

Child care programs need help

Thank you for your continued support of Preschool Promise during this incredibly challenging time! Montgomery County's children and families are so lucky to have such passionate supporters.

On May 14, Governor DeWine announced that child care will be permitted to re-open, starting May 31, under new strict and costly health and safety rules. Child care providers are eager to be there for children, families and employers. But nearly all are worried that they will not be able to stay afloat. Unquestionably, some will close.

How many? No one knows, but the outlook is frightening. Ohio cannot successfully re-open and get back to business without affordable, accessible, quality child care.

While it's critical we protect children and child care professionals, we also have to find a way to pay for that protection.

The following are questions we're getting from families and providers. We wanted to pass on this information to you as well. Please don't hesitate to [share your thoughts](#).

Robyn



FAQs

Q: What are the new health and safety rules?

A: These are the **changes** we know so far.

Infant and toddler classrooms are limited to 6 children; previously, the limit was 12 and 14, respectively. Preschool and school-age children are limited to 9; previously the limit was 24 and 36, respectively.

Adult:Child Ratios

| | Pre COVID-19 Adult:Child Ratios | Post COVID-19 Adult:Child Ratios |
|-------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Infant | 1:5 or 2:12 | 1:4 or 2:6 |
| Toddler | 1:7 or 2:14 | 1:6 |
| Preschooler | 1:12 or 2:24 | 1:9 |
| School-age | 1:18 or 2:36 | 1:9 |

These limits on class size AND new adult-to-child ratios mean programs will have to reduce their capacity by 30% to 50%. Fewer children can be served in the same space AND more staff are required to provide care.

Q: Will there be enough child care?

A: We are extremely concerned about capacity. Some families will be reluctant to enroll their children in child care and Preschool. Some white-collar workers will have the choice of working from home and caring for their children themselves. Some families will be eager to return and there may not be space at their child care program. It will take time to know what the new demand will be.

What's certain is that there will be fewer spaces for children if only because of new limits on how many children can be in a classroom.

Q: How will programs decide which families they'll accept?

A: Providers are tortured by this question. They don't want to turn people away or pick and choose among children.

From a purely business standpoint, they will be better off providing care to private-pay families because the reimbursement rate for the poorest of our poor children who receive state subsidized care does not cover programs' real costs. (Only families earning at or under 130% of the Federal Poverty Level are eligible for subsidized care.) They also will be forced to prioritize families that attend full-time and perhaps have multiple children in the program.

This bias against our lowest-income families will further disadvantage children whose families have been hit hardest by COVID-19. These also are families who are doing their best to work or go to school, so they can pay their own way.

Q: Will programs raise their rates?

A: Many will have no choice but to increase their fees. Many low- and middle-income workers who make too much to get subsidized care can't afford to pay more for child care. If they have more than one child, or now if they need child care for an older child because school is closed as a result of COVID-19, the expense will be too much. Being on the job won't pay.

Q: How can we ensure employees will have access to child care?

A: The federal and state governments have to increase their financial commitments. There's no other way forward. It doesn't matter whether a program serves private-pay families or high-poverty families receiving state subsidized care or both. The old business models are not sustainable when more staff are required to serve fewer children.

Q: How are the pandemic centers making it, given the costs of new health and safety rules?

A: Many are losing money. They can't afford to do that for long. Others are tapping philanthropic support. Pandemic centers that serve only or mostly extremely low-income families can make ends meet because, for the moment, the State is reimbursing them for high-poverty children of *non-essential* workers who were enrolled in their programs prior to the pandemic and even though these children are not permitted to attend today. That support will come to an end starting May 31.

Programs that closed under the Governor's order and serve largely private-pay families are seeing huge losses of revenue unless they're requiring families to continue to pay to reserve their spot.

Providers still have fixed costs (rent, insurance, utilities) whether they're open or closed, whether they're full or have openings.



Q: How is Preschool Promise spotlighting this crisis?

A: We are working with Groundwork Ohio, a statewide early care advocacy organization, to make sure the DeWine administration, federal and state lawmakers, and policy makers understand what is happening on the ground.

We are pleading with them to prioritize child care as new budgets are created and as Congress is considering sending support to the states. This help most likely will not arrive quickly enough.

We also are bringing together local business groups to make sure they're aware of the threats to child care. Many are extremely concerned. They understand that their workers can't return to work without child care.

Q: What is Preschool Promise doing to support providers as they consider re-opening?

A: We are:

- Holding webinars so that pandemic child care providers can share what they have learned during the last seven weeks.
- Sharing important information from ODJFS about new rules and payments.
- Offering small grants to help programs with re-opening costs.
- Sharing financial analyses to help providers understand the risks if they re-open.
- Advocating for public financial support.
- Participating in groups advising state leaders regarding how to best re-open.

Q: How can others help?

A: Spread the word that child care is critical to getting the economy going again!

- Call and write U.S. Senators Rob Portman and Sherrod Brown, U.S. Rep. Mike Turner, Gov. Mike DeWine and local legislators encouraging them to prioritize child care. Groundwork Ohio is making it **easy to contact** members of Congress.
- Use your lobbyists and industry groups to share the needs of child care providers and explain that businesses need their workers on the job.
- Consider subsidizing your employees' child care costs.

Thank you for your generous support of Preschool Promise!

