

Pennsylvania Statewide Child Care Emergency Plan October 2020



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1.0 Background & Overview

1.1 Background

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania State Emergency Operations Plan (SEOP) is designed to assist state-level leaders and emergency management personnel in handling all phases of emergency management any type of disaster. It follows the principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS) as specified by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and as directed under the Governor's Proclamation on December 20, 2004. It also follows a format similar to the National Response Framework (NRF).

All-hazard emergency management acknowledges that most disasters and emergencies are best managed as a cycle consisting of four phases: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, with mitigation across all four phases. All-hazard emergency management also acknowledges that there are common emergency functional responses. To address these commonalities, the SEOP contains 15 functional annexes, each addressing an Emergency Support Function (ESF). The ESF is a mechanism that consolidates multiple agencies that perform similar or like functions into a single, cohesive unit to allow for the better management of emergency response functions. The Department of Human Services (DHS) has been tasked as the coordinating agency for Emergency Support Function Six (ESF #6).

Emergency Support Function (ESF) #6 – Mass Care, Shelter, and Human Services coordinates the delivery of Commonwealth mass care, emergency assistance, housing, and human services when county response and recovery needs exceed their capabilities. DHS's Response and Recovery Framework for Mass Care, Shelter and Human Services identify the authority, roles, and responsibilities for DHS executives and program offices to ensure the collective response to disasters and emergencies.

1.2 Scope

In September 2014, the federal Child Care Development Fund and Block Grant (CCDBG) was reauthorized. In Pennsylvania, CCDBG Act of 2014 provides the funding to support child care, through the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care to the DHS Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). These funds, along with the required matching state funds, support child care licensing, child care subsidy and the commonwealth's quality rating and improvement system, Keystone STARS. A key component of the CCDBG Act of 2014 reauthorization was the inclusion in the requirements for participating states to develop and disseminate a Statewide Child Care Emergency Plan.

In Section 658E(c) (2)(U) of the CCDBG Act of 2014, the Statewide Child Care Emergency Plan must include:

- Guidelines for continuing Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) assistance and child care services after a disaster, which may include provision of temporary child care, and temporary operating standards for childcare after a disaster.
- Requirements that child care providers receiving CCDF have in place procedures for evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, lock-down, communication and reunification with families, continuity of operations, accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.
- Requirements that child care providers receiving CCDF have in place procedures for staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training and practice drills.

In order to fulfil the requirement of Section 658, OCDEL has developed the following Statewide Child Care Emergency Plan with the intent to identify and communicate the processes and supports for child care in the event of an individual, local, regional or statewide emergency or disaster occurs. It outlines recommendations for planning preparedness, response and recovery from a disaster and the role the office will play in providing supports. The document provides guidance regarding Child Care Centers, Groups and Family Child Care Homes certified by OCDEL and also strives to provide information relevant to all other early learning programs in terms of recommendations and resources.

1.3 Assumptions

The following assumptions were considered in the development of the plan:

- Emergencies and disasters present themselves in all forms. While some provide advanced warning such as weather-related events, others may come about with no warning. The best way to prepare for a disaster is planning and practice.
- Child Care is a necessary component for families and should be restored as quickly as possible.
- All licensed child care providers are required to develop, provide staff orientation, share with parents, and file an individual emergency plan with their local municipality and county.
- DHS is the Coordinating Agency for ESF #6 – Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing & Human Services – when county and regional task forces' response and recovery needs exceed their capabilities. As such, DHS maintains plans and protocols for the implementation and management of child care in the event a state-managed shelter was to be activated.
- This document is a supplement to those plans developed by DHS and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) and does not serve to address the full scope of community or commonwealth response to a disaster or emergency.
- Time frames provided throughout the plan, unless specifically noted serve as guidelines for activities and may vary depending on the circumstance of the disaster or emergency.

1.4 Overview

The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) is a dual deputation of both the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) and Department of Human Services (DHS). As an office, many of the commonwealth's child serving systems are funded or supported by OCDEL staff or business partners. OCDEL serves as Pennsylvania's lead agency for the administration of the Child Care and Development Fund Block Grant. Additionally, OCDEL receives funding through the Office of Head Start for the Head Start State Collaboration Office and from the U. S. Department of Education to support services to children eligible for Early Intervention birth to three and three to school age.

1.4.1 Licensed Child Care

The standards to aid in protecting the health, safety and rights of children are found in PA Code Chapter 55, Sections 3270, 3280 and 3290 for child care centers, groups and family child care homes respectively. Those chapters identify the minimum level of compliance necessary to obtain the Department's Certificate of Compliance. Regulatory Amendment - On September 24, 2008, the child care facility regulations were amended to include the requirement for a facility emergency plan (see 55 Pa. Code §3270.27, 3280.26 and 3290.24, relating to emergency plan).

1.4.2 License-exempt Child Care

The only entities offering child care who are exempt for licensing in Pennsylvania are those entities who meet the definition of "Relative" established by the language of the CCDF Act of 2014. All other child care providers operating in Pennsylvania must hold a valid Certificate of Compliance. Relatives are considered to be: grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, and siblings over the age of 18 who do not live in the child's home. At this time there are no specific Pennsylvania requirements for licensed-exempt providers to have an emergency plan, but in terms of best practice it is advisable. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security as well as the American Red Cross support resources for families' emergency planning. See the Resource section at the end of this document for useful links.

1.4.3 Child Care Subsidies

Pennsylvania's child care subsidy program, Child Care Works, provides financial assistance to low income working families, families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), working families that have transitioned off of TANF (Former TANF) and families that participate in unpaid employment and training activities through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Child Care Works is administered by local Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) grantees, located throughout the commonwealth. The CCW program pays for child care while parents work or attend approved employment and training programs. To support continuity of operations during an emergency or epidemic, the Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) agencies' grant requires each ELRC regional operation have a way to continue supporting families in need of CCW and payment of CCW to child care provider agencies. Each ELRC have approved plans in place

in the event of an emergency or epidemic which may include staff working remotely from their traditional offices to ensure continuity of operations and supports to families.

1.4.4 Head Start

Head Start is federally funded through the Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start and state-funded PDE grants. OCDEL manages the oversight of those grantees receiving PDE funding through Head Start Supplemental Assistance Program (HSSAP). Information Memorandum ACF-IM-HS-09-09 outlines the recommendations for Head Start/Early Head Start programs to develop and implement an emergency plan.

1.4.5 Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts (PKC)

PDE also funds PKC. This state funded program offers early learning programming to 3 and 4-year-old children in approved provider settings (Child Care, Head Start, School District and Private Academic Preschool). Emergency preparedness is addressed in § 405.50. Emergency Response Plans of the PKC regulations.

1.4.6 Early Intervention

Infant Toddler and Preschool Early Intervention (EI) services support children with developmental delays and disabilities generally within their natural/least restrictive environments. Preschool EI programs that operate or contract to operate Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) classrooms must also develop policies in accordance with 22 Pa. Code § 10.24. Emergency and Nonemergency Response and Preparedness. It similarly outlines requirements for the development, sharing, practice and preparation in anticipation of emergencies or disasters.

1.4.7 Family Support/Home Visiting Programs

OCDEL funds and provides oversight and technical assistance for state- and federally funded family support and home visiting programs. Many of the family support programs implement evidence-based home visiting and positive parenting models to implement services which embed emergency preparedness in the program standards. As a best practice, families' individual preparedness should be encouraged. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security as well as the American Red Cross support resources for families' emergency planning. See the Resource section at the end of this document for useful links.

OCDEL has statutory authority over the licensing of child care facilities as well as the authority for the provision of subsidized child care through Child Care Works (CCW). The office does not have authority to take custody of children or provide them with direct care.

2.0 Disaster, Epidemic and Pandemic

2.1 Disasters can be human caused or natural catastrophes. The most common disasters in Pennsylvania are flood, fire, and weather. While it is impossible to plan for

every contingency, individual, families, businesses, communities and all levels of government have a responsibility to establish basic emergency planning. In some cases, there are regulations or laws requiring emergency and disaster planning and annual review and training around the content of the plans and responses.

2.2 Epidemic/Pandemic- An epidemic is actively spreading; new cases of the disease substantially exceed what is expected. More broadly, it's used to describe any problem that's out of control. An epidemic is often localized to a region, but the number of those infected in that region is significantly higher than normal. When an epidemic spreads across countries it is known as a pandemic. Emergency planning for preparedness, communication and response is equally critical in an epidemic or pandemic response. For the purposes of this document the term epidemic will be used.

3.0 Preparedness

Preparedness is fundamental to the success of any emergency plan. It allows for the consideration of the risks an individual provider, community or region could be exposed to; identification of internal and external resources to assist during an emergency or disaster; and designates critical roles for staff and volunteers to fill in the execution of an emergency or drill.

3.1 Providers

3.1.1 Many providers are required through statute or regulation to develop an Emergency Plan and file it with their local municipality. The Child Care Facility Toolkit is a resource to assist programs develop their plan. It can be accessed [here](#).

3.1.2 Child care providers receiving CCDF (regulations require all child care providers to have the plan) should include in their individual plan procedures for evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, lock-down, communication and reunification with families. In addition, the emergency plan must include accommodations for infants, toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.

3.1.3 Programs looking to identify the Emergency Manager for their municipality can do so by following this [link](#). Detailed steps are included in the Resource section at the end of the document.

3.1.4 Periodic Test & Readiness Activities- It is not sufficient to develop and file a plan. All staff should be oriented to the plan upon hire, annually, and when updates are made to the plan. An Emergency drill must be conducted at least annually. The types of drills should be varied so that staff, children and families have a level of comfort in responding to a variety of potential risks.

3.1.5 Preparedness for operations during an epidemic and pandemic can be guided by resources available through the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The Guidelines for Child Care that remain open can be found [here](#).

3.1.6 Preparation for an epidemic requires consideration for additional health screening protocols to be included in the development of an emergency plan or a separate Health and Safety Plan. Learning from the implementation of plans to respond to the novel coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic of 2020, sample plans can be accessed [here](#).

3.2 OCDEL

3.2.1 OCDEL will incorporate this Statewide Child Care Emergency Plan into the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) developed for the office.

3.2.2 On an ongoing basis, OCDEL will continue to evaluate, identify and hone internal and external supports for providers' health and safety efforts and their role in executing the plan.

3.2.3 Annually OCDEL will conduct a review of the plan and make revisions as needed.

3.2.4 The Statewide Child Care Emergency Plan will be posted on the Department of Human Services website for public access and review.

3.2.5. Some disasters or epidemics may necessitate the mandated closure of child care and early learning operations. In order to communicate to early learning providers and families the following processes will be implemented:

- Use of a waiver to operate for child care centers, group child care, and family child care homes. Communications regarding providers' eligibility to submit a waiver will be issued via listserv. A draft of the current waiver is included in the appendix of this document but may be modified as each event warrants.
- Modifications are being implemented to the consumer website, www.findchildcare.pa.gov to allow child care providers to indicate temporary closure due to the event. This feature will allow providers' information to continue to display for consumer search but will indicate a closure and the duration of the closure, if applicable.

4.0 Response

Pennsylvania follows the principals of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS). Immediate emergency or disaster response and recovery operations will be accomplished at the lowest level of government. Local jurisdictions will be responsible for all operations up to their capability. In that response the priorities are life-safety, protecting property and the environment and meeting basic needs. Response is identified as the time period immediately before, during and after an emergency event. It is during this time period where providers should be prepared to enact their Emergency Plan.

4.1 Providers

4.1.1 In the event of emergency providers should execute the portions of their plan that best address their needs for the immediate situation. Related to an emergency, a decision must be made to act on one of four paths. Should the program: lockdown; immediately evacuate; shelter in place; or evacuate to a relocation facility. For further information to understand the decision making behind these decisions follow the link to “Daycare Emergency Checklist” provided in the Resource Section of this document.

4.1.2 As soon as it is safe to do so, but no later than 24 hours after the emergency, child care providers should communicate with their Regional Child Care Certification Office and ELRC.

4.1.3 In the event of an epidemic, child care providers may make operational decisions to temporarily close. Closure notice should be provided to the Regional Office of Child Care Certification or to the RA-PWDRACERT@PA.GOV email account.

4.2 OCDEL

4.2.1 As appropriate, OCDEL will communicate directly using phone, email, listserv, media, or in person as necessary to share information with providers in the emergency zone.

4.2.2 OCDEL will collect and provide updates to the Secretary or designee as to the impacts of the disaster/emergency throughout the response period.

4.2.3 Individual events may necessitate the development and dissemination of new policies or procedures to adapt to the disaster or epidemic. OCDEL will develop a temporary webpage to post all information related the event to ensure providers can access important information and updates.

4.2.4 For events necessitating temporary closures for child care providers, OCDEL will post on the COMPASS website (www.findchildcare.pa.gov) an indicator of a facilities' temporary closure notice.

5.0 Recovery

Recovery is defined as the period after an emergency or disaster where individuals or the community as a whole is attempting to return to or has completely resumed normal activities. Depending on the circumstances of the disaster, Recovery can vary in length of duration.

5.1 Providers

5.1.1 A critical element of Recovery is communication with families of children enrolled in child care, staff, Regional Child Care Certification staff and local Early Learning Resource Center Office. It is important to establish whether the facility is operational so families can make appropriate alternative arrangements for child care.

5.1.2 Depending on the size and scale of a disaster or epidemic, ELRCs will partner with child care providers to identify placement opportunities for families who lost child care due to provider closures or emergency services workers supporting recovery activities.

5.1.3 If providers are unable to re-open their facilities due to the event, but have identified alternative facilities, it is critical to contact the Regional Child Care Certification Office immediately. They can start the process to expedite an emergency relocation or the licensing of a new facility.

5.1.4 Providers impacted by an emergency should conduct a self-assessment to identify needs for their facility if their intent is to reopen.

5.1.5 In the aftermath of a disaster, program staff may need to deal with the impacts of the disaster on their own family and may not be able to return to work. If a facility finds the need to hire additional staff or use volunteers to support reopening, they must continue to adhere to the Child Protective Service Law requirements for Child Abuse, Criminal Background, NSOR, and FBI Fingerprint Certifications. For more information about the requirements for mandated reporting and child abuse certifications visit the Keep Kids Safe PA website [here](#).

5.2 OCDEL

5.2.1 During Recovery, OCDEL or its business partners, the PA Keys to Quality or the ELRC agencies will collect data on the impacts of the disaster on the availability of child care in the impacted community as identify by the administration or the Regional Office of Child Care.

5.2.2 Using email or the Department of Human Services website, OCDEL will communicate information related to recovery efforts.

5.2.3 OCDEL Certification staff will support providers impacted by the event and assist with certification of temporary or relocated facilities.

5.2.4 As necessary, OCDEL will work with legal counsel to suspend or waive child care regulations as appropriate to support continuity of operations and to ensure health and safety efforts are responsive to the situation at hand.

5.2.5 After community level disasters or an epidemic, OCDEL will conduct after action review to determine what factors should be considered for future events and modify the Statewide Child Care Emergency Plan accordingly.

6.0 Critical Activities

6.1 Subsidized Child Care Continuity of Services – ELRC

The Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) agencies are the hub of child care information. They are the community-based organizations where low-income working families can get assistance with paying for child care, and all families can access resource and referral information to other community organizations. Additionally, they provide families with information on quality child care and personalized child care referrals to child care providers based on specific needs or preferences. Currently there are 14 agencies providing ELRC services in 19 regions across the commonwealth, who provide these supports for families and providers. A listing of ELRC agencies can be found [here](#).

To support continuity of operations during an emergency, ELRCs are required to have an emergency operation plan in place. Daily, the agreement requires each ELRC provide comprehensive information on all agency services which includes resource and referral services. In addition to the emergency response continuity operations plan, the ELRCs are also required to have a Data Disaster Recovery Plan and be operational within 72 hours

In an emergency disaster or epidemic, ELRC staff will continue to make parent services available to the general public and all families who may be eligible for subsidized child care. ELRC staff often provide additional resource and referral information for other community services and will continue to do so during an emergency. ELRC agreements with OCDEL require ELRC staff to be cross trained to assure core functions will be performed. Additionally, the ELRCs will complete needed special projects or assignments at the direction of OCDEL. Such projects during an emergency, disaster or epidemic may include the dissemination of funding similar to the CARES act funding project lead by the ELRCs during the COVID 19 pandemic.

In the event an ELRC office is impacted by an emergency, disaster or epidemic, the ELRC may work from locations other than their primary locations. They may work remotely from

their homes, within local state agencies, such as County Assistance Offices (CAO), other contractors such as another ELRC, or local community services, such as libraries.

OCDEL issued the Health and Safety Regional Task Force Expectations for ELRCs communication on 09/02/2020. The purpose of this communication was to inform ELRCs of OCDEL's expectations regarding the development of a Health and Safety Regional Task Force including its purpose, objectives, commitments, and long-term goals. This task force work will further assist the ELRCs in ensuring continuity of operations across the commonwealth during an emergency, disaster, epidemic, or other crisis. The ELRC's are expected to function as a connection among support systems and between support systems and the child care provider community. They are required to collaborate and bring together professionals to strategize on the consistent health and safety needs related to supports to ECE providers, identify needs, maximize resources, and leverage local and statewide strengths to address needs and improve services.

The subsidized CCW program's IT system, PELICAN Child Care Works, is web-based and can be accessed through any computer with internet access. The ELRC agencies can work with their local CAO to address the child care needs of families receiving TANF and SNAP. As detailed in section 1.4.3, ERLC operations must continue to pay CCW payments to child care providers and support families with their child care needs during an emergency, disaster or pandemic.

An epidemic may require limited face to face interactions partially or entirely. Each ELRC will have established procedures to support initial eligibility and redetermination activities remotely.

6.2 Continuity of Services – Providers

To support the much-needed systems level interventions of providers during an epidemic, in which the ability to offer guidance in a face to face manner is inhibited or prohibited, several OCDEL initiatives will adapt to continue those efforts. Specifically, those supports include Early Intervention (EI), Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMH), Home Visiting and a system of Health & Safety Supports through regional task forces across the Commonwealth. Each of these services will leverage virtual support, consultation and interventions as appropriate. Protocols are established to determine if a face to face visit is appropriate, critical and/or safe. Additionally, in order to ensure providers receive critical and required training on fire safety, an online, asynchronous training module is available at no cost to ensure when children and staff are in a space, they are properly prepared.

6.3 Continuity of Services – Families

In the aftermath of an emergency or a disaster, families may find their need for child care or circumstances for eligibility for subsidized care have been impacted. Below are some clarifications related to subsidized child care during an emergency or disaster:

6.3.1 Changes – Changes to location, number of hours, additional children to be served – Parents may request a change in provider, hours and days of care at any time. Parents may self-declare their need for additional days and hours of care for up to 30 days; then they must provide verification of the need. If parents are having difficulty producing verification, the ELRC agencies must help parents verify information. The ELRC may not deny or terminate subsidy when the parent has cooperated but is unable to provide the required verification.

The parent may choose any regulated provider, including a provider who may be operating at an emergency location, approved by certification.

Parents may request care for additional children living in the home. The children can be added to the family composition and can receive care if there is available funding and the parent/caretaker meets the requirements of the program.

6.3.2 Increased Wages – In the event a parent's employer increases the number of hours worked and in turn, increases income during a disaster, a procedure is in place to address increased earnings if families must work overtime due to circumstance – Parents do not have to report increased earnings unless they will permanently earn more than 85 percent of the state median income. Increased earnings based on temporary overtime do not have an impact on eligibility.

6.3.3 Maintenance of Eligibility - Families maintain eligibility for child care for a period of no less than 12 months. If a parent/caretaker is not meeting the work requirement due to a loss of work, the family's eligibility continues until the redetermination date. The parent/caretaker must be meeting the work requirement at redetermination. If the parent/caretaker is not meeting the work requirement at redetermination but can verify he/she has a job to return to within 92 days, the family may be eligible for presumptive eligibility for 92 days. If the parent/caretaker has not returned to work at the end of the 92 days, the family is ineligible.

Each event will be assessed individually. At the discretion of the administration eligibility renewals may be extended for families beyond 12 months to accommodate continuity of services as well as mitigate risk to families during a disaster or epidemic. Specific changes related to disaster or epidemic will be communicated to the ELRC via a policy Communication or Announcement.

6.3.4 Modification of Co-payment – During a family's 12-month period of eligibility, co-payments may be decreased based on the family's income. Co-payments may not be increased between redeterminations, even if the family's annual income increases. As each event is unique, specific protocol will be issued by a formal policy Communication or Announcement.

6.3.5 Streamlined Application Process – Families may apply on paper, or may apply online through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services COMPASS website at [COMPASS](#).

7.0 Temporary and Emergency Child Care

Definitions: The following words used in this protocol have the following meanings

- Emergency - an unforeseen combination of circumstances or the resulting state that calls for immediate action
- Temporary - lasting for a limited time.

7.1 Regional Office Notification

7.1.1 The operator shall immediately contact the regional office regarding the emergency at the facility. In the event of a facility fire, the operator must follow the requirements at 55 Pa. Code §3270.20 and §3280.20, relating to reporting injury, death or fire. The operator must inform the regional office of the status of the building and the need to relocate. If part of the child care space was not affected by the emergency and the building is deemed safe for occupancy by a code enforcement officer, child care may resume in the unaffected space. The operator must provide documentation of building safety to the regional office. The legal entity or the legal entity representative is responsible to inform the regional office of the following:

- Returning to the original location within 60 days
- Converting the current temporary location into a permanent location; or
- Plans to move to another permanent location within 60 days or a period defined by the Department as appropriate.

7.2 Initial Move to Temporary Location

7.2.1 If the operator is moving to a temporary location, the operator must obtain a certificate of occupancy within five business days following the temporary relocation.

7.2.2 Certification staff will conduct an initial inspection of the temporary location within five business days of the relocation. The initial inspection is limited to high risk items using the temporary relocation checklist. If the facility is in compliance with the regulations on the temporary relocation checklist, the certification staff will issue a certificate of compliance for 60 days.

7.2.3 If there are violations of the regulations on the temporary relocation checklist, the certification staff will assist the provider in developing an acceptable plan of correction and a schedule for verifying correction of these violations as soon as possible.

7.2.4 If the facility has a current STARS 2, 3 or 4 rating the legal entity will contact the ELRC to provide an update on the temporary relocation the location. Certification staff will also contact a STARS representative to provide an update on this temporary relocation.

7.2.5 The regional office will maintain the existing certificate of compliance for the original location.

7.2.6 If the provider is currently under a negative sanction, the sanction will follow the relocation. Nothing will disrupt the negative sanction process.

7.3 Returning to the Original Location

7.3.1 The legal entity must inform the regional office prior to returning to the original facility location.

7.3.2 If the facility sustained structural damage the legal entity must contact their local municipality to determine if an updated certificate of occupancy is required. If one is required, the legal entity must have the certificate of occupancy prior to the inspection noted below. If the local municipality determines that an updated certificate of occupancy is not required, the legal entity should request this in writing.

7.3.3 Certification staff will conduct a full inspection before child care may resume in the original location. The inspection will occur within 10 business days of notification that the site is deemed acceptable for child care purposes. The standard cycle of inspection and certificate renewal will resume.

7.4 Converting the Temporary Location into a Permanent Location or Moving to Another Permanent Location

7.4.1 The legal entity will submit a complete application for the site as a new location.

7.4.2 The Bureau will utilize the standard inspection process to make a certification decision.

7.5 Child Care in Emergency Shelter

7.5.1 Under the Emergency Support Function 6 (ESF-6), one of the four primary functions are: Mass Care: which includes sheltering, feeding operations, emergency first aid, bulk distribution of emergency items, and support for family reunification. DHS is the state's Coordinating Agency for ESF #6 and is therefore responsible to coordinate the Commonwealth's mass care response and recovery operations in close coordination with county governments, state and federal partners, VOADs, NGOs, and the private sector. DHS ESF-6 operations will assist local shelters as needed and activate state-owned assets to include facilities for shelters, trained staff and resources, or support public health with said resources when assigned by PEMA. DHS activates a shelter upon request of the local emergency management agency (EMA) or by order of the Governor

7.5.2 The Secretary, through the Response and Recovery Framework has designated the Offices of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) and Children and Youth and Families (OCYF) as having responsibility to dedicate staff to support shelter operations.

7.5.3 Congregate sheltering, feeding, and distribution of emergency supplies addresses accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.

7.5.4 Through advance planning, an agreement has been reached with the Church of the Brethren, Children's Disaster Services (CDS) to provide trained and certified volunteers to establish temporary child care centers in Red Cross managed or state-managed shelters as appropriate. CDS provides its volunteers with background clearances and training on the unique needs of children in disasters.

8.0 Communication

8.1 OCDEL

8.1.1 OCDEL uses information provided by child care and other affiliated early learning program facilities to communicate on an individual basis. To the greatest extent possible, it is critical that phone numbers and email addresses are provided to the primary contact for each facility.

8.1.2 In the event OCDEL is informed of an emergency or a disaster, where appropriate individual contact would be made to programs.

8.1.3 In the event OCDEL is informed of a widespread emergency or disaster, OCDEL will use listserv, public announcement and website postings to inform child care and other early learning providers of relevant information.

8.1.4 During an emergency or disaster, OCDEL or its business partners will collect local or regional information as to the status of the event for the intent to keep the Secretary and Deputy Secretary informed and to assist in prioritizing follow up activities.

8.1.5 As needed information will be conveyed to PEMA, and Region III Office of Child Care to inform appropriate response.

8.1.6 Using the PA Key, OCDEL will implement an event specific webpage for communication and posting of updates, policy and resources. The information will remain available post event for 60 days then will be removed.

8.2 Media

8.2.1 Department and Office communications to the general public will be coordinated by the DHS Press Secretary or their designee.

8.2.2 Requests for impact statements or updates intended for public information from the press, TV or other media outlets should be directed the Department of Human Services Newsroom, Phone: (717) 425-7606.

9.0 Family Reunification

9.1 Children are the responsibility of their caregiver until such time as their parent or approved guardian can retrieve them from the child care facility.

9.2 Reunification includes identifying the correct parent/guardian, verifying their identity, and documenting the child's release to their custody.

9.3 In the event that a child's custody is unclear or when multiple persons seek to claim a child, all information will be turned over to the County Children and Youth Agency (CCYA) or Law Enforcement for their investigation and determination of custody.

9.4 Under the Emergency Support Function 6 (ESF-6), one of the four primary functions are: Mass Care: Congregate sheltering, feeding, distribution of emergency supplies, and reunification of children with their parent(s)/legal guardians and adults with their families.

9.5 The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (PA DHS) is the state lead for ESF-6 and is therefore the coordinating agency to assist local reunification efforts should they be overwhelmed.

9.6 During a disaster, there may be children who will need short- or long-term placements if their parents/guardians become incapacitated, die, or cannot be located. If an unaccompanied minor housed in the shelter cannot return home and needs suitable living arrangements, PA DHS will notify law enforcement and the county children and youth agency (CCYA) within 24 hours. The child will remain with PA DHS until the child's parent/legal guardian, CCYA or law enforcement takes custody of the child

10.0 Emergency Behavioral Health (EBH)

Emergencies or disasters can create or exacerbate behavioral health problems. Emergency Behavioral Health (EBH) teams are comprised of disaster behavioral health professionals and para-professionals, organized at the county level, trained to deliver Psychological First Aid (PFA) and provide referrals to additional services to support disaster victims and their families in accordance with standards established in the state Emergency Behavioral Health Plan. EBH Teams are deployed through the respective county Emergency Management Agency.

A listing of the local Mental Health offices can be found at: [Local County Mental Health Contacts.](#)

11.0 Plan Review

11.1 The Early Learning Council/State Interagency Coordinating Council (ELC/SICC) will receive and have opportunity to comment on the initial and revised Statewide Child Care Emergency Plan.

11.2 Annually an ad hoc committee of the ELC/SICC will convene to review the plan, any after incident recommendations, current updates related to best practice and complete an update of the plan.

11.3 Updates to the Statewide Child Care Emergency Plan will be approved by the Secretary and subsequently posted on the DHS website.

12.0 Resources

12.1 PA Code [PA Codes](#)

12.2 Municipal Emergency Management contact website: [Municipal Emergency Management Statistics](#)

- 1) When the page opens, select the county or municipality name if known
- 2) Select the button "Remove All"
- 3) Then in the left-hand box, scroll down and highlight "39- Emergency Management Coordinator"
- 4) Select the button "Select" and it should appear in the right-hand box
- 5) Select the button "Display" Report. It should provide the contact information for the selected municipality.

12.3 Head Start Emergency Preparedness Manual: [Head Start Emergency Manual](#)

12.4 Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency. Practical Information on Crisis Planning: a Guide for Schools and Communities: [Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency](#)

12.5 Daycare Emergency Checklist: [Daycare Emergency Checklist](#)

12.6 Children's Disaster Services, Church of the Brethren - [Brethren Church Children's Disaster Services](#)

12.7 Early Learning Resource Center listing - [Early Learning Resource Center](#)

12.8 Department of Homeland Security – [Homeland Security](#)

12.9 American Red Cross - [American Red Cross](#) and American Red Cross Safe and Well: [American Red Cross Safe and Well](#)

12.10 Health and Safety Plan template [Health and Safety Plan Template](#)

Appendix – Draft Waiver Form

Exemption of Directive to Temporarily Close

Child Care Centers and Group Child Care Homes operating in non-residential buildings are directed to temporarily close effective Monday March 16, 2020 by Executive Order of Governor Wolf unless an Exemption has been granted by the Department of Human Services.

Exemption to the Directive to Temporarily Close may be granted when the child care facility is caring for children of essential workers.

Exemption to the Directive to Temporarily Close may be requested and documented by completing and signing the form below.

Legal Entity Name:	
Legal Entity Address:	
Location Name:	
Location Address:	
County:	MPI Number:
Reason for requesting the exemption:	
<p>I certify that I meet the exemption requirements as listed above. I hereby swear/affirm that the information as set forth in true and correct.</p>	
Signature of Legal Entity or Legal Entity representative	
Title	Date:
Name of Legal Entity or Legal Entity representative	
Title:	Date:

March 18, 2020