



# AMERICAN SAMOA GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN & SOCIAL SERVICES

*“Matagaluega Tautua ma Alagamanuia mo Tagata Lautele”*

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

**GOVERNOR**

*Lemanu P. S. Mauga*

**LT. GOVERNOR**

*Talauega E. V. Ale*

**DIRECTOR**

*Muavaefa'atasi*

*John E. Suisala*

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR**

*Finance & Administration*

*Panisia Neueli*

**DEPUTY DIRECTOR**

*Programs & Services*

*Josephine G. Lutali*

Ellen C. Wheatley, Ph.D.

Acting Director

Office of Child Care

330 C ST SW, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor

Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Wheatley:

As the designated lead agency for the CCDF in American Samoa, the Child Care Division of the Department of Human and Social Services (DHSS), submits this report to inform the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, and the U.S. Congress as to the intended use of our allotted Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) funds to further support child care needs throughout our Territory.

The following are planned activities to be funded by CRRSA resources, organized by the categories specified in the OCC Program Instructions:

**1. Direct Services/ Subsidies**

- A.** Implement a comprehensive social marketing plan to expand parental choice options, with an emphasis on engaging new providers offering nontraditional hours of care to better support essential critical infrastructure (ECI) area workers, intrinsically creating new job opportunities in this struggling economy.
- B.** Double the number of CCDF children (new client participation) served in settings that maintain COVID-conscious operations. We will also continue to waive income eligibility requirements for ECI area workers.
- C.** Increase subsidy rates by at least 50% so providers have access to resources they need to keep up with the demands of providing COVID-conscious care.
- D.** Enhance in-home child care (IHCC), which was expanded due to COVID-19 to include ECI area workers (e.g., health care sector employees, emergency responders, sanitation workers, etc.) because they are subject to a 24/7 work schedule. IHCC subsidies will match the prevailing rates for other providers to equal the subsidies issued per child in those settings or total \$1,000, whichever is greater.

*“Providing the best possible services for the people we serve.”*

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*P.O. Box 997534 ♦ Pago Pago ♦ American Samoa 96799*

*Phone: (684) 633-7506 ♦ Facsimile: (684) 633-7449*

*E-mail: [jsuisala@dhss.as](mailto:jsuisala@dhss.as) (Acting Director)*

*E-mail: [pnueeli@dhss.as](mailto:pnueeli@dhss.as) (Deputy Director)*

*E-mail: [jlutali@dhss.as](mailto:jlutali@dhss.as) (Deputy Director)*

**2. Implementation of Virus Mitigation Policies and Practices**

- A. Facilitate access to resources, supplies, and technical assistance to consistently implement COVID-conscious practices endorsed by the American Samoa Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control.
- B. Reimagine activities, normally conducted in-person (pre-COVID), to align COVID-conscious guidelines, such as the virtualization of health and safety training modules for pre-service orientation, best practices for opening and safely maintaining child care operations, facility inspections. All virtualized capacity-building methods will be available in both the English and Samoan languages and accessible online with a means for tracking participant completion.
- C. Facilitate consistent access to personal protective equipment, cleaning/ disinfecting supplies, and professional services for COVID-19 health and safety.

**3. Grants or Assistance (Other Than Subsidies) to Stabilize Child Care Providers**

- A. Aside from subsidies, additional funding assistance will be issued to providers to supplement staff salaries for the added responsibilities related to COVID-19.
4. We will not be assisting providers that did not participate in the subsidy system before the pandemic because all of the child care facilities operating in the Territory are part of the subsidy system.

**5. Other**

- A. Continue to protect the supply of child care, especially during mandatory shutdowns, as initiated through our CARES initiatives.
- B. Maintain the continuum of care for ECI area workers, enabling their seamless transition from centers/ FCC homes to IHCC in the event of a mandatory shutdown.
- C. In-house and outsourced technical assistance for providers and parents to bolster quality in child care settings, underscoring the importance of COVID-19 health and safety.
- D. Comprehensive data collection, management, and reporting system tailored for the American Samoa Child Care Program and COVID-related programmatic and fiscal activities.
- E. Implement an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) system to streamline and improve the efficiency of getting subsidy funds to providers.
- F. Retrofit lead agency setting for COVID-conscious service delivery.

Finally, the DHSS Child Care Division will amend our CCDF Plan to reflect activities implemented under CRRSA funding that are not currently described in the Plan, within 60 days of implementation. Please feel free to contact me if you should need more information.

/s/

Muavaefa'atasi John E. Suisala  
Director

CC: Paul Noski, Acting Regional Program Manager, Office of Child Care, Region IX  
Kurt B. Gee, Program Specialist, Office of Child Care, Region IX  
Joshua Lee, Program Specialist, Office of Child Care, Region X