



Expedited Processes for Expanding Licensed School-Age Capacity in Family Child Care Programs

Background

On August 28, 2020, Governor Baker issued COVID-19 Executive Order No. 49, which provides three paths for communities to support expanded access to child care and supervision in response to the increased need from families with children enrolled in hybrid or remote learning.

The Executive Order makes possible the expansion of programs licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to serve school-aged children during remote learning hours. Therefore, effective August 28, 2020 and for the duration of the COVID-19 Executive Order No. 49, all Licensed Family Child Care and Group & School-Age Programs that are currently licensed to serve school age children are *automatically* approved to serve school-age children (within their current licensed capacity) during virtual learning hours, as well as to continue programming during before- and after-school hours.

For many families, this option has many benefits, including that programs are already expert in serving children in this age group, are already subject to the oversight of a state authority, and in large part have been operating under strict health and safety guidelines to great effect since summer. This option also presents benefits to programs that can now immediately accommodate the needs of the children and families they serve without any additional requirements or delays.

However, EEC recognizes that more needs to be done to ensure the preservation of and access to licensed, high-quality child care options. To that end, EEC is pleased to offer the following newly designed and expedited processes for licensed child care programs and new providers.

About EEC's New Expedited Processes for Existing and New Licensed Programs

In accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15D, EEC is responsible for the regulation and oversight of child care programs that serve school age children during the hours before and after the traditional school day, while school districts oversee the education and supervision of school-age children during school day hours. During the COVID-19 pandemic, school districts plan to deliver education virtually, creating an urgent need for families to find alternative options for the supervision and educational support of their school-age children during virtual learning hours. In the absence of any existing oversight mechanism to authorize programs to provide this supervision and support, EEC has created four new processes to enable Licensed Programs to be responsive to community needs. These new processes empower providers to increase their capacity and/or build new capacity as they adjust to the changing child care and public health landscapes.

In addition to these new expedited processes, EEC has implemented the following policies:

- **All licensing fees are deferred through 2021** to assist Licensed Programs in increasing their sustainability and to alleviate some of the burdens associated with the COVID-19 closure.

- Programs will not be penalized for delays due to COVID-19. When necessary because of a local municipality’s restrictions, inspections that have expired since January 2020 may be extended through the period that the COVID-19 Executive Order is lifted, in consultation with the program Licensors. If applying to expand, move, or add licensed spaces through an expedited process, please consult your Licensor or Regional Office if you encounter difficulty fulfilling requirements for inspections.
- Any program receiving an amended license with temporary conditions issued through the following expedited processes may be given the option to keep the change as a permanent condition, as appropriate and consistent with regulatory standards. Upon expiration of the COVID-19 Executive Order, EEC will work with all programs interested in making a temporary condition into a permanent license change.

Through this document, EEC outlines some of these expedited processes, including the streamlined requirements for Licensed Programs to increase their capacity, space, or program staffing in order to promote child care access within their communities.

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EXPEDITED FAMILY CHILD CARE CAPACITY INCREASE

Use the **Expedited Capacity Increase for Licensed Family Child Care** if you are:

- An FCC Provider seeking to serve MORE children (i.e. a provider that is licensed to care for 6 children seeking an upgrade to care for up to 8 children); and
- An FCC Certified Assistant seeking to upgrade credentials to serve MORE children (i.e. an assistant that is seeking employment in an FCC home serving 10 children).

You will need:

- Evidence of having completed, within one year of application, the required pre-service Capacity Increase Training, which is located on the [EEC website](#).
- If not previously submitted, evidence of having completed the “Guidelines for Reopening Child Care” course which is available through the [StrongStart Professional Development System](#).
- Evidence of current CPR and First Aid certification, as appropriate to the ages served.
- Current Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR) account, including the required experience as applicable to the requested upgrade.

Step-by-Step Process:



EXPEDITED CERTIFICATION FOR EDUCATORS SEEKING TO WORK AS A CERTIFIED FAMILY CHILD CARE ASSISTANT

Use the **Expedited Certification for Educators Seeking to Work as a Certified Family Child Care Assistant** process if you are:

- An EEC certified teacher or director interested in obtaining certification to work as an assistant in a Family Child Care home;
- An FCC Educator seeking to temporarily close your licensed child care program and work for another FCC Educator as a Certified Assistant;
- An FCC Educator seeking to close your licensed program permanently and work as a Certified Assistant in a Family Child Care home.

Group and School Age Expedited Assistant Certification:

Individuals holding an EEC Teacher Certification (Infant/Toddler, Preschool, Lead Teacher, or Director) shall be considered to meet the qualifications of a Certified Assistant. These individuals must complete the following steps to become an FCC Certified Assistant. **You will need to:**

- Complete the FCC Certified Assistant application process through the LEAD portal.
- Complete a new Background Record Check (BRC).
- Upload evidence of completion (certificates or date of completion) for the Family Child Care Potential Provider Meeting: Part One training, EEC Essentials trainings, and the new “Guidance for Reopening Child Care” course.
- Upload the current EEC Teacher Certification as an Additional Attachment to the transaction.

Family Child Care Educator Expedited Assistant Certification:

Family Child Care Educators seeking to work as a Certified Assistant shall be considered to meet the qualifications of a Certified Assistant. These individuals must complete the following steps to become an FCC Certified Assistant.

FCC Educators seeking to work as an FCC Certified Assistant **permanently** must:

- Complete the FCC Certified Assistant application process through the LEAD portal.
- Complete a new Background Record Check (BRC).
- Upload certificates of completion for EEC Essentials and the new “Guidance for Reopening Child Care” course.
- Close FCC program through LEAD via the *Close Prior to Expiration* transaction.
- Return the FCC license to EEC.

FCC Educators seeking to work as an FCC Certified Assistant **permanently** must:

- Complete the FCC Inactivate transaction through the LEAD portal.
- Return the original FCC license to EEC and receive temporary amended license (*Duration of temporary amended license may not exceed FCC license expiration date*).

INTERIM PROCESS FOR PROSPECTIVE CHILD CARE PROVIDERS SEEKING NEW LICENSURE

Complete Pre-Service Orientation and Training

1

- A. Complete the **Potential Provider Meeting: Part 1 (PPM1)** course through the StrongStart Professional Development System, specific to your program type. *Please see the NEW Potential Provider Meeting Orientations section below for more information on how to access the StrongStart system.*
- B. Contact the regional EEC office that will issue the license to find a **Potential Provider Meeting: Part 2 Q&A (PPM2)** session specific to your program type. Register for a regional virtual Potential Provider Meeting: Part 2 Q&A Session (PPM2).
- C. Potential provider completes all required training, including EEC Essentials through the StrongStart Professional Development System. If applicable, Potential Provider completes CPR and First Aid training and certification.

Submit a New License Transaction

2

- A. Review the EEC Licensing Regulations and the Interim New Licensure Requirements (listed below) for the correct program type. Prepare and collect all required documents.
- B. Contact the regional office to request access to the Licensing Education Analytic Database (LEAD) portal. An email will be sent out to the provider with instructions once the request is processed.
- C. Submit a New License transaction in LEAD, including all applicable required documents. Upon submission of the New License transaction, the Potential Provider will receive two emails requesting the submission of Background Record Check (BRC) Consent Form and Tax Certification. Complete and submit both required forms to complete the provider part of the transaction.

Pre-Licensing Visit

3

- A. Your EEC Licensor will contact you to schedule an in-person pre-licensing visit to inspect the program space.¹
- B. Technical assistance will be provided for any observed areas where the program is facing barriers to successfully meeting the Licensing Regulations and/or Minimum Requirements for Health and Safety.
- C. Receive a visit report and respond to any corrections requested. EEC may require additional verification of corrections before moving forward with final review and approval of the New License transaction.

Receive New Licensure

4

- A. EEC will issue the new license, including any conditions as applicable.

¹ The in-person pre-licensing visit will be conducted under strict health and safety guidelines including social distancing and wearing a mask or cloth face covering.

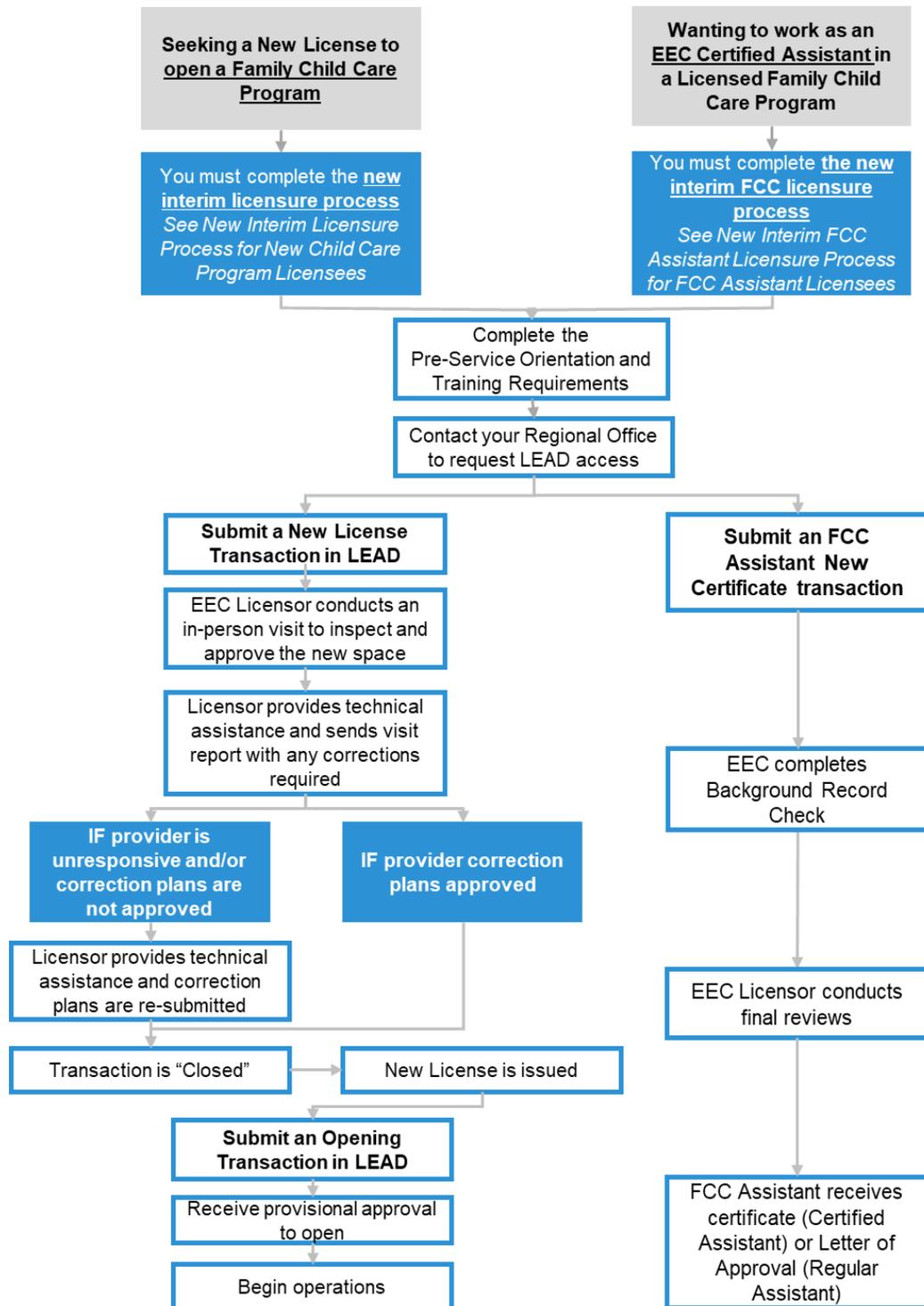
- B. New Licensee must submit an Opening Transaction and all associated requirements through the LEAD Portal *and* receive provisional approval to open from EEC *prior to operating the child care program.*

You will need:

- Evidence of completion (certificate) of an EEC Family Child Care Potential Provider Meeting: Part 1 Training through the StrongStart Professional Development System
- Evidence confirming participation in an EEC Family Child Care Virtual Potential Provider Meeting: Part 2 Q&A Session (date of completion is required to be entered within New License Transaction)
- Evidence of completion (certificate) of EEC Essentials training (12 modules) available via EEC's Learning Management System at <https://strongstart.eoe.mass.gov/>.
- Medical statement indicating you have had a physical exam within the past year and are in good physical and mental health. The statement should note whether or not there are any limitations on your ability to care for children and include evidence that you have been immunized in accordance with the recommendations of the Department of Public Health ([Medical Letter](#)). If there are any conditions or impacts on the provider's ability to care for children (or if the mental or physical health of any household member may effect their ability to care for children) that must be reflected in the submitted medical statement.
- Up-to-date Professional Qualifications (PQ) Registry account.
- Evidence of current certification in both basic first aid and CPR for infants and children.
- Tax Certification form (sent via email following the submission of transaction with further instructions about this item)
- Consent for Background Record Check (BRC) electronic form filled out and signed by each household member (regardless of whether they are home during child care hours) and person(s) regularly on the premises, 15 years of age and over, including yourself (sent via email following the submission of transaction with further instructions about this item.)
- If the Family Child Care home's water is from a private well and not a town water supply, evidence of a well water test from a Massachusetts Dept. of Environmental Protection approved lab or documentation from the local board of health or health department, indicating that the home's water meets Drinking Water Standards must be submitted.
- Parent Handbook and other required documents to be reviewed during the pre-licensing visit²
- In-person Pre-Licensing Visit (including response to corrections, as applicable)

² Sample forms are available on the EEC website at <https://www.mass.gov/lists/licensing-forms-for-family-child-care-providers>

I am not licensed to provide home-based child care and...



Appendix: Additional Processes and Requirements for Family Child Care Providers

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) recognizes the importance of safe options for families and child care providers as they consider the best approach for their unique circumstances and needs during the COVID-19 Emergency, including new staffing models to adjust to the pandemic, renewing licenses that have expired since the closure, and temporary relocation due to ongoing COVID-19 closures.

In response, EEC is issuing guidance for programs seeking to respond to community needs by expanding or modifying their program structure and operations in order to ensure that families with children have access to safe options for core and supplemental care options during the 2020-2021 academic year.

Appendix A: Opening Following the COVID-19 Closure of Child Care

! Important Note: New licensees must submit an Opening Transaction AND receive provisional approval from EEC prior to opening and operating the new licensed program.

The Process to Open Following the COVID-19 Closure

NOTE: please see the [EEC web site](#) for important materials to inform the reopening process, including templates for health and safety planning and a copy of the Attestation Form, available in multiple languages.

Step 1: Required Health and Safety Training

Complete the required health and safety training (“[Guidance for Reopening Child Care](#)”) through the StrongStart Professional Development System. This training must be completed by all educators and staff prior to opening the program for child care during COVID-19.

Step 2: Opening Transaction

Submit an Opening Transaction for the applicable program type through the LEAD portal. Complete transactions will include:

- COVID-19 Health and Safety Plans;³
- Current staff checklist (must reflect completion of the Guidelines for Reopening Child Care course offered through the StrongStart Professional Development System for all applicable educators and staff); and
- Signed Attestation Form.

Step 3: Provisional Approval

Programs shall receive a provisional approval letter once EEC has reviewed the application and confirmed that the program meets the applicable criteria below. Programs issued provisional approval may begin to operate immediately upon receipt of the approval letter/email and in accordance with any applicable conditions. Provisional approvals shall remain in effect until Final Approval has been issued by EEC.

Provisional approval will be issued based upon the following criteria:

³ Previously known as Reopening Plans.

- A current (not expired⁴) license in good standing (no open investigation, legal order, and no pending legal referral)
- Required health and safety training (“Guidance for Reopening Child Care”) completed by all educators and staff (*must be indicated on the staff training checklist*)
- Submission of a completed attestation form, including signature of the licensee and date
- Submission of all required COVID-19 Health and Safety Plans (*programs may use the template provided by EEC or their own, provided all required sections are addressed*)
- Intended date of opening is indicated in the transaction
- All information entered within the transaction is complete, current, and consistent with EEC regulatory requirements and the program’s license
- All required Background Record Checks (BRC) have been initiated

● ***Please note that any candidates in provisional status may not work directly with children unless in direct visual supervision of a program employee that has already been found suitable by EEC.***

Step 4: Final Approval

Final approval will be issued once the program’s COVID-19 Health and Safety Plans have been approved. EEC Licensors shall review all submitted COVID-19 Health and Safety Plans carefully and may use email and telephone calls to communicate with programs about their opening plans. Technical assistance will be offered to support providers with their plans and updates may be requested before the plans are approved and final approval is issued, when deemed necessary by EEC.

In some instances, EEC may require a virtual visit to be conducted prior to issuance of final approval, including programs in the renewal process and those for whom an annual differential monitoring visit did not occur due to COVID-19.

Upon review and approval of a program’s COVID-19 Health and Safety Plans and receipt of a complete Opening Transaction, the program will receive final approval and must post the Final Approval Letter next to their license for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appendix B: Interim License Renewal Process and Requirements

- 1. Provider completes a Renewal Transaction through the LEAD portal, including submission of all required and/or updated documents.**
- 2. Licensors will conduct a virtual renewal visit. The renewal visit must be conducted by the licensors, responded to by the educator, and closed before the renewed license can be issued.**
- 3. Provider will receive the renewed license via mail.**

Renewal Transaction Requirements for Family Child Care Programs

⁴ Licensees who are in “Renewal in Progress” shall be considered current and may be provisionally approved, provided they have submitted all required opening documentation. A virtual visit must take place before final approval is issued.

- Licensee completes the Family Child Care Renewal application/transaction and submits all required documents, including:
 - Completed medical form
 - Evidence of current certification in both basic First Aid and CPR for infants and children
 - Up-to-date Professional Qualifications (PQ) Registry number (must reflect completion of all pre-service and annual training requirements)
 - Evidence of completion of all annual training requirements, including evidence of completion of training requirement for the number of children provider is approved to care for, if applicable as part of upgrade
 - Copy of any updates made to the program’s Parent Handbook since the last licensing visit
 - Copy of completed Children’s Records Checklist (NEW)
 - Consent for Background Record Check (BRC) for the licensee, and all household members or persons regularly on the premises
 - Tax Certification form
 - Virtual Renewal Visit conducted and responses to any corrections requested have been received and approved by EEC.

Appendix C: Interim FCC Assistant Renewal Process and Requirements

- 1. FCC Assistant completes an FCC Assistant Renewal Transaction through the LEAD portal (see transaction requirements below).**
- 2. EEC will review submitted transaction and, upon completion of review, issue the approval or certificate to the assistant.**

Renewal Transaction Requirements for FCC Assistants

- FCC Assistant completes the Family Child Care Assistant Renewal application/transaction and submits all required documents, including:
 - Completed [medical form](#)
 - Evidence of current certification in both basic First Aid and CPR for infants and children, if applicable
 - Up-to-date Professional Qualifications (PQ) Registry account, including required training hours.
 - Consent for Background Record Check (BRC)

Appendix D: Interim FCC Assistant Application Process and Requirements

- 1. Applicant completes the required pre-service orientation as appropriate to the assistant type.**
- 2. Applicant completes all required pre-service trainings. For all assistants, this must include the EEC Essentials Trainings and Guidelines for Reopening Child Care, through the StrongStart Professional Development System. FCC Certified Assistants must also complete training for and obtain CPR and First Aid Certification for children and infants.**

3. **Applicant completes an FCC Assistant New Certificate transaction⁵ through the EEC LEAD Provider Portal, including submission of tax certification form and BRC Consent Form.**
4. **BRC is completed for the applicant and suitability confirmed.**
5. **Licensor conducts final review and approves the application.**
6. **FCC Assistant receives certificate (Certified Assistant) or Letter of Approval (Regular Assistant).**

Interim Regular FCC Assistant Requirements:

- Must be at least 18 years old
- Proof of completion of EEC Essentials training (12 modules) available via EEC's Learning Management System at <https://strongstart.eoe.mass.gov/>
- Proof of completion of Family Child Care Regular Assistant orientation online training class at: http://www.eec.state.ma.us/docs1/regs_policies/FCCAssistOrient/FCCAssistantOrient.htm
- Evidence of completion of Guidelines for Reopening Child Care online training
- Evidence of current certification in both basic first aid and CPR for infants and children, if applicable.
- Up-to-date Professional Qualifications (PQ) Registry account
- Medical statement indicating the assistant has had a physical exam within the past year and is in good physical and mental health. The statement should note whether or not there are any limitations on the assistant's ability to care for children and must include evidence that the assistant has been immunized in accordance with the recommendations of the Department of Public Health (Medical Letter). If limitations identified, the Medical statement must explain the condition and any impact on the assistant's ability to care for children.
- Consent for Background Record Check (BRC) electronic form filled out and signed
- Completed Tax Certification form

Interim Certified FCC Assistant Requirements⁶ - All requirements listed above for Regular Assistant, PLUS:

- Evidence of completion of the FCC Potential Provider Meeting: Part 1
- Up-to-date Professional Qualifications (PQ) Registry account, including evidence of experience caring for children, which must include at least one of the following:
 - One year of full-time experience caring for children younger than 14 years of age (may include parenting experience, babysitting does not count), or
 - Nine months of full-time experience caring for children younger than 14 years of age and 15 hours of training approved by EEC, or
 - Six months of full-time experience caring for children younger than 14 years of age and 30 hours of training, approved by EEC, or
 - A certificate of qualification as a teacher, director, or site coordinator issued by EEC

⁵ Prospective FCC Assistants must contact their EEC regional office to request access to the LEAD portal following completion of all pre-service requirements.

⁶ Certified Assistants seeking to be certified to care for more than 6 children are required to complete the pre-service training for Serving 7 to 10 Children in Family Child Care entitled "Maintaining Quality While Expanding Your Capacity."

Appendix E: NEW Virtual Potential Provider Meeting Orientations

The Potential Provider Meeting Orientation is a two-part series designed specifically for prospective child care providers seeking to operate a child care business in Massachusetts. In order to ensure safe access to the required orientations during the COVID-19 pandemic, EEC has designed virtual options that are available to all potential providers across the state.

The Potential Provider Meeting: Part 1 (PPM1) course is the first in a two-part orientation series for individuals interested in learning more about what is involved in becoming a licensed child care provider in the state of Massachusetts. Through this training, EEC will introduce participants to the licensing rules, business considerations, and professional qualifications needed to run a licensed child care business.

The Potential Provider Meeting: Part 2 Q&A Session (PPM2) is the second orientation, focusing more on regulations and associated policies and procedures. Through the second PPM, prospective licensees will learn more about the licensing rules that govern child care in MA and what the specific components of complete licensing application look like. Participants will have an opportunity to meet the EEC licensing supervisor from their respective regions and take part in a Question & Answer session to make sure they have the answers they need as they begin the process of becoming a new licensee.

How to Access the Potential Provider Meeting: Part One

Step 1: Go to the StrongStart Professional Development System (SSPDS) Home Page <https://strongstart.eoe.mass.gov/ets/home>.

Step 2: Click on Course Catalog (located on the left of the screen).

Step 3: Find the Potential Provider Meeting: Part One course that is appropriate to the type of care you intend to provide (Family Child Care or Group and School Age Child Care) and click the link.

Step 4: The system will ask participants to either sign-in or create a new account (if participants have not been in the SSPDS before. During the process of creating a new account, the SSPDS will ask for your Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR) number. **If the participant has an account in the EEC PQR, the participant's PQR# should be used as the code.** Participants that do not yet have an account may enter '3333' as a temporary code to take this course.

Step 5: Complete the Potential Provider Meeting: Part One training. At the end, save and/or print out your certificate.

Please note: Participants moving forward in the licensure process will need to have evidence of completion of PPM1 and the date of completion of both PPM 1 & 2 orientations in order to submit the application for your license or certificate.⁷

How to Access the Potential Provider Meeting: Part Two

Step 1: Call the regional EEC office located within your region to identify a PPM2 date and to register for the chosen PPM2 session.⁸

⁷ There is a link on the homepage on how to view and print certificates.

⁸ If you are a prospective FCC provider, you will receive an email confirming your registration.

Step 3: Look for an email with log in information needed to join the PPM2 session. Save the information and have it accessible on the date of the scheduled session.

Step 4: Join the PPM2 session a few minutes before the start time and come prepared with any questions.

Appendix F: COVID-19 Incident Reporting Processes

Routine Reporting of all COVID-19 Related Incidents

All COVID-19 related incidents must be reported to EEC by submitting an Incident Report through the LEAD portal. This includes any presumptive or confirmed COVID-19 cases and/or any confirmed or presumptive exposures involving any individual(s) that spent time in the child care space. Please note: Incident reports must be submitted any time a program is made aware of an individual getting tested for a possible exposure, in addition to when made aware of a positive test.

While the Department of Public Health reporting (below) is focused on positive cases among children, staff, and family members, EEC Incident Reports track the impact to the program. Therefore, the EEC Incident report should contain the following key information, if available:

- Individual and their role in the child care setting (child, family member of a child, educator, assistant, household member, or exposure through a contact with one of the above)
- Status of the COVID case (presence of symptoms, whether a test has occurred, whether it is a confirmed close contact)
- Brief description of any guidance received from the Local Board of Health or DPH epidemiologist and any additional contact tracing activities or instructions, if applicable
- Related actions undertaken by the program to respond (isolation, quarantine, communication with families, and/or closure and recommended follow-up steps)

Procedure to Report COVID-19 Positive Staff, Children, or Children’s Household Members

All licensed child care programs must follow the steps below when informed of a confirmed COVID-19 positive individual in their program or of a confirmed COVID-19 positive individual that shares a home with an individual in the program.

1. Report the positive case to the Department of Public Health using the COVID-19 Positive Reporting Form (a link to this form can be found in a provider’s LEAD account)
2. Connect with an Epidemiologist from the Department of Public Health to discuss next steps. **The Epidemiologist will call the contact as listed in the reporting form after the COVID-19 Positive Reporting Form is submitted.**
3. Implement a communication plan that maintains the privacy of the infected individual and addresses next steps with impacted families as discussed with the Epidemiologist.
4. Per the guidance above, submit an incident report in LEAD in the same manner as another infectious disease.

Appendix G: What Do I Need to Do Now? Overview of Expedited Processes for Licensed Family Child Care Programs

I am a licensed Family Child Care Provider...

