

# Child Care Providers COVID-19 Informational Webinar Q&A

## WA Compass Reporting

**Q: Who was involved in deciding to mandate that providers report capacity? Why were provider feedback groups not consulted?**

A: In the state-wide emergency situation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in alignment with the state-wide county-based recovery plans and in consideration of the child care services available for first responders, essential workers, and as other industries come back, the Department has an authority and responsibility to provide the state real-time openings and supply data to serve communities state-wide.

**Q: The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 110-300-0016A and 110-305-1525A were “emergency enacted.” How do these WACs provide a safer environment for children?**

A: These requirements’ purpose is to ensure accessibility to safe and healthy quality child care services for the children whose parents are first responders, essential workers, and part of the Safe Start phased reopening industry workers.

**Q: What does DCYF hope to gain by requiring providers to report vacancies?**

A: The data is being used to ensure accessibility to safe and healthy quality child care services for the children whose parents are first responders, essential workers, and part of the Safe Start phased reopening industry workers. Available slots will show up on [Child Care Check](#) so that if families are searching for child care, they will know if a provider is reporting current openings.

**Q: Is this mandatory for all Early Learning Programs? Example: Are programs who do not receive subsidy or not receiving state money required to report?**

A: This is for all licensed child care programs to ensure accessibility to safe and healthy quality child care services for the children whose parents are first responders, essential workers, and part of the Safe Start phased reopening industry workers.

**Q: Do you want enrollments or attendance?**

A: DCYF realizes that enrollment and attendance are changing frequently. The request is that you report open slots that you are willing and able to fill.



**Q: The slots is total amount and then there are checkboxes for ages. How do we notate specific spots available for specific ages?**

**A:** You do not need to notate specific spots for specific age groups. Some providers may have slots that could be filled by a range of age groups and so the expectation is that you report the total number of available slots and also report which age groups for which you have available slots. If you fill some slots and in the process no longer have available slots in one age group the expectation is that you update the number of available slots and uncheck the age group that is now full.

**Q: Is the reporting requirement based on licensed capacity or the Department of Health's recommendations to keep group sizes at 10?**

**A:** The reporting requirement is based upon the number of slots you are willing and able to fill.

**Q: If we do not report or conform to this WAC, what will licensing do to enforce this rule?**

**A:** This is to help DCYF and providers plan, not necessarily regulate. It is not the intention for licensors to "monitor" to this licensing regulation. DCYF licensors will provide technical assistance and communicate to providers the importance of the data to our current COVID-19 pandemic to ensure accessibility to safe and healthy quality child care services for the children whose parents are first responders, essential workers, and part of the Safe Start phased reopening industry workers.

**Q: How do we register our information within 24 hours when we have already been closed since March 20?**

**A:** If you have already reported your closure to your licensor, the information has already been recorded. If you reopen, please let your licensor know so that information can be updated in the system.

**Q: Forcing providers to report information every 48 hours as numbers change places an additional burden on providers when most are struggling to either keep their doors open or close them. Even in knowing if providers are open or how many slots providers have, providers are in charge of which families elect to enroll at sites.**

**A:** Providers are not required to update the information every 48 hours. The goal is to have an update within 48 hours from the point the number of children and/or the age group of children in care may change.

**Q: Will the data that DCYF is collecting about closures/vacancies be published publicly somewhere? If so, where will we be able to view this information?**

A: The available slot information is being displayed on [Child Care Check](#) so that families can search for providers with openings.

## Child Care Guidance

**Q: Will group size limitations be relaxed for child care centers in phase 2? By keeping the class size at 10 through the summer months, do you mean phase 3?**

A: The Safe Start phased reopening plan does not address child care. Child care has remained open and may continue to operate. Per the most recent DOH [Child Care, Youth Development, and Summer Day Camps During the Covid-19 Outbreak](#) guidance, in keeping with the public health approach, it is anticipated that this guidance will be in effect through the summer months. The DOH guidance should be followed throughout the summer and until the DOH provides updated guidance for the safe operation of programs serving children and youth. Counties may be at different phases during this time.

**Q: The language used was "COVID requirements" with regards to capacity. Does this mean that the Department of Health guidance, including the group size of 10, are now requirements or WAC?**

A: DOH guidance, including group size of 10, are recommendations for providers to follow and are considered best practice in keeping with a public health approach. These are not required by WAC.

**Q: I thought the group of 10 was a suggestion. Are we supposed to turn away families as they return back to work because it would put us over a group of 10?**

A: Physical distancing is an important part of our collective effort to control and limit the spread of the virus. Group size is a DOH guidance.

**Q: 10 people per classroom with staff and children, is there any relaxing with over 50 people per center?**

A: The Safe Start phased reopening plan does not address child care, therefore child care was not restricted to gatherings of 50. Child care has remained open and may continue to operate.

**Q: Any updates on Early Achievers rating requirements with all these restrictions?**

A: Early Achievers data collection was paused effective March 17, 2020 due to COVID-19. Data collection will remain paused until further notice. DCYF will continue to issue Quality Improvement Awards to Early Achievers participants. DCYF will also continue Tiered Reimbursement payments for care that is authorized and claimed on your invoice to early learning sites through this state of emergency, even if those sites have temporarily closed due to COVID-19.

We are taking this time to work on the continuous quality improvement (CQI) of Early Achievers. Part of that work is to develop an improved process for data collection that minimizes on-site evaluation. This CQI work is centered on feedback we have received throughout the years, as well as stakeholder engagement in the coming weeks and months.

DCYF will continue to update our plans for Early Achievers as this situation unfolds. We will provide ongoing communication throughout this process. We will share how you can engage with DCYF in this CQI work and what to expect regarding a timeline for the start-up of data collection and how DCYF will support providers through this transition.

For more information, please visit the **Early Achievers COVID-19 FAQ** Page:

<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/coronavirus-covid-19/early-achievers>

**Q: Do we need to document health checks that we do every day?**

**A:** It is not required that you keep documentation of health checks. However, it is best practice.

**Q: Are centers obligated to report there is a possible COVID-19 case if the person is awaiting test results?**

**A:** You are asked to work with your local public health department and to follow their direction. If you are temporarily closed awaiting results or for cleaning purposes, you are obligated to report that information through the provider portal.

**Q: [SHB 2619](#)- Increasing early learning access through licensing, eligibility, and rate improvements- comes into effect June 11<sup>th</sup>. What does transferring license with property mean?**

**A:** More information about this will be coming out soon.

**Q: Does a program with a waiver need to stick to the 10 group size because of the language in the waiver?**

**A:** Yes. The waiver was approved based upon a facility following DOH guidance. A waiver is going outside the WAC and as such, must provide for how the needs of children will be met. For an emergency COVID-19 waiver, that includes following DOH recommendations. If a provider is no longer willing or able to follow the waiver as written and approved, they should let their licensor know and the waiver will be closed.

**Q: We will have the children wearing masks indoors, but will spend as much time as possible outdoors. Since there will only be 6-7 kids plus teachers, can we let them go maskless outside?**

**A:** As part of the Safe Start phased reopening plan, beginning June 8 all employees will be required to wear a cloth face covering except when working alone in an office, vehicle, or at a

job site, or when the job has no in-person interaction.

## **COVID-19 Grant**

The COVID-19 Child Care Grant provided support and stabilization for over 3,500 child care providers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, the \$29 million in federal grant funding has been depleted and the grant application is no longer available.

### **Q: With the amount of languages left blank, how can the department be sure the funds are being equitably distributed?**

**A:** 'Primary language spoken' is a question DCYF has always asked in WA Compass as an optional question for providers to answer. It is not a perfect analysis and it is what is available at this time.

DCYF structured the grant funds with this in mind. The family child care provider community is our most diverse provider group and are disproportionately low-income women of color. Family child care providers received the majority of the grant funds.

### **Q: How do we find out who has been awarded the grants?**

**A:** Providers received a confirmation email when they submitted their completed application. Additionally, a follow-up email was sent to providers when their grant payment was processed.

### **Q: Specifically, what utilities can be paid for and what percent?**

**A:** The portion of utility costs associated with the child care business may be paid using COVID-19 Child Care grant. This may include power, water, sewer, garbage, phone, and internet service. DCYF recommends providers keep records of all payments made and documentation that demonstrates how the child care costs were determined.

### **Q: How much of the grant is left?**

**A:** The COVID-19 Child Care Grant funding is depleted and the grant application is no longer available.

### **Q: Can the grant funds be used for transportation, bus or car to pick up kids from school to school?**

**A:** No, that is not covered.

### **Q: Will grants be available again in the fall if re-opening is postponed?**

**A:** We do not know what supports will be available in the fall at this time.

### **Q: Will the COVID grant interfere with Early Achievers compensation this year?**

**A:** No, it will not.

**Q: DCYF said this grant could be used for my space. Does that mean improvements to my play area or new outdoor toys?**

**A:** No, using the COVID-19 Child Care Grant for space improvements is not allowed.

**Q: I lost 3 families. Can I use some of the money to make up the difference for what I lost?**

**A:** The COVID-19 Child Care Grant may be used for payroll/benefits, utilities, facility costs/space rent, health/safety and cleaning supplies and food.

**Q: I have commercial business insurance and commercial car insurance - can I pay this monthly bill with the grant money?**

**A:** No, the COVID-19 Child Care Grant may be used for payroll/benefits, utilities, facility costs/space rent, health/safety and cleaning supplies and food.

**Q: If you are a home provider that has had to move 100% virtual [i.e. zoom] because no family member wants to come in, would you qualify for this grant?**

**A:** No. Providers who are open and offering child care to children are eligible for the COVID-19 Child Care Grant. If a facility is not open for families to bring their children to, then they are not eligible. Virtual child care programs offered to children who are in their own homes are not eligible.

**Q: Can you apply to the Needs Based Grant as well as the COVID-19 grant or will one rule out the other?**

**A:** Yes, a provider may apply for a COVID-19 Child Care Grant and an Early Achievers Needs-Based Grant if they meet eligibility requirements. These are two separate grant opportunities with separate eligibility requirements.

**Q: We have an SSPS number but we haven't had any subsidy payments for years. How do I know if this payment route is still open and where do those funds show up?**

**A:** Providers will receive a grant payment in the same way that they last received an SSPS payment. If a provider has questions about their SSPS number they may contact their licensor.

**Q: If I don't use the SSPS number, do I need to fill out a Provider File Action Request (PFAR) to have a potential check mailed?**

**A:** Please check with your licensor. Most licensed providers have an SSPS number already and will not need to fill out the PFAR form.

**Q: We received an SBA Paycheck Protection Loan; does that exclude us from receiving this grant?**

**A:** No, it does not.

**Q: Are we are going to receive confirmation email saying that you received the Grant application?**

**A:** Confirmation emails were sent to providers when the grant application was submitted.

**Q: How long will DCYF provide support with subsidy co-payments and subsidy payments?**

**A:** The temporary changes to parent co-payments and enrollment-based payment are scheduled to end June 30, 2020.