

Child Care Centers Close on April 1 unless Serving Children of Essential Workers

Governor Murphy Signs Executive Order Requiring Child Care Centers Close on April 1 Unless Serving Children of Essential Workers

Governor Phil Murphy today signed Executive Order No. 110, directing all child care centers in New Jersey to certify by Friday, March 27, that they will solely serve as emergency child care centers for the children of essential workers. Child care centers that do not certify that they can and will exclusively care for these children of essential workers must close by Wednesday, April 1.

“Essential personnel are a vital part of our response and limiting child care to solely these individuals will assist in flattening the curve of COVID-19 cases, as well as provide our front-line workers with the critical services they need to get through this emergency,” said Governor Murphy. “A lack of child care cannot be a barrier for our essential employees, and while these workers commit themselves to our New Jersey family, we will commit ourselves to protecting their families.”

“Safe, dependable childcare has always been a necessity for working families,” said New Jersey Department of Children and Families Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer. “It is even more crucial now for parents working in professions deemed essential during this public health crisis. The state’s response to, and recovery from, the Novel Coronavirus really hinges on the skills and ability of our dedicated first responders and essential personnel. We need to do all we can to help them do their jobs without the worry and distraction of losing safe childcare options.”

“In this ongoing emergency, child care providers and staff who care for the children of essential workers are vitally important to our children and to the State’s response,” Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson said. “We thank the entire child care workforce for their dedication and commitment every day, and especially during this difficult time.”

Among the directives, the Governor’s executive order directs:

- The Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families, in consultation with the Commissioners of the Departments of Education, Human Services, and Health, shall implement a plan permitting access to emergency child care services for the children of “essential persons.”
- In order to be designated as an Emergency Child Care Center, any person or organization, requesting permission to stay open or resume operations on or after April 1, 2020, shall submit the certification form to the Commissioner of Children and Families for approval by Friday, March 27, 2020. If the certification form demonstrates that it will provide child care services exclusively to “essential persons” during the school closure period, and that it will follow all applicable emergency child care standards, the Commissioner shall authorize it to remain open or resume operations as an emergency child care center.
- Any child care centers, including those as defined in this executive order, that fail to timely certify shall be closed to the public as of Wednesday, April 1, 2020, and remain closed through the school closure period. Centers shall receive notice of the Commissioner of Children and Families’ certification decision by Monday, March 30, 2020.

- Child care centers, for purposes of this order, include entities providing care on a regular basis for children aged 0-13, including licensed child care centers.

For purposes of this order, essential persons shall include, but not be limited to: 1) Health care workers, including staff working in health care facilities and in community-based services including home health and behavioral health; 2) law enforcement personnel, fire and emergency services personnel, and staff at correctional facilities; 3) individuals employed at emergency child care centers operating on or after April 1, 2020; 4) staff working for entities that provide essential social services, including, but not limited to, group home and shelter staff; 5) essential government employees who are unable to work from home, including child protection services workers, child welfare workers, foster care workers, unemployment compensation processing staff, and public health employees; and 6) certain critical workers, as defined by the Commissioner of DCF, at essential retail businesses, as defined in Executive Order No. 107 (2020) and subsequent Administrative Orders. The Commissioner of DCF shall have the authority to make changes to this list.

The order will take effect immediately.