

Updated as of 3/16/20, 10 PM

NEW MEXICO CHILD CARE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS AND PROVIDERS

As a child care provider in the State of New Mexico, we want you to do everything possible to stay open and provide services to families and young children. Child care is incredibly valuable and of vital importance. Our communities have voiced how important you are. At this time, the State is **NOT** requiring child care providers (either in homes or centers) to close.

“We recognize that New Mexicans face a range of circumstances and challenges. **If you have the flexibility to stay home with your child, we encourage you to do so.** If you need child care, we are doing everything in our power to ensure that you have access to healthy and safe care,” said Early Childhood Education and Care Department Secretary Elizabeth Groginsky. “New Mexico is fortunate to have child care providers who are stepping up to support families and we are here to support them.”

Important Websites:

www.newmexico.gov

<http://cv.nmhealth.org/>

newmexicokids.org/

<https://cyfd.org/child-care-services>

The National Institute for Early Learning Research COVID19 Resources - http://nieer.org/covid-19_resources

Important Numbers (Information Provided in English and Spanish):

New Mexico Department of Health Hotline: 1-855-600-3453 (Available 24/7)

State of New Mexico Resource Hotline - 1-833-551-0518

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

WHERE TO FIND THE FAQ: <https://www.newmexicokids.org/>

FAMILY QUESTIONS:

Q: If my child care center closes, can I take my child and my CYFD contract to one that is open?

- A. Yes. The state will pay both entities during the state of emergency so that you may find care. Please make contact with your local Child Care Services Bureau to notify them of the new child care center (see Child Care Services Bureau phone listing on page 10).

Q: I am a parent; can I call and get a contract for child care over the phone?

A: Yes, a phone interview may be conducted in order to get a contract for child care. Clients seeking child care assistance may submit their application in several ways:

- 1) Go to www.pulltogether.org and submit an on-line application. You will receive a phone call from a worker.
- 2) Go to www.cyfd.org to download an application and applicant checklist for a list of all necessary documents required for eligibility determination. A phone interview will be required once all documents are submitted. When the emergency declaration is over, you may be required to schedule a visit to continue receiving services.

Q. If I am a parent in need of child care, who can I call if I have questions or need support?

A: For questions about child care assistance in general, your child care contract or payment for child care services, you may contact your local child care assistance office. For licensing/registered home questions, you can call your local licensing office. Please see the Child Care Bureau phone listing below. For technical assistance or other support, you may call the New Mexico Child Care Resource and Referral line at 1-800-691-9067. It operates 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. You can also email your questions to child.care@state.nm.us.

Q: How will the state support first responders and health providers with child care?

A: If a first responder or health provider needs child care during the public health emergency, CYFD will issue full-time contracts for payments to early childhood providers who are providing service. In our state plan we will designate emergency responders and health care professionals in the high risk category. Call your county offices to apply for services (see phone numbers below).

Q. Will all first responders get state assistance regardless of income?

A: Yes. First responders, health care professionals and other essential employees are eligible to receive child care assistance, regardless of income.

Q: Are there options for child care for children of hospital workers? Will there be waivers to allow hospitals to establish their own child care? Are there options to use community centers with priority for HCW and other first responders?

A: If a first responder or health provider feels they need additional support during the public health emergency, CYFD will be issuing full contracts for payments to CYFD-approved early childhood providers who are providing service. Call your local county office to apply for services (see Child Care Bureau phone listing below).

To apply to open a licensed temporary site, please call your local licensing office (see Child Care Bureau phone listing below). For communities that wish to open additional space, please work with a licensed local child care center (3 STAR center or above) and your local licensing office.

Q: I would like to offer care to children of first responder's and health care providers at this time. Currently we'll have room as other families are keeping their children home. What do we do after this is over and we're trying to get back to ratio and group sizes?

A: Thank you for your willingness to provide care for first responders and health care providers. This care will be temporary. After the public health emergency, you will return to your licensed and FOCUS ratios and group sizes.

Q. How will the state support families with meals if the licensed child care provider is closed?

A. If you have questions about food access, please call 1-833-551-0518 or email nutrition.program@state.nm.us

PROVIDER QUESTIONS:

Q. How are federally-funded Head Start facilities managing this emergency?

A. From the Office of Head Start:

"In response to COVID-19, the Office of Head Start is advising grantees to coordinate with local health authorities and implement their existing policies and procedures related to closure of Head Start centers during infectious disease outbreaks. Closure of centers in areas heavily impacted by COVID-19 is an important element of containing and limiting its spread.

"In recognition of the unique circumstances associated with COVID-19, OHS is directing programs to continue to pay wages and provide benefits for staff unable to report to work during center closures necessary to address COVID-19. During center closures, employees should continue to engage families and to deliver services to the extent possible, remotely.

"This additional emergency response flexibility is important to ensure critical grants management activities can continue during closures. It will help ensure staff are ready

and able to return to work as soon as it is possible to resume operations. This flexibility remains in effect through April 30, 2020 unless further extended by OHS.”

Q: Are CYFD offices going to remain open during this time, and are reimbursements to providers going to be processed on time?

A: Yes. CYFD offices will remain open. Reimbursements will be processed on time.

Q: Are CYFD NM PreK providers (that follow public school schedules) to close as well?

A: No. The State is not requiring CYFD-funded NM PreK sites to close. However, **PLEASE NOTE: All CYFD NM PreK providers are authorized to suspend instructional time for CYFD PreK during this health emergency.**

However, if your program makes the decision to close you will continue to receive payments. Please make sure you submit your billing based on your March enrollment. This is also the process if you decide to stay open to meet the needs of your families and have fewer children than those enrolled; your billing should be based on your March enrollment.

Q: Home care providers are worried and asking if they also must close in response to public school closures?

A: At this time, home providers are NOT required to close. Families still need care and we want to make sure that our programs are still available for families that need services if possible.

Q. Will you allow community-based providers to stay open and let parents choose for themselves?

A: Yes. At this time, community-based providers (both homes and centers) are encouraged to remain open and continue serving children and families. If your program or center makes the decision to close you will be paid for the children enrolled in the child care assistance program.

Q: For child care programs that are set in schools, do they also have to remain closed if the schools are not being used?

A: If you are licensed by CYFD and utilize a public school building, we encourage you to stay open. Our communities need to work together to support child care as you all are supporting children and families in our state. If you need assistance working with a local school district, please call 1-833-551-0518.

Q: Will the state direct licensed child care providers to close, as with K-12 schools?

A: No. At this time, the State is NOT directing child care providers (either home- or center-based) to close. We are encouraging programs to stay open if possible so that working families will have access to child care programs. Families are also NOT required to attend child care (even those families who are in the Child Care Assistance Program) during this emergency period. These families will not lose their child care benefits and the program will still be paid for their enrolled children.

Q: Are CYFD/FOCUS/PreK programs expected to follow the NM PED three-week closure, until April 6th? Will the ECECD be issuing its own directives, guidance and policies for early childhood programs?

A: At this time, the State is NOT directing CYFD/FOCUS/PreK programs to close. The ECEC Department is coordinating with CYFD and PED on guidance for programs and will provide daily briefings for child care providers during the emergency.

Q: In the event of closure, will CYFD and NM PreK funding continue? Is there any emergency funding (state or federal) to help centers maintain operations during closures?

A: Yes. Child care assistance funding and CYFD NM PreK funding will continue. Emergency funds will be available to help centers maintain operations.

Q: Should we close our PreK or Early PreK program?

A: We are not requiring CYFD programs to close. We are encouraging centers and programs to continue to provide services to families. However, if your community program makes the decision to close, providers will continue to receive payment (including subsidy and PreK payments).

Q: Should I close my child care center?

A: That is a business decision. If you choose a temporary closure, please notify your licensing surveyor of this closure. The New Mexico Department of Health will mandate closure of any center in which a COVID-19 case is confirmed.

Q: If a center has to close, will the staff and programs get reimbursed for the time off?

A: If a child care center has to close, please notify your local licensing office. Payments for children enrolled in the child care assistance program will continue through the emergency period.

Q: How do they expect us to provide full time care for the next three weeks for before & after school children on part-time CYFD contracts?

A: Contracts will be amended to full-time care and full-time payments. Please ask families to contact their eligibility specialist at CYFD via phone, or email, to let them

know they are now receiving full-time care. Our team across the state will amend the contracts.

Q: We are facing shortages of important supplies.

A: The state recognizes that suppliers are running short. We are currently assessing the situation and gathering information on which suppliers can support programs. Please email child.care@state.nm.us to let us know which supplies you need.

Q: How can programs provide and maintain proper classroom ratios with a surge of families in our community needing child care practically overnight?

A: CYFD will suspend FOCUS ratios and group size during the emergency period. However, ratios and group sizes outlined in regulations must be maintained.

Q: Can there be a temporary waiver for ratios with centers that take in children from the public schools?

A: CYFD will suspend FOCUS ratios and group size during the emergency period. Ratios and group sizes outlined in regulations must be maintained.

Q. Is there a way to get a TEMPORARY waiver to take in more children?

A: Yes, contact your local licensing office. Please note, CYFD has suspended FOCUS ratios and group size during the emergency period. Ratios and group sizes outlined in the licensing regulations **must** be maintained.

Q. What kind of relief program can be put in place to support both providers and families?

A: The state is submitting a waiver to the federal government to waive copayments for families during the health emergency declaration. Additionally, we will pay licensed providers a differential of \$250 for all children enrolled in child care assistance per month during the health emergency declaration. We will also provide waivers to programs licensed at 3 STAR or above who want to open additional sites during the health emergency declaration.

Q: Is the \$250 differential for all children or only CYFD children?

A: At this time, the differential only applies to children enrolled in the child care assistance program during the health emergency declaration.

Q. If CYFD is paying co-pays, is that included in the \$250.00 or additional?

A: No, the co-pays are not included in the \$250.00 differential for children enrolled in the child care assistance program.

Q. Do the temporary rules work the same way for self-employed people?

- A. Self-employed people don't qualify for unemployment, but New Mexico is asking President Trump to declare a "major disaster," in which case they could.

Q. Will the state be paying for the cleaning of all licensed childcare centers?

A: No; however, for all children enrolled in the child care assistance program, the state will pay a differential of \$250 per child per month during the health emergency declaration. Please call 1-833-551-0518 if you need support in having your center professionally cleaned.

Q. What support will be put in place so that providers can still pay their staff?

Information provided by the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions:

- Starting Monday, March 16, 2020, work search requirements for anyone whose job is affected by COVID-19 will be waived for unemployment. This will last for an initial period of 4 weeks. There is a built-in one week waiting period in the system, but people can get \$433 per week after that for the rest of the time.
- Examples: contracted school workers (bus drivers, etc; many are familiar with the process as they do it every May), event staff, or servers who are either laid off or have their hours reduced.
- Businesses who want to reduce hours rather than lay people off can have employees apply for unemployment to help offset those costs up to \$433 per week.
- Workers are highly encouraged to apply for benefits online at <http://www.dws.state.nm.us>. There is an 800 number available as well (877-664-6984) but online is optimal.
- The unemployment trust fund is currently at about \$490 million, a very healthy level. Furthermore, we are closely monitoring the bill that Congressional Democrats passed last night to see what federal resources will be available and when they might be disbursed. We are ready and able to distribute them. In addition, providers will continue to receive payment if the program closes due to the current public health emergency.

Q. What support will be available for families who have no child care and still have to work?

A: The state has a child care resource and referral line to help families find child care in their community. Please call 1-800-691-9067 or visit www.NewMexicoKids.Org. If a family in the Child Care Assistance Program normally attends a site that is closing, we can issue a second contract to a new provider while paying the original site during the emergency period.

Q. Will there be adjustments in contracts?

A: Yes, we will adjust child care contracts for families that need additional services. If a family needs full-time care and has a part-time contract, please have them contact the CYFD County Field Office (see Child Care Bureau phone listing below). We ask businesses and providers to keep track of each case to ensure we can fully reconcile our records after the emergency declaration has ended.

Q: Should staff interacting with children wear masks or gloves?

A: No. Just like with many other illnesses, the best way to protect yourself is to wash your hands regularly, to cough or sneeze into your sleeve or a tissue, and when possible, to avoid contact with people who are coughing or sneezing.

Q: Will providers be paid if children are absent for more than 5 days a month?

A: Yes. If a center remains open during the emergency health declaration period, they will be paid in full for all children enrolled during the emergency period, even if the child is absent for more than five days. If a licensed child care provider continues to provide service they will be paid a differential for all children enrolled in child care assistance of \$250 per child per month.

Q: I am a before and after care program provider. Can I serve school-aged children during school closures? How does this affect me?

A: If you are licensed by CYFD and utilize a public school building, we encourage you to stay open. Our communities need to work together to support child care as you all are supporting children and families in our state. If you need assistance working with a local school district, please call 1-833-551-0518.

If you are able to secure another site, please work with your licensing surveyor in your region to apply for a waiver to operate at a temporary location. Employees must have background checks and meet minimum requirements. Please see the Child Care Bureau phone listing below.

Q: Will the state help child care centers open satellite sites to support families?

A: The New Mexico Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan for Child Care allows licensed centers that are 3 STAR or above to request a waiver to open satellite sites to support families. Please contact your local licensing office (see Child Care Bureau phone listing below). All staff must have a background check and staff will be required to complete the online health and safety training at www.newmexicokids.org, as well as online CPR training.

Q: As a center that chooses to stay open, can I go over capacity temporarily to serve my community?

A: No. While we applaud your desire to support your community, all centers must stay within the ratios and group size outlined in the licensing regulations and cannot run over capacity due to health and safety concerns. We are asking that you have conversations with families who have child care assistance contracts; it is important that they know that they will NOT lose benefits if they choose to stay home. If some choose to stay home, this will free up space for other children.

Q. We have families asking if we can accept older elementary siblings in our child care centers. Is this possible if our school is not licensed for this age group?

A: You can contact your local licensing office to see if your facility is able to amend its license to serve school age children. All licensed facilities must maintain the ratios and group size outlined in the licensing regulations.

Q: What TA or support will be provided for those that stay open?

A: Support will be provided in a number of ways. Starting on Monday, March 16, Secretary Groginsky will host daily calls with providers. Providers may call the New Mexico Child Care Resource and Referral line at 1-800-691-9067 or e-mail questions or concerns to child.care@state.nm.us. Frequent updates will be provided on the New Mexico Department of Health website: <https://nmhealth.org/>

Q: Does the 50-person rule apply to child care centers or after school programs?

A: No, child care centers are exempt from this order.

The New Mexico Department of Health issued an order Thursday, March 12, temporarily prohibiting mass gatherings in New Mexico in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The public health order exempts family gatherings such as weddings or funerals, shelters, retail stores or grocery stores, typical office environments, businesses, courthouses, restaurants and bars, correctional and detention facilities, schools and educational institutions, hospitals, clinics, nursing homes, other health care and **congregate care facilities (e.g. child care centers)**, and places of worship operating during "normal business hours."

Q: The state recognizes that small centers often use Sam's Club for food, janitorial, and office supplies. Sam's is notifying providers they cannot fulfill their standing orders. Can the state require districts to prepare USDA meals for child care centers?

A: The state is currently working with PED and suppliers. For janitorial and office supplies we are gathering information on when supplies are being delivered in our state to help providers. We will have more information soon. PED is working with districts to support programs and providers during this emergency.

Q. Will the state provide ECEC programs with access to cleaning, preventative materials and supplies? Due to the shortage we are running out of these items.

A: We are committed to making sure that child care providers have needed supplies. Please complete the form on www.newmexicokids.org to let us know what supplies you need. We will connect child care providers with suppliers.

Q: Will the state be paying for the cleaning of all licensed childcare centers?

A: No; however, for all children enrolled in the child care assistance program, the state will pay a differential of \$250 per child per month during the health emergency declaration. Please call 1-833-551-0518 if you need support in having your center professionally cleaned.

Q: I am experiencing a staffing shortage as a provider. How can the state help?

A: During the emergency health declaration, the state will accept the online health and safety training located at www.newmexicokids.org as well as ONLINE CPR certifications; the Department of Public Safety has agreed to expedite background checks.

Q: I have a public school employee who would like to help during the emergency health declaration. Will the background check work for CYFD?

A: Staff will have to adhere to the CYFD background check. DPS has offered to expedite background checks during this time. Please contact your local licensing office to discuss the process.

Q: Are verifications continuing during the health emergency?

A: At this time we are suspending verifications. Verifications will resume when the declaration is lifted.

Q: I am a family member who has agreed to take care of children. Can I be compensated?

A: During the emergency health declaration, the state will temporarily register family, friend and neighbor (FFN) providers who will be eligible to receive child care assistance funding. The FFN temporary providers will be required to complete a background check, as will all family members over the age of 18 living in their home. The Department of Public Safety is partnering with CYFD to provide expedited background checks at no cost to the temporary FFN provider. The temporary FFN provider will also be required to complete an online three-hour health and safety training and an online CPR training.

Q: Is there any specific information programs should share with families during the school shutdown?

A: Each provider / community will make a decision based on their individual circumstances. If your program closes temporarily, please notify licensing. When informing parents, please let them know when you plan to reopen.

Q: Can providers turn families away if they have Child Care Assistance?

A: If your program is open during the emergency health declaration and a family has to work AND is eligible for child care assistance, please prioritize those families.

Q: On Friday, the city was out of milk. Will we still receive reimbursement for meals as a participant of CACFP?

A: Yes, please claim all the meals you served to children, we are obtaining a waiver from the USDA for meal patterns so we will not need to disallow meals through CACFP.

Q: How do we handle families that have been out of state?

A. Follow the Guidance on the New Mexico Department of Health website
<https://cv.nmhealth.org/>

Child Care Services Bureau Offices

County	Field Office	Phone Number
Bernalillo	Albuquerque	(505) 841-4801
Sandoval	Rio Rancho	(505) 771-5900
Socorro	Albuquerque	(505) 866-2314
Valencia	Albuquerque	(505) 866-2314 or (505) 866-2315
Torrance	Los Lunas	(505) 866-2315
Cibola	Grants	(505) 285-6673 x1116
Colfax/Harding/Union	Raton	(505) 425-2832 x1301
McKinley	Gallup	(505) 726-8449
Rio Arriba/Los Alamos	Espanola	(505) 753-0222
San Juan	Farmington	(505) 325-0820
San Miguel/Mora	Las Vegas	(505) 425-2832 x1301
Santa Fe	Santa Fe	(505) 476-5440
Taos	Taos	(575) 751-9631
Catron/Grant/Hidalgo	Silver City	(575) 538-0259
Luna	Deming	(575) 546-6557 x1207
Dona Ana Northern Region	Las Cruces	(575) 373-6640
Dona Ana Southern Region	Anthony	(575) 882-7871
Sierra	Anthony	(575) 882-7871
Lincoln/Otero	Alamogordo	(575) 439-1730
Chaves	Roswell	(575) 625-1078
Curry/De Baca/Guadalupe/Quay	Clovis	(575) 742-3950
Eddy	Carlsbad	(575) 628-6141
Lea/Roosevelt	Hobbs	(575) 391-3500