
March 25, 2020

COVID-19 Guidance for License-Exempt Child Care Centers Providing Emergency Child Care to Essential Workers

Per Governor Pritzker's Stay at Home Executive Order issued on Friday, March 20, 2020, all child care programs were closed. **Where possible, children should be kept at home.** Effective Monday, March 23, 2020, Governor Pritzker amended the Executive Order to allow [certain license-exempt child care centers](#) to provide care for the children of [essential workers](#) without needing to apply for an Emergency Child Care License during the COVID-19 State of Emergency. Examples of programs that may provide emergency care without applying for an Emergency Child Care License include:

- Programs operated by public or private elementary school systems; secondary school units; or institutions of higher learning.
- Programs operated by a school registered with the Illinois State Board of Education and recognized or accredited by a national or multi-state educational organization or association which regularly recognizes or accredits schools such as Association Montessori Internationale or the American Montessori Society.
- Any type of day care center that is conducted on federal government premises.
- Partially exempt child care programs, as defined under Title 89 of the Illinois Administrative Code, Sections 377.2, such as school-age programs operated by a nonprofit partner in a school setting.

License-exempt centers who choose to provide care for the children of essential workers do not need to apply for an Emergency Child Care License but are strongly encouraged to [contact the Child Care Resource and Referral \(CCR&R\) system](#) to inform them that they are offering emergency child care. This way, CCR&Rs representatives can connect essential workers to available child care options via a [COVID-19 Emergency Provider Search](#) webpage.

License-exempt centers operating during the emergency should serve a maximum of 10 children per classroom; programs are encouraged not to exceed five classrooms to minimize the number of individuals with whom children and staff may come into contact. Children and staff should not move between rooms, and the mixing of groups during drop off and pick up should be avoided to the maximum extent possible.

License-exempt child care centers who are providing emergency child care should follow newly developed [guidelines developed by the Illinois Department of Public Health \(IDPH\)](#), which were informed by [CDC guidelines and best practices](#) for caring for children. Providers who are in a higher risk group for COVID-19, such as those over age 60 or with a pre-existing health condition, are discouraged from providing care during this public health emergency. All persons providing care for children in a license-exempt center should have a [current background check](#) and be appropriately qualified to care for groups of children.

License-exempt centers are allowed to apply for an Emergency Child Care License from DCFS if they so choose. To apply, complete an [IDCFS Application for Child Care Facility License](#) and submit it to Emergency.Daycare@illinois.gov.