

Child Care

NEWS BRIEF



Greetings from your Partners at the Tennessee
Department of Human Services, Child Care
Services Team!

Happy
Holidays

The holiday season is a festive time of celebration, filled with many activities. We hope that your holidays are filled with merriment, laughter, togetherness, and tremendous joy. We also hope that during the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, you are taking time to practice self-care to maintain your overall health and well-being. Wishing you all a very Happy Holiday Season!

This edition of the Child Care Services Newsletter provides new and updated information related Child Care Emergency Grants, HealthCare information for Child Care Educators and TNPAL enhancements. We greatly appreciate our child care provider partners and all that you do for the children and families of Tennessee.

Disaster/Emergency Grants

During this holiday season, the last thing we expect to experience are disasters that

cause devastation and loss. Our state was again impacted by disastrous storms on December 9th that moved through four counties in the Northern Middle region impacting families, businesses, and communities. Our thoughts and deepest sympathy are with those who lost family, friends, and community members.

On December 13, 2023, President Biden approved Montgomery, Dickson, Sumner and Davidson counties under a disaster declaration. With this declaration Federal aid is available to supplement State and local recovery efforts.

“Residents and business owners who sustained losses in the designated areas can begin applying for assistance at www.DisasterAssistance.gov, by calling 800-621-FEMA (3362), or by using the [FEMA App](#). Anyone using a relay service, such as video relay service (VRS), captioned telephone service or others, can give FEMA the number for that service.”

TDHS Child Care Disaster/Emergency Grants

The Department will continue to support our child care provider partners who have experienced damage from the recent storms through Disaster/Emergency grants. Our licensing team has been reaching out to first check on the well-being of providers in these four counties and to gather information on damage sustained. For TDHS licensed child care providers in these designated counties, you will be contacted directly with a link to apply soon.

New - Achieving a State of Healthy Weight

We are excited to share with you some happy news! Tennessee is leading the nation in support of childhood obesity prevention in early care and education settings through our licensing rules and regulations. Based on the 2022 Annual Report on Achieving a State of Healthy Weight by the University of Colorado College of Nursing, recently completed, Tennessee is number 1 based on High-Impact Obesity Prevention Standards (HIOPS). The link to the full report may be accessed [here](#).

When we promulgate new rules, we establish standards that promote the health, safety, development, and overall well-being of children. Several of our child care provider and quality partners have been instrumental in participating in rules revisions and are committed to these same goals. We want to express our gratitude and sincerest thanks to each of you for your work in creating healthy spaces that impact children in your care!

Educator's Corner

Our Educator's Corner highlights resources, tools and tips that support our valued child care early care education workforce in promoting ongoing professional development, retention, and professional career growth.

Did you know that you may qualify for a Health Care Plan?



FIND THE RIGHT PLAN FOR YOU

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKERS

Week of Action



ENROLL IN A MARKETPLACE PLAN AT

Health
Care
.gov

5 Things Consumers Need to Know about Marketplace Open Enrollment:

Key Dates! The Marketplace Open Enrollment at HealthCare.gov runs from **November 1 to January 15**. Consumers who want health coverage starting January 1 should enroll in coverage by December 15. Consumers must enroll by January 15 to have coverage that starts on February 1. Otherwise, consumers will need to qualify for a Special Enrollment Period to enroll in a Marketplace plan.

Coverage is Affordable! Thanks to a new law from 2022, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), more people qualify for help purchasing quality health coverage. If you have looked for health coverage before, it is worth a second look:

- 4 out of 5 HealthCare.gov customers will be able to find a plan for \$10/month or less with financial help.
- With the IRA, millions of people will continue to qualify for tax credits that lower their premiums.

Quality Plans! The Marketplace offers quality, comprehensive health insurance plans that provide coverage for doctor visits, emergency care, behavioral health care, preventive care, hospital care, maternity care, and prescription drugs.

- There are also new plan options that offer similar benefit designs and more pre-deductible services.

Help is Available! Consumers can access Navigators and other assisters in every state on the Marketplace. To find local help go to <https://localhelp.healthcare.gov>.

Sign Up for Coverage! All consumers shopping for health insurance coverage — even those who currently have coverage through the Marketplace — should enroll or re-enroll by logging in to HealthCare.gov or CuidadodeSalud.gov or call 1-800-318-2596 (TTY is 855-889-4325) to fill out an application and enroll in a Marketplace plan. Free help is available 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week, and assistance is available in over 200 languages.

Reminder - Training Information

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) is pleased to share periodic enhancement updates for the Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning (TNPAL). Please see below select highlights of enhancements made to TNPAL with our update release on November 20, 2023.

New Enhancements

- New attestations statements for employee record documentation available to director level users.
- Onscreen help tooltips have been updated or added. *These are accessible when users click a question mark icon.*
- User Guides have been updated.
- Performance improvements and bug fixes

Agency Summary Reports

On November 13, 2023, TDHS introduced the Agency Summary Report available to TNPAL Director and TDHS users.

- Both Individual and Agency Summary Reports will only *temporarily* continue to display the past QRIS cycle of October 1, 2022—September 30, 2023, to better assist TNPAL users with becoming familiar with this new feature.
- TDHS will alert child care programs when the display of the QRIS cycle will be aligned to the current QRIS cycle of October 1, 2023—September 30, 2024.

An additional feature is currently in development to automatically archive past QRIS cycle training reports that can be accessed by TNPAL users. TDHS will alert child care programs when this enhancement becomes available.

TNPAL Guidance and FAQ Available

On October 30, 2023, TDHS issued *TNPAL Guidance and Frequently Asked Questions* which may be found among companion resources at the bottom of the [TNPAL website](#). This guidance document is the result of ongoing collaborative conversations with our licensed child care agency partners, CCDF Quality Child Care Partners, and TDHS staff in articulating training requirements and how they are displayed in TNPAL; and based upon feedback incorporating changes and enhancements designed to improve the user experience.

Important Reminders

TDHS also wishes to take the opportunity to share several important reminders for licensed child care provider directors and educators:

- **Licensing Rules and Regulations preservice training must be completed by all existing child care agency staff before December 31, 2023.** This training is available at [TCCOTS powered by ProSolutions Training](#). This extension was first announced in the September 2023 TDHS Child Care Newsletter.
- Directors must ensure all program staff are affiliated with the licensed program in TNPAL.
- Once affiliated, directors must complete a *one-time verification* for each educator's (1) start date, (2) education records, and (3) credentials/certification records.
- Please Note—Supporting documentation is *required* when adding a new Education or Certification/Credential record. *Training completion certificates should not be added as Certification/Credential records.*
- Directors must request *one-time verifications* from the program's assigned Licensing Consultant.
- Ongoing training requirements renew at the beginning of each QRIS cycle. The current cycle began on October 1, 2023. This was detailed in a TNPAL update emailed to licensed child care agencies on August 1, 2023.

Need Help?

Many different forms of support are available to assist both educators and administrators:

- The TNPAL Help Desk is available 7am to 9pm Central, Monday through Saturday. They may be contacted at support@tnpal.org or (615) 277-1688.
 - If you reach the TNPAL Help Desk voicemail due to increased call activity, please leave a voicemail which will be transcribed and emailed for faster response.
- Additional video tutorials are available at the [TNPAL YouTube Channel](#) featuring topics such as "How to Register."
- Additional trainings as well as guided assistance is available from our partners at [Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network](#) (CCR&R) and [Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance](#) (TECTA).

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