

Child Care

NEWS BRIEF



Child Care Services Newsletter

November 2021

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

Welcome to the November 2021 edition of the Child Care Services Monthly Newsletter. This edition of the newsletter is arriving just in time to kick off the holiday season. As we quickly approach the Thanksgiving holiday it is an opportunity to state how thankful we are for you, our child care provider and community partners. This edition includes information on how to access health care coverage during the open enrollment period of November 1, 2021 through January 15, 2022. We have received updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control to share, additional information on the distribution of funds through the ARPA Stabilization Grants, updates for Tech Goes Home and TNPAL. Our Child Care Newsletters are now posted and available 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>. We wish each of you an abundant holiday!

Health Care Coverage Information for ECE Workforce Educators

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Week of Action — The Administration for Children and Families is partnering with CMS to help the early childhood workforce access health coverage during the Open Enrollment period for Marketplace coverage, which started on November 1. Starting on November 14th, the Week of Action will raise awareness among the early childhood workforce about how to access health coverage and connect with navigators and assisters.

It is important to ensure that every early childhood educator has access to affordable health care coverage, particularly those who are on the front lines serving children, families, and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we know that the early childhood workforce is two times less likely to have health care coverage or to receive employer-sponsored health care coverage than the general population. Benefits are a critical piece of compensation, and as we continue to work to improve compensation for the workforce, it is essential to include health care coverage.

For more information about the Health Insurance Marketplace, click on this link: [What Do Early Childhood Educators Need to Know About the Marketplace? \(cms.gov\)](https://www.cms.gov/medicare/health-care-providers/health-care-plans/what-do-early-childhood-educators-need-to-know-about-the-marketplace)

Open Enrollment runs from November 1, 2021 – January 15, 2022. Enroll by December 15, 2021, for coverage starting on January 1, 2022. Take a few easy steps now. Get a checklist to prepare for enrollment at [11896 - Getting Ready to Apply Checklist \(healthcare.gov\)](https://www.healthcare.gov/healthcare-getting-ready-to-apply-checklist)

UPDATE: COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs

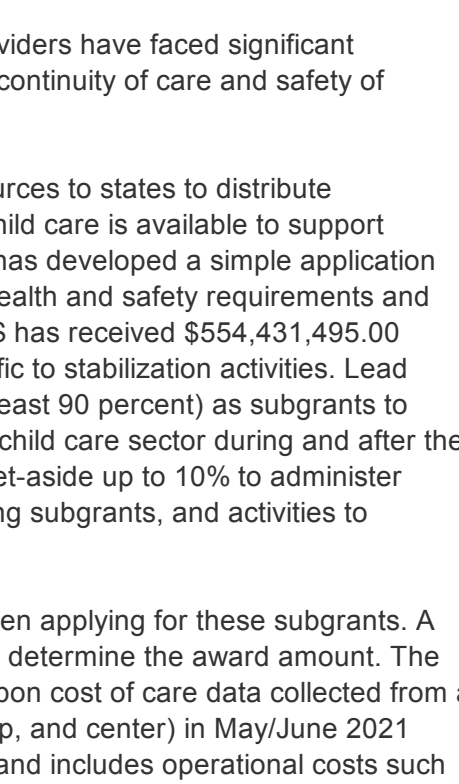
The Administration for Child and Families Office of Child Care has shared with states updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We encourage you to follow this guidance to the extent practicable to facilitate environments that maintain the health and safety of children.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated its [COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs](https://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/pdfs/50/11/21-1101.pdf). Updates to the guidance emphasize the importance of universal masking for everyone ages 2 and older, regardless of vaccination status. Additionally, this guidance provides more information on screening testing and updated guidance for fully vaccinated staff. Early care and education (ECE) programs can promote vaccinations among staff and families, including pregnant women, by providing information about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccination, encouraging vaccine trust and confidence, and establishing supportive policies and practices.

The updated version of the guidance outlines strategies for ECE programs to implement to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to maintain safer operations. ECE programs include child care centers, home-based and family child care programs, Head Start programs, and other prekindergarten programs.

Although fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared with adults during the pandemic, children can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, get sick, and spread the virus to others. CDC's [science brief on transmission in schools](https://www.cdc.gov/eid/content/pdfs/50/11/21-1101.pdf) includes scientific evidence about the spread of the virus among children and in school and ECE settings.

UPDATE: American Rescue Plan Act Stabilization Grant Information



There have been several inquiries related to the ARPA Stabilization Grants and application/award process. Applications from the first two Cohorts are currently routing through the vetting process. The next step will be sending out the award notifications. We anticipate the award notifications for Cohorts 1 and 2 will be sent by our partners at UT-SWORPS by December 3rd and Cohort 3 by December 10th. When you receive your award notification, you will have five (5) business days to return the signed award notice and our plan is to distribute funds within thirty to forty-five days after receiving your signed award notice document.

Below is a reminder of the purpose, the process, how to access technical support and the links to all available resources to assist you throughout this process.

Purpose of the Stabilization Grants-Reminder

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, child care providers have faced significant challenges such as increased operational costs to ensure continuity of care and safety of children and staff.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has provided resources to states to distribute stabilization grants to child care providers to ensure that child care is available to support families and businesses as the economy recovers. TDHS has developed a simple application that will be available to all child care providers who meet health and safety requirements and other eligibility requirements as defined in the ARPA. TDHS has received \$554,431,495.00 designated American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds specific to stabilization activities. Lead agencies (TDHS) must spend most stabilization funds (at least 90 percent) as subgrants to qualified child care providers to support the stability of the child care sector during and after the COVID-19 public health emergency. Lead agencies may set-aside up to 10% to administer funds, provide TA and Support in applying for and accessing subgrants, and activities to increase supply of child care.

We built a process to minimize the burden on agencies when applying for these subgrants. A formula based on an average cost per child will be used to determine the award amount. The calculations for the base grant award amount are based upon cost of care data collected from a sample of TDHS-licensed child care agencies (family, group, and center) in May/June 2021 completed by our partners at the University of Tennessee and includes operational costs such as rent/mortgage, personnel costs including salaries and benefits, food and educational supplies, training and professional development, general liability insurance, and transportation expenses. Using this cost estimate model avoids placing the burden on each agency to collect and produce individualized financial materials as part of their application.

The purpose of these grants is to provide you relief for operational expenditures for a three-month period to allow you the opportunity to build revenue for ongoing sustainability. Because of this operations support, we encourage you to assist struggling families with child care costs to promote continuity of care.

The Application Process and Distribution Structure

1. The grant application process will be supported through the University of Tennessee Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (UT-SWORPS).

The total amount each child care agency may apply for varies depending on their size and licensed capacity. These grants will provide hundreds of dollars monthly for each child the agency can serve to cover a three-month grant period. 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.

2. There are additional incentives included in the potential grant award amounts.

- Agencies who are contracted to participate in the Child Care Certificate Program, as of October 1, 2021, are eligible for a 10% bonus calculated on the base award amount.
- A 10% bonus on the base award amount is also provided for agencies operating in communities scoring .6 or above on the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI). For more information about the SVI, please visit [CDC/ATSDR SVI Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) | Place and Health | ATSDR](https://www.cdc.gov/atsdr/svi/frequently-asked-questions)
- Child Care Agencies including administrators, educators, and support staff went above and beyond throughout the pandemic in providing safe and healthy environments for children. You are our heroes, and we want to recognize your hard work and dedication to serving families and children within your communities by providing the opportunity to apply for **Staff Retention Awards**, a one-time payment of \$1000 for part-time staff or \$2000 for full-time staff.

3. Over the next three months, all TDHS licensed child care agencies, will receive a direct email notification with an individualized link to an application template based upon the agency's licensed capacity.

This will allow for a more efficient process to manage quick and accurate application review and minimize the burden on child care agencies who want to apply. The projected timeframe for notifications to be distributed and applications to be submitted is listed below.

Cohort 1: (Center (100+))
Date Invitation Is Extended: October 5, 2021
Closing Date: October 18, 2021 11:59 pm CST

Cohort 2: Center (76-100)
Date Invitation Is Extended: October 19, 2021
Closing Date: November 1, 2021 11:59 pm CST

Cohort 3: Center (51-75)
Date Invitation Is Extended: November 2, 2021
Closing Date: November 15, 2021 11:59 pm CST

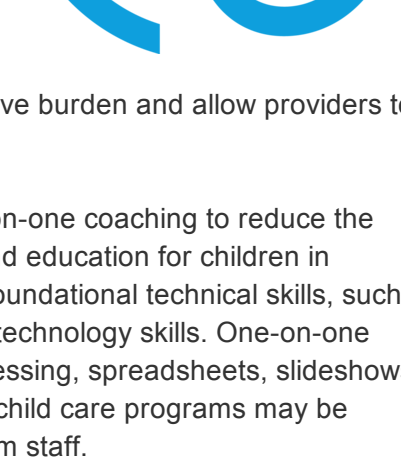
Cohort 4: Center (26-50)
Date Invitation Is Extended: November 16, 2021
Closing Date: December 1, 2021 11:59 pm CST

Cohort 5: Center (up to 25)
Date Invitation Is Extended: November 16, 2021
Closing Date: December 1, 2021 11:59 pm CST

Cohort 6: Family/Group
Date Invitation Is Extended: December 2, 2021
Closing Date: December 15, 2021 11:59 pm CST

UPDATE - Tech Goes Home

The Application Link is Now Live



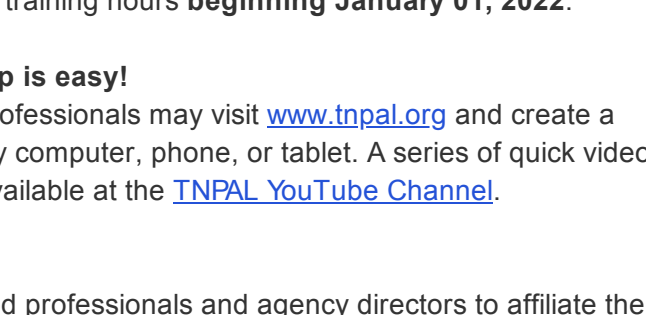
In October 2021, TDHS deployed the "Tech Goes Home" model available to child care agencies that includes the provision of technology devices, coaching and technical assistance on the use of the model and how it strengthens business operations. This program is in collaboration with the Child Care Resource 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, presentation building, and 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.

As you have seen in earlier newsletters, we are engaging in several technology systems modernization projects. We expect to pilot the new electronic attendance tracking system in January (Davidson, Hawkins, & Madison Counties) and for the system to be available statewide in late February. 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/> as applications for the program are now being accepted with trainings to begin in December. Once on the website, scroll down to the three boxes and the application button is found in the first box on the left.

Update: TNPAL



The Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning (TNPAL), launched by the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) as a free online resource to better support professional development for early childhood professionals working in TDHS-licensed child care agencies, continues to celebrate more milestones with over 16,000 registered users!

This single web-based portal is designed to collect and preserve completed trainings, accomplishments, credentials, education, certifications, and awards. These features and functions empower not only early childhood professionals but also support verification by directors and TDHS. As a reminder, TNPAL will become the Department's system of record for capturing staff qualifications and completed training hours **beginning January 01, 2022**.

Don't have a TNPAL account? Signing up is easy!
 TNPAL is waiting for you! Early childhood professionals may visit www.tnpal.org and create a TNPAL account using a web browser on any computer, phone, or tablet. A series of quick video tutorials, including "How to Register", are available at the [TNPAL YouTube Channel](https://www.tnpal.org).

It's equally important for both early childhood professionals and agency directors to affiliate their TNPAL user accounts with their TDHS-licensed child care agency. This association enables training and qualifications verification and promotes continuing professional development. Early childhood professionals who haven't requested association during the registration should login to TNPAL to complete this step.

Agency directors, please remember to acknowledge these associations for your agency's early childhood professionals to utilize the full potential of TNPAL.

Want to dive deeper? Learn more from the Lean Into You podcast.
 Earlier this year, CCR&R highlighted TNPAL in an episode of its Lean Into You podcast. Entitled "Level Up Your Professional Development with TNPAL", the episode featuring Lisa Walsh, Registry and Training manager with TECTA, may be found online by clicking the URL below. This is a great resource to share with your staff and educators: [Lean Into You: Level Up Your Professional Development With TNPAL](https://www.tn.gov/humanservices/for-families/child-care-services/child-care-resources-for-providers/monthly-child-care-newsletters.html)

Please remember: TNPAL will become the Department's system of record for capturing staff qualifications and completed training hours **beginning January 1, 2022**.

TDHS is committed to promoting early childhood environments that are safe, healthy, and educationally rich. Thank you for offering Tennessee families learning opportunities and environments that will help their children thrive.

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