

Child Care NEWS BRIEF

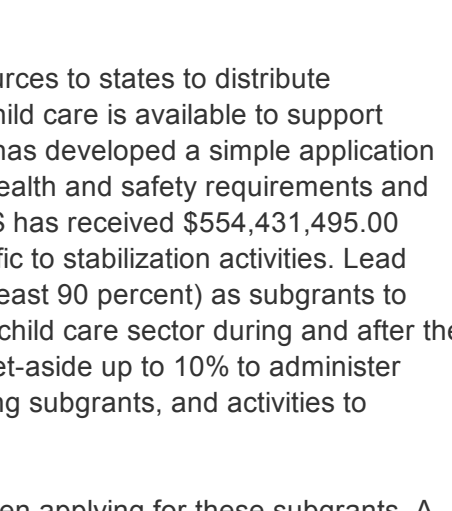


Child Care Services Newsletter October 2021

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

Welcome to the October 2021 edition of the Child Care Services Monthly Newsletter. There is so much activity and focus on child care and we want to keep you updated with relevant news and information. The Child Care Stabilization Grant Application process is well underway through our Technical Assistance Partner, UTSWORPS. This edition provides general information and a few updates on the status of this process. This edition contains an update on the new Tech Goes Home initiative, as well as our intent to resume in-person monitoring visits.

UPDATE - American Rescue Plan Act Stabilization Grant Information



There have been several inquiries related to the ARPA Stabilization Grants and application/award process. Below is a reminder of the purpose, the process, how to access technical support and the links to all available resources to assist you throughout this process.

Purpose of the Stabilization Grants-Reminder

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, child care providers have faced significant challenges such as increased operational costs to ensure continuity of care and safety of children and staff.

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) has provided resources to states to distribute stabilization grants to child care providers to ensure that child care is available to support families and businesses as the economy recovers. TDHS has developed a simple application that will be available to all child care providers who meet health and safety requirements and other eligibility requirements as defined in the ARPA. TDHS has received \$554,431,495.00 designated American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds specific to stabilization activities. Lead agencies (TDHS) must spend most stabilization funds (at least 90 percent) as subgrants to qualified child care providers to support the stability of the child care sector during and after the COVID-19 public health emergency. Lead agencies may set-aside up to 10% to administer funds, provide TA and Support in applying for and accessing subgrants, and activities to increase supply of child care.

We built a process to minimize the burden on agencies when applying for these subgrants. A formula based on an average cost per child will be used to determine the award amount. The calculations for the base grant award amount is based upon cost of care data collected from a sample of TDHS-licensed child care agencies (family, group, and center) in May/June 2021 completed by our partners at the University of Tennessee and includes operational costs such as rent/mortgage, personnel costs including salaries and benefits, food and educational supplies, training and professional development, general liability insurance, and transportation expenses. Using this cost estimate model avoids placing the burden on each agency to collect and produce individualized financial materials as part of their application.

The purpose of these grants is to provide you relief for operational expenditures for a three-month period to allow you the opportunity to build revenue for ongoing sustainability. Because of this operations support, we encourage you to assist struggling families with child care costs to promote continuity of care.

The Application Process and Distribution Structure

1. The grant application process will be supported through the University of Tennessee Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (UT-SWORPS).

The total amount each child care agency may apply for varies depending on their size and licensed capacity. These grants will provide hundreds of dollars monthly for each child the agency can serve to cover a three-month grant period. 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.

2. There are additional incentives included in the potential grant award amounts.

- Agencies who are contracted to participate in the Child Care Certificate Program, as of October 1, 2021, are eligible for a 10% bonus calculated on the base award amount.
- A 10% bonus on the base award amount is also provided for agencies operating in communities scoring .6 or above on the Social Vulnerability Index (SVI). For more information about the SVI, please visit [CDC/ATSDR SVI Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) | Place and Health | ATSDR](https://www.cdc.gov/atsdr/svi/frequently-asked-questions/)
- Child Care Agencies including administrators, educators, and support staff went above and beyond throughout the pandemic in providing safe and healthy environments for children. You are our heroes, and we want to recognize your hard work and dedication to serving families and children within your communities by providing the opportunity to apply for **Staff Retention Awards**, a one-time payment of \$1000 for part-time staff or \$2000 for full-time staff.

3. Over the next three months, all TDHS licensed child care agencies, will receive a direct email notification with an individualized link to an application template based upon the agency's licensed capacity.

This will allow for a more efficient process to manage quick and accurate application review and minimize the burden on child care agencies who want to apply. The projected timeframe for notifications to be distributed and applications to be submitted is listed below.

Cohort 1: (Center (100+))

Date Invitation Is Extended: October 5, 2021

Closing Date: October 18, 2021 11:59 pm CST

Cohort 2: Center (76-100)

Date Invitation Is Extended: October 19, 2021

Closing Date: November 1, 2021 11:59 pm CST

Cohort 3: Center (51-75)

Date Invitation Is Extended: November 2, 2021

Closing Date: November 15, 2021 11:59 pm CST

Cohort 4: Center (26-50)

Date Invitation Is Extended: November 16, 2021

Closing Date: December 1, 2021 11:59 pm CST

Cohort 5: Center (up to 25)

Date Invitation Is Extended: November 16, 2021

Closing Date: December 1, 2021 11:59 pm CST

Cohort 6: Family/Group

Date Invitation Is Extended: December 2, 2021

Closing Date: December 15, 2021 11:59 pm CST

We intend to conduct a round of child care stabilization grant applications in January 2022 for DOE regulated agencies participating in the 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 kindergarten services. Grant awards could not go to agencies that have publicly funded kindergarten or pre-kindergarten services, 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 also have been certified by DOE as meeting all applicable state and local health and safety 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.

4. Upon approval of an application, funds will be distributed through Supplier Maintenance within our state accounting system, EDISON.

You will need to be enrolled in this system as a vendor. If you are currently participating in the Child Care Certificate Program, you already have a vendor account and will not need to register again. If you are not registered as a vendor, you may create an account through this link: https://hub.edison.tn.gov/psp/paprd/SUPPLIER/SUPPH/?tab=PAPP_GUEST. We are working on the most efficient distribution process for these funds. The funds should be distributed within forty-five days of certification or signature by the provider on the official award notification.

5. Upon approval of an application, an award notification will be routed to you for review of terms and conditions and review of the award amount. At this time, you will have the opportunity to accept the calculated amount based on the prescribed formula, or you may choose to indicate a lesser amount prior to final certification.

6. You will need to maintain documentation of your operational expenses that were paid through the ARPA stabilization grant award. You will receive more information about this process when grants funds are awarded.

7. As a reminder, you will be notified directly through email to begin the application process.

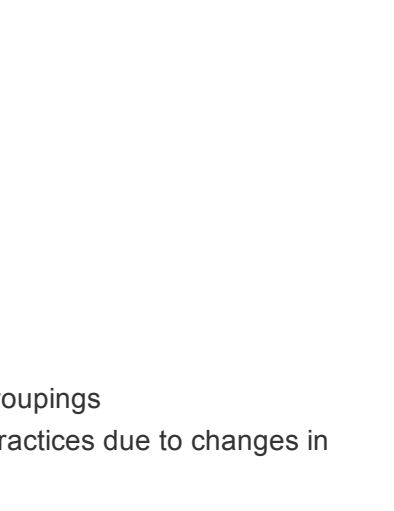
We have a sample grant application for you to review on our website at this link: [American Rescue Plan Act \(ARPA\) Stabilization Grants](#)

Technical assistance will be available to you should you have any questions. If you have any questions, please contact UT SWORPS at TDHS_CCP@utk.edu or call the tollfree 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.tn.gov/cocf-stabilization-grant/>. The most current version is available, including updated questions and answers from the first two Cohort rounds.

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



In October 2021, 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 for children's digital divide and support a system of high-quality early care and education to reduce in Tennessee. The 15-hour training course is designed to teach foundational technical skills, such as email navigation, presentation building, and 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.

For more information please visit the CCR&R website for [Tech Goes Home TN – Focused on Early Child Care Educators and Agencies](#) to view additional information and submit an application. Applications for the program are now being accepted with trainings to begin in December. 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, & Madison Counties) and for the system to be available statewide in late February. Tech Goes Home TN can be a resource for agencies that need technology equipment where parents can electronically sign in/out their children.

Return to In-Person Monitoring

The Tennessee Department of Human Services is committed to supporting child care agencies in providing programs that are safe, healthy and educationally rich. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges and many opportunities to approach delivery of our services in different ways. Now, as we are continuing to see a decrease in COVID cases in Tennessee, we want to reinstate best practices for monitoring child care agencies, while protecting the health and safety of child care agency staff, children in care, and TDHS staff.

Effective **November 15, 2021** we will be resuming in-person monitoring visits with licensed child care agencies. It is our goal to remain sensitive to the continued impact of the pandemic on individual child care agency operations. Licensing Consultants will reach out to your agency prior to the scheduled visit to understand protocols that you have put in place and will be prepared to follow those protocols. We encourage our team to wear appropriate PPE when conducting in-person visits and be respectful of all established protocols set by your agency. We are providing an overview of how these visits will be conducted.

Monitoring Visits

The Department has developed an approach for resuming regularly scheduled visits that will minimize the risk of exposure for you, your staff, children in care and our staff. Prior to scheduling a visit, the Licensing Consultant will contact you with detailed information on how to prepare, and a packet will be sent to you prior to the visit on what to expect. It is also possible that circumstances may arise that warrant an on-site unannounced visit (i.e. a complaint investigation) to your agency.

Re-evaluations/License Renewals

The Department will continue scheduling annual re-evaluation visits the week of November 15, 2021 for those agencies whose license has expired or will be expiring within the next few months. We will prioritize the visits beginning with agencies with expired/extended licenses through present. The annual re-evaluation visit will be conducted using the same in-person model as a regularly scheduled monitoring visit. The Licensing Consultant will contact you to schedule these visits, and review required documentation. Please note that the annual re-evaluation will be more involved and will require additional time to complete than a regular monitoring visit.

Annual Report Card/Program Assessment

The Department will continue to monitor the component areas of the Report Card during the scheduled visit. We will continue to utilize the [temporary Assessment Instrument](#) to evaluate program enrichment (quality) and to capture the requirements under the component area.

Technical Assistance

The impact of the pandemic has created many challenges over the past year. The Department has worked to develop financial supports, technical assistance, and resources to alleviate some of the economic impact and instability the pandemic has caused. Your Licensing Consultant will be available to provide more detailed information, guidance, and toolkits on how to access the necessary supports and resources to help with sustainability moving forward. As the Licensing Consultant is conducting monitoring visits, we encourage you to take the opportunity to discuss any additional support that may be needed. Areas where you may wish to have further discussion on available supports may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Social distancing strategies
- Child care and disinfecting
- Parent drop-off and pick up
- Caring for infants and toddlers
- Food preparation and Meal Service
- Infectious Diseases Reporting Requirement
- Grant Assistance
- Low attendance
- Difficulty in classroom management due to changes in groupings
- Difficulty in implementing Developmentally Appropriate Practices due to changes in groupings
- Difficulty in supervisory
- Difficulty in positive teacher/child interactions
- Difficulty in daily health practices, hand washing, sanitizing
- Coordination of consultants to address stress, anxiety and grief
- Additional information on new initiatives such as Tech Goes Home, Inclusionary Supports and Resources, and existing initiatives such as WAGES®, Enhancement Grants, Business Academies and Professional Development Opportunities

Thank you for the incredible and important work that you are doing in your communities to care for children and serve families. We appreciate your perseverance and your dedication to providing child care services that are safe, healthy, and educationally rich. We are grateful to partner with you in this critical mission.

TDHS Collaborative Partnerships - Access Needs and Building Capacity

Did you know? TDHS actively partners with other state agencies to better understand child care needs and explore solutions that help promote safe, healthy, and educationally rich spaces so that children have environments where they may thrive. Below are some highlights from our recent work with a few of our interagency partners:

- Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR)
 - TDHS and TBR recently convened instructors and leadership from Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs across the state to share information about [TECETA](#) and the [WAGES program](#) and to open up conversations that can help bridge the gap between ECE programs and employment opportunities. We are also exploring new options to strategically co-promote child care education and career pathways.
- TN Department of Economic & Community Development (TDECD)
 - A new partnership between TDHS, TDECD, and our state's nine local development districts will help TDHS and TECED better understand the specific child care needs of communities across the state and utilize CARES Act funding to provide financial support to existing child care agencies interested in renovating and/or expanding their facilities to increase capacity. This innovative partnership allocates \$10 million in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding for capital expenses associated with growing the capacity of our state's child care network. More information on this grant opportunity will be available soon.
- TN Department of Labor & Workforce Development (TDOLWD)
 - TDHS' Child Care Services division has been working closely with the team at DOLWD to develop a streamlined, integrated process to help support individuals seeking employment with child care, payment assistance when a lack of access to child care impedes their job search efforts. And, as a reminder, DOLWD's [Jobs4TN website](#) has tools available for you, our provider partners, to post job opportunities and reach potential applicants who can help fill vacant positions. www.jobs4tn.gov

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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