

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Program to Provide Free Child Care for Essential Workers Expanded

New categories of essential occupations have been added to the COVID-19 Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance Program that's now available until mid-August.

NASHVILLE – The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) is expanding support for essential workers who are serving their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. All categories of essential workers identified in Governor Bill Lee's [Executive Order 22](#) are now eligible for the COVID-19 Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance Program.

This change makes the program available to essential workers in the financial, religious, utility and hotel industries among others. Existing applicants who fit into one of the expanded categories do not need to apply again, even if they were previously denied or their application is still in process. TDHS is reviewing and reevaluating those previously submitted applications under the expanded employment categories.

Additionally, the program has been expanded to provide payment assistance until mid-August 2020 to help essential employees stay on the job through the summer.

"This program is an example of how our state has prepared for an emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic through sound fiscal management our child care dollars," said TDHS Commissioner Danielle W. Barnes. "Tennessee is in a unique position to support a wide range of essential workers during this time of uncertainty. We're making sure child care is accessible to those who are continuing to serve our communities. Alleviating this burden for so many families is essential as we continue to build a thriving Tennessee."

Applications for the COVID-19 Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance program will be accepted online [here](#). After an essential employee is approved for the program, TDHS will make arrangements to pay for child care at the TDHS licensed or TN Department of Education regulated program where the child is currently served. Regardless of when an application was submitted or approved, the benefit will be effective on the first day of the program, April 15, 2020, if the child was in care at that time.

For those parents whose children are not already receiving care at a licensed program, a list of licensed child care agencies that are open and able to accept children of essential workers is available on the TDHS website [here](#). Once the child is enrolled in care and the essential employee is approved for payment assistance, TDHS will make arrangements to pay for that child care as well.

TDHS expects the number of licensed child care agencies that are open and available for this program to grow over the coming weeks. To support them, the department has posted special

guidance for child care providers [here](#).

As part of the department's support for essential workers previously announced in April, TDHS has also partnered with the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Clubs in Tennessee to provide free child care for school aged children of workers identified in [Executive Order 22](#). The YMCA and Boys and Girls Clubs have established a network of temporary/emergency child care locations across the state. Essential employees with school aged children who need care are now able to register at these locations and access care at no charge during the COVID-19 state of emergency.

A listing of these temporary/emergency care locations is available for the YMCA [here](#) and the Boys & Girls Clubs [here](#). Parents seeking care at these temporary locations, do not need to apply with TDHS first. TDHS will continue to support free child care for school-aged children of essential workers at these temporary/emergency locations until mid- August 2020.

Funding for the COVID-19 Essential Employee Child Care Payment Assistance and other child care programs is provided through the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) that provides funding to state programs that offer assistance to low-income families through subsidized child care, activities and services to improve the quality and availability of child care, and the regulation of child care agencies throughout the state.

Learn more about the Tennessee Department of Human Services at www.tn.gov/humanservices.

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