



WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES

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MEMORANDUM

Date: February 25, 2021

To: Ellen Wheatley, Acting Director of the Office of Child Care (OCC)

From: Korin A. Schmidt, Director of the Department of Family Services (DFS) /sl

Subject: Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriation (CRRSA) Wyoming Spending Plan

Ref.: KAS-2021-332

Priority: High

Summary: As part of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplement Act (CRRSA), the Administration of Children and Families awarded \$12,216,624 to the State of Wyoming for assistance with COVID-19 prevention, preparation and response efforts within the child care sector. The notice of award received on February 4, 2021, requires a spending plan be submitted to OCC by February 25, 2021. The following is a summary of the plan that Wyoming has developed for the distribution of the CRRSA funds. The Department will continue to update this plan as additional guidance and information becomes available.

On February 5, 2021, DFS sent a survey to all licensed child care providers requesting input and feedback on the current state of Wyoming's child care sector and ongoing provider needs to support and sustain the severely impacted child care infrastructure. The survey produced 128 responses from the child care community which were used to inform this proposed spending plan. In addition, input was garnered from the Wyoming Early Childhood State Advisory Council.

The CRRSA Program Instruction (PI) provided to state agencies highlights five specific areas to be addressed in the, "Planned Use of CCDF CRRSA Act Funds Report":

1. Direct Child Care Services (Subsidies)

While not specific to essential workers, the Department plans to use CRRSA funds to approve subsidies for eligible clients based on enrollment instead of attendance. This practice proved beneficial during the initial COVID-19 response and was requested by 52% of survey respondents.

The Department is also considering providing child care subsidies for families with shift workers to allow child care during hours of sleep as well as expanding qualified activities eligible for subsidies.

2. Implementation of Virus Mitigation Policies and Practices

The Department is still researching this option.

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

The Department plans to provide a combination of large grants, small grants and one-time stipends to child care facilities in order to support and sustain the Wyoming child care sector.

Large grants will be used to offset revenue shortfalls or increased expenses related to COVID-19 (i.e. payroll for quarantined or substitute staff, tuition payment/reimbursement for families during closure periods, revenue loss due to reduced capacity, facility start-up or moving costs). Grant requirements will be broad in order to allow consideration of specific needs of providers and families. 69% of survey respondents requested large grants.

Small grants will be used for the purchase of PPE or increased operating expenses, such as dishwasher replacement, professional cleaning services, or supplies to assist with social distancing and classroom cohorts. Grant requirements will be broad in order to allow consideration of specific needs of providers and families. 62% of survey respondents requested small grants.

The Department is considering providing stipend payments for facilities to offset the immediate impacts of a COVID-19 closure or reduction in capacity. Stipend payments will act as a supplement while grant applications are being reviewed and processed. 54% of survey respondents requested stipend payments.

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

The target audience for the programs described in #3 of this spending proposal includes both licensed and exempt providers and does not differentiate between providers who accept subsidy payments and those who do not.

5. Other

The Department is exploring options for enhancement of the Wyoming Statewide Training and Resource System (STARS) professional development training registry, background check system and central registry in order to expedite the onboarding process for child care providers and ensure appropriate staffing levels are readily available. The Department also plans to use CRRSA funds to enhance the subsidy eligibility system (Jobs Automated System (JAS)). JAS is a mainframe system and was built in 1992. It is not easily responsive to policy changes due to COVID and is an obstacle when making policy decisions.

The Department will continue to assess the needs and requests of the child care sector and adapt this plan accordingly.

Thank you for allowing DFS the opportunity to continue to support the struggling child care sector. It is our hope and goal that the CRRSA funds will have a profound and prolonged impact towards the sustainability of child care in Wyoming. If you have any questions regarding the above outlined spending proposal, please contact Roxanne O'Connor at roxanne.oconnor2@wyo.gov or (307) 777-6101.

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