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## **Applications for Child Care Payment Programs Open Today**

(MADISON) – The Department of Children and Families (DCF) was approved to begin a \$51 million payment program to support Wisconsin’s early care and education community. The funding comes as part of the state’s federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) monies.

“The fact that we are able to provide critical funding for child care providers across Wisconsin is a testament to the positive impact we can have when we work together,” said DCF Secretary Emilie Amundson. “Throughout the process of creating this payment program, we made a concerted effort to incorporate input and advice from early care and education providers and stakeholders, legislative leaders of both parties, and members of the Joint Finance Committee. What we heard along the way was nearly universal desire to help early care educators, and a clear understanding of the critical role child care availability, affordability, and quality plays in a healthy economy.”

The Child Care Counts: COVID-19 Emergency Payment Program is broken into three smaller programs targeted at the most common circumstances early care and education providers are facing in the wake of the public health emergency. The individual payment programs are detailed below and cover the March 12 to May 26 period. The department is issuing payments across three application periods: May 18 to May 29, June 8 to June 19, and June 29 to July 10. Providers are encouraged to apply during all phases and can do so by visiting [the department’s web site](#).

### **Funding to Care for Essential Workforce Families**

This program is designed to support the costs of providing care for essential workforce families. Funds are to be used for paying staff, reimbursing families, or other allowable expenses.

## **Incentive Pay**

The Incentive Pay program provides additional wages for child care providers and individual educators. Funds are required to be used to increase base pay during the State of Emergency for current employees, providers, and individual educators.

## **Support for Temporarily Closed Child Care Programs**

To assist providers who were forced to close, this program helps defray costs associated with retaining staff and reopening child care programs as Wisconsin's workforce returns to work. Funds are required to be used for reopening within 30 days of receiving funding. The money received is required to be used for paying staff, reimbursing families, or other allowable expenses.

A copy of the department's approval letter from the Joint Committee on Finance is available online. The final program reflects a requested change to the department's original proposal that gave the department authority to spend a portion of funds on supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) for child care providers. DCF is still working to secure these items for child care providers who cannot access them locally. To learn more about DCF, visit [www.dcf.wisconsin.gov](http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov) and follow @WisDCF on Twitter and Facebook.

NOTE: The department recently launched an initiative to connect families with local child care, including [an interactive map](#) that displays open, available care and [an application for families](#) in need of child care.

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