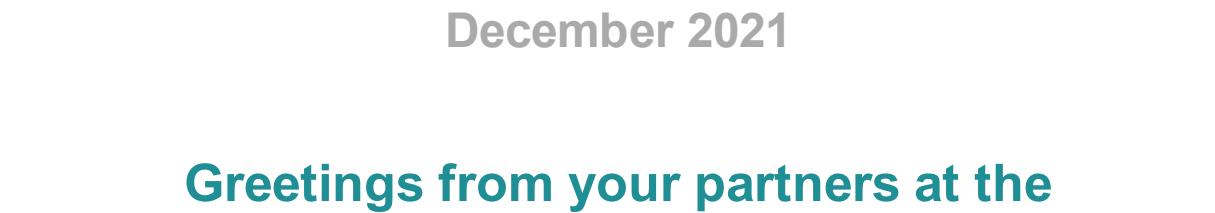


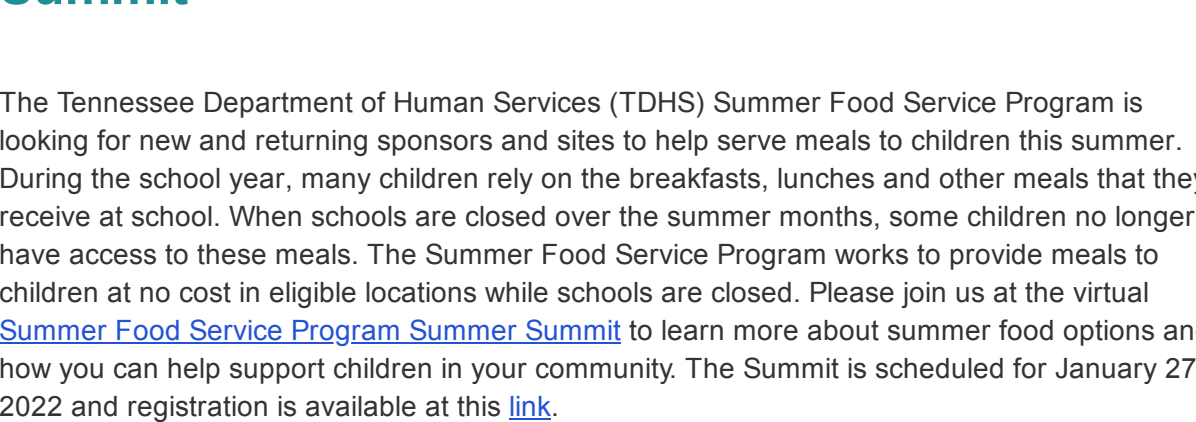
# Child Care NEWS BRIEF



## Child Care Services Newsletter December 2021

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

Welcome to the December 2021 edition of the Child Care Services Monthly Newsletter. We look forward to a year of continued progress improving your experience in doing business with the Department, elevating families, and strengthening supports and resources to further enhance child development so that together, we are building a thriving Tennessee. This edition contains reminders for Health Care Coverage opportunities, the 2022 Summer Food Summit, TNPAL, and much more. 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>. We wish each of you a happy, healthy and plentiful New Year!



### Summer Food Service Program 2022 Summer Summit

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) Summer Food Service Program is looking for new and returning sponsors and sites to help serve meals to children this summer. During the school year, many children rely on the breakfasts, lunches and other meals that they receive at school. When schools are closed over the summer months, some children no longer have access to these meals. The Summer Food Service Program works to provide meals to children at no cost in eligible locations while schools are closed. Please join us at the virtual [Summer Food Service Program Summer Summit](#) to learn more about summer food options and how you can help support children in your community. The Summit is scheduled for January 27, 2022 and registration is available at this [link](#).

### Reminder: Health Care Coverage Information for ECE Workforce Educators - Open Enrollment Deadline is Fast Approaching

The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Week of Action — The Administration for Children and Families is partnering with CMS to help the early childhood workforce access health coverage during the Open Enrollment period for Marketplace coverage, which started on November 1. Starting on November 14th, the Week of Action will raise awareness among the early childhood workforce about how to access health coverage and connect with navigators and assisters.

It is important to ensure that every early childhood educator has access to affordable health care coverage, particularly those who are on the front lines serving children, families, and communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we know that the early childhood workforce is two times less likely to have health care coverage or to receive employer-sponsored health care coverage than the general population. Benefits are a critical piece of compensation, and as we continue to work to improve compensation for the workforce, it is essential to include health care coverage.

For more information about the Health Insurance Marketplace, click this link: [What Do Early Childhood Educators Need to Know About the Marketplace? \(cms.gov\)](#)

Open Enrollment runs from November 1, 2021 – January 15, 2022. Take a few easy steps now. Get a checklist to prepare for enrollment at [11896 - Getting Ready to Apply Checklist \(healthcare.gov\)](#).

### UPDATE: COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs

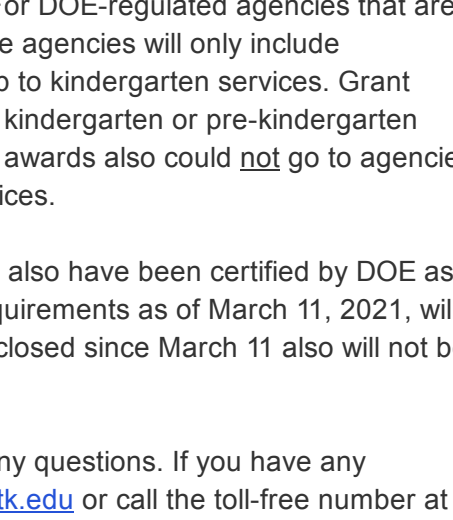
As we again see a rise in COVID cases, we are resharing this informative guidance. The Administration for Child and Families Office of Child Care has shared with states updated guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We encourage you to follow this guidance to the extent practicable to facilitate environments that maintain the health and safety of children.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has updated its [COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs](#). Updates to the guidance emphasize the importance of universal masking for everyone ages 2 and older, regardless of vaccination status. Additionally, this guidance provides more information on screening testing and updated guidance for fully vaccinated staff. Early care and education (ECE) programs can promote vaccinations among staff and families, including pregnant women, by providing information about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccination, encouraging vaccine trust and confidence, and establishing supportive policies and practices.

The updated version of the guidance outlines strategies for ECE programs to implement to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to maintain safer operations. ECE programs include child care centers, home-based and family child care programs, Head Start programs, and other prekindergarten programs.

Although fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared with adults during the pandemic, children can be infected with the virus that causes COVID-19, get sick, and spread the virus to others. CDC's [science brief on transmission in schools](#) includes scientific evidence about the spread of the virus among children and in school and ECE settings.

### UPDATE: American Rescue Plan Act Stabilization Grant Information



Our partners at UT-SWORPS have issued all Award Notification/Contracts for Cohorts 1 through 5 and are routing the signed documents for payment processing. The award documents are matched with the applications and supplier maintenance information in order to release funds. We had hoped to be able to issue funds within 30-45 days after receiving signed grant contracts. Depending upon how child care providers have registered in supplier maintenance, it can take longer to reconcile the grant application and payment information. This is a detailed process to ensure compliance with all federal and state requirements for management of grant funding.

#### Update on Payment Processing for ARPA Grants

**In order to ensure 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. Payments are in process and will be distributed beginning this month. We ask for your patience during this process.**

**Please Note: If you have questions regarding confirmation of receipt of your award contract, please contact UT-SWORPS at [TDHS\\_CCP@utk.edu](mailto:TDHS_CCP@utk.edu) or call the toll-free number at 1-888-883-5514**

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.

We intend to conduct a round of child care stabilization grant applications beginning January 25, 2022 for Department of Education (DOE)-regulated agencies participating in the Child Care Certificate Program. Based upon information received from DOE, we also intend to include DOE-regulated child care agencies that meet eligibility criteria. For DOE-regulated agencies that are not participating in the certificate program, the list of eligible agencies will only include community-based, private child care agencies, including up to licensed day care centers, Head Start, or Early Head Start Programs. Grant awards also could not go to agencies, public or private, delivering 1st -12th grade education services.

Only DOE-regulated agencies who meet these criteria and requirements as of March 11, 2021, will be considered eligible. Any agency that has permanently closed since March 11 also will not be considered eligible.

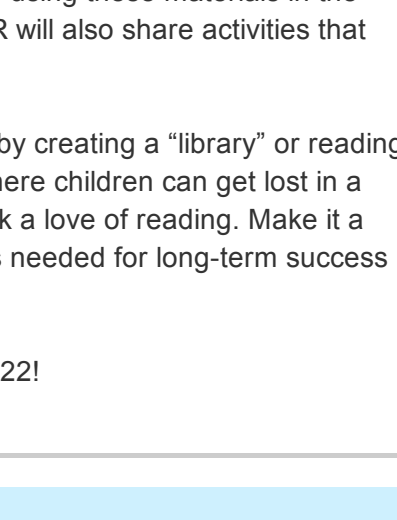
Technical assistance is available to you should you have any questions. If you have any questions, please contact UT-SWORPS at [TDHS\\_CCP@utk.edu](mailto:TDHS_CCP@utk.edu) or call the toll-free number at 1-888-883-5514.

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.

In February, we will issue a "clean-up" round of application notices to TDHS licensed child care agencies who may not have applied in earlier rounds, who have had a change in capacity, or who are newly licensed. More information will be provided as we finalize plans for these application notices.

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 - Tech Goes Home The Application Link is Now Live



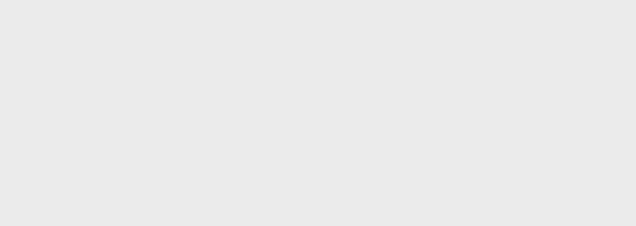
We are excited to be moving closer to roll-out of our new technology supports through our system modernization efforts. We encourage agencies who have technology support needs to apply for this new resource. TDHS deployed the "Tech Goes Home" model available to child care agencies that includes the provision of technology devices, coaching, and technical assistance 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.

As you have seen in earlier newsletters, we are engaging in several technology systems modernization projects. We expect to pilot the new electronic attendance tracking system in January (Davidson, Hawkins, and Madison counties) and for the system to be available statewide in late February. Tech Goes Home Tennessee 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 and training underway. Once on the website, scroll down to the three boxes, and the application button is found in the first box on the left.

### Update: TNPAL



The Tennessee Professional Archive of Learning (TNPAL) is the official system of record for qualifications, training, and professional development for child care providers licensed by the Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) effective January 1, 2022. This free resource is designed to better support professional development and empower early childhood professionals who work in TDHS licensed child care agencies by collecting and preserving completed trainings, accomplishments, credentials, education, certifications, and awards. TNPAL also directly supports verification of these records by directors and TDHS for compliance and regulatory purposes. Learn the benefits of TNPAL and sign up at <https://www.tnpal.org/>.

**Don't have a TNPAL account? Signing up is easy!** TNPAL is waiting for you! Early childhood professionals may visit [www.tnpal.org](http://www.tnpal.org) and create a TNPAL account using a web browser on any computer, phone, or tablet. A series of quick video tutorials, including "How to Register", are available at the [TNPAL YouTube Channel](#).

**Already have a TNPAL account?** It's equally important for both early childhood professionals and agency directors to enable their TNPAL user accounts with their TDHS-licensed child care agency. This association enables training and qualifications verification and promotes continuing professional development. Early childhood professionals who haven't requested association during the registration should login to TNPAL to complete this step.

Agency directors, please remember to acknowledge these associations for your agency's early childhood professionals to utilize the full potential of TNPAL.

**Want to dive deeper? Learn more from the Lean Into You podcast.** Last year, CCR&R highlighted TNPAL in an episode of its *Lean Into You* podcast. Entitled "Level Up Your Professional Development with TNPAL", the episode featuring Lisa Walsh, Registry and Training manager with TECTA, and may be found online by clicking the link below. This is a great resource to share with your staff and educators: *Lean Into You: Level Up Your Professional Development With TNPAL*.

Please remember: TNPAL is now the Department's system of record for capturing staff qualifications and completed training hours **as of January 01, 2022**.

### Early Literacy Resources Arriving 2022

The Tennessee Department of Human Services and Governors Early Literacy Foundation (GELF) are collaborating with Scholastic to supply early literacy resources and enhance classrooms as reading and learning spaces for licensed child care providers in the new year.

These resources will include a set of age-appropriate, high-quality "Best New" collection of books from Scholastic, an Early Learning Read-Aloud Guide, and Too Small to Fail: Indoor Activities for Families. The Tennessee Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR&R) will offer free supports developed by its early literacy specialists for using these materials in the classroom through training and coaching opportunities. CCR&R will also share activities that families can use at home.

We encourage you to continue engaging children and families by creating a "library" or reading space in your child care agency. Make it a welcoming space where children can get lost in a good book. Make it an inspiring space where children can spark a love of reading. Make it a place where children can develop the critical early literacy skills needed for long-term success in life.

Please look for these resources to arrive beginning January 2022!

*TDHS is committed to promoting early childhood environments that are safe, healthy, and educationally rich. Thank you for offering Tennessee families learning opportunities and environments that will help their children thrive.*

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