



May 11, 2020

Dear Illinois Parents and Families,

In response to the public health emergency Illinois is facing as a result of the spread of COVID-19, Governor Pritzker has extended the current Stay at Home Order through the end of May 2020.

What does this mean for families with young children? This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) answers questions families may have considering the extension.

### **ILLINOIS' PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS**

#### ➤ **What is the current status of schools in Illinois?**

- All K-12 public and private schools in Illinois have stopped in-person instruction through the rest of the 2019-2020 academic year. The ISBE notification can be found [here](#).
- School districts are to create remote learning plans. Remote learning is learning that happens outside of the traditional classroom because the student and teacher are separated by distance and/or time. Remote learning may or may not involve technology.

#### ➤ **Since schools are closed, what are the learning expectations for my child(ren), the school, and me as a parent or caregiver?**

##### Schools/Teachers

- The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has created Remote Learning Recommendations for Illinois schools as a guideline for implementing remote learning.
- Districts must develop instructional remote learning plans that allow for student engagement and continuity of instruction. School districts will not be expected to extend their school year calendar. The remote learning will take the place of the in-person learning that has been suspended due to COVID-19.
- The focus for schoolwork during the remote learning period is on **learning**. Schools are also encouraged to prioritize supporting children's emotional and physical safety, access to meals, and engagement in learning during this challenging time.
- The recommendations for grading during this period of unprecedented crisis is for pass/incomplete options, not pass/fail.
- Teachers should communicate regularly with children and families, providing opportunities to answer questions and give feedback.

##### Students

- Students are expected to participate in remote learning opportunities and complete assignments on time.
- Students will not be penalized for failure to master new content.



The following guidelines are presented as suggested times of engagement by students in remote learning activities:

Grade Level	No More Than	Recommended Length of Attention at One Time
PreK	60 minutes/day	3-5 minutes
K	90 minutes/day	3-5 minutes
1 <sup>st</sup> -2nd	90 minutes/day	5-10 minutes
3 <sup>rd</sup> - 5th	120 minutes/day	10-15 minutes

### Parents/Caregivers

- Caregivers should spend time talking with their children about how they are feeling.
- Caregivers are encouraged to play games (invented or purchased), tell stories, and/or read books in any language.
- Caregivers are advised to ensure your children have a routine during which they can complete remote learning work.
- Caregivers are encouraged to communicate with and ask the teacher questions if needed.

### ➤ **How will attendance be monitored?**

School districts will still be expected to submit student attendance to ISBE. How schools “take” attendance is varied by district. Ways attendance can be monitored may include:

- One-on-one daily check-ins
- Video conference “check-ins”
- Wellness checks coupled with a question on student engagement/participation in lessons
- Phone calls coupled with a question on student engagement/participation in lessons
- Text messages or email communications coupled with a question on student engagement/participation in lessons
- Packet collections by school personnel

### ➤ **What are some available resources since state public and private schools are closed?**

- Find schools that offer drive up WIFI with the ISBE [map finder here](#).
- ISBE curated [free resources](#) to assist teachers and parents to support student learning while Illinois’ schools are closed.
- The Governor’s Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) has an [Emotional Well-Being Toolkit](#) that includes Engaging Learning Activities for children at home.



- **How can my child(ren) continue to receive the meals they were receiving in school?**
  - Families can participate in both the Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program and any meal distribution program that is currently available at their school. They do not have to choose one or the other, as these programs operate independent of each other.
  - Also, here is the link to [Pandemic EBT SNAP benefit](#) information, [CPS Grab and Go sites](#), and the [Greater Chicago Food Depository](#).

### **CHILD CARE PROGRAMS**

- **What is the status of child care (child care centers, child care homes, early education programs)?**
  - The State is mindful that child care is a critical emergency service that is necessary for *essential workers* currently required to work outside the home to maintain the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of Illinois.
  - Effective March 21, 2020 and for as long as the public health emergency continues, all child care programs are closed. However:
    - Child care centers who have been licensed to operate as an Emergency Child Care Center to provide care to the children of essential workers (in groups of ten or fewer, recommended no more than 50 children per center) may remain open.
    - Many legally license-exempt centers can also choose to remain open to serve the children of essential workers who must work outside the home, also in groups of ten or fewer children, recommended no more than 50 children per center.
    - Home-based child care programs serving six or fewer children may also remain open to serve the children of essential workers who must work outside the home during this pandemic.
    - All other child care programs that have either decided to close or have not been licensed to provide Emergency Child Care to the children of essential workers will remain closed until the Stay at Home Order has been lifted.
  - Where possible, children should be kept at home. The safest place for children during this time is at home.
- **Who is considered an Essential Worker?**
  - For the definition of essential workers, see item #7-12 on pages 6-10 in the [amended Stay at Home Executive Order](#).
  - An example of an essential worker is someone who works in healthcare, grocery stores, financial institutions, transportation, etc. Click on the link above for a complete list.



- **If I am an essential worker working from home, am I eligible for emergency child care?**
  - No. While we understand the difficulty of working from home while also caring for children, children remain safest in the home. Emergency child care is being reserved only for situations where there is no other option for child care.
  - We know this is an incredibly trying time for families, especially those with young children. Governor Pritzker's number one priority is protecting the health, safety, and well-being of all Illinois families.
  
- **If I am an essential worker, how do I find child care?**
  - You can go to [COVID-19 Emergency Provider Search](#) and input your information to search for an Emergency Child Care Home or Center open in your community. You can also call: (888) 228-1146.
  
- **How are child care homes and centers keeping my child(ren) safe?**
  - The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), using [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) recommendations](#), created [guidelines for Emergency Child Care Programs](#) that are providing service for essential workers. There is also a [Comprehensive Health Guide](#) for Emergency Child Care Programs.
  - In addition to the current safety recommendations of frequently washing of hands for at least 20 seconds, covering coughs and sneezes, maintaining social distance of six feet if possible, washing frequently touched surfaces, and wearing of face covering for anyone over two years old when in public, Child care Guidelines also include:
    - Restricted access to home/center to only specific people
    - Adjusted drop off/pick up procedures
    - No entry into facility of any person with a temperature of 100.4°, signs of cough, sore throat, respiratory infection or shortness of breath
    - No entry into facility of anyone who has had contact with someone under investigation to have or is diagnosed with COVID-19
  - The [Illinois guidelines for Caring for children in Group Settings including Children with Disabilities or Special Needs](#) has more guidance for programs.
  - Federal recommendations from the CDC can also be found in [Guidance for Childcare Programs that Remain Open](#).
  
- **Will families still need to pay Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) co-pays, or will they be waived?**
  - Effective April 1st, priority essential workers in health care, human services, essential government services and essential infrastructure now qualify for Illinois' Child Care Assistance Program regardless of family income, meaning the state will cover most of the cost of care. Family co-payments have been reduced to \$1 for the months of April and May, 2020. The application with more information is available at the following link: [COVID-19 Priority Essential Workers Child Care Application](#).



## **ESSENTIAL INFORMATION**

- **I'm feeling a little stressed and overwhelmed!?**
  - Illinois residents experiencing stress due to COVID-19 can text "TALK" or "HABLAR" to 5-5-2-0-2-0. Within 24 hours, you will receive a call from a counselor employed by a local community mental health center to provide support.
  - Erikson Institute is now offering virtual mental health services in English and Spanish for parents and caregivers of young children regardless of their ability to pay. Parents and caregivers can reach out to set up an appointment through the intake line at 312-709-0508 (English) or 312-934-6446 (Spanish), or by visiting [Erikson.edu/ccf](http://Erikson.edu/ccf).
  - The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) has developed an [Emotional Well-being Toolkit](#) containing resources for parents/caregiver self-care.
  
- **I may need some more information or support, where can I look?**
  - The Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) has a [COVID-19 Families webpage](#) with additional resources and links to information about essential resources and keeping your family safe.
  - You can find [Housing and Shelter Assistance](#) information at Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS).
  - IDHS also has [Information and Resources](#) about food and medical benefits, child care, disability and other services.
  - Find [Unemployment FAQs](#) at the State of Illinois COVID-19 Response website.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

- Find a Stay at Home order FAQ updated May 1st [here](#). Information at [coronavirus.illinois.gov](http://coronavirus.illinois.gov) is available in several languages and includes information about the order, essential business, healthcare, transportation, vulnerable and children populations.
  
- **What businesses are open?**
  - All essential businesses that were previously open are still open, like grocery and home improvement stores, banks, gas stations, and food service that can either provide to go, curbside pick-up or delivery. In addition, retail stores where online orders and curbside pick-up or delivery can be provided are also open.



➤ **Can my family go outside?**

- In order to stop you and your family from contracting COVID-19, you should stay home as much as possible.
- If you are an essential worker or you must perform an essential activity, such as grocery shopping, or taking care of a family member, you should adhere to the guidelines in place. This means practice social distancing, wear a face covering for all persons over two years old and who can medically tolerate one, avoid touching your face, and wash your hands often, especially after touching public surfaces.
- When performing these activities, if possible, only a minimum number of household members should participate.
- Families that are currently living in the same household can go for a walk, hike, run, and bike ride in public and State Parks. Playgrounds are not open as touching the surfaces may spread COVID-19. Families should always practice social distancing from others while out.