



**National Association of Counties (NACo) Webinar: Questions & Answers
Child Care and COVID-19: Federal Resources and Best Practices for County Governments
June 17, 2020**

1. Is any financial assistance being given to the various agencies who support Child Protective Services?

The [Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act \(H.R. 748\)](#) provided \$45 million for grants to states, territories and tribes to support the child welfare needs of families during the crisis, and to help keep families together. The non-federal matching requirement does not apply to this funding increase. ACF has released this funding according to the existing formula for Title IV-B funds. [Additional information can be found here.](#)

In Watauga County, all Department of Social Services employees are essential and social workers were given frontline worker status in our state. The county put Emergency Management in charge of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), but supplies have been extremely limited. Being declared frontline workers opens the door for receiving state-funded supplies and thus supports the county in making its first order of PPE.

2. Can states use the CARES Act to provide wages for those child care workers who are unable to work due to a facility closure or because their children or others in the home have high-risk factors? In addition, what has your county done in response?

Yes: the CARES Act provided \$3.5 billion in supplemental funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) to support activities that prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus (COVID-19). These supplemental funds are intended to be very flexible, and [ACF suggests in its guidance](#) that an allowable use includes continued payments and assistance to child care providers in the case of decreased enrollment or closures related to COVID-19, and to assure providers are able to remain open or reopen. [More details on these funds can be found here.](#)

3. Could you discuss how well the CCDBG formula works (or doesn't work) for rural areas?

Families living in rural areas face unique child care challenges, as the nearest center might be far from their home, and the lack of a concentrated population could affect the availability of care. Coupled with more extreme levels of poverty and structural challenges for providers—such as the ability to meet licensing costs, afford transportation, weather instability in demand and attract and retain workers, it is unsurprising that nearly two-thirds of rural families live in a [child care desert](#), or an area where there are at least three young children for every licensed child care slot—or no licensed child care providers at all. Investments in child care infrastructure and the child care workforce in



rural communities, financial incentives for rural providers, and coordinated outreach efforts in rural communities are examples of policy levers that might complement CCDBG subsidies to boost supply and affordability in rural areas. Increased CCDBG subsidy rates for rural providers and full funding to cover all eligible children might also boost access in rural areas.

With respect to COVID-19 response, there is growing bipartisan consensus that the initial tranche of CCDBG funding in the CARES Act is insufficient to cover the ongoing needs of the child care sector. Find more details about [legislative proposals to address the child care crisis here](#).

4. If the House version of the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act passes the Senate, what can counties expect in terms of increased local funding for child care?

The [HEROES Act \(H.R. 6800\)](#) is unlikely to see Senate action, but does include some targeted investments for child care. Proposed funding includes:

- \$7 billion in emergency funding for CCDBG
- \$825 million in funding for child and dependent care for essential workers through the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG)
- Makes the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (CDCTC) refundable and increases the credit size for 2020

More details on the legislative outlook for child care proposals responding to COVID-19 [can be found here](#).

5. Did you provide free child care for the essential workers even though they do not have or are eligible for publicly funded child care (PFCC)?

CARES Act funding for CCDBG provided 100% free child care for children of essential workers beyond those enrolled in the child care subsidy program. “On March 24, 2020, Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) authorized Tarrant County Workforce Board to implement emergency child care in response to the global pandemic of COVID-19 using its current Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funding. This assistance will help support the cost of direct care for workers deemed essential during the COVID-19 emergency for a three-month period. **Note:** *This assistance is available to all Tarrant County CCMS child care providers who remain open during the COVID-19 period and/or those who choose to join Child Care Management Services (CMMS) as child care providers for frontline personnel and essential workers,*” according to Tarrant County CMMS. The 3-month assistance program can be found [here](#).

Some counties have made “essential workers” a priority group for receiving child care services. Essential workers who qualify for traditional subsidized child care are bypassing the waiting list to be served first.

6. Regarding the data dashboard from Tarrant County, how did your state coordinate efforts to identify programs with available slots in real time?



Initially, Tarrant County called licensed child care providers to collect information on the availability of services. The county used a protected spreadsheet to insert data. Currently, child care providers receive a weekly email alert requesting updated information on child care availability. Providers may update their information by phone or computer device.

a. What was the full cost on front end and monthly costs for the website/data tool you built?

Costs for building out this tool was about \$35,000 over one year. This figure does not include agency staff time to support implementation efforts. The county was able to leverage philanthropic dollars to cover the costs.

b. Who processed the applications for subsidy?

In Texas, subsidies for child care are processed locally. The state agency distributes funding to local Workforce Boards who contract with an outside entity, [Child Care Associates](#), to manage the subsidy program. Child Care Associates processes all applications including essential worker subsidies.

c. Were there any concerns about the platform and listing those child care programs that had licensing issues?

Tarrant County's online platform links to the state's public-facing website for parents to access and review child care providers' licensing history. The county is exploring ways for providers to include photos and other parent-friendly information about services that are unique to their business.

7. In your county, what are the procedures for child care providers requesting to remain open while stay-at-home orders are still in place? Who processes these requests and did your county need to hire new staff to get this accomplished?

In North Carolina, the Division of Child Development and Early Education has an [online application](#) that child care providers must complete to remain open during stay-at-home orders. The state processes requests from child care providers. The Watauga County Children's Council is the liaison between the state and child care providers with the county. The Children's Council is responsible for providing education and support to child care providers.