



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Department of Early Education and Care

Temporary Policy	
<p align="center">Subsidy Policy Related to COVID-19 Emergency Closures</p>	<p align="center">Field Operations – Subsidized Child Care Providers</p>
<p align="center">Effective Date: July 20, 2020 Updated: September 17, 2020</p>	

Through this policy, EEC seeks to offer guidance on subsidy policies related to notification, approval, and reimbursement for COVID-19-related emergency closures during the COVID-19 Emergency. *Please note that all other emergency closures (flood, snow, power loss, etc.) will be handled following the existing subsidy guidelines for General Emergency Closures as detailed in the Financial Assistance Policy Guide Appendix F.*

Closures

An Approved Closure is determined when an Educator/Provider has followed the proper EEC notification protocol to request closure days *and* has received written acknowledgment via email from the Regional Director confirming that the request meets approved COVID-19 related closure criteria.

This policy is applicable to programs that need to close temporarily due to COVID-19 related reasons. This refers to all types of COVID-19 related closures, whether mandated or the program chooses to proactively suspend operations. Such closures shall include:

- closures due to staff illness, including that which may compromise staffing numbers and negatively impact ratios and supervision of children;
- child illness;
- closures to sanitize the location¹;
- program closures following advisement by the local board of health or Department of Public Health epidemiologist; and
- other COVID-19 related reason, as approved by EEC.

Unapproved closures will include any days that the Educator/Provider has not received an acknowledgement of Approval for Closure and is found to be not open for child care or when the program requests to close for a reason not included as an approved closure. Educators/Providers that close without following the proper EEC notification protocol below to obtain EEC approval for closure may not be reimbursed for subsidy. Please note that scheduled closures for holidays or professional development are not considered in this policy.

Process for Requesting Approval for a COVID-19 Related Closure

¹ A program that closes to sanitize the location may be reimbursed for no more than 3 consecutive days (note: the CDC recommends that cleaning procedures begin one day after a program has suspended operations). There is nothing that restricts more than one round of 3-day closures for sanitization.

Child Care Educators/Providers must notify EEC of any COVID-related emergency closure request. This applies to all types of COVID-19 related emergency closures, whether mandated by the Department of Public Health or an associated authority (i.e. DPH epidemiologist, local Board of Health) or chosen by the Educator/Provider, and may include requests for closures due to illness, quarantine, cleaning/sanitizing, advisement from the local board of health, or other COVID-19 related reasons, as approved by EEC.

Educators/Providers requesting to temporarily close for a COVID-related reason must notify EEC by calling or emailing the Regional Director within 24 hours of the anticipated closure or sooner to report on the reason for the request and the anticipated dates of closure. The Regional Director will approve all COVID-related closures that meet the criteria described above. If the Regional Director has questions or concerns about the approval of a specific COVID-19 related closure request, the Regional Director shall consult with the Commissioner. EEC reserves the right to request additional information when determining approvals for closure days.

Please note: Closure days shall not be considered approved by EEC until the Regional Director sends out an acknowledgement email to the Educator/Provider.

Following approval of a requested closure, the Regional Director shall email the Educator/Provider as soon as possible with the following acknowledgement:

- Date request was made to the Regional Director
- Approved reason for closure
- Dates approved for closure

Reimbursement

All COVID-related emergency closures approved by the EEC Regional Office will be reimbursed by EEC for up to three (3) consecutive emergency closure days. Requests for reimbursement for medically necessitated closures beyond three (3) consecutive days may be considered on a case by case basis. In rare occasions only when additional information is needed, EEC may require documentation from the local board of health to verify mandated and/or medically necessitated emergency closures due to COVID-19. For each event requiring a Child Care Educator/Provider to close for emergency purposes, Parents may not be charged Parent Fees for more than three (3) closure Days (only applicable after EEC has resumed the collection of parent fees).

Contracted Child Care Educators/Providers must maintain all approvals for COVID-19 related closures on file.

Voucher Child Care Educators/Providers must provide a copy of the EEC Regional Office approval to their CCRR for payment.

Resuming Care Following an Approved Closure²

Educators/Providers shall resume care on the first care day following the last approved date of closure. For example, if the Educator/Provider operates on a Monday – Friday schedule and has been approved for closure on Wednesday and Thursday, care shall resume on Friday. Educators/Providers that are unable to resume care on the established day must notify the Regional Director immediately to request a new approval. Educators/Providers that remain closed without following the proper EEC notification protocol above to obtain EEC approval for additional closure days shall not be funded for additional closure days.

² EEC may require documentation from the local board of health, Department of Public Health, or other entity prior to approving the reopening of child care following COVID-19 related exposure. Programs unable to reopen on the anticipated date due to COVID-19 related reasons will not be penalized.