

## DCF ORDER 16: Frequently asked questions for child care providers regarding “Safer at Home”

### 1. What does [Governor Evers’ “Safer at Home” order](#) mean for child care providers?

The goal of Safer at Home is to reduce cases of COVID-19 by further restricting non-essential businesses and workers, allowing our health care facilities to properly care for our sick. **Child care teachers, providers, and staff are exempt from this order.** Child care is a critical function in supporting health providers and essential workforce in this crisis. This order also requires providers to prioritize child care for families of health care and essential workers – we provide more detail on this below.

In short, **we are urging you to stay open.** Caring for children during this crisis is essential to the state’s public health response. We understand staying open is a challenging decision to make as individuals and as business owners. The department will continue to advocate for additional support and resources to recognize your efforts during the crisis.

*If your center is currently closed, but you are willing to re-open to serve health care providers and essential workers, please update [Provider Portal](#) and notify your DCF licensor immediately.*

### 2. What does Governor Evers’ “Safer at Home” order mean for child care teachers?

Child care teachers are considered part of the essential workforce. The state requests your continued service for Wisconsin’s essential workforce families. This also means you are on the prioritized list for your children to be eligible for child care.

If you are currently at your existing program, please continue to serve at this location. If your program has already closed but you are willing to provide care to essential workers, please fill out [this survey](#). DCF can then assist in redeploying you to a program that is currently open, to provide in-home care, or to help staff a new emergency center.

### 3. Are early childhood providers restricted in who they are providing care to under this order?

The Safer at Home Order requires providers to prioritize health care and essential workers. DCF has updated the definition of essential workforce to reflect two, tiered priority levels for providers to make that determination.

Practically, this means that when filling slots, providers should prioritize slots for families who fall under the essential workforce definitions. If providers receive additional inquiries on availability from essential workforce families, and DCF cannot find a different placement for that family (please see information on updated child care matching process in the [“COVID-19 Emergency Child Care Authorization Manuals”](#)), providers will be asked to accommodate essential workforce families, which may mean displacing existing families. Providers should prioritize Tier 1 essential workforce over Tier 2, as defined below.

#### **DCF Essential Workforce Definition**

- Tier 1: employees, contractors, and other support staff working in health care;
- Tier 2: employees, contractors, and other staff in vital areas including but not limited to military; long term care; residential care; pharmacies; child care; child welfare; government operations; public safety and critical infrastructure such as sanitation, transportation, utilities,

telecommunications; grocery and food services; supply chain operations; and other sectors as determined by the Secretary of the Department of Children and Families.

**4. How will DCF connect individual child care educators and providers with essential workforce families who need child care?**

Child care for the essential workforce was deemed an essential objective by the State of Wisconsin during the COVID-19 crisis. DCF is the agency lead on the task force to respond to this objective. Our success is dependent on your ability to serve the families of essential workers - and we are committed to supporting and helping you.

To date, DCF has surveyed health care provider parents, child care providers, and educators. From the results of those surveys, DCF has partnered with Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs) and Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) to help connect the healthcare providers who have a need for child care (regulated and in-home options). Today, March 24, DCF is launching updates to our existing applications as well as the development of a new system to more quickly connect the essential workforce with child care.

For DCF, WECA, and SFTA to most effectively match providers with essential workforce families, DCF has updated the Provider Portal to collect additional information. This information includes information like the number of spots available and the type of care you provide. *Please update your information in Provider Portal as soon as possible and in an ongoing basis to notify us if you have spots open or if you are closing during COVID-19.* Provider availability information, coupled with incoming requests from essential workforce families, will be matched with a newly launched Placement Map which tracks available care by county. Staff from WECA and SFTA will be contacting you to match essential workforce families with your available slots.

**5. How should providers verify that families are essential workers?**

Providers should follow the definition of “essential workforce” listed above. Providers should use their best judgement to verify the employment of essential workforce families.

**6. Do child care providers and/or teachers need documentation for employees to carry with them under the Safer at Home order?**

No documentation is required.

**7. If we don't have essential workers needing care, does this mean we should close?**

To meet the growing demand of child care for essential workforce families, we are asking all child care programs to remain open. Per #2 above, providers should prioritize providing care to essential workforce families and follow the two-tiered priority levels. All non-essential workforce families should be keeping their children home to help stop the spread of COVID-19. However, the Department does not encourage you to displace existing slots until you have incoming essential workforce to replace them.

As part of the newly launched system to Provide Emergency Care to the Essential Workforce, DCF along with WECA and SFTA will be directing essential workforce families to available child care in their area.

Additionally, by updating Provider Portal, essential workforce families will be able to proactively contact you to provide care to their family.

If you are unable to keep your program open, we ask that you consider serving as the regulated provider for a new emergency child care center at a hospital or local community organization. If you are interested in serving in that capacity, please contact your local DCF licensor. Additionally, we ask that you identify whether your staff would be willing to serve families at other centers, in-home, or at emergency child care centers by [filling out this survey](#). DCF can then help match them with centers in need of staff.

**8. Is the state opening emergency child care centers?**

Where necessary, yes. The system updates we are making will allow us to better track the supply and demand of child care in real time. This will help us identify where we need to identify local partners to open new, emergency child care centers. Emergency child care centers are required to be licensed by an existing, regulated provider. If you are interested in supporting a new emergency child care center (for example, on-site at a hospital, at a school, or at a community organization), please update your information in the [Provider Portal](#) and notify your DCF licensor.

If you are an individual teacher whose program is closed and are willing to provide care for the essential workforce, [please fill out this survey](#).

**9. Will the state be providing more clear public health guidance for child care programs that choose to stay open?**

More clearly structured guidance and suggestions on public health policies and protocols will be found on the [Department's COVID-19 guidance page](#). Existing guidance covers two scenarios: preparedness and best practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and what to do if you, your staff, your children, or their families encounter COVID-19 or test positive. If you believe you have a positive COVID-19 case related to your facility, please contact your local public health department and your DCF licensor. They will work with you on establishing procedures for closure, cleaning, and reopening.

**10. How are child care providers going to receive the critical supplies they need to stay open?**

If you need immediate supplies and resources, please first check your local community retailers. Supplies are flowing back into Wisconsin regularly. If you still cannot locate what you need, contact 211 Wisconsin. 211 Wisconsin can help connect you with resources in your local community. If you still cannot find what you need, please contact DCF at [dcfmbcovid19@wisconsin.gov](mailto:dcfmbcovid19@wisconsin.gov) and provide your contact information and a general idea of your needs. Additionally, DCF is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to secure supplies in the event of widescale shortages.

**11. If a child care provider is notified of COVID-19 exposure or a positive test for a worker, child, or family member of a worker or a child, how should they proceed?**

DCF will be providing [updated guidance on our website](#). If a provider is notified of exposure, please contact your local public health officials and your DCF licensor. If your center is closing, please notify your licensor and update Provider Portal as soon as possible.

**12. Does the Department have guidance on self-isolation and quarantine for staff, children, and their families?**

DCF will be providing [updated guidance on our website](#).

**13. Is the state going to offer additional resources to compensate the child care workforce who are stepping up in this time of crisis?**

The Administration is actively working with legislative leaders to pursue hazard pay for the child care workforce. We are also working with the federal government to identify any flexibility in existing funding to leverage support for the child care workforce. Providers taking on new, essential workforce families are encouraged to enter into contracts for private pay that fit the identified need for both parties.

**14. What guidance is DCF providing providers regarding closure and payments?**

Providers should follow their individual contracts with families, which include guidelines on payments.