

COVID-19: Child Care Updates

As the COVID-19 crisis evolves, safe child care is increasingly crucial yet difficult to find for workers in essential industries, such as healthcare, emergency response and food service.

As of 3/24/2020, child care operations in North Texas continue to operate. In select counties, including Dallas and Tarrant, providers may only serve children of essential workers.

During this time, it is imperative that those who can work and keep their children at home do so, even if they are in an essential industry. For essential workers that absolutely need care, state agencies and local providers are hard at work to meet demand.

Providing Care for Children of Essential Workers

On 3/24/2020, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) approved a number of changes to its subsidized child care program to make care available for the children of essential workers:

- Provide temporary eligibility to COVID-19 emergency workers, defined as:
 - healthcare and pharmacy;
 - first responders;
 - critical local and state government staff;
 - mail and delivery services;
 - direct care providers, including nursing homes, child care and home healthcare;
 - grocery stores;
 - gas stations;
 - banks;
 - restaurants (take-out and delivery only);
 - military personnel; and
 - any worker otherwise deemed essential by TWC or local workforce boards.
- Establish an income eligibility threshold of 150% of the state's median income.
- Waive requirement for essential workers to document hours to prove employment.
- Provide supplemental funding to local workforce boards to cover missed parent payments and support providers.
- Extend three-month job search period so that unemployed parents do not lose eligibility during the crisis.

On 3/17/2020, TWC authorized children enrolled in the child care subsidy program to accrue additional absences, starting 3/1/2020, without impacting eligibility.

Updated Guidelines for Child Care Providers

On 3/16/2020, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission provided updated guidelines for child care providers sustaining operations:

- Ensure each child is provided individual meals and snacks.
- Limit visitors to staff members, state agency staff, law enforcement officers, enrolled children and the legal guardians of enrolled and present children.
- Require that pickup and drop-off of children occur outside the operation.
- Screen all individuals prior to entry, and deny entry to any person who meets one or more of the following criteria:
 - Records a temperature of 100.4°F or above;
 - Shows signs of a respiratory infection, including cough, fever, sore throat or shortness of breath;
 - Had contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, under investigation for COVID-19, or otherwise ill with a respiratory infection in past 14 days;
 - Travelled internationally to high-risk countries in past 14 days.