

Our Recommendations for Supporting Young Children, Families, and Child Care Providers

On Tuesday, March 17th, a group of more than a dozen providers and advocates from across Ohio sent recommendations to State administrators offering suggestions on how to assist child care programs in this unprecedented health crisis, with a special emphasis on how we'll ensure that doctors, nurses, first responders and others like them can be on the job. Below are our recommendations for the State to best support children, families, child care programs, and communities.

Here are 10 things we need to do now:

- We must promise families notice if child care programs are ordered to close — they need 48-72 hours to come up with a Plan B.
- We need to create “Critical Child Care” sites for essential workers at existing child care programs. They have the resources and expertise.
- Any person who meets the definition of an essential worker should automatically qualify for free child care, paid for by state funding.
- Child care workers must be fairly compensated, especially considering the risk they're taking. The \$11/per hour average wage is not nearly enough — and should be raised by at least 50%.
- We must allow alternative facilities such as rec centers and libraries to serve as temporary child care sites, especially for school age children, and be mindful of the fact that our youngest children (infants, toddlers and preschoolers) require age-appropriate equipment and resources
- Family child care providers must be allowed to continue to operate; these providers often care for our youngest children, and they typically serve small numbers of children (which can limit exposure and transmission of Covid-19).
- We must take advantage of alternative facilities such as rec centers and libraries as possible child care sites.
- We must ensure providers have ready access to protective gear, cleaning supplies, toilet paper, and food for children.
- We need to call on college students and other younger, lower-risk people to work in the designated Critical Child Care sites even if they do not have the normally required paperwork and background checks.
- We need to ensure the Critical Child Care sites have sufficient funding to operate through the pandemic — even if only a few children attend on a given day. The number of families who need care is going to vacillate as circumstances change.

This is a long list of needs and recommendations, but our most critical workers can't keep Ohioans safe if we don't assure them that their children will be well cared for. We will keep you informed as we hear of decisions made by State leaders.