

Child Care

NEWS BRIEF



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

Welcome to the July/August 2022 edition of the Child Care Services Monthly Newsletter. It has been a hot, hot summer and we hope that all are staying safe. As the heat of summer continues, the theme for this newsletter is "hot" with activity. This edition will provide updates on the Child Care Task Force, transition status of the new QRIS, update for site support, recent rate increases and co-pay relief for families, as well as an update on 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/for-families/child-care-services/child-care-resources-for-providers/monthly-child-care-newsletters-.html>

Update and Request - Child Care Task Force

The Department remains committed to building strategies to address the 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 Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) and is comprised of task force members including the TDHS Commissioner, 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 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.

Request - The State of Tennessee is seeking feedback from the public on the [Tennessee Child Care Task Force's](#) Interim Progress Report, and, in particular, your thoughts on child care access, child care affordability, child care quality, and child care governance/regulation. A copy of Interim Progress Report and an online form to collect feedback can be found on the TDHS website, [here](#). Please give us your feedback and share this link with the families you serve and others who care about child care in Tennessee.

The public's comments will help inform the work of the Tennessee Child Care Task Force, as established in [Public Chapter 474](#).

Responses will be accepted until **4:30 pm CT on Wednesday, August 31, 2022**.

QRIS Status Update

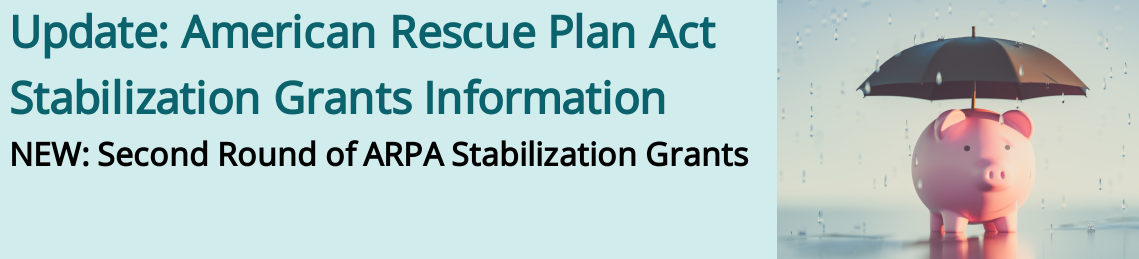
Reminder: For the last 3 years, we have been planning the redesign of our child care Quality Rating Improvement System (QRIS). We appreciate all the providers that have attended focus groups and participated in workgroups to inform this new design. Your perspective has been central to the redesign process.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

Transition Period

With the passage of new licensing rules, implementation of the new licensing system/provider portal and new monitoring/evaluation tool, the Department will continue to allow for a transition period between July 1, 2022 and September 30, 2022.

This transition period will give the opportunity for all licensed child care agencies to be monitored/evaluated using the new tool and see their respective scores. These scores will not count during this transition period. The Department will begin full implementation of the new QRIS October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023, with the first scores posting October 1, 2023.



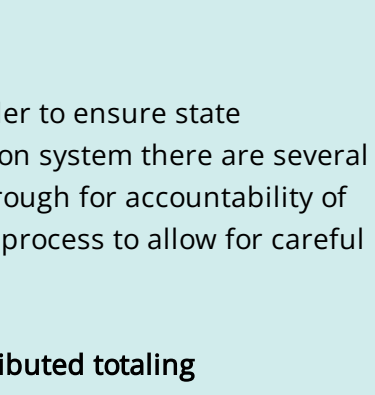
Partnering with Parents

As child care providers, you all know how important it is to partner with parents to engage them in understanding and supporting their child's health, safety, and development. An important part of this partnership is encouraging parents to see your space and get to know the educator who is caring for their child.

We appreciate how hard child care agencies have been working to limit exposure of children and staff to COVID. We encourage all agencies to balance these protections and protocols with the importance of strong parents connections. Parents can better support their child's development when they fully understand the child care environment, routines, and teaching practices used at the child care agency.

Update: American Rescue Plan Act Stabilization Grants Information

NEW: Second Round of ARPA Stabilization Grants



We have launched a second-round opportunity for ARPA stabilization grant funds. The Department in partnership with UT-SWORPS began issuing 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.

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, 8	Round 2 Applications	Monday, August 22, 2022	Tuesday, September 6, 2022
Cohort 6, 8	Round 2 NOAs	Wednesday, September 14, 2022	Wednesday, September 22, 2022

Please Note: We will provide a second round of applications for TN Department of Education (Cohort 8) regulated agencies that meet eligibility requirements on Monday, August 22, 2022, with the notice of application set to begin at that time.

Update on Payment Processing for 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.

As of August 5, 2022, there have been 2,093 grants distributed totaling \$277,127,616.33. These are from Cohorts 1 through 9. 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.

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 funds are required to the application and the grant contract, agencies that are awarded listed on the 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.

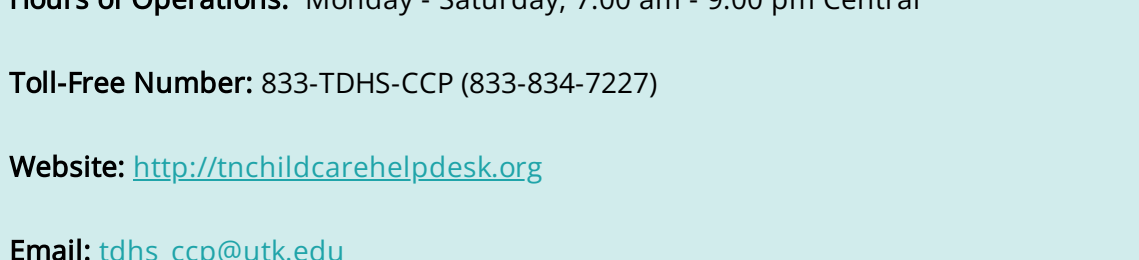
As a reminder, award dollars must be spent on one or more of the below purposes:

- 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 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 Department is pleased to announce that our licensing system successfully rolled-out statewide on June 27th. All providers are now able to manage their licenses, report changes, submit corrective action plans and so much more through your provider portal. We will continue to explore how we can improve your customer experience with us. We are scheduling a series of enhancements and will communicate with you any system functionality that will directly impact your user experience, as these become available.

Site Support is now the TN Child Care Help Desk!

We are excited to announce that on August 15th, our Site Support Team will become the TN Child Care Help Desk! This team will offer all the same assistance to provide as our Site Support team as well as extended hours and additional ways to interact as you continue to use our new modernized systems.

Accessing Resource Materials Available to You

As a reminder, we have created a wide variety of materials to help you continue to learn and utilize our new systems. On the [TDHS Website's Modernization Project Resources Page](#), you can find materials including replays of our Provider Townhalls, Quick Reference Guides, our Provider Portal User Guide, How-To Videos, and past *Modernization Monthly* Newsletters. We encourage you to review these materials as needed.

Reaching Out to Our Child Care Help Desk Team

Beginning on August 15th, our team will be 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

Support: 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

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.

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 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 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/> 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.

Reminder: Overall Rate Increase and Waiving of Parent Co-Pays

The Department is continuing to implement strategies that support our overall goal of improving quality and increasing access. Additionally, we want to remain sensitive to recent economic events and increased costs for basic needs that greatly impact families. Beginning August 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022, we will provide temporary relief to families participating in the Child Care Certificate Program by waiving the parent co-pay fee amounts. This means that providers will be paid the full state reimbursement rate beginning August 1st.

The parent co-pay amount is located on the Child Care Certificate for the child(ren) of families approved for child care payment assistance and are enrolled with your agency. This is not a new category of care. This is intended to provide temporary relief to families who meet the eligibility criteria for our routine payment assistance programs and have been approved to receive child care payment support. The eligibility dates for the approved family are located on the Child Care Certificate.

The adjustment for co-pays will be managed through an automated process. We will not be sending updated certificates with the co-pay removed, as this will continue to be a record for you when this temporary relief is suspended. We encourage you to notify families who are participating in the Child Care Certificate Program of any 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 is waiving so that we are paying up to the State Reimbursement Rates.

The recent actions of increasing reimbursement rates and waiving co-pays are in direct response to rising costs faced by families and child care providers. As a reminder, the new Child Care Reimbursement Rates that became effective July 1st may be found [here](#).

Follow @TNHumanServices

©2020 Tennessee Department of Human Services
505 Deaderick Street
Nashville, TN 37243-1403
ChildCareServices.DHS@tn.gov
[Find Your Local Office.](#)
[Edit Email Settings](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)

Update your preferences | [Learn more](#) | [Using TrueRemove™](#)
Got this as a forward? [Click here](#) to receive our future emails.
View this email in your browser.

505 Deaderick Street, 17th Floor | Nashville, TN 37243 US

This email was sent to .
To continue receiving our emails, add us to your address book.

[Subscribe](#) to our email list.