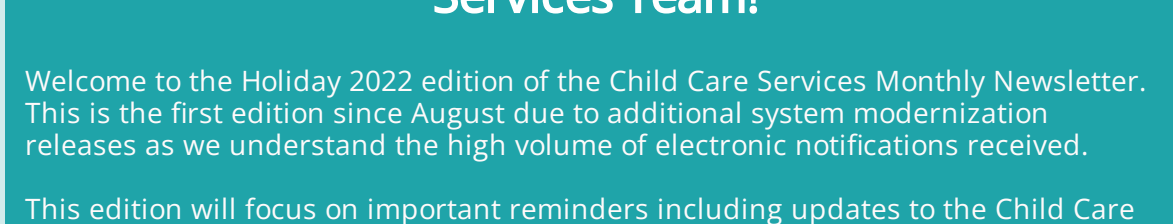




# Child Care

## NEWS BRIEF



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

Welcome to the Holiday 2022 edition of the Child Care Services Monthly Newsletter. This is the first edition since August due to additional system modernization releases as we understand the high volume of electronic notifications received.

This edition will focus on important reminders including updates to the Child Care Certificate Program, status of ARPA Stabilization Grants, systems modernization efforts, as well as information on available resources for educators.

As we are immersed in this joyful holiday season, we want to express our gratitude for all you do, each and every day to support families and children in Tennessee. We are building a strong collaborative partnership with our child care providers, community partners, businesses, local governments and other State agencies to create a thriving early care and education system where every child has an opportunity to thrive, families have access to high quality child care and child care agencies have the tools and resources to support this critical work.

We wish you a safe, healthy, happy and joyous holiday season! As a reminder, our Child Care Newsletters are now posted on our website for your reference: <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/child-care-services/child-care-resources-for-providers/monthly-child-care-newsletters-.html>

### Important Reminder: Waiving of Parent Co-Pays Ends December 31, 2022

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) implemented temporary relief to families participating in the Child Care Certificate program by waiving the parent co-pay fee amounts. As a reminder, the waiving of co-pays ends December 31, 2022. This means that the co-pay amount that appears on the Child Care Certificate for the child(ren) of families approved for child care payment assistance and are enrolled with your agency will be reinstated.

The adjustment for co-pays will be managed through an automated process. We will not be sending updated certificates, as the Certificate issued at time of eligibility will continue to be a record for you as this temporary relief is suspended. We encourage you to notify families who are participating in the Child Care Certificate Program of this change and update the family with the remaining cost difference payment responsibility in order to adhere to the requirements within the provider contract, section C.4.a.

Parent co-pay is different from cost difference. Cost difference is the amount that the agency charges above the State Reimbursement Rates. The co-pay amount is determined at eligibility and is based on income and family size. This co-pay is listed on the Child Care Certificate. This is the amount the Department waived from August 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022.

### Update on Child Care Task Force

The Department remains committed to building strategies to address opportunities for increasing child care capacity based on individual community needs as well as building an early care and education system that is safe, healthy and educationally rich. Our goals within the division of Child Care Services are to increase access, improve quality and strengthen business efficiencies. This commitment and visioning aligns with legislation that was passed in the summer of 2021, as established in [Public Chapter 474](#) to create a child care task force. The task force is tied administratively to the Department of Human Services and is comprised of task force members including the Commissioner of DHS, Commissioners or their designee of several other State agencies including the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, the Department of Economic and Community Development, the Department of Education, the Department of Health as well as a member of the State Senate and House of Representatives, four representatives from the business community and four experienced providers.

**Reminder:** The purpose of the Child Care Task Force is to recommend a strategic plan that addresses the challenges of quality, affordability and accessibility of child care in our state and how we can maximize all available resources to address these challenges including funding streams and collaborative partnerships. The work of the task force will culminate in a report listing recommendations to address the identified challenges that were finalized in the December 15, 2022 meeting. More information can be found on the TDHS website at <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/child-care-services/tennessee-child-care-task-force.html>.

### \*NEW\* 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.

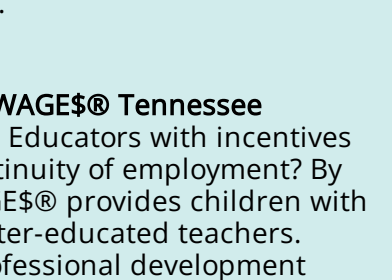


Did you know that the **Child Care WAGES@ Tennessee** program provides Early Childhood Educators with incentives based on their education and continuity of employment? By increasing teacher retention, WAGES@ provides children with more stable relationships and better-educated teachers. WAGES@ addresses individual professional development efforts and low wages, but does not affect budgets, regular wages or parent fees within the child care program. Learn more at <http://www.tnwages.org/>.



**Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA)** supports professionalism in the field of Early Childhood Education to meet the continuing education goals of early childhood educators and child care professionals. TECTA offers a variety of tuition and academic supports for students completing Early Childhood Career and Technical Education programs. TECTA and Tennessee State University also offer the Tennessee Early Childhood Program Administrator Credential (TECPAC), Tennessee Infant-Toddler Credential, specialized orientation courses, and a high school equivalency program. Learn more at <http://www.tecta.info/>

### Update: American Rescue Plan Act Stabilization Grants Information



#### Update on Second Round of Payment Processing for ARPA Grants

The process for distributing ARPA Stabilization Grant funds is complex. In order to ensure state compliance with issuance of payments through the Edison system there are several steps that must be completed. These steps are very thorough for accountability of funds distribution. We ask for your patience during this process to allow for careful review and vetting.

**Round 2: As of December 9, 2022, there have been 1,438 grants distributed totaling \$207,342,542.77. We are continuing to process exceptions when identified. Exceptions occur when information on the award/contract notice does not match information that has been provided to Supplier Maintenance and information in our case management system.**

**Total ARPA Grants distributed from Rounds 1 and 2 as of December 9, 2022 include:**

Round 1: 2,135 grants distributed totaling \$283,622,077.42  
Round 2: 1,438 grants distributed totaling \$207,342,542.77

**Total to Date: 3,573 grants distributed totaling \$490,964,620.19**

#### Reporting and Accountability Post Receipt of Grant Funds

**As a Reminder:** The Tennessee Department of Human Services is administering these funds in collaboration with its consultant HORNE who has a team dedicated to supporting recipients of Tennessee's Child Care Stabilization Grants. HORNE will facilitate the reporting and accountability elements of the grant process. As listed on the application and the grant contract, agencies that are awarded funds are required to report how those funds were used and status of meeting the certifications. HORNE is supporting these requirements by communicating to agencies after funds have been distributed and helping agencies submit the necessary reports and expense verifications.

You will receive an email from the HORNE TN Child Care Stabilization Grant Support Team shortly after receiving your funds. That email will include a copy of the Expense Tracking Workbook. Detailed instructions on how to complete the workbook will be included in the file provided. You should add expenses to this workbook as they are incurred, and expenses should only be added to this workbook if you have documents supporting the expenses in your records.

To help you recognize communications from HORNE, the subject line of all email communications from HORNE will begin with the heading **CC Stabilization Communication**. When you see an email with this heading in the subject line, please review the message and take action in order to meet your grant reporting requirements.

As a reminder, award dollars must be spent on one or more of the below purposes:

- Personnel costs, benefits, premium pay, recruitment, and retention.
- Rent or mortgage payments, utilities, facilities maintenance and improvements, or insurance.
- Personal protective equipment, cleaning and sanitation supplies and services, or training and professional development related to health and safety practices.
- Purchases of, or updates to, equipment and supplies to respond to COVID-19.
- Goods and services necessary to maintain or resume child care services.
- Mental health support for children and employees.

Technical assistance is available to you should you have any questions. If you have any questions, please contact UT SWORPS at [TDHS\\_CCP@utk.edu](mailto:TDHS_CCP@utk.edu) or call the toll-free number at 1-888-883-5514.

An FAQ document has been created to address questions related to the process and may be found at this link: <https://tnchildcarehelpdesk.sworpswebapp.sworps.utk.edu/ccdf-stabilization-grant/>. The most current version is available including updated questions and answers from the Cohort rounds.

We are excited these dollars have been made available to support the very critical work you provide in caring for the children of Tennessee. These funds are to build a stable and sustainable early care and education system for our existing providers, so children will continue to have access to safe, healthy and educationally rich spaces.

### Update: Systems Modernization and Site Support Access

The Tennessee Department of Human Services continues to engage in enhancement activities for the licensing system. Since the system launched on June 27th, we have been in a period of "launch, learn and tweak" as our staff and our customers experience the functionality. During the months of October and November, the Department co-hosted several shadowing sessions with our staff as well as our child care provider partners to observe how the end user utilized the system and to evaluate how we could strengthen their experience.

The most recent updates to our system through Release 7.0 were to improve the Time & Attendance and Administration Process Flows in the Provider and licensing Portals. These updates were the result of the shadowing sessions with child care providers and our staff. A Town Hall for our child care partners was hosted on December 1, 2022 to review these changes.

#### The Provider Portal has been updated to include:

- An updated 'Attendance Summary' screen that includes specific instructions for the various ways time and attendance can be captured.
- An 'Import Attendance' template that is auto-populated with Enrollment ID, Child's First and Last Name, and Check-In/Out Date. To capture attendance data for the week, Providers will simply input Check-In/Out time for each child, then upload the file to the Provider Portal.
- Default absent codes on the EAV Attendance Details screen which will automatically mark children as absent if zero hours have been entered for a particular day. Additionally, weekends will now show as 'closed' and state holidays will now show as 'holiday.'
- The ability for parents or guardians to easily update their electronic pin through the 'Pin Configuration' section of the Mobile App. This reduces the need for parents or guardians to access their account settings through the Consumer Portal Website.

Capturing accurate attendance data is essential to the operation of your agency. These enhancements to the Provider Portal and Mobile App were designed with the goal of streamlining your attendance processes, providing more guidance on the various ways to capture attendance, and making it easier for parents and guardians to access the Mobile App.

#### Learning Resources

We have updated your [Provider Portal User Guide](#) to help you get familiar with these enhancements. Please refer to pages 162-166, 167-169, 172-178, and 214 to understand the new functionality. For a closer, more targeted look at this new functionality, please refer to the following Quick Reference Guides:

[Quick Reference Guide Uploading and Updating Attendance](#) – pgs. 2-9

[Quick Reference Guide Reviewing, Submitting, and Tracking EAVs](#) – pgs. 1-6

[Quick Reference Guide Customer Account Creation, Enrollment Linkage, and Mobile App Check-In and Out](#) – pgs. 8-13, 18-21

[Quick Reference Guide Provider Site User Access](#) – pg. 6

#### Reaching Out to Our Child Care Help Desk Team

Technical support is available Monday to Saturday, between 7:00 AM and 9:00 PM Central Time, to answer any questions regarding the new systems or to aid you through any blockages – simply call us using the toll-free number listed below. This team can also be contacted after hours via voicemail and email.

#### Child Care Help Desk Information

**Purpose:** The TN Child Care Help Desk Team will assist system End Users who encounter questions while navigating the system, experience an incident requiring further assistance, or need general system utilization support.

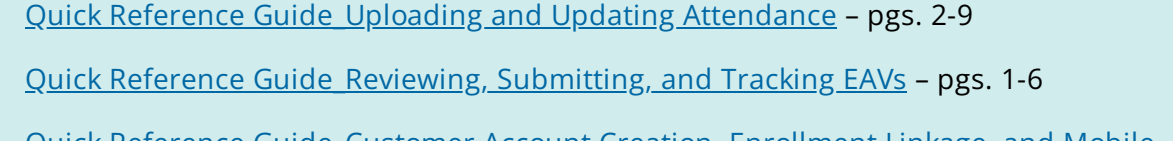
**Hours of Operations:** Monday - Saturday, 7:00 am - 9:00 pm Central

**Toll-Free Number:** 833-TDHS-CCP (833-834-7227)

**Website:** <http://tnchildcarehelpdesk.org>

**Email:** [tdhs\\_ccp@utk.edu](mailto:tdhs_ccp@utk.edu)

We are so excited about these modernized systems and we look forward to continuing to assist you as you navigate the Provider Portal! We encourage you to reach out should you need additional assistance or have experienced any difficulty with the new system technology.



With the roll-out of our new technology supports through our system modernization efforts, we encourage agencies who have technology support needs to apply for this resource. TDHS has developed the "Tech Goes Home" model available to child care agencies that includes the provision of technology devices, coaching and technical assistance on the use of the equipment and how it strengthens business operations. This program is in collaboration with the Child Care Resource and Referral Network and will support child care agencies in modernizing their systems and equipment in order to lessen the administrative burden and allow providers to focus on family/child interactions and delivering quality care.

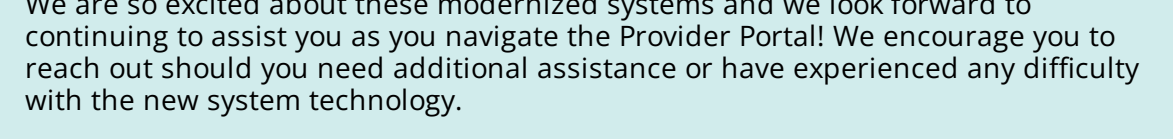
**Tech Goes Home Tennessee** provides free training and one-on-one coaching to reduce the digital divide and support a system of high-quality early care and education for children in Tennessee. The 15-hour training course is designed to teach foundational technical skills, such as email navigation and presentation building, small business technology skills. One-on-one coaching includes training on software that includes word processing, spreadsheets, slideshows, calendar, and email. Upon completion of the training, licensed child care programs may be eligible to receive technology incentives for use by their program staff.

**New module:** Once the Tech Goes Home training has been completed, the director of the agency will be offered the opportunity to participate in another training for the attendance app that will include coaching by the Tech Goes Home Coach and/or the Small Business Support Specialist to help the director complete the initial registration process for using the Attendance Mobile App deployed by the Department. Upon completion of the attendance app training the agency will receive additional device(s) based on the size of the agency and that are compatible with reading the QR code.

As you know, we are engaging in several technology systems modernization projects. Tech Goes Home Tennessee can be a resource for agencies that need technology equipment where parents can electronically sign in/out their children.

For more information and to apply, please visit the CCR&R website <https://techgoeshometn.org/>, as applications for the program are now being accepted. Once on the website, scroll down to the three boxes and the application button is found in the first box on the left.

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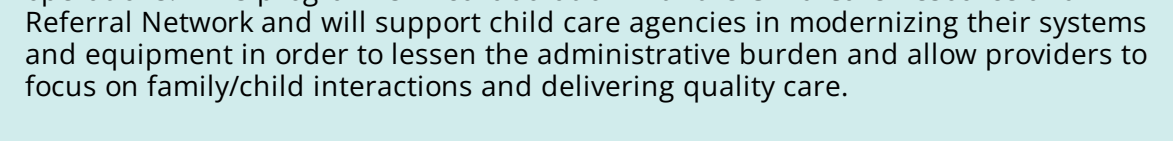


©2020 Tennessee Department of Human Services  
505 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, TN 37243-1403  
[ChildCareServices.DHS@tn.gov](mailto:ChildCareServices.DHS@tn.gov)  
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