

NEW JERSEY CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM STATEWIDE EMERGENCY, DISASTER AND RECOVERY PLAN

I. BACKGROUND

The Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014 requires States to have a Statewide Child Care Disaster Plan. As the Lead Agency for the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), the New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of Family Development (DHS/DFD) has prepared this Statewide Emergency, Disaster and Recovery Plan (the Plan) specific to subsidized childcare services and programs.

- The Plan adopts the five key topic areas recommended by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) as a framework to support child care providers, children in their care, and their families before, during, and after an emergency or disaster. The five (5) key topic areas are:
 - Planning for Continuation of Services to CCDF Families
 - Coordination with Emergency Management Agencies and Key Partners
 - Regulatory Requirements and Technical Assistance for Child Care Providers
 - Provision of Temporary Child Care Services After a Disaster
 - Rebuilding Child Care

As detailed below, the State of New Jersey has reviewed policies and procedures in order to demonstrate that New Jersey is complying. The Plan outlines key agencies, roles, responsibilities, policies and procedures.

Disasters can be divided into three different types: (1) Natural, such as hurricanes, tornadoes and snowstorms, and biological; (2) Technological, including power outages, fires, exposure to hazardous materials; and (3) Attacks, resulting from terrorism and other acts of violence, these categories are further expanded as follows:

NATURAL	TECHNOLOGY	ATTACK
Severe Weather Snow and Ice Storms Tornadoes Hurricanes Earthquakes Floods Wildfires and Forest Fires High Winds Volcanic Eruptions Landslides Tsunamis and Tidal Waves Pandemic	Electrical Outages Loss of Water Flooding from broken pipes Gas Outages Fires Exposure to Hazardous Materials Aviation Accidents Oil Spills Dam Failures	Bomb Threats Biological Attacks Chemical Attacks Explosions Nuclear Attacks Radiological Lock Down Cyber Attacks

The Governor, State and local government along with key partners are responsible for ensuring that New Jersey adequately prepare for emergencies of all types and sizes. In situations where a major disaster may be imminent, the Governor of New Jersey or his designee may declare a State of Emergency.

The New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is the Lead Agency responsible for planning, directing and coordinating emergency operations in the State of New Jersey. This Office plays a key role in communicating with government state agencies and the public during an emergency, providing advice and instructions and maintaining calm public order.

OEM at the State and local level play a critical role supporting and assisting Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development (DHS/DFD), carry out its responsibilities assisting and supporting child care providers, both in emergency situations, planning and preparations as well as with recovery efforts.

New Jersey Child Care Subsidy Program administered by multiple state agencies. Department of Children and Families, Office of Licensing (DCF/OOL) regulates child care centers and requires licensed centers to notify local law enforcement or OEM of their written emergency plan and procedures through N.J.A.C. 3A:52, for licensed childcare centers, including Head Start programs. DCF/OOL is also the regulatory agency responsible for the Family Child Care Registration Program and N.J.A.C. 3A:54 for family childcare providers require coordination with OEM.

After Hurricane Sandy in 2012, DHS/DFD and the Department of Children and Families, Office of Licensing (DCF/OOL), along with the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), collaborated to gather information on child care providers impacted by the storm to help inform how to best respond to disaster-related needs of families and the child care providers.

Lessons learned from Hurricane Sandy in 2012, resulted in improved coordinated efforts across key stakeholders at multiple levels, better tracking mechanisms, and an established governance of decision makers to quickly address challenges and achieve shared goals efforts to support working families and child care providers impacted by the pandemic.

March 12, 2020, Governor Murphy declared a State of Emergency with Executive Orders (EO#107, EO#110 and EO#149) to address and respond to the national health emergency, which significantly affected the entire state and severely crippled the child care sector.

A collaborative network of state agencies, responsible for administering the child care subsidy program, worked closely with OEM offices to implement an Emergency Child Care Program – to support the essential frontline workers, help sustain child care providers and provide continuity of child care services to families impacted by the national health pandemic.

<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-149.pdf> (Exec. Order 149, 5/29/2020)

<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-107.pdf> (Exec. Order 107, 3/21/2020)

<https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-110.pdf> (Exec. Order 110, 3/25/2020)

<https://nj.gov/governor/news/news/562020/approved/20200402b.shtml> (4/2/20 Emergency Child Care Program)

<https://www.childcarenj.gov/Resources/Coronavirus> (NJ DFD/OCC Website)

<https://www.nga.org/governors/powers-and-authority/#orders>

II. **COORDINATING WITH EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND KEY PARTNERS**

A. MAIN PARTNERS

In situations where a major disaster may be imminent, the Governor of New Jersey or his designee may declare a State of Emergency. The following entities are the Division's main partners that will coordinate in the event of an emergency.

1. Office of Emergency Management

State and local offices of emergency management (OEMs) play a critical role in the childcare world, both in emergencies as well as in more routine areas such as training childcare providers. There is a Statewide OEM, as well as OEMs for each separate State department. The Department of Human Services, as well as the Department of Children and Families have Offices of Emergency Management. Both units work in conjunction with the State of New Jersey Emergency Support Function (NJESF) 6 which implements and coordinates all levels of Government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and the Private Sector assistance in the provision of mass care and emergency assistance, disaster housing and human services. Each of New Jersey's 21 counties has an OEM, as do many municipalities. The relevant OEMs work with all county and local agencies during emergencies and disasters.

2. Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&R's)

In New Jersey, the delivery of childcare services funded by CCDF supervised at the State level by DHS/DFD and are administered at the local level by 14 regional Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies.

3. Department of Children and Families, Office of Licensing (DCF/OOL)

DCF/OOL regulates public and private child care centers that are maintained for the care, development, or supervision of six or more children under 13 years of age for less than 24 hours a day under the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers, N.J.A.C. 3A:52. DCF/OOL is also the regulatory agency responsible for ensuring that contracted Sponsoring Organizations comply with all applicable provisions of the Manual of Requirements for Family Child Care Registration, N.J.A.C. 3A:54. Licensed child care centers and registered family child care providers are required to notify local law enforcement or OEM of their written emergency plan.

4. Department of Education

CCDF funds serve many children in before and after school programs on-site in New Jersey public and private schools. The Department of Education's Office of School Preparedness & Emergency Planning (OSPEP) provides support to district and school leaders to assist with the establishment and maintenance of a school safety and security plan that addresses all hazards and follows the phases of crisis management planning – mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

5. Department of Health

The New Jersey Department of Health (DOH) serves as a partner with DHS/DFD as it licenses summer camps. Some summer camps operated by child care centers that operate all year long. These camps receive a license through DCF/OOL; however, most summer camps that operate only during the summer months licensed by DOH. DOH is a key partner because they provide guidance for these summer camps in the event of an Emergency. Of equal importance is the lead role that the DOH plays during the current pandemic.

6. The New Jersey Council for Young Children

The Early Childhood Advisory Council in New Jersey, known as the New Jersey Council for Young Children (NJCYC). NJCYC offered recommendations and consulted as this plan was developed.

7. Grow NJ Kids Technical Assistance Centers

The TA Centers are committed to providing technical assistance, coaching and modeling to early childhood educators enrolled in quality improvement initiatives. They are integral to keeping lines of communication open with child care providers, as well as partnering to assess and meet the needs of providers during and after disaster.

8. Head Start

Head Start is a Federal program for low-income families that promotes the school readiness of children from birth to age five by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Head Start programs provide a learning environment that supports children's growth in many areas such as language, literacy, and social and emotional development. Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher. These programs help build relationships with families that support family well-being and many other important areas.

Many Head Start programs also provide Early Head Start, which serves infants, toddlers, and pregnant women and their families who have incomes below the Federal poverty level.

9. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) serves as the national focus for developing and applying disease prevention and control, environmental health, and health promotion and health education activities designed to improve the health of the people of the United States.

CDC is responsible for controlling the introduction and spread of infectious diseases, and provides consultation and assistance to other nations and international agencies to assist in improving their disease prevention and control, environmental health, and health promotion activities. The role of CDC was critical and significant helping New Jersey respond to the Coronavirus public health crisis (COVID-19) matters related to disease prevention and control activities.

III. REQUIREMENTS FOR PROVIDERS and TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

i. DCF/OOL Regulated Providers

1. Licensed Centers

The licensing and inspection of child care centers (public or private with six or more children under the age of 13) is under the authority of DCF/OOL.

Licensed child care centers are required to prepare and post prominently, emergency procedures. Procedures include, among other things: relocation to an alternate indoor location with the same operating hours and procedures for obtaining emergency transportation to the alternate site, and a diagram showing how the center evacuated in an emergency. Additionally, procedures for ensuring the safety of children and communicating with parents in the event of evacuation, lockdown, disaster or other emergency; and requirements to ensure safe and timely evacuation of infants and toddlers. Moreover, licensed childcare centers must conduct two lockdown drills per year and maintain on file a record of each lockdown drill. (Monthly fire drills are also required, as is recordkeeping of these drills.) These regulations appear in the New Jersey Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers, N.J.A.C. 3A:52-5.3(n).

Lastly, staff are required to have yearly training on the center's emergency preparedness plan, including but not limited to, emergency evacuation and lock down procedures.

Licensed childcare centers are also required to: notify appropriate local law enforcement agency or emergency management office of pertinent information such as the name and location of the center, the number of children and adults on site, the need for emergency transportation, the location to which children will be evacuated and other information. The local law enforcement agency or emergency

management office receiving such notice identified in the posted emergency plan. These regulations among others are contained in the New Jersey Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers, N.J.A.C. 3A:52-5.3.

Moreover, the New Jersey Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers requires licensed childcare centers to maintain on file documentation of required staff training N.J.A.C. 3A:52-4.8(g).

OOL ensures compliance with the regulations by conducting yearly inspections of all licensed childcare programs in the State.

2. Registered and Approved Providers

Registration of family child care providers (who care for five or fewer children) is also under the authority of DCF/OOL. DCF/OOL approves DHS contracted CCR&Rs, which then handle the voluntary registration of family childcare providers.

Registered family child care providers likewise are required by state regulation to maintain and post prominently, a written plan for emergency evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, or lockdown. The plans must address, among other items, the following: an anticipated relocation site; procedures for communicating with parents and ensuring family reunification after the emergency; emergency transportation; and the unique needs of infants, toddlers and children with special needs or chronic medical conditions.

Moreover, providers are required to practice fire, shelter-in-place, lockdown, and evacuation drills with each child from all exit locations and at varied times of the day, and during varied activities, including naptime. Detailed documentation of the drills is required. Required, two shelter-in-place and two lockdown drills per year implemented and documented, as well as monthly evacuation and relocation drills. N.J.A.C. 3A:54-6.4.

In the event of an evacuation, shelter-in-place, or lockdown, registered family childcare providers must have a plan for notifying the local law enforcement agency or emergency management office of pertinent information such as the location of the home, the number of children and adults there, the need for emergency transportation, the location to which children will be evacuated, and other information. The local law enforcement agency or emergency management office are required to be notified and identified in the posted emergency plan. N.J.A.C. 3A:54-6.4.

Approved Homes regulated under the authority of Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development must undergo many of the same inspection requirements that Registered Homes managed and enforced by the CCR&Rs.

ii. **Programs in Public School Facilities**

Child care programs housed in public school facilities fall under the purview of the Department of Education (DOE) disaster preparedness guidelines. The DOE's, Office of School Preparedness & Emergency Planning (OSPEP) provides support to district and school leaders in assisting with the establishment and maintenance of school safety and security plan that addresses all hazards and follows the phases of crisis management planning, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Each school district is required to develop and implement comprehensive plans, procedures, and mechanisms that provide for safety and security in the school district's public elementary and secondary schools. The related rules are contained in N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1 through 5.7 (School Safety and Security). Additional rules found in N.J.A.C. 6A-16-6.1 through 6.5 (Law Enforcement Operations for Alcohol, other Drugs, Weapons, and Safety).

iii. **Summer Youth Camps**

Summer camps are required to meet specified health and safety requirements under State statute and regulations (N.J.S.A. 26:12, N.J.A.C. 8:25), with monitoring and enforcement falling under the purview of the New Jersey Department of Health (DOH). Among other requirements, camps required by State regulation to establish written emergency procedures that address, at a minimum, evacuation, fires, natural disasters, serious accidents, illness or injury and lost campers. N.J.A.C. 8:25-6.1. Camp directors are required to train personnel on these emergency procedures. N.J.A.C. 8:25-3.2.

iv. **License-exempt Providers**

Historically, a small number of license-exempt providers, approved providers, and other private childcare providers were not subject to DCF/OOL or any formal emergency preparedness regulatory requirements. Providers required to be licensed by DCF/OOL in order to serve CCDF families.

v. **Technical Assistance and Training Requirements for Providers**

State regulations require licensed child care centers and registered family childcare providers to receive emergency preparedness training. These r regulations appear in the New Jersey Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers, at N.J.A.C. 3A:52-4.7 and N.J.A.C. 3A:54-4.2. A variety of training resources are available to providers to assist them in satisfying these training requirements.

DHS/DFD offers a free online pre-service in emergency preparedness, as well as other health and safety training to all providers statewide at <http://www.childcarenj.gov/Providers/Training>.

OOL provides various resources to providers to assist with emergency preparedness. OOL offers technical assistance to licensed child care centers. OOL also coordinates trainings/meetings with Sponsoring Organizations so that they in turn can provide training to registered and approved family child care providers.

Furthermore, OOL has several resources that providers can use to establish individualized emergency preparedness plans for both family child care and center-based providers, including a “Technical Assistance Checklist” and an “Emergency Procedures” template. It can be completed with site-specific emergency information such as the location of the first aid kit, name and address of hospital where ill children are taken, etc., and then posted in a prominent location on the premises.

Pursuant to their contracts with the State, CCR&Rs must offer providers emergency preparedness and response training. They are directed by their contract with DFD to use the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (NACCRRA) Disaster Planning Guide. At a minimum, training must meet Caring for Our Children, National Health and Safety Performance Standards; and involve a toolkit that contains a Child Care Program Emergency Plan template, as well as other sample forms (emergency contact list, records and documents form, evacuation requirements form, and others), to assist providers in structuring their own emergency preparedness plans. <https://nrckids.org/files/CFOC4%20pdf-%20FINAL.pdf>

Furthermore, CCR&Rs are required to coordinate with local OEM offices on emergency preparedness training so that CCR&Rs will be able to assist their local providers. Some county CCR&Rs have already had training with either a local city official or with their County Emergency Management official.

Training related to disaster preparedness for DOE providers is contained in N.J.A.C. 6A:16-5.1 et seq. and for DOH providers in N.J.A.C. 8:25.

III. PLANNING FOR CONTINUATION OF SERVICES TO CCDF FAMILIES

A. OEM FUNCTIONS

The New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is the Lead Agency responsible for planning, directing and coordinating emergency operations within the State of New Jersey beyond local control. OEM coordinates the emergency response efforts of state agencies, allied agencies, county Offices of Emergency Management, and the private sector.

OEM works closely with federal, state and local partners to prepare for all hazards, natural or manmade, that could affect New Jersey's families, communities and businesses. Because there are numerous types of hazards, OEM works with many key partners and coordinates services at the state county and local levels. Within each county, there are coordinators to assist local government, not-for-profit, and for-profit agencies, including the childcare community, to prepare and plan for emergencies and disasters.

In addition, OEM quickly triages and addresses emergencies and helps entities easily access the various resources and services needed, such as transportation, resource support, search and rescue and human services.

The State OEM typically begins a traditional media and/or social media campaign to keep the public, including the childcare community, informed. It would send out an alert to all of the State departmental OEMs, which in turn would notify all of the departmental divisions, and each division would take appropriate action. Communication flows from the State OEM to the other state agencies, while county specific emergencies are handled at the local level by the county and municipal OEMs.

OEM is the leader in disaster management. All State entities adhere to their guidance and utilize their established partnerships as needed.

DHSOEM team will be at the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) coordinating Mass Care operations through any State/County/ and Local Partners. DHSOEM will also be able to identify and provide resources as needed that impact the child care community in their role at the SEOC. DHSOEM also works in coordination with NJ Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (NJVOAD) for any needed resources to support child care. The Division of Family Development will work in coordination with the Department of Human Services Communications Team to get critical messages out to our community during times of crisis.

B. OOL FUNCTIONS

1. All Hazards Department of Children and Families Disaster Preparedness Plan

DCF maintains a Statewide plan known as the "All Hazards Department of Children and Families Disaster Preparedness Plan" (DPP) that addresses all entities under its purview, including licensed centers and registered homes. The DPP based on the National Response Framework model, emphasizes a comprehensive and collaborative response following a disaster. The plan is geared towards ensuring the coordination and ongoing provision of all DCF services throughout the State and the continuity of business operations. The DCF Office of Emergency Management (DCF/OEM) has initiated and established connections with DHS, the NJ Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (OHS&P), OEM and the DOH. The plan is distributed to the American Red Cross, Salvation Army and The United Way. According to the DPP,

each DCF functional component has a designated order of succession. The DPP supports the ongoing 24-hour operation of the State Centralized Registry and a call center. The plan generally contemplates all hazards from Hurricanes and Nor'easters to active shooters, the release of hazardous materials and terrorism, as well as the effects of the current pandemic.

Generally, the plan breaks disaster response into three specific phases (1) the Planning and Preparedness Phase, (2) the Response and Mobilization Phase and (3) the Recovery Phase.

Despite the DHS/DFD role in providing a subsidy on behalf of children that attend the childcare facilities, DCF/OOL is the regulatory entity; therefore, the bulk of the response efforts are under the purview of DCF/OOL and the other State partners mentioned in this Plan.

2. General Practices

Immediately following a disaster, DCF/OOL reaches out to licensed childcare centers in affected areas to assess conditions and needs. Licensed centers are required to notify OOL if they are impacted in an emergency. N.J.A.C. 3A:52-3.2. Licensed centers are provided with contact numbers for OOL, which includes a toll-free number, the direct office number and the inspector's contact information. They can also contact their local CCR&R, which in turn can contact OOL on the center's behalf. After-hours emergency contact procedures implemented; for instance, during Hurricane Sandy, centers could call the State Central Registry (a child protection hotline) to connect with OOL for help. Various mechanisms including social media used to direct the providers to the State Central Registry.

After connecting with an impacted licensed center, OOL would then inspect the center and assess the situation, to determine, among other things, if the building that the program utilizes would be completely or partially safe to continue operating with children in care. OOL would then issue an inspection report with its findings. In cases where a center is damaged, OOL determines a plan of action on a case-by-case basis to assist the center in attaining compliance with state licensing regulations. OOL works closely with local enforcing agencies to ensure the safety of the childcare facility.

If a center deemed unsafe, OOL assists with an emergency relocation so that the children will not be without care. Once an alternate temporary location is found by the local CCR&R, the OOL inspector, or through other entities, OOL works with local enforcing officials to ensure that the alternate location is safe.

DFD and OOL will communicate regularly to ensure that CCDF and other providers receive the assistance they need from the appropriate agencies.

C. CCR&R Functions

Pursuant to the contracts between the State and each local CCR&R agency, CCR&Rs must meet various performance standards relating to emergency planning and preparedness. The contract provides that CCR&Rs utilize the disaster planning guide published by the NACCRRRA or a comparable document, as guidance to prepare their own disaster plans. Under the contract with the State, the CCR&R disaster plan must include the following:

1. A contingency plan for continuation of services to families and providers
2. Coordination efforts with the local emergency management agency and key partners
3. Outreach efforts to assess need and provide technical assistance to childcare providers
4. Assistance to families and providers with rebuilding efforts after a disaster
5. An emergency contact person and team and relocation and evacuation plans

The contract further requires CCR&Rs to get alternative contact information (alternate phone numbers, email addresses, etc.) from providers. Various methods of communication (email blasts, group phone calls, websites, etc.) are required to inform providers and parents of emergencies and continuity of service policies; and, to provide information and resources and coordinate with key partners to help families and providers expedite recovery efforts.

The NACCRRRA planning guide, incorporated by reference into the State contract with CCR&Rs, contains an extensive disaster preparedness checklist for CCR&Rs to aid them in case of a disaster, as well as detailed narrative guidance on CCR&Rs disaster preparedness. This planning tool also provides guidance to CCR&Rs on providing temporary childcare after a disaster and restoring childcare after a disaster. Finally, the NACCRRRA guide provides detailed guidance to CCR&Rs on how to help providers prepare for disasters.

Among other functions, CCR&Rs maintain lists of licensed childcare providers, as well as registered family care providers in their areas. After a disaster, if certain child care providers are unable to immediately resume services, the local CCR&R will provide referrals to other approved providers.

CCR&Rs will distribute information to victims about available help, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) public assistance grants, state, and local foundation grants, as well as information related to small business loans and emergency preparedness training.

D. Department of Health

For general emergencies, DOH regulations instruct camps to follow OEM guidance in the event of an emergency. N.J.A.C. 8:26-6.1

In the event of a public health emergency, such as COVID-19, DOH in conjunction with OEM are the lead agencies. Within the DOH sits the Division of Public Health Infrastructure, Laboratories and Emergency Preparedness (PHILEP). PHILEP works to coordinate the New Jersey's local public health agencies, laboratory services and preparedness for responses to emergencies.

PHILEP oversees the Emergency Preparedness and Operations Section, Office of Emergency Medical Services, Office of Local Public Health and the Public Health and Environmental Laboratories.

PHILEP interacts with other government agencies on the federal, state, county and local levels, as well as private and non-for-profit sector organizations.

PHILEP has developed a strategic plan that details how the Division will prepare for and respond to public health emergencies.

E. Department of Education

The Department of Education (DOE) has a guidance document entitled the *School Administrator Procedures: Responding to Critical Incidents*. The document provides complementary procedures. The procedures focus on the topics of bomb threats, active shooter response, lockdowns, evacuations and public information. These procedures serve to strengthen the emergency response system in all schools and enhance collaboration, communication and coordination.

Each school has a school safety and security plan. The plan must be reviewed at least once a year. The DOE recommended that the review occur by the third week in October. Additionally, the safety and security plan must be reviewed and updated anytime weaknesses are identified during a drill or actual emergency.

F. New Jersey Council for Young Children

The NJCYC was formed in order to develop high quality, comprehensive systems of early childhood development and care for children, birth to school entry. The NJCYC brings together critical decision makers for discussion on how to better coordinate and enhance services to young children so they have the support that they need to thrive.

G. DHS/DFD ROLE

Core functions that are handled by DFD in the case of a disaster include: (1) establishing policy on any temporary eligibility criteria for CCDF subsidies, and (2) ensuring that there are mechanisms in place for continued subsidy payments to childcare providers after a disaster. Local CCR&Rs then implement DFD policy and procedures. In the event of a disaster, DFD provides guidance on how to address

temporary, disaster-related needs of impacted CCDF families and impacted childcare providers. This typically is accomplished by issuing program instruction to CCR&Rs or via other routes.

Alternative routes included within the Division of Family Development existing organizational structure:

- Communications:
 - Post information for parent on “Preparing for Disaster”
<https://www.childcarenj.gov/Parents/Resources>
 - Continually updates the DFD Website with information specific to COVID-19
<https://www.childcarenj.gov/COVID19>
<https://www.childcarenj.gov/Resources/Coronavirus>
 - Parent Letters
 - Social Media Updates
 - Press Releases
 - Web text
 - Program Launch
 - Briefing Materials for Federal Government
- Facilities:
 - The Facilities/Mail Room staff supported the distribution of emergency materials. During the distribution of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE), the Facilities/Mail Room staff facilitated the receiving of shipments and the distribution of materials.
- Quality:
 - Coordinated efforts with Office of Licensing (OOL), Department of Health (DOH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), New Jersey’s Afterschool Network (NJSACC) and other Consultants to discuss and establish “How to Best Practices”
- Professional Development:
 - The Socio-Emotional Formation Initiative (SEFI) Training and Consultation
 - Child Care Development Block Grant (CCBG) – required trainings
- New Jersey Child Care Information System (NJCCIS)
 - NJCCIS is designed to serve as a one-stop for business operations related to licensed child care centers, registered family child care providers, the NJ Workforce Registry and Grow NJ Kids (GNJK) - New Jersey’s Child Care Quality Rating Improvement System.
 - Alerts, as well as specific and general information about programs are posted.
 - Providers are able to look up payments, research discrepancies and notify DFD of any temporary or permanent closures.
- Office of Special Projects

- Collaborates with Key Partners in Coordinating Responses, such as, but not limited to:
 - State of New Jersey’s Governor’s Office
 - New Jersey State Police
 - New Jersey Department of Health Emergency Medical Services (OEMS)
 - New Jersey Department of Health
 - Department of Education
- Active committee members of the Disaster Case Management Plan. Other committee members include, but not limited to: New Jersey Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NJVOAD), Long Term Recovery Groups, Early Childhood Disaster Committee members, Local Municipalities and other government organizations coming together to assess the needs of the community.
- Coordination of Closures and Reopening of Facilities
- Coordinated with Technical Assistance (TA) Centers to distribute PPE to Child Care Centers.

<https://www.nj.gov/governor/>

<https://www.njsp.org/>

<http://www.njvoad.org/>

Modified Eligibility Criteria for Families

In response to the current Pandemic, DFD issued Division of Family Development Program Instruction (DFDI) No. 20-05-02.

This Instruction informs all Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies of the established policy and procedure related to the New Jersey Child Care Program during a federal or state-declared emergency or disaster, to promote continuity of services to impacted children and families, and to maintain support for child care providers.

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act, Section 418 of the Social Security Act, in addition to federal and state Executive Orders, if any, enable states affected by emergencies with options to continue providing child care services despite disruptions to families and providers.

Updated Policies as per DFD Instruction 20-05-02:

POLICIES

A. Emergency and Disaster Plan Submission. CCR&Rs must submit their emergency and disaster plans to the Division for approval prior to its implementation and may modify such plans upon review and approval.

- B. Priority Criteria Classification.** Families impacted by federal or state-declared emergency or disaster are considered a priority population and therefore, eligibility determinations in these cases must be expedited and processed in accordance with the priority of service policy timelines.
- C. Child Protective Services Classification.** On a case-by-case basis, certain eligibility criteria may be waived on a temporary base for children of families impacted by federal or state-declared emergency or disaster classified under protective service classification status during the emergency.
- D. Alternative Document Verification.** If an existing applicant/parent is unable to provide an income verification document to continue eligibility, he/she may complete and submit the work verification form.
- E. Extended Recertification Timeline.** Recertification timelines shall be extended for three (3) months to allow extra time for submission of required paperwork and/or documentation or processing of applications. Families are eligible for continued child care for at least three (3) months to avoid interruption of child care services.
- F. Application/Documentation Submission and Timeline Extension.** Families whose initial applications are in pending status are eligible for a three (3) month extension from date of application to provide additional documents, if required.
- G. Agreement Flexibility.** Families are eligible to change their agreements based on their family needs, such as changing agreement from part-time to full-time for school- age children.
- H. Adverse Action Suspension.** Families in the process of going into the State Set- Off of Individual Liability (SOIL) system should be temporarily suspended.
- I. Modified Absence Policy.** Families are eligible for additional excused absences and required to document sick days as excused absences in EPPIC for children unable to attend child care.
- J. Co-Payment Adjustments.** Families are eligible to have their co-payment waived, when requested, due to an emergency or disaster.
- K. Delinking Provider Payment.** Providers caring for children are eligible for payment when families change providers due to closure.

- L. Additional Closure Days.** Providers who experience a short-term closure (three to ten consecutive days) are eligible for additional closure days. Because of adverse effects and uncertainties associated with emergencies and disasters, the additional number of closure days will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- M. Payment Based on Enrollment.** Providers who experience a long-term closure due to a state or federal declared emergency, which requires closure or children absences, are eligible for payment based on enrollment. Because of adverse effects and uncertainties associated with emergencies and disasters, the duration will be determined on a case-by-case basis
- N. Tracking and Reporting Cases.** CCR&Rs must track the services provided and the funding authorized and spent under the federal or state-declared emergency or disaster initiative, and submit the appropriate monthly report to DFD, Office of Child Care.

Modified Guidelines for Providers

- a) Temporarily may increase allowable paid program closure days if re-opening of a program is delayed due to a disaster.
- b) Temporarily may increase the allowable number of absence days per cycle, if warranted by extended absenteeism after a disaster.

1. Continuing the Subsidy

Payments to child care providers through the electronic E-Child Care (ECC) system is managed by a vendor, which contracts with DHS/DFD. It directs the deposit of funds into provider-designated bank accounts on a bi-weekly basis.

The New Jersey e-Child Care Provider Web Portal is a powerful tool that gives child care providers the ability to view information about their agreements, attendance transactions, payments, and other program information.

<https://www.echildcarenj.org/eccpw/> (ECC Provider Web Portal)

The State's vendor is required to have its own disaster plan, to ensure that payments can continue if a disaster occurs in the vendor's state or in a state where equipment is located.

If a disaster disables the ECC system in a particular area of New Jersey for a prolonged period, relevant information obtained manually, and entered in a different geographic part of the State not impacted by the disaster. Either the State, or non-impacted CCR&Rs, could input manual attendance records provided to them, and payments processed accordingly. Prior to ECC, DHS/DFD used a voucher payment system. In the event of an extended outage, DFD has experience issuing manual payments.

Furthermore, the ECC system promptly implement temporary, disaster-related modifications of program requirements. For instance, if after a disaster, the State allows several additional paid program closure days, this temporary policy change can be programmed into the ECC system so that providers can be electronically paid for the extra days.

The CARES system also has the capacity to set up wait lists, and it contains priority criteria that would apply to wait-listed applicants. Presently, there is no wait list in New Jersey, however, should a disaster strike and the demand for childcare exceeds the supply, the CARES wait-list system could be used to manage childcare applications based on disaster-related priority category.

IV. RESTORING AND REBUILDING CHILD CARE INFRASTRUCTURE

Child care providers in New Jersey should have a variety of resources to assist with business continuity should a disaster occur. Providers receive training through the CCR&Rs, via a training module, in all key components of emergency preparedness, including adequate insurance coverage and protection of records and assets. The CCR&Rs also provide consumer education to providers on engaging business associations, community development financial institutions and other organizations that could help allow providers to reopen.

Furthermore, providers can obtain information through the CCR&Rs and through the State's website about financial assistance available for rebuilding. The New Jersey 211 website also would have updated information on available financial assistance after a disaster. New Jersey maintains FEMA contacts for consultation regarding childcare services that may be eligible for reimbursement under the federal Public Assistance Grant program.

In the aftermath of a disaster, FEMA, US Small Business Administration (SBA) and other federal agencies, and State OEMs along with other State and local agencies, work together to facilitate recovery.

OEMs coordinate with FEMA and other agencies to direct available FEMA funds where they are needed. For instance, if a child care center is destroyed in a disaster, FEMA, State OEMs, and other agencies are expected to work together to direct available FEMA funds (like small business loans) to eligible needy child care providers. DHSOEM team works in coordination with FEMA/NJOEM in conducting Damage Assessments and applying for both FEMA Public Assistance and Individual Assistance Disaster Grants. At this time, DHSOEM develops information and guidance to share with DFD those centers that may be eligible for disaster assistance under PA/IA or SBA, in a Presidentially Declared Disaster.

<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/early-care-and-education-providers-taking-advantage-new-small-business-administration--and-grant>

<https://www.fema.gov/>

<http://www.nationalmasscarestrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/post-disaster-reunification-of-children-a-nationwide-approach.pdf> -

A. Additional Procedures and Standards

DHS/DFD uses two provider platforms to communicate and notify providers if an emergency arises. New Jersey Child Care Information System (NJCCIS) is a shared system with Department of Children and Families (DCF), Office of Licensing OOL, which house New Jersey provider data.

Additionally, the CCR&Rs have access to the system and receive notifications. DHS/DFD can place an immediate alert on the landing page and send out an email blast to providers. The communication functionality of NJCCIS provides instant notification to providers. NJCCIS has the capacity to alert OOL, CCR&Rs and individual child care providers of an imminent disaster.

DHS/DFD electronic payment system, (ECC system) tracks attendance and direct provider payments, and has the capacity to broadcast and deliver emergency messages to individual child care providers through the Point of Sale (POS) devices located at the provider sites. Emergency broadcast messages can be sent to CCR&Rs through the ECC Administrative Terminal, a web-based application for CCR&Rs that they log into to obtain information about childcare attendance, payments, etc. Emergency messages can be broadcast via the ECC Administrative Terminal statewide, or to individual counties that might be impacted by a disaster. For instance, if a disaster is imminent, a message can be sent via the ECC Administrative Terminal to CCR&Rs in the area that may be impacted that everyone must vacate the premises within a certain period. New Jersey will utilize this ability to broadcast where appropriate.

The addition of these two systems has strengthened communication and coordinated efforts amongst state agencies and partners to address emergencies as they arise, without the usual posting delays, and critical tool to help provide continuity of services.