

## Child Care Subsidy Program – COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

Updated August 11, 2020

On April 15 2020, Pete Ricketts, Governor of the State of Nebraska, signed Executive Order No. 20-18, suspending several state regulations regarding the Child Care Subsidy Program. The Department has developed this FAQ to provide information to child care subsidy providers and households about the Executive Order. The FAQ will be updated as new questions are received.

### Subsidy Providers:

**Q: Can licensed child care subsidy providers who are open and staffed bill DHHS (child care subsidy) if parents/caretakers keep their children home due to the COVID-19 emergency?**

A: Yes, under Executive Order No. 20-18, DHHS will allow licensed child care providers who have a current child care subsidy agreement to bill DHHS for days when the provider is opened and staffed and the child is absent because the child's parent or legal caretaker keeps the child home or is unable to utilize care due to the COVID-19 emergency. The provider must complete and comply with the terms of the Child Care Subsidy Provider Enrollment to Bill for Absent Days. The form can be found [here](#).

**Q: How do I become eligible to bill for absent days?**

A: To become eligible to bill for absent days, current providers must complete the Child Care Subsidy Provider Enrollment to Bill for Absent Days form available on the DHHS website at [dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Child-Care-Providers.aspx](https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Child-Care-Providers.aspx) and return it DHHS by emailing the Provider's Resource Development Worker or [dhhs.ccsubsidy@nebraska.gov](mailto:dhhs.ccsubsidy@nebraska.gov).

**Q: When can I start billing for absent days?**

A: Providers' enrollment will be effective starting on the date when the provider emails or otherwise transmits the completed (signed and dated) form to DHHS. DHHS will not be contacting providers individually to confirm receipt. You may begin billing for absent days without such confirmation.

**Q: How will billing for absent days work?**

A: The provider must continue to bill in-line with the child's regular attendance schedule and current child care subsidy authorization.

- EX 1: Child usually attends M-F 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM and is now absent. Billing when the child attends would be 1 DAY UNIT each day. Billing when the child is absent would still be 1 DAY UNIT.
- EX 2: Child usually attends 3 hours a day, 3 days a week and is now absent. Billing when the child attends would be 3 HOUR UNIT for 3 days each week. Billing when the child is absent would still be 3 HOUR UNIT for 3 days each week.



**Q: Can child care subsidy providers bill DHHS for days when the child was absent in the past?**

A: No, billing for absent days became effective the date the Executive Order was signed and issued. Absent days prior to April 15 are not eligible for reimbursement.

**Q: Are child care subsidy programs that are closed able to bill DHHS?**

A: No, closed programs are not able to bill DHHS for days when they are closed.

**Q: Is there a different reimbursement rate for COVID-19 absent days?**

A: No, you will bill the same contracted rate you regularly bill.

**Q: Do absent days need to be documented on attendance calendars?**

A: Yes. You need to enter an “A” to indicate that it is an absent day and write in the total number of HOUR UNITS or ONE DAY UNIT billed.

**Q: As a subsidy provider, do I have to collect co-pays (family fees) from families?**

A: At this time, the collection of co-pays from families can be your choice as a business. All income changes (either temporary or permanent) of subsidy families should be reported to [ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov](https://ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov) or by telephone via the Customer Service Center at: 1-800-383-4278. A decrease in income may reduce or eliminate families’ subsidy co-payment for future months.

**Q: I am not currently a subsidy provider, but would like to become one. What should I do?**

A: The Child Care Subsidy program is referral based. If you are interested in providing care to a Subsidy eligible family, have them contact Access Nebraska at 1-800-383-4278 to make the request. You will then be contacted by a Resource Development worker to complete the contract process.

**Q: The Child Care Subsidy Provider Enrollment to Bill for Absent Days form requires me not to reduce the number of slots in my program for children receiving subsidy during the state of emergency. What if a subsidy child drops out, or if a child of a first responder applies?**

A: Providers who enroll to bill for absent days must make good faith efforts to keep the same number of slots available for subsidy children during the state of emergency. However, there may be times when a subsidy child drops out and another subsidy child is not immediately available to take the slot. Providers are not absolutely required to hold that slot for a subsidy child, but should consider how they may continue to serve the same number of subsidy children throughout the entire state of emergency. Both subsidy children and the children of first responders are to be given priority placement whenever possible. Providers are encouraged to think broadly about available child care resources, including temporary alternate location child care centers and how these could be used to meet children’s and families’ needs for care.

**Q: I have an authorization for school-age care. The child's school district is only holding class in-person a few days per week. The child will be attending my child care program on the days when there is no school. Can I bill a full day when the child attends my child care program?**

A: Yes. School-age care authorizations should state that "child care is authorized for before and after school and days when school is out." The child is authorized care for days when school is not in session. The provider would bill for the time care is provided.

Should more units need to be added to an authorization because of billing for non-school days, contact your Resource Development Worker or [ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov](http://ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov).

**Q: I have an authorization for school-age care. The child's school district is only holding class in-person a few days per week. The child will be attending my child care program on the days when there is no school. Can I bill "absent" days when the child is at school?**

A: No. School-age care authorizations should state that "child care is authorized for before and after school and days when school is out." Days when a child attends school are not absent days because the child is in school. Care would normally not be provided by the child care program when a child is in school.

**Q: Can I provide remote learning opportunities to school-age children in my care on days when school is not in session due to COVID and bill Child Care Subsidy?**

A: Yes. Child Care Subsidy can be billed if remote learning and assistance with school learning is provided during the child care day and in-person school learning is not offered.

**Q: I have an authorization for school-age care, and the parent continues to keep the child at home full time, not attending school or my child care program. Can I continue to bill for absent days if I still have an authorization?**

A: School-age care authorizations should state that "child care is authorized for before and after school and days when school is out." Providers can bill for times the child would have typically attended the child care program had they also been attending school (i.e., afterschool care). Billing full absent days, 5 days a week, is not allowed.

**Q: The child is attending full-time remote learning for the school year. Can school-age children attend child care during the day while parents are at work?**

A: Yes, if the child is enrolled in a school that they would be attending full time in person prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, subsidy will pay the child care program/provider during remote learning and the time the child is in their care.





**Q: If schools end up closing again due to a high number of COVID cases, will I be able to bill for full-time absent days again for school-age children?**

A: Yes. If the child is attending your child care program and is absent, you may bill Child Care Subsidy for those days for the duration of the school closure. Once school resumes, billing full absent days when the child is absent from your child care program while attending school is not allowed. The provider must have completed an Absent Day Enrollment Form.

**Q: Can in-home child care be approved for families that have their children learn remotely during the school year?**

A: Yes. Child Care Subsidy can be billed if remote learning and assistance with school learning is provided during authorized subsidy child care time.

**Q: Will my child care subsidy reimbursement rates increase for times I am providing remote learning and school instructions to children?**

A: No. Subsidy rates will not increase to compensate providers who assist children with remote learning.

**Q: Will DHHS offer any grants to purchase new computers or tablets to assist with the remote learning I am now providing in my child care program?**

A: No. There are no grants available at this time to assist child care providers with purchasing technology and equipment to help assist with a child's remote learning requirements. Parents should work with their child's school with any technology and equipment needs.

**Q: I am a child care provider and the child I provide care for is home-schooled (not schooled from a public or private school). Can I bill Child Care Subsidy for times I assist with home-schooling activities and assignments during the hours I provide care?**

A: No. Child Care Subsidy cannot be billed for any home-schooling activities, per 392 NAC 1-003.

**Q: Due to directed health measures, I have had to limit the number of children who can physically attend my program. Can I bill for children who are enrolled but cannot attend due to these limits?**

A: Yes, you may bill for enrollment up to your licensing capacity. For example, suppose your program is licensed for 50 children, but you are only able to care for 30 children under the Directive Health Measure. You may bill for the 30 children present in care and for up to 20 children by enrollment to equal your capacity of 50.

## **Parents/Caretakers:**

**Q: Can I have someone come into my home to watch my child(ren) while I work and have subsidy pay them?**

A: Yes, Executive Order No. 20-18 allows families that are eligible to participate in the child care subsidy program to obtain in-home child care when other child care options are unavailable.



**Q: Who can I choose as my in-home provider?**

A: A family member, friend, or neighbor may be paid as an in-home child care provider. Parents are not eligible to be in-home subsidy providers for their children. Families or providers interested in learning more about in-home child care provider opportunities should contact ACCESSNebraska at: 1-800-383-4278. DHHS will conduct background checks on the referred individual.

An in-home provider must be at least 19 years old and meet background check requirements and some health and safety requirements.

**Q: Can an in-home provider be someone who lives with me?**

A: If a child has a special need as defined by Department regulations, the Department may allow in-home provider subsidy payments to an eligible provider who lives in the child's home. For all other situations, the in-home provider cannot live in the same household as the child(ren) needing care.

**Q: Where can I find a list of child care providers?**

A: A list of licensed child care providers is available at: <http://dhhs.ne.gov/licensure/Documents/ChildCareRoster.pdf>. You can also call the Child Care Resource and Referral Line at: 1-800-892-4453 (messages left on this line are returned daily).

**Q: How do I apply for a child care subsidy?**

A: Applications are available online at: [ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov](http://ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov). Or you apply by telephone via the Customer Service Center at: 1-800-383-4278.

**Q: I currently have a subsidy co-pay but cannot afford to pay my provider. What should I do?**

A: All income changes (either temporary or permanent) should be reported to [ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov](http://ACCESSNebraska.ne.gov) or by telephone via the Customer Service Center at: 1-800-383-4278. A decrease in income may reduce or eliminate your subsidy co-payment for future months.

**Q: I had child care subsidy for my job, but was recently laid off. Can I use child care subsidy to job search?**

A: Yes, your current child care subsidy authorization should allow you to roll into job search status for up to three (3) months if you lose your employment. Child care for those in job search status is authorized for the same provider up to the same level of care previously received.

**Q: I have been directed by my employer to work from home. Am I still eligible for childcare?**

A: Yes, parents/caretakers are still able to utilize child care if working from home.