

Family Fees for Child Care During COVID-19

The COVID-19 public health emergency is an unprecedented time for families and child care providers. In the interest of public health, many programs have closed. To support essential workers, many programs remain open as well.

- Child care businesses are at risk of permanent closure if they do not collect any revenue. Even when a family fee is not paid, the program/ provider's expenses continue. Personnel costs, rent, utilities, insurance, equipment, materials, supplies, etc. must still be paid. During this emergency, the absence of income from family fees may mean that some programs will not be able to stay in business providing child care services.
- Families' budget are strained as many face unemployment or reduced income.

Licensed providers are required to have policies in place and specified fee arrangements, which may be provided to families within a contract or policy manual. These established policies may describe how providers collect fees when a child is absent, a family experiences a financial hardship, or enrollment is withdrawn or postponed. A lack of payment may result in families losing their child care space. Providers are encouraged to have a hardship policy stating the circumstances that allow for a reduction or waiver of family fees, and the impact of such a waiver on continued enrollment in the program.

What is OEC doing to support child care businesses during this time?

The Office of Early Childhood has committed funding to subsidize providers per memo #13 through June 30, 2020. OEC will continue to provide policy guidance and look for ways to ensure program stability so that child care programs and providers remain viable during and after the COVID-19 emergency.

OEC encourages families and providers to work together at this time to resolve issues of tuition payment. Open dialogue between providers and parents is important when having these difficult conversations.

Tips:

- Recognize the difficult situation that both parties are experiencing.
- Refer to existing policies or agreements.
- Offer an opportunity for both parties to share the impact that this public health emergency is having on them.
- Discuss both the short term situation and the longer term impact of changes in program operation and fee payments
- Consider other sources of funding that might be able to support either families or providers during this public health emergency.
- Show caring and compassion.
- Consider the needs of the child(ren) during the discussion and work to maintain a positive relationship.