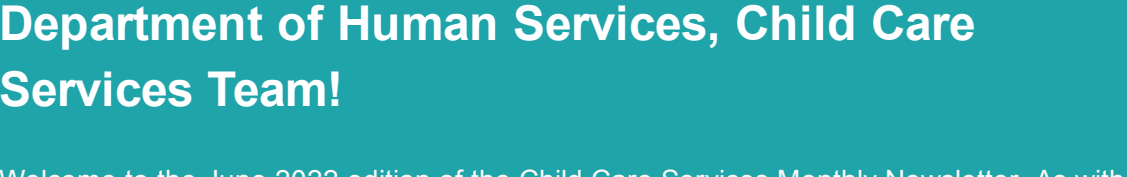


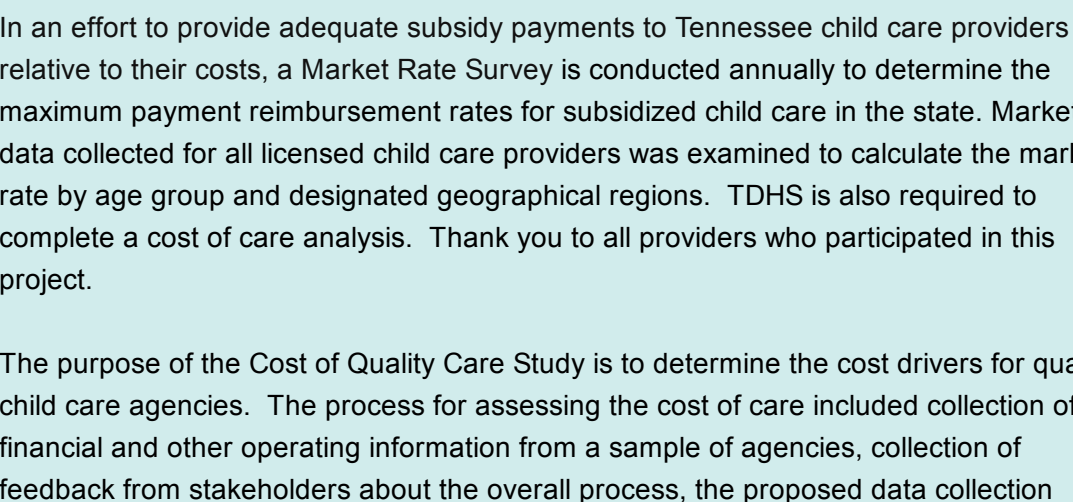
Child Care NEWS BRIEF



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

Welcome to the June 2022 edition of the Child Care Services Monthly Newsletter. As with the blooming of the beautiful spring flowers and new growth on the trees, we continue to grow with our transformation activities. This is a time of change, a time of embracing a future state that creates a thriving early care and education system, where all may thrive, especially Tennessee's children.

This edition will provide updates on the new Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), systems modernization activities, market rate and cost of care surveys, and round 2 of child care stabilization grants. As a reminder, our Child Care Newsletters are now posted on our website for your reference: <https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/families/child-care-services/child-care-resources-for-providers/monthly-child-care-newsletters.html>



Annual Market Rate Survey and Narrow Cost of Care Results

In an effort to provide adequate subsidy payments to Tennessee child care providers relative to their costs, a Market Rate Survey is conducted annually to determine the maximum payment reimbursement rates for subsidized child care in the state. Market rate data collected for all licensed child care providers was examined to calculate the market rate by age group and designated geographical regions. TDHS is also required to complete a cost of care analysis. Thank you to all providers who participated in this project.

The purpose of the Cost of Quality Care Study is to determine the cost drivers for quality child care agencies. The process for assessing the cost of care included collection of financial and other operating information from a sample of agencies, collection of feedback from stakeholders about the overall process, the proposed data collection instruments, as well as feedback about their experience with the child care subsidy program. A short survey was distributed to all providers to collect information on barriers to participation in the subsidy program and required parent fees above the cost of tuition.

We are pleased to share with you the most recent Market Rate Survey for the 2020-2021 reporting period, the Cost of Quality Final Report, and Survey Results available by following the links below.

- [TDHS Reports and Information Webpage \(tn.gov\)](#)
- [2020-2021 Market Rate Survey](#)
- [Cost of Quality Care Final Report](#)
- [Stakeholder Input & Provider Survey Results](#)

QRIS Status Update and Licensing Rules Training

Reminder: For the last 3 years, we have been planning for the redesign of our child care Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). We appreciate all the providers that have attended focus groups and participated in workgroups to inform this new design. Your perspective has been central to the redesign process. Those that attended focus groups last August heard some key elements of the redesign:

- Licensing and quality assessment roles have been merged - completed through staff reorganization in spring 2021.
- Through new role of Licensing Consultant, focus is on monitoring, evaluation, support, and partnership to promote child care environments that are safe, healthy, and educationally rich.
- "Essential Quality Indicators" will serve as the basis for future monitoring including health and safety items, as well as teacher/child interactions.
- Quarterly monitoring visits will provide immediate feedback to providers about areas of strength and those needing improvement.
- The annual quality rating score will be based upon the average of scores across the 4 quarterly visits conducted that year. One single visit/observation will not determine an annual score.

QRIS Redesign Roll-out

- **Training (Training will be delivered by the Child Care Resource & Referral Network)**
 - Child Care Providers in the Pilot counties received training the week of April 11, 2022.
 - Training for providers, statewide is available through CCR & R and may be scheduled through the following link: [Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network \(tnccrr.org\)](#)
- March 31, 2022 - Current QRIS Star Quality Scores were frozen and there will no longer be ongoing "quality" assessments utilizing the Temporary Assessment Instrument.
- The current QRIS evaluation process ended effective March 31, 2022. Any license reviews for expired or expiring license dates before March 31, 2022, that have not been completed during the year will be assessed using the Temporary Assessment Instrument and will have a Report Card Issued based on all component areas.

- **Transition to Full Implementation**
 - May through September (Transition Period) - every agency will have the opportunity to receive one or two monitoring visits on the new Monitoring/Observation tool before the score "officially counts."
 - October 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023 (Full Implementation) - All agencies will receive one visit per quarter utilizing the new Monitoring/Observation tool. At least one of those visits will be unannounced.
 - New Scorecard Posts October 1, 2023 - all agencies will be on the same cycle. Annual Quality Rating (QRIS) Scores for all DHS-licensed agencies will be issued and post at the same time on the same cycle.

Rules Promulgation and Training Information

We are continuing through the licensing rules promulgation process. The notice of filing has been posted and the link is shown below. The rules revisions were approved by the Government Operations Committee of the Legislature in May and will become official as of June 29, 2022. Therefore, your agency will continue to be monitored based on current rules until June 29, 2022.

Rules Hearing Information: https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/rules_filings/03-25-22.pdf

To help you prepare, training will be made available on the new QRIS rules and what is different in current licensure rules the week of June 6, 2022. There are several sessions that are available so you may register for the session that best meets your schedule. These trainings will be delivered virtually, and a recording of the training will be made available on our Child Care Services website shortly after the training for agencies has occurred. The schedule and registration links are listed below.

June 7, 2022 – 9am CST: [Child Care Licensing Rules Session 1](#)

June 7, 2022 – 6pm CST: [Child Care Licensing Rules Session 2](#)

June 8, 2022 – 1pm CST: [Child Care Licensing Rules Session 3](#)

June 9, 2022 – 9am CST: [Child Care Licensing Rules Session 4](#)

June 9, 2022 – 6pm CST: [Child Care Licensing Rules Session 5](#)

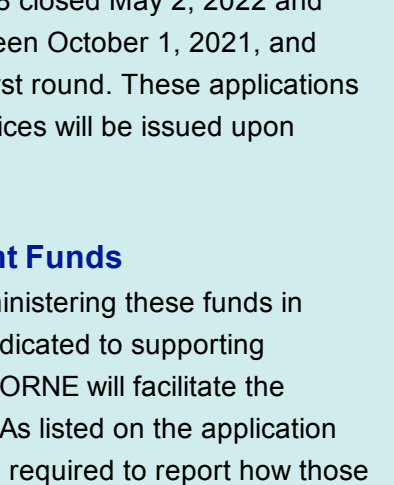
June 10, 2022 – 1pm CST: [Child Care Licensing Rules Session 6](#)

As you click on the link for the session you wish to attend, please follow the registration instructions. After you submit your registration a meeting link will be sent to you for the date and time you selected with details on how to join when it is time.

Update: American Rescue Plan Act Stabilization Grants Information

NEW: Second Round of ARPA Stabilization Grants

We are excited to announce there will be an opportunity to apply for a second round of ARPA stabilization grant funds.



The Department, in partnership with UT-SWORPS will be launching notifications for TDHS Licensed agencies to apply for the grants per the schedule below. The schedule also includes the expected timing for Notices of Award (NOA)/Grant Contracts to be distributed for the related cohorts after applications are reviewed.

Reminder: cohort groupings for TDHS licensed agencies are as follows based upon licensed capacity: Cohort 1 (Center 100+); Cohort 2 (Center 76-100); Cohort 3 (Center 51-75); Cohort 4 (Center 26-50); Cohort 5 (Center up to 25); Cohort 6 (Family/Group).

Cohort	Form	Open	Close
Cohorts 1 & 2	Round 2 Applications	Monday, June 13, 2022	Monday, June 27, 2022
Cohorts 1 & 2	Round 2 NOAs	Wednesday, July 6, 2022	Wednesday, July 13, 2022
Cohorts 3, 4, 5	Round 2 Applications	Monday, July 18, 2022	Monday, August 1, 2022
Cohorts 3, 4, 5	Round 2 NOAs	Wednesday, August 10, 2022	Wednesday, August 17, 2022
Cohort 6	Round 2 Applications	Monday, August 22, 2022	Tuesday, September 6, 2022
Cohort 6	Round 2 NOAs	Wednesday, September 14, 2022	Wednesday, September 22, 2022

The first round of ARPA stabilization grant funding was made available to otherwise eligible applicants that are regulated by the Tennessee Department of Education. The second round of ARPA stabilization grant funding will be made available **only** to TDHS licensed agencies. After the second round applications for all TDHS licensed agencies have been processed fully and funding for those applications is established, TDHS will determine whether round two funding will be made available to eligible TDOE regulated agencies.

Update on Payment Processing for First Round of ARPA Grants

The process for distributing the 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. Payments are in process and distribution began in January.

As of May 23, 2022, there have 1,618 grants distributed totaling \$224,356,099. These are from Cohorts 1 - 7. 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.

The application process for the "clean-up" round for Cohort 8 closed May 2, 2022 and included all new TDHS licensed agencies who opened between October 1, 2021, and March 31, 2022, or agencies who did not apply during the first round. These applications will be vetted for award amounts and the contract/award notices will be issued upon completion of that review.

Reporting and Accountability Post Receipt of Grant Funds

As a Reminder: The 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 or call the tollfree 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

The Department is pleased to announce that the Release 2 Pilot in Davidson County of our e-licensing system successfully launched on May 9, 2022. This phase of our system modernization functionality includes capabilities for our provider partners to manage their child care licenses. You will be able to submit your annual report and accompanying documentation to support continuous licensure, report changes, submit corrective action plans and so much more through your Provider Portal. The second roll-out for Pilot that includes Hawkins and Madison counties is scheduled for June 6, 2022 with statewide roll-out anticipated the last week of June. We are continually exploring how we can improve your customer experience with us.

We understand that with any change, there is a period of adoption. We also fully understand that your days are very full with the critical work you do each and every day in caring for Tennessee's children. We have put in place supports to assist you in learning these new technologies and we are eager to provide additional technical assistance when needed.

Through Release 1, we implemented the new Attendance Tracking capabilities and the ability to submit your EAV through the Provider Portal. We recognize the importance of receiving timely payments and have moved to a more frequent payment process to support your operations. If you submit your EAV by 6:00 pm Central Time each Monday for the prior week's cycle of Sunday through Saturday, you will receive payment the following week. By adhering to this schedule, reimbursement through the Child Care Certificate program will be a weekly cycle.

We encourage you to reach out should you need additional assistance or have experienced any difficulty with the new system technology.

Modernization Project Help Resources

Are you a Child Care or Adult Day Services Providers who needs assistance? Our team is here to help!

TDHS Fiscal Assistance

If you have made a mistake on an EAV, submitted an EAV more than 2 weeks ago and have yet to be paid, or have other payment related questions, please call the **TDHS Fiscal Hotline at 1 (800) 362-8004**.

TDHS Customer Assistance

If your customers have questions regarding their Customer Mobile App or Customer Portal, please refer them to our TDHS Customer Hotline at 1 (615) 313-4700.

TDHS Licensing Consultant Assistance

If you have a question about your Child Care Provider report card, upcoming monitoring observation visits, or have questions about your licensing requirements, please reach out to your Licensing Consultant. If you do not know who your licensing consultant is, please email FaShara Marshall at fashara_marshall@tn.gov.

TDHS Provider Portal and Mobile App Site Support

If you have a question about your Provider Portal Account or Mobile App, please call our Site Support Team using the Zoom information below. Our team is available Monday through Friday between 8:00 AM and 5:00 PM Central Time to answer any questions you have on our new systems. Simply join our Zoom link below or call us using the Dial-In Number, Meeting ID, and Password.

- Zoom Link: <https://deloitte.zoom.us/j/92094735246?pwd=RDNWnNjQUVnSHpOR2ZMV3pZQ2IxUT09>
- Dial-In#: 1+646-518-9805 or 1+720-928-9299
- Meeting ID: 920 9473 5246
- Password: 863180

Tech Goes Home

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 new resource. TDHS deployed the "Tech Goes Home" model available to child care agencies that includes the provision of technology devices, coaching and TA 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 technical 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 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 TN 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/>.

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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505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243-1403

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