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For Immediate Release:
March 19, 2020



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Missouri officials take regulatory action to address child care needs amid COVID-19 outbreak

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – The Departments of Health and Senior Services and Social Services have taken regulatory action to assist child care providers and families during the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.

“We recognize that child care is an essential component of fighting COVID-19,” said Dr. Randall Williams, director of DHSS. “Health care and other emergency medical personnel must have appropriate arrangements for their children to ensure they can provide the health care and other essential services needed by our communities.”

To assist in this effort, DHSS’s Section for Child Care Regulation (SCCR) has taken the following steps:

- During the period of time that schools are closed, licensed child care providers are able to utilize the rules regarding emergency school closings. This allows licensed programs to accommodate enrolled school-age children who need care. The provider will be permitted to exceed the license capacity of the facility by 1/3 during this time.
- SCCR has developed a process to allow for the temporary care of preschool and school-age children. Short-term licenses for a 45-day period are available. These licenses, which are renewable, will be based on an abbreviated inspection that focuses on key health and safety indicators.

Additionally, SCCR has loosened some regulations for licensed child care providers to allow them to extend their hours of care, and eased administrative burdens related to record keeping requirements.

DHSS utilized its statutory authority to develop this temporary opportunity.

“COVID-19 has created additional challenges for low-income Missourians who receive Child Care Subsidy benefits,” said Jennifer Tidball, Acting Director, Department of Social Services. “To ensure those child care needs are met and children remain safe, the Department of Social Services is helping families and the child care providers enrolled in the Child Care Subsidy program cope with the impact of COVID-19.”

The Department of Social Services has taken the actions below:

- Child Care Subsidy program benefits are extended for 90 days.
- The Child Care Subsidy program can pay for additional hours of care for a child’s attendance due to school closure or the parent is required to work additional hours.
- Child Care Subsidy provider application renewals are extended for 90 days.

DHSS/SCCR and DSS are also working closely with Child Care Aware of Missouri, a child care resource and referral agency. Child Care Aware of Missouri is a resource and referral agency that assists parents in locating child care. Parents who are looking for child care can call 1-866-892-3228 to speak with a referral specialist. They can also access these services online at <https://www.mo.childcareaware.org/>. There is no cost to parents for these services.

Child Care Subsidy benefit recipients who need additional child care hours or any low-income families who want to apply for assistance with child care costs are encouraged to reach out to the Family Support Division for help. Missourians can do business with the Family Support Division without leaving home. They can apply for services online by visiting [MyDSS.mo.gov](https://mydss.mo.gov), over the phone by calling 1-855-FSD-INFO, or in-person at their nearest Family Support Division Resource Center.

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