

How Governments Can Invest COVID-19 Relief Dollars from SB 189 in Early Care and Education

Louisiana is making funds available to cities and parishes for COVID-19-related expenditures through the recently passed [SB 189](#). Those expenditures must be made before December 30, 2020—meaning cities and parishes cannot use these funds for long-term budget projects, but have an opportunity to use them to support early care and education in the following ways.

Governments can use COVID-19 relief dollars to provide grants to child care centers to help them reopen or stay open.

Child care providers are economic anchors in the community and must remain open. Child care providers are fighting to stay open while working valiantly to serve families during the pandemic. They have lost significant revenue, taken on additional costs, and decreased enrollment to adapt to new public health guidelines.¹ During the pandemic, it is critical that child care centers remain open to support productivity for parents, school readiness for young children, and stability for all other industries.

Grants can be used for increased costs due to the pandemic. New or increased expenses include facility improvements and adaptations to manage new public health requirements, personal protective equipment (PPE), incentive pay for teachers, and other needs. In a recent survey, child care providers who were temporarily closed during the pandemic estimated needing an average of almost \$23,000 per center to reopen.² Many providers who want to reopen are struggling to do so because of the increased costs necessary to ensure the health and safety of children and reduced capacities to serve children due to group size restrictions under COVID regulations. Health guidelines requiring smaller group sizes reduce enrollment capacity for many ECE providers by half.³ Louisiana already has a strained child care supply and if child care centers close during an economic crisis, the impacts could be all the more devastating.

Local early care and education leaders can help ensure government investments reach child care providers. [Early Childhood Community Networks and Ready Start Network leaders](#) can help local government officials by connecting them to local child care providers who are in most need of relief.

Governments can use COVID-19 relief dollars to fund child care seats for certain children ages birth to three.

Governments can support parents with young children by helping them access child care.

- **Parents who are essential workers:** Essential workers have kept communities safe, healthy, and fed during the pandemic and will continue to do so in the coming months. Providing them with access to child care during the pandemic will help maximize their productivity during this critical time.
- **Parents who are employed by the municipal government:** Local government employees have helped keep local government running during these unprecedented months and will continue to do so for the duration of the pandemic. Providing them with access to child care during the pandemic will help maximize their productivity during this critical time.

1. https://Ocd902dd-9de1-4dae-8781-4a355ebda8df.filesusr.com/ugd/43cca3_fe42cbcb974649e7a93ccc1d9985d17b.pdf
2. https://Ocd902dd-9de1-4dae-8781-4a355ebda8df.filesusr.com/ugd/43cca3_fe42cbcb974649e7a93ccc1d9985d17b.pdf
3. https://Ocd902dd-9de1-4dae-8781-4a355ebda8df.filesusr.com/ugd/43cca3_b72abbb3b2c4459a84cd5589c57519c1.pdf



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- **Parents who are unemployed and looking for work due to the pandemic:** Many parents have lost their jobs due to the pandemic and are actively seeking new employment as the state begins to reopen. With over 319,000 Louisianans filing for or continuing to claim unemployment benefits as of June 20, the need for affordable early care and education programs will be greater than ever.⁴ Funding child care for parents for three months while they are looking for work could greatly facilitate connecting families with economic security and employers and potential employees.
- **Parents who are working:** As the economy restarts and more parents are called from their homes to return to workplaces and offices, working families will need to send their children to safe, developmentally appropriate learning environments when they return to work. Funding early care and education seats allows working parents to fully participate in the economy and provide for their families.

Governments can make data-driven investments in high-quality early care and education centers. The Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) has established a reliable accountability system to measure the quality of child care programs and [made the data widely available](#). Using these data to direct funding, local governments can remain confident that their investments in child care are maximized. The City of New Orleans has been investing in early care and education since 2017 and has committed \$3 million of its 2020 budget towards early care and education and helped over 262 children and families reach key developmental milestones while improving the quality of participating early care and education programs.⁵

Local early care and education leaders can help ensure that investments reach families who need them. [Early Childhood Community Network and Ready Start Network leaders](#) can help local government officials by identifying parents who need assistance getting their children into quality care.

Cities and parishes must submit applications to the Louisiana Division of Administration for reimbursement for their COVID-19 responses. Local governments should act swiftly to assist their communities with recovery efforts, while funds are available.

4. http://www.laworks.net/LaborMarketInfo/LMI_ReportOutput.asp

5. https://www.nola.com/news/education/article_b561f258-0ca0-11ea-9422-978dbf618f27.html?fbclid=IwAR0_kVIZ5fuDUx8wRGGIBbnI7LRzCTHUUG1venKFiAn_czve3w2wFlqag

