

Using the access framework to guide child care policy during the COVID-19 crisis ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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Excerpted from introduction

The COVID-19 health crisis has upended the child care sector by further crippling an already financially fragile, long underfunded child care system. This is especially true for those providing care for low-income families receiving child care subsidies funded through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)—the largest federally funded child care program. Mandated child care closures and new space and safety restrictions upon reopening threaten to drastically reduce the child care supply. Only 18 percent of child care programs report feeling confident they will be able to stay open past a year without financial support¹; and among providers, those serving low-income communities, including families receiving child care subsidies, are the most likely to need to close their doors.

The child care closures also threaten to exacerbate racial and socioeconomic inequities, affecting those who have been the most financially impacted by the pandemic and those who have historically had challenges accessing child care. Roughly half of low-income parents and Black and Hispanic parents reported problems paying for housing, utilities, food, or medical costs in the past month during the pandemic. Additionally, half of Black parents and low-income parents and more than 60 percent of Hispanic parents reported they or someone in their family lost work or work-related income due to the coronavirus outbreak.² Moreover, a recent analysis showed that child care closures will be concentrated in low-income and middle-income neighborhoods, and many families will be unable to access child care assistance during a period of record-high unemployment, ³ making it harder for parents to return to work.

States have the opportunity to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on those most affected by child care disruptions by ensuring that child care policies that are implemented promote equitable access. This brief illustrates how CCDF state administrators; local, state, and federal policymakers; and researchers can apply the Access Framework—which utilizes a family-centered, multi-dimensional definition of access and is a project supported by the Office of Research, Planning, and Evaluation in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and managed by Child Trends. This framework can assist states in making child care subsidy policy and funding decisions, assessing state capacity, and tracking progress toward equitable access over time. Using the Access Framework to guide equitable access will be especially important as states respond to and move toward recovery from COVID-19

Region: United States ^[3]

Tags: access to child care ^[4]

COVID-19 ^[5]

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