



NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER

Justice for Her. Justice for All.

MARCH 2020 | FACT SHEET

TALKING POINTS COVID-19 RESPONSE: GETTING FLEXIBLE CHILD CARE FUNDING TO THE STATES

Overview

COVID-19 is highlighting and exacerbating the deep gaps in our child care infrastructure. These gaps have long existed due to significant underinvestment. As we hear stories about how parents are trying to work while caring for young children, it is clearer than ever that child care providers are the backbone of our economy. If Congress does not act immediately to provide substantial and sustained relief, it will all but guarantee that our child care system is irreparably harmed. And we may find that there is no child care system left once we return to normal.

Child care is a necessity for all families, but especially for front-line workers who cannot help with this public health crisis without it. Medical professionals, delivery drivers, grocery store workers, and first responders are just some of the front-line workers who need child care in order to go to work. Families are losing their jobs or are being forced to reduce their work hours, therefore losing their income streams. They cannot be expected to continue to pay for child care when other finances are stretched thin. Child care providers should not be expected to make up the difference between what families can pay and what it costs to care for children.

Key Points

Congress must act immediately to provide \$50 billion in funding for child care to states as part of the third stimulus package. This funding must be flexible enough to address the identified and emerging needs in the child care sector, including (but not limited to):

- Providing training and medical support for child care providers on health and safety practices in response to COVID-19.
- Paying providers to cover ongoing operating costs while they are closed so that their financial security—and the financial security of families, communities, and the educators they employ—is not threatened. This must include centers as well as home-based providers such as family child care homes and family, friend, and neighbor (FFN) caregivers.
- Eliminating copayments or tuition for families during this public health and economic crisis while ensuring that providers are still paid the full amount for every enrolled slot.
- Finding and paying substitute educators where needed and available.
- Purchasing materials for providers that cannot afford or find supplies.

Congress must act to expand [paid leave](#), [unemployment insurance](#), [direct cash assistance](#), [housing assistance](#), [food and nutrition assistance](#), and other support programs for all families and communities. Right now, many child care centers, family child care homes, and FFN caregivers are excluded from participating in benefits due to legislative carve-outs for small businesses. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act was an important first step in addressing this crisis, but the third stimulus package must be designed so that all families and communities are able to receive the benefits that they need during this public health and economic crisis.

Child care providers are struggling to stay open and may be forced out of business permanently. A [recent survey](#) from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) taken of more than 6,000 providers from March 12-16 shows that 30 percent of providers would not survive a closure of more than 2 weeks. In addition to millions of families losing their child care, early educators will lose their jobs and the income they need to afford basic necessities. For providers that choose to—or must remain open—to serve front-line workers, they lack the training, cleaning supplies, and other public health resources to serve families safely and effectively in this time. Moreover, they are doing essential work on the frontlines as well and make poverty-level wages for doing so; they deserve and require hazard pay during this time.

Conclusion

Child care is the backbone of our nation's economy. It is clear that additional federal investments are needed to mitigate the COVID-19 crisis' impact on the child care sector. Congress must act immediately to invest at least \$50 billion in child care funding to states as part of the third stimulus package.