

Burlington Children's Space COVID- 19 Child Care Action Plan

On March 18, 202 Governor Scott required all licensed child care programs to close and develop a plan to reopen for the children of Essential Workers (EWs). BCS has created a plan to address the needs of EW's, of which BCS has over 20. This plan for a Hybrid Model, prioritizes the health and safety of the providers and children of EW's and considers the following:

- Child care providers, now considered EW's themselves, will not be available to provide care unless the delivery model protects their health and safety and adequately compensates them for the additional risk they are agreeing to accept.
- The children of essential workers are vulnerable due to the high levels of stress their parents are experiencing as well as their potential exposure to disease due to their parents' line of work. They need care in the most supportive environment possible.
- Contrary to earlier predictions, COVID19 does affect young children. Emerging research from China indicates some risk for children under 5 years of reduce the potential spread of disease, for both the child and the provider. Additionally, children and providers should have the least amount of exposure to others while providing care.
- Many essential workers have expressed their first choice would be to find care for their children in their home, using social distancing practices and allowing for some flexibility around work hours.
- Some essential workers cannot find or afford to pay someone to provide care in their home through a relative or close member of their community and will need a qualified care provider from outside their circle.

The Hybrid Model

In-Home Subsidized Option A:

This first option is in many ways the simplest and healthiest in that the school (either BSD or BCS, depending on the age of the children) pays the stipend directly to the family while the family is responsible for the rest. Families currently paying tuition would not be required to pay and could receive additional funds. Knowing that many families already have people in mind or in place, this allows them to better practice social distancing, keep siblings together, and allow the family to determine when they need care. The stipend could be based on the need for full or part time care and the number of EW's in the home. Many current EW's have indicated they do not need full time care, but several need coverage during non-school hours.

School Site Based Option B:

For children under age 3 currently enrolled at BCS, the program will work with the family to determine the best site for care and assign a qualified provider who is working exclusively with their family. For Prek-5th grade students of EW's, families would enroll their children as a unit (no children from other families) into a school-based childcare program that will be housed at Flynn Elementary (and be expanded to Sustainability Academy if more capacity is needed). This program will be free to all eligible students. Procedurally, families and the school would agree upon a weekly schedule of childcare that is needed by the family, with priority given to those EW's who are the sole providers for their family, or where two parents are EW's working full time.

Once the student(s) in the family begin childcare they will be: met at the front door of the school by the childcare provider and a school nurse. A verbal check-in will happen with the family regarding any potential new health-related concerns or changes; the nurse will take the (each) child's temperature; the provider will then bring the child(ren) to their classroom. All activities will occur in the classroom or outside on school grounds. This includes all playing and learning, eating, washing of hands, and use of the toilet.

While this model is written in terms of the Burlington School District and the Burlington Children's Space, we see the transference to childcare centers focused on Birth to 5 in Burlington and across the state, especially those able to work collaboratively with the school district.

Budgetary considerations

The CDD has urged licensed child care programs like BCS to continue to pay staff, collect tuition from families, and request subsidy payments for low income children in order to keep programs stabilized and available to reopen when the crisis is over.

Providing care for EW's will require an **additional investment** to ensure EW's are able to **continue their critical work**, their **children are safe**, and **child care providers are supported** as they embark on this effort. These funds must be **in addition to subsidy payments and stabilization funds** as they represent an additional expense to the program. BCS will not be able to provide care to EW's without assurance that the state will reimburse all costs in addition to the existing commitment to maintaining CACFP subsidies and tuition from families unable to pay due to financial hardship. These costs include the following:

Stipends for families choosing the home care option (paid to families receiving CCFAP, or a reduction in tuition for private pay families).

- Full: up to \$625.00 per week. This is based on the need for full time care, only available to a single parent working as an EW or two parents, both EW's needing to work full time. This is a top priority, especially as this family could need extended hours and this should be done in the home.
- Partial: \$25 per hour for less than 25 hours per week, available to a family of EW's in the above category who only need part time care. This would be based on the number of hours needed.

Costs for onsite care for children under 3 at a designated site.

- Differential for hazard pay for staff (an additional \$12.00 per hour) for the number of hours needed up to 40: \$480 per week per child
- Additional cleaning staff \$800 per week *
- Admin staff (an additional \$12.00 per hour): \$ 480 per week per site*
- **TOTAL PER CHILD WEEKLY EXPENSE INCREASE: \$1760***

*Per child cost goes down as admin and cleaning are divided by the # of children at the site.

Base salary, general operating expenses, and materials provided by BCS.

BCS is **requesting a nurse** or medical provider to do morning health checks of staff and children and to be available to consult. This should be available somewhere in the existing resource pool (BSD,

neighboring CHC, etc.). BCS would work with BSD to access meals already being provided to the BSD site.

Need at BCS

BCS is currently serving 42 families, a population that is representative of the larger Burlington community and other licensed child care programs. Out of the total, 40% receive a child care subsidy and 60% of families pay tuition, some on a sliding scale. There are **23 essential workers**. All of the families of essential workers have said they currently have care at home, but some are requesting funds to cover care or will need additional support if their hours increase. Under the hybrid plan, priority would be given to the 5 families with 2 EW's or where the EW is the sole provider.

The Burlington School district is currently implementing this model. They serve 1992 children pre-k through 5th grade in their district. Of that total, 65 families were eligible for care due to their EW status; 30 of those families have a current need for care; 18 requested funding for home care and 6 families need on site care (for a total of 12 children). Given the total number of students served in the district, the amount of care provided is very small and has been managed successfully at one elementary school.