

February 23, 2021

Ellen Wheatley, Acting Director of the Office of Child Care  
Office of Child Care  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
Mary E. Switzer Building  
330 C St. SW, 4th floor  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Director Wheatly:

The Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSA) allocated \$10 billion in supplement funding for the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) to prevent, prepare for and respond to coronavirus. The North Dakota Department of Human Services is committed to supporting CCDF eligible families and the child care sector by implementing the activities outlined in this report.

### **Direct Child Care Services (Subsidies)**

The lead agency plans to use CRRSA funds to provide direct child care services to all eligible CCDF families by implementing the following:

1. Co-payments will be eliminated for all CCDF eligible families and all eligible subsidy payments will be authorized and paid based on a child's enrollment in their child care setting, rather than attendance. Eligible payments will be paid up to the maximum payment rate, based on a child's approved level of care that is set by the lead agency. These two efforts combined will help to ensure stable revenue for child care providers and ensures families will be able to afford and maintain their child care. This activity will have an anticipated implementation date of March 1, 2021 and is expected to last through March 31, 2023.
2. Eligibility will be extended at the time of application and review to families who are participating in job search. This change will help support family efforts to re-establish their household's financial stability amidst COVID-19 disruptions. This activity will have an anticipated implementation date of March 1, 2021 and is expected to last through September 30, 2022.

### **Implementation of Virus Mitigation Policies and Practices**

The lead agency plans to use CRRSA funds to provide facility improvement grants to child care providers (licensed, authorized or registered with DHS) who are interested in

making improvements to their facility that would help improve both COVID-indicated and overall health and safety practices. The grants will help child care providers pay for certain facility updates, including touchless faucets, touchless towel dispensers, automatic or touchless door openers, various disinfecting appliances, air purifiers and other improvements that affect indoor air quality.

The facility improvement grant will have an anticipated implementation date of April 1, 2021 and will close by December 31, 2021.

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

The lead agency plans to use CRRSA funds to provide an emergency operating grant to child care providers (licensed, authorized or registered with DHS) who can demonstrate a continued negative impact from COVID-related reductions in enrollment-based revenues of at least 30% for a period of at least 6 months.

The emergency operating grants will have an anticipated implementation date of April 1, 2021 and will be available through March 31, 2022 (estimated).

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

As required in CRRSA, the lead agency 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. This will be accomplished with both of the proposed provider grant programs (i.e., neither is limited only to CCAP providers).

### **Other**

An outreach campaign focusing on health, safety and lifeline workers will be developed encouraging those families to apply for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). The goal of this effort is increased enrollment in CCAP for those families that are deemed essential to COVID-19 efforts.

Please feel free to reach out with any questions or additional clarification you may need. As always, ND appreciates OCC's support in our administration of CCDF programs.

Sincerely,

/s/

Jessica Thomasson  
Executive Policy Director  
ND Department of Human Services