



March 15, 2020

Good Afternoon Child Care Provider Community,

The Early Learning Coalition of Orange County has been monitoring the COVID-19 information related to school closures and changes in community partners business operation. At this time, the Governor's Office, the Office of Early Learning, and Orange County Government have issued no required closures of early care and education facilities.

We are recommending as part of your continuing business operations and processes that you practice CDC health care guidelines and monitor yourselves, facility, staff, and children for health concerns. Please notify the Coalition of any closures mandated or voluntary. (NOTE: **voluntary closures are not eligible for reimbursement under current rule.**)

Further, please find an overview of how our partnerships and current regulations work for emergency closures and child attendance:

1. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) takes the lead on evaluating health and safety at child care sites.
2. In the case of infectious diseases, DCF and the Department of Education/Office of Early Learning (DOE/OEL) would follow any instructions provided by the Florida Department of Health (FDOH) related to quarantine or child care site closure due to potential virus exposure.
3. If a child care sites close voluntarily without any confirmed cases, they take the risk of not being paid at all since there are no child absences. If the center is closed, no child can be absent.
4. If a child care site is required close due to potential/actual virus exposure, OEL has administrative code (rule) provisions that will allow early learning coalitions to continue to reimburse the provider during the temporary closure.
  - a. For school readiness (SR), coalitions may continue to reimburse providers for child care services (given the children are not being served by another SR provider) for as long as the emergency dictates that the site be closed. [See Rule 6M-4.501\(2\), F.A.C.](#)
  - b. For voluntary prekindergarten (VPK), coalitions may continue to reimburse the providers for up to five (5) instructional days. Beyond this, VPK providers would have to make up those instructional days lost due to closure. See [Rule 6M-8.204\(5\), F.A.C.](#)
5. Regarding child absences, the SR rule allows a child to be absent for up to 10 days (3 unexcused absences and 7 excused absences) per calendar month. See Rule [6M-4.500\(4\)\(a\), F.A.C.](#) For VPK, a provider may be reimbursed for the full FTE if a child is absent no more than 20% of the instructional days of the month.
6. At this point and until OEL receives further instructions from DOE, temporary closures and absence allowances beyond what is allowed in the SR and VPK rules are not in effect.

Finally, OEL currently does not have a protocol in place for those that travel internationally or to a level II country and need to be self-quarantined for 2 weeks. At this point we would recommend that everyone follow the guidance and instructions provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), FDOH, and your local health department/authority.

If a provider refuses to care for a child or has voluntarily closed, the Coalition will look at transferring the child to an operating facility if there is no evidence of exposure to the virus based on CDC and FDOH protocols.

OEL is in review of its reimbursement and attendance regulations as it relates to this matter and will make sure to inform early learning coalitions and providers about any changes that may impact the current process.

In advance, thank you for your continued partnership and dedication to the children and families of this community. The Early Learning Coalition of Orange County is operational. We will suspend in-person staff activities and have closed our offices to in-person meetings with outside vendors, parents, teachers, directors, owners and community partners. As a courtesy and to assist with the maintenance for your facilities' health, we will be providing training and technical assistance virtually from our offices. This will limit the disruptions and unnecessary foot traffic. However, should you need any assistance, please reach out to your Provider Relations and/or Provider Services staff member.

We will provide an update as information becomes available.

Additional information can be found at the CDC web address:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

And FDOH site:

- <http://www.floridahealth.gov/diseases-and-conditions/COVID-19/covid19-toolkit.html>.

Sincerely,



Mary Harper, PhD  
Chief Program Officer  
Early Learning Coalition of Orange County