



Office of Children and Family Services

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

SHEILA J. POOLE
Commissioner

February 25, 2021

Ellen Wheatley, Ph.D.
Acting Director, Office of Child Care
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Mary E. Switzer Building
330 C Street, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Wheatley:

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is the Lead Agency for the administration of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) in New York State (NYS). As per the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSA) (Public Law 116-260), the following describes NYS's planned use of CCDF CRRSA funds.

Direct Child Care Services (Subsidies)

- ✓ Yes, OCFS plans to use CRRSA funds to provide direct child care subsidy assistance to health care sector employees, emergency responders, sanitation workers, farm and other food service workers, and other workers deemed essential or frontline during the response to coronavirus.

OCFS Plan: Essential Worker Scholarships to support families for 40 weeks covering the child care costs of essential workers (average: \$250/week) for 40 weeks.

Implementation of Virus Mitigation Policies and Practices

- ✓ Yes, OCFS plans to use CRRSA funds to provide resources, supplies, and/or technical assistance to child care providers to support implementation of health and safety practices and policies in line with guidance from State and local health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Grants or Assistance (Other than Subsidies) to Stabilize Child Care Providers

- ✓ Yes, OCFS plans to use CRRSA funds to support the stability of the child care sector to help child care providers (program facilities and workforce) pay for increased operating expenses during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

OCFS Plan: Child Care Business Continuity Grants:

- A base grant for all open providers based on modality ranging from \$2,000 to \$10,000 per program which can be used for increased operating costs, consumable personal protective equipment (PPE), and increased staff requirements.
- An add-on to the grant to at least partially pay for tuition recovery from programs facing decreased enrollment due to COVID-19.

OCFS surveyed more than 10,000 child care providers to determine their biggest concerns, their operating status, and need for PPE. The number one concern identified by programs was decreased enrollment. Going into the pandemic, NYS was facing a considerable child care shortage—wait lists were long, and there was approximately one spot for every six children. However, the survey revealed that providers had about only about 40% of their pre-pandemic enrollment currently enrolled. This lack of enrollment represents an existential

threat to child care programs, which operate with very thin profit margins and are struggling to meet the burden of fixed costs while also facing increased operating costs due to health and safety considerations related to infection control. Child care centers can claim for up to 25 unenrolled slots; group family child care up to 8 slots; and family child care up to 4 slots. These grants will help ensure the continued operation of child care programs, which are vital for NYS's economy.

Assistance to Providers Not Participating in the Subsidy System Prior to the Pandemic

✓ As required in CRRSA, yes, OCFS plans to use a portion of funds appropriated in CRRSA to provide assistance to CCDF-eligible child care providers not participating in the subsidy system prior to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

OCFS Plan: The Child Care Business Continuity Grants will be available to all licensed and registered child care programs in NYS without regard to whether or not they serve subsidized children.

Announcements of funding availability and how to apply will be widespread. Applications will be available in both English and Spanish. OCFS will look to its partners to help get the word out.

The availability of CRRSA funding provides an extraordinary opportunity to support essential workers and other low-income families needing child care, and to strengthen and stabilize what has become an increasingly fragile child care infrastructure so that it can provide the services to children and families that it was designed to do.

We look forward to providing further refinements and updates to our proposed plan as New York turns its attention to the post pandemic recovery and rebuilding phase. We thank you for your support.

Please let us know if you have any questions. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

/s/

Sheila J. Poole
Commissioner

cc: Shonda Laurel, Regional Program Manager, Region II
Audrey Neuhaus, Program Specialist, Region II