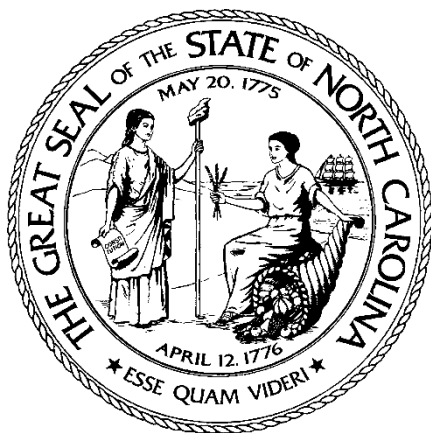


HOUSE COVID-19 COMMITTEE



COVID-19 and Children

Susan Gale Perry

North Carolina Department of Health and
Human Services

August 20, 2020

How are Children Being Impacted by COVID-19?

COVID-19 Cases

- About 11% (16,374) of NC COVID-19 cases are among children 0-17 and one child death in this age group

Increasing Food Insecurity

- Overall food insecurity among all ages of North Carolinians increased from 11.7% in Feb 2020 to 24% by May 2020¹
- Prior to COVID-19, school nutrition program served approximately 1.2 million meals per day for 900,000 eligible students
 - Highest number of meals served during May/June: 500,000 meals per day
 - Average meals served July/August: 150,000 meals per day
- While NC served ~900k students through the Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program, Congress has not re-authorized P-EBT program for the fall

1. Northwestern Institute for Policy Research, July 2020. <https://www.ipr.northwestern.edu/news/2020/food-insecurity-app-visualizes-national-state-by-state-data.html>

How are Children Being Impacted by COVID-19?

Risks to Child Safety

- 35% decline in Child Protective Services reports
 - Decline attributable to mandatory reports (especially educational professionals) having less contact with students

Learning Loss

- Research suggests students may return in fall with significant losses in math and reading as a result of learning disruptions
 - Children of color likely to experience disproportionate losses

Snapshot of COVID-19 Impact on NC's Child Care System

- Child care has remained open throughout pandemic
 - Meeting additional COVID-19 Health and Safety Requirements layered on top of existing health, safety and learning licensing standards
- ~ 90% of private child care facilities traditionally open in the summer have reopened
- Only 43% of children (106,000) currently attending child care vs. 245,000 in Feb. 2020
 - 60% of child care revenue comes from private tuition
- Since NCDHHS started public reporting on June 22, there have been:
 - 21 clusters in child care settings
 - 63 cluster-associated cases among staff
 - 1 cluster-associated death among staff
 - 63 cluster-associated cases among children
 - 0 cluster-associated deaths among children

What Does All this Mean for Child Care Providers?

Zac Everhart

- Owner, Excel Learning Centers
- Chairman, NC Child Care Commission



Addressing School Age Child Care Needs for Families

1. Leverage ~30,000 existing slots at child care facilities that are licensed for school age care
2. Expand capacity for licensed child care facilities that are not currently licensed for school age
3. Offer school age care on-site at public schools
4. Offer school age care on-site at community-based organizations (CBOs) – public schools must have contracts with CBOs to do so
5. Prioritize bringing younger children back to public school for in-person instruction
 - ~16 School Districts bringing back only younger children or prioritizing more days per week of in-person instruction for younger children

School-Age Health and Safety

- Child Care/School-Age Care protections are found in federal and state laws, state regulations, and local codes
- DHHS has layered additional COVID health and safety requirements upon robust, pre-existing licensing standards in child care and requirements in public schools
- Child care licensing include:
 - Criminal background checks
 - Building, fire, and sanitation inspections
 - Health and safety training including preventing/controlling infectious disease, administering medication, recognizing and responding to child maltreatment, responding to natural disasters, CPR and First Aid
 - Group sizes and staff ratios for adequate supervision

Child Care Commission (CCC) Emergency Rules

- CCC met on August 5, 2020 and adopted emergency rules for Care of School-Age Children During State of Emergency
- Allows public schools to enter into written contract agreement with a Remote Learning Facility
- As part of contract, public schools agree to:
 - Be responsible for enrollment and attendance of school-age children at a Remote Learning Facility
 - Be liable for any incidents or occurrences at the Remote Learning Facility the same way it would be liable if school-age children were in a building approved for school occupancy and which houses any part of the public school system
- Issued letter to superintendents and charter school leaders on August 5, 2020 outlining 3 options to support families who may need school-age care (promoting hotline for licensed care, providing care onsite, contracting with CBO to provide care)
- Wake, Durham, and other districts already pursuing this option

CARES Act Funds for Child Care in NC

NCDHHS anticipates expending all CARES funds allocated for child care

- \$34.7M for emergency child care subsidy which served 20,000+ children
- \$38.2M for teacher and staff bonuses (for 25,000+ individuals)
- \$80M for operational grants for 3,800+ open programs in April, May, June (66%)
- \$5M to SmartStart for parent support and child care business technical assistance
- Purchased \$6.2M PPE and cleaning supplies for 4-8 week supply for ~4,200 programs
- Projected \$10M to cover parent copayments for families receiving subsidy in June and July at open programs
- Projected \$12M for additional PPE and cleaning supplies for rest of the year

Funding Priorities

- PPE: Provide additional infection control supplies to child care programs
- Child Care Workforce Retention: Provide one-time retention bonuses for child care staff working onsite in open programs
- Operational Grants: Stabilize child care programs who have lost significant tuition revenue due to lower enrollment with operational grants