

April 13, 2020

Emergency Child Care Initiative

For Santa Barbara County

~In response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Help is available NOW to link essential employees of critical employers to licensed child care. Contact us today to make arrangements, in preparation for the ramp-up of services that is expected in the next few weeks.

The Emergency Child Care Initiative for Santa Barbara County (ECCI) offers partial funding for emergency child care services for critical health care providers, first responders and essential food distribution employees during the COVID-19 outbreak. An incubator fund has been established with United Way of Santa Barbara and several local philanthropic foundations have joined the effort, led by Jane and Paul Orfalea/the Audacious Foundation and the Natalie Orfalea Foundation, with Lou Buglioli. Grants will be offered through this funding collaborative to match contributions from employers and other partners involved in each emergency child care project.

In addition to funding, ECCI helps match essential employers with appropriate child care to meet employee need and hands-on support to ensure the program and employer match works well for children and families. It is the objective of this initiative that children of employee populations (especially health care and first responders) are kept as separate as possible and children are cared for in safe facilities with attention to their health, wellbeing and social emotional needs during this crisis. Leaders in local child care systems including the Santa Barbara County Education Office Child Care Planning Care Council, First 5 of Santa Barbara County, and Children's Resource and Referral of Santa Barbara County are aligning efforts, playing key roles in developing the communitywide response and supporting the emergency child care providers.

The steps are as follows:

1. ECCI connects with an employer whose employees may need licensed child care to be able to perform essential work during the COVID-19 crisis, based on the priority list below.
2. ECCI provides an online employee child care survey (Google Form) and an instructional email template that can be customized for each employer. The employer emails the survey to employees and collects the data through Google Form.
3. The employer relays a summary of the child care needs of employees to ECCI – where and when child care is needed, and for which ages.
4. If the survey reveals a child care need, ECCI identifies options for those employees in a licensed child care program, with the goal of keeping the children of those employees together. Care may be provided:
 - a. in a center that is currently operating, with the employees' children in classrooms separate from other children,
 - b. in a single child center where just employee children are enrolled, or
 - c. in one or more family child care homes that can accommodate the children and keep them together.

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5. The child care provider or employer may apply for ECCI funding through a simple application to help pay for the program. ECCI funds can be requested for general child care operation expenses and other costs specific to emergency child care, such as “hazard pay” for teaching staff and parent scholarships.
6. The balance of the budget should be secured through a partnership between the child care provider, the employer, the employees who pay tuition and any other project partners. Employer contributions can include cash for program operations or parent scholarships; or in-kind support, including critical services such as meals/food and cleaning services.

Priority for recipients of emergency child care projects will be as follows:

- ✓ First Priority: Employees of essential health care services such as hospitals, essential health clinics, ambulance drivers, and first responders who do not have another childcare option while working.
- ✓ Second Priority: Employees involved in the distribution of food such as grocery stores, School Food Service, and Foodbank (this does not include private restaurants) during the COVID-19 outbreak.
- ✓ Third Priority: Employees involved in other essential services providing critical services to vulnerable populations impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. For the purposes of this grant, priority will go to essential workers specifically including farmworkers/ agricultural production, nursing homes, garbage collection/ sanitation workers, gas station staff, workers managing medical waste or medical supply chain, etc.

Within all the above tiers, children ages 6 months to 12 years will be prioritized.

Expectations and Support:

All emergency child care programs must agree to follow the COVID-19 guidelines for child care that were developed to prevent the spread of the disease and must ensure that childcare workers are trained on how to properly screen children for COVID-19 symptoms, as well as how to properly sanitize facilities on an ongoing basis and follow all recommended spacing and isolation procedures. County-wide resources will be in place to support the implementation of the guidelines. Programs will be provided support for the implementation of the health and safety guidelines, and other program assistance. Child care is expected to be the highest quality possible, to ensure children’s wellbeing, and to allow parents to do their essential work without worrying about their children’s care.

For more information, please contact:

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