



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Department of Early Education and Care

Policy	
<p>COVID-19 Emergency Closure Policy for Subsidized Child Care</p> <p>Effective Date: July 20, 2020 Updated: September 8, 2021</p>	<p>Field Operations – Subsidized Child Care Providers</p>

Through this policy, EEC seeks to offer guidance on subsidy policies related to notification, approval, and reimbursement for COVID-19-related 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](#).*

COVID Incident Reports

This Policy does not supplant any obligations that child care programs have to report COVID incidents to EEC and the Department of Public Health pursuant to the COVID-19 Incident Reporting Policy¹ found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/covid-19-incident-reporting/download>. This Policy *only* pertains to child care providers receiving subsidy.

Reasons for Closure

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 to reduce the risk of spread of COVID-19 and to protect the health and safety of children and staff. 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 location²;
- closures due to administration of the vaccine;
- closures due to short-term side effects after administration of the COVID vaccine;
- staff absences and sanitization of facilities prior to school reopening;
- program closures following advisement by the local board of health or Department of Public Health epidemiologist; and
- other COVID-19 related reason.

¹ In some rare instances, a program may close pursuant to this policy but *not* be required to file a COVID Incident Report with EEC.

² 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.

Unapproved closures will include any days that require approval as detailed below and the Educator/Provider has not received an acknowledgement of approval but is found to be not open for child care. Educators/Providers that close without following the proper protocol detailed 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

When EEC Approval Is Required to Receive Subsidy Payments

Closures for Three Days or Fewer

Programs may close for up to three (3) days or fewer due to a COVID-related reason detailed above and continue to receive subsidy payments during the closure period without approval from the EEC Regional Director. If required by policy, the program is still required to file a COVID Incident Report with EEC and notify DPH.

Closures for Longer than Three Days

Programs may close for longer than three (3) days due to a COVID-related reason detailed above and continue to receive subsidy payments during the closure period only with written approval by the EEC Regional Director.

Programs requesting to receive reimbursement for a COVID-related closure for longer than three (3) days must notify EEC by 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 and reopening. 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 or her designee. EEC reserves the right to request additional information when reviewing approvals for reimbursement for closure days.

Closure days shall not be approved for reimbursement by EEC until the Regional Director sends out an acknowledgement email to the Provider, unless the COVID-related closure is three (3) days or less.

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

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

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.

Substitute Care During an Approved Closure

EEC will provide funding both to the original provider and the substitute provider under the following conditions:

1. The original Educator/Provider will receive payment as long as they have received approval for the closure, if needed, according to the process detailed above.
2. A substitute Educator/Provider can provide care and receive funding only if the family is not required to quarantine by the local Board of Health.

All substitute care during an Approved COVID Closure must be processed through the Substitute Care Module in CCFA and marked as a “Licensing Approved Paid Closure - Approved COVID Emergency Closure”. Please see “Payment of Substitute Child Care” section in Appendix C of the [EEC Financial Assistance Policy Guide](#) for additional information.

Resuming Care Following an Approved Closure³

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.

³ 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.