



## VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

### **Virginia Child Care Subsidy Program Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19**

Effective March 18, 2020

Updated May 14, 2020

*(This information will be updated as additional information becomes available.)*

#### **Child Care Subsidy Program FAQs - Families:**

**1. How can essential personnel in need of child care apply for the Child Care Subsidy Program?**

Essential personnel can apply for Child Care Subsidy in two ways, which include [CommonHelp](http://www.commonhelp.virginia.gov/), (<http://www.commonhelp.virginia.gov/>) a web-based app that allows Virginians to screen for eligibility, apply for benefits and services, and obtain other information; or by submitting an application directly to their local department of social services. A listing of all local departments is available from the Virginia Department of Social Services website ([www.dss.virginia.gov](http://www.dss.virginia.gov)) under “Find your local department” on the home page.

**2. How will local departments of social services maintain contact with families should offices “close?”**

In most instances, if a local department is closed to the public, staff remain working either remotely or on site. Families are also encouraged to apply for assistance through [CommonHelp](http://www.commonhelp.virginia.gov/).

**3. Has eligibility criteria for the Subsidy Program changed?**

No. Eligibility criteria remain in place. This information is available on the child care microsite ([www.childcareva.com](http://www.childcareva.com)) or [CommonHelp](http://www.commonhelp.virginia.gov/).

**4. Do I need to participate in a face-to-face interview to apply for Child Care Subsidy services?**

No. The requirement for a face-to-face interview as part of the eligibility determination process for the Child Care Subsidy Program has been temporarily waived.

**5. My school-age child participates in the Child Care Subsidy Program and is approved for only part-day care. While schools are closed, can my child be approved for full-day care?**

Yes. Local departments can authorize a full day of child care for the time public school is not available to children. Parents should communicate their need to their case worker in the local department of social services, who will process the appropriate authorization.

**6. Can siblings of children currently receiving Child Care Subsidy services be authorized during the period of school closure?**

Yes. Children that are eligible for Child Care Subsidy but do not have a current authorization, may receive services during school closure, if needed. This does not apply to children that are currently on the waitlist.

**7. How can I find another child care provider if my provider closes?**

When a Child Care Subsidy vendor closes, families participating in the Child Care Subsidy Program should seek assistance from their case worker at the local department of social services. They can also search for child care on [www.childcareva.com](http://www.childcareva.com), or contact Child Care Aware of Virginia at <http://www.vachildcare.com> or by telephone at 866-481-1913.

(April 15, 2020, Update)

**8. Should I record an absence if I am turned away because I am considered non-essential or because the program has reached maximum capacity under the new guidelines (limit group size to 10)?**

Yes. The Subsidy Program will pay for an absent day not to exceed the number of allowable absences within the fiscal year if the child was authorized and unable to attend for any reason.

If you are considered essential personnel and are turned away due to the program reaching capacity, you may need to find alternate care. In this circumstance, contact your local department when a new program is identified.

\*For purposes of this guidance document, essential personnel are the first-responders, health care workers, and others who help maintain the health, safety, and welfare of the Commonwealth's residents. Examples of essential personnel include:

- Providers of healthcare including, but not limited to, workers at clinics, hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), nursing homes, long-term care and post-acute care facilities, respite houses, designated agencies and emergency medical services;
- Essential government employees, including public health employees and employees who oversee or support all the other functions included in this list;
- Criminal justice personnel including those in law enforcement, courts, and correctional services;
- Police, firefighters, and military;
- Employees who operate shelters or other essential services for adults, children and families;
- Employees who ensure continuity of basic services such as electricity/gas, water, internet, plumbing, sanitation and garbage removal;
  - Employees who ensure essential transportation, including public transportation, trucking and health care-related transportation;
  - Employees who ensure essential food, pharmaceutical and supplies access (e.g., grocery, food bank, feeding programs, drug store, hardware store); and
  - Staff and providers of child care and education services (including custodial and kitchen staff and other support staff) for children of other essential personnel.

Note that these examples are not exhaustive and the definition of essential personnel may evolve as needed to respond to the crisis.

**9. How do I record attendance if I am unable to enter the child care facility to use my VA-ECC card?**

Discuss this issue with your child care provider to decide what works best for both of you. There is a 'Store and Forward' feature on the Point of Service device. This feature offers portability of the device for use outside of the facility. The vendor may choose to use this option to record attendance or submit manual attendance.

**10. Where can I find instructions for recording absent days?**

The *Parent Guide for Recording an Absence from Any Phone* is available at [childcareva.com](http://childcareva.com) on the [COVID-19 response page](#). You may also contact your local department of social services for assistance with recording absences.

**11. Will I receive priority on the Waiting List if I am considered essential personnel?**

Only if the family meets one of the currently prioritized groups.

(April 15, 2020, Update)

**12. Will I need to pay my monthly co-payment?**

Any family with a copayment assessed for the service periods of April, May, and June 2020 will have their copayment obligation temporarily waived.

If the recipient has already paid their April copayment to the vendor, the recipient and child care provider should work together to apply April's copayment to July services, or the provider should consider issuing a reimbursement to the recipient.

(April 15, 2020, Update)

**13. Will the Coronavirus stimulus payment impact my Subsidy case?**

Funds received as a result of the Coronavirus stimulus checks will be disregarded when determining eligibility and family copayments for the Child Care Subsidy Program.

(May 14, 2020, Update)

**14. Will families with a redetermination due in April, May or June have their current eligibility period extended?**

Families with a redetermination due in April, May or June will have their current eligibility period and redetermination date extended for six months. April redeterminations will be due October 31, 2020, May redeterminations will be due November 30, 2020, and June redeterminations will be due December 31, 2020.

A communication form will be mailed to families notifying them of the extension of their redetermination.

**Child Care Subsidy Program FAQs - Providers:**

(May 14, 2020, Update)

**15. What if a child in the Child Care Subsidy Program is quarantined or otherwise unable to attend?**

**Can I be paid for that absence?**

The Child Care Subsidy Program has increased the total number of paid absences to 76, which can be used within the fiscal year. This should allow families the flexibility to use absences when children are not able to attend regularly scheduled days of care. The new absence limit should cover children who may already have used all of the previously allotted 36 absences. The ability to be paid for absences is available to both Level 1 (unlicensed) vendors and Level 2 (licensed and license-equivalent) vendors.

If the vendor has decided not to bill private pay families for absent days, the Subsidy program should not be charged for these days. Vendors should apply comparable payment practices for private pay families and those families who are eligible for Subsidy assistance.

Parents must enter absences for the provider to be paid for the absent day. Parents may use any phone (not just the phone onsite at the provider’s business site) to utilize the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) option to record the absent day. Parents can dial 877-918-2322 to access the IVR option to enter an absence.

**16. What about unexplained absences?**

In a public health crisis, it is more important than ever for parents to be informing providers each day if their children are attending. Providers should work with parents to ensure timely communication of any absences so children can be accounted for and documented correctly. Please ensure that parents understand the importance of communicating about attendance during this time and are clear on their obligation to report all absences.

(May 14, 2020, Update)

**17. Can I receive reimbursement for subsidized children if I temporarily close my program?**

Yes. The Subsidy Program will pay for an absent day if the child was authorized and unable to attend for any reason. Vendors may submit Manual Attendance forms in these instances if the absence is beyond the back-swipe period. Providers reporting a temporary closure related to COVID-19 may submit manual attendance forms to request payment for absent days for the service period of March 18, 2020 through June 30, 2020.

If the vendor has decided not to bill private pay families for absent days, the Subsidy program should not be charged for these days. Vendors must apply comparable payment practices for private pay families and those families who are eligible for Subsidy assistance.

Manual attendance forms will be accepted by email as an Adobe PDF attachment and sent to [vendor.services@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:vendor.services@dss.virginia.gov). Email is the preferred method of receipt.

Manual attendance forms will also be accepted via United States Postal Service mail if you are unable to email the manual attendance. For questions regarding manual attendance, please email [Vendor.Services@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:Vendor.Services@dss.virginia.gov).

**18. How should manual attendance be submitted during the COVID-19 episode?**

Manual attendance forms will be accepted by email as an Adobe PDF attachment and sent to [vendor.services@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:vendor.services@dss.virginia.gov). Email is the preferred method of receipt. Manual attendance forms will also be accepted via United States Postal Service mail if you are unable to email the manual attendance. For questions regarding manual attendance, please email [Vendor.Services@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:Vendor.Services@dss.virginia.gov).

**19. When will additional absent days be available to Level 1 and Level 2 vendors?**

The Subsidy program has made additional absent days available as of March 18, 2020. Absence units have been increased in the system to 76 units for Level 1 and Level 2 child care vendors. Parents should record their absences by calling in absences to 877-918-2322. This number is located on the back of their card. If it is past the 8-day back swipe period, manual attendance can be submitted using the reason code: COVID-19. If a parent is unable to sign the form include: "parent not available" on the signature line.

**20. How do parents record attendance if they are not permitted to enter the child care facility to use their VA-ECC card?**

The Point of Service device has a ‘Store and Forward’ feature, which offers portability of the device for use outside of the facility. The vendor may choose to use this option to record attendance or submit manual attendance.

**21. Will new emergency child care or child watch programs at public school facilities be eligible to participate in the Subsidy program?**

These programs will not be eligible to participate in the Subsidy program.

(April 15, 2020, Update)

**22. Will I need to collect a monthly co-payment from Subsidy families for April, May and June?**

Any family with a copayment assessed for the service periods of April, May, and June 2020 will have their copayment obligation temporarily waived.

If the recipient has already paid their April copayment to the vendor, the recipient and child care provider should work together to apply April's copayment to July services, or the provider should consider issuing a reimbursement to the recipient.

(April 15, 2020, Update)

**23. Are there any incentives available for providers who are trying to remain open during the pandemic?**

Yes. Incentive grants are available to child care providers who remain open to serve children of essential employees. Providers who are open serving essential personnel and want to apply for the new grant program, please find instructions at [www.childcareva.com](http://www.childcareva.com).

(April 15, 2020, Update)

**24. Are any resources available to schools that provide child care in communities where the private market cannot meet the demand?**

Yes. Public schools are encouraged to collaborate with local leaders to plan for and provide emergency child care on an as needed basis for the children of essential employees. Public schools considering offering emergency child care should email [superintendent@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:superintendent@doe.virginia.gov).

**For the latest news and updates related to the Child Care Subsidy Program, please visit [www.childcareva.com](http://www.childcareva.com). If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact your local department of social services.**