



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Early Learning Division



June 11, 2020

Dear Provider,

As you know, we have been operating under Emergency Child Care (ECC) rules and guidance since mid-March as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Early Learning Division (ELD) has been working closely with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to make sure ECC rules and guidance are up-to-date as our knowledge about how COVID-19 spreads and affects adults and children evolves.

As more counties move into new phases of re-opening and school districts look toward planning for the fall, I am writing to let you know that we are beginning work with the OHA on the next phase of ECC guidance. Our goal is to release final updated statewide guidance for ECC by **Friday, August 14, 2020**.

This effort will continue to be based on what science tells us about how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and incorporate your feedback and expertise on how to operate child care that is safe for you, your staff, and the children in your care. Since the start of this emergency, we have heard from many of you that health and safety is your primary concern in operating or re-opening. This will remain a priority.

This next phase of guidance will not be a return to “business as usual” pre-COVID-19. This is because the virus remains in our communities. As we look to other businesses that have re-opened, all are doing so with new guidance, particularly regarding maintaining six feet of physical distance. To date, physical distance remains one of the most effective strategies for COVID-19 prevention. However, that is not entirely possible in child care, particularly for younger children. As a result, ECC rules and guidance have centered on keeping groups smaller and more stable than normal, frequent cleaning, and exclusion of symptomatic adults and children.

At the same time, we have heard from many of you about your concerns with the challenges of implementing these safety practices without support in the long term, particularly the feasibility of operating with smaller group sizes. We know it has an effect on the bottom line of your business. We have also heard from you about the difficulties of turning families away, as quality child care is an essential support for families to thrive and for children to learn and grow.

Therefore, the next phase of ECC guidance will take into account all of these factors, including looking at the possibility of flexibility to increase group size requirements in consultation with OHA. It will take all of us working together to find new ways to ensure child care is safe, and all of you are supported to operate during a pandemic for the foreseeable future.

Beginning the week of June 22, 2020, we will begin using our weekly calls by facility type to hear your concerns and suggestions, and other methods, such as surveys of child care staff and partner webinars, to solicit your input on updated guidance. ELD is committed to ensuring that there are multiple

opportunities and venues for child care staff and business owners to provide input on the updated ECC guidance before it is finalized.

We are also working on plans to resume visits and inspections from licensing specialists across the state and working on supports to help child care businesses access essential supplies, and supporting staff to understand and implement sanitation and other health and safety precautions.

As a field, we have always prioritized the health and safety of children and early care and education professionals. This is no exception. Thank you for your continued commitment to this work and to children and families in Oregon.

Sincerely,



Miriam Calderon
Early Learning System Director
Early Learning Division



Amy Joyce
Child Care Director
Early Learning Division