

Maine Department of Education

Coronavirus Relief Fund Day Programming for School Age Children

Information and Frequently Asked Questions

Updated as of August 24, 2020

On Friday, August 21, Governor Mills, Maine Department of Education, and Maine Department of Health and Human Services announced a commitment of \$25 million in Coronavirus Relief Funding (CRF), which is an urgently needed investment to cover unanticipated costs associated with providing childcare in school administrative units (SAUs) that are operating hybrid or remote instruction models. Funding will be made available to the following entities: school administrative units, charter schools, and magnet schools. The competitive application process will prioritize applicants with schools that have free and reduced lunch eligibility rates of 35% or higher, as of October 1, 2019.

Applications for funding will be available on Monday, August 24, 2020. The application process requires superintendents/heads of school to attest to the proper use of CRF funding to support childcare expenses that directly result from the COVID-19 pandemic, that are urgently needed in order to comply with health and safety guidelines, and to otherwise mitigate the impact of the pandemic on school operations, students and staff safety, and student access to education. Applicants must further attest to the following conditions:

- Expenses covered by CRF must not have been previously planned/budgeted
- Expenses covered by CRF must address urgent childcare needs caused by COVID-19
- Expenses covered by CRF must not be reimbursed through any other funding source
- Expenses covered by CRF must be incurred between 3/1/2020 and 12/30/2020
- Items, facilities, supports, and services covered by CRF must be in use before 12/30/2020
- Lost revenues will not be recovered using CRF
- Applicants must agree to implement the health and safety [requirements](#) identified by Maine CDC for safely reopening schools

The application includes a budget template to reflect costs and expenses for which the applicant's organization may be reimbursed in an amount up to its approved amount. CRF funding may reimburse COVID childcare related expenses incurred between the date of grant approval and 12/30/2020. Allowable costs include:

- Facilities (rents, leases, tents) and other overhead costs like insurance and utilities
- Staffing

- Meals
- Technology infrastructure, such as hot spots or WIFI connections to support school provided devices
- Transportation services provided by site/school unit
- Supplies and materials
- Health and safety supplies, such as cleaning supplies and PPE

FAQs

- 1. Who is responsible for signing the application and attesting to the requirements?**
Superintendent/ Head of School
- 2. Which child care organizations are eligible to partner with SAUs?** SAUs may use these funds to either establish their own programs or partner with licensed child care providers and/or local community organizations, such as Parks and Recreation Departments, Boys and Girls Clubs, local YMCAs.
- 3. Are SAUs required to develop contracts with partners?** SAUs are required to develop contracts or MOU agreement with all partners.
- 4. Where should we send CRF day programming/child care questions?** Questions may be sent to Lee Anne Larsen, Early Learning Team Coordinator (leeann.larsen@maine.gov).
- 5. What age range will the funding support?** Enrolled students ages 4 – 14 years old may be supported with these funds.
- 6. How much funding is available for each SAU?** The amount of funding available for reimbursement to each SAU will be based on the plans and budgets they request, subject to limits. Such limits will be based on whether proposed expenditures are consistent with this initiative. Funding will cover costs for providing care for children during the time that they would typically be attending school and instead are participating in remote learning due to the school's hybrid model.
- 7. Can SAUs use the funds for new expanded programming?** Yes, SAUs may purchase slots for the period during which children would ordinarily be attending school.
- 8. Do our childcare spaces need to be inspected by the Fire Marshal?** Yes. Please review the priority notice on this topic available [here](#).
- 9. Are we allowed to utilize tents on school grounds?** Yes. All tents must be fire resistant. Please review the priority notice on this topic available [here](#).

- 10. Must the health and safety guidance for child care providers or the return to school checklist be utilized?** The program must follow the [health and safety guidance for child care providers](#) OR the [6 requirements for safely opening schools this fall](#).
- 11. May we charge families for care?** The intention of these funds is to provide free care for children.
- 12. Must the partner be licensed?** No. The partner does not need to be licensed. If not licensed, the partner must be an existing nonprofit, like the Boys and Girls Club, or a municipal organization, like Parks and Recreation Departments, that is currently providing programming to students. All partners, except for the Parks and Recreation Departments, that plan to charge a fee to parents and collect child care subsidy must be licensed and can obtain emergency licenses with the Office of Child and Family Services.
- 13. Do SAUs that establish their own day programming/child cares need to be licensed?** SAUs who establish their own programs and plan to charge and collect child care subsidy must be licensed and should work with the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) to obtain emergency licenses. SAUs that are not charging fees or collecting subsidy do not need to be licensed but could do so to provide additional review and/or as a precaution.
- 14. Who should SAUs contact at OCFS for assistance with licensing questions?** SAUs may contact Pattie Collins, Child Care Licensing Supervisor, Pattie.Collins@maine.gov or Jennifer Welch, Child Care Licensing Supervisor, Jennifer.S.Welch@maine.gov.
- 15. What are the required ratios for child care workers and students?** The ratio of school-age children (age 5 and older) to adults in licensed child cares is 1 adult to 12 children. The ratio for 4-year olds in licensed child care is 1 adult to 8 children. Temporary waivers of 1 adult to 20 children may be sought on a case by case basis for school-age children attending licensed programs. It is recommended that unlicensed programs not exceed ratios of **1:15** or group sizes of 30. Group sizes should also be determined based on health and safety guidelines for physical distancing.
- 16. What are the parameters for daily operation (hours)?** This funding can support programming that occurs during the hours in which children would be in school. If a SAU wants to extend programming to before and after school programming, the SAU will need to cover that cost through sources other than CRF or charge fees.
- 17. Can high school students work at a day programming/child care site?** If a high school student works at a site as part of a practicum experience, the student must be supervised by a qualified educator. If a high school student is compensated, the student must meet employability requirements of the organization and the Maine Department of Labor.

- 18. What is the allowability under the category of meals?** Funding may only be used for programs ineligible for Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
- 19. What is meant by technology infrastructure?** Funds can be used to pay for purchasing charging stations and establishing WIFI connections, but not for devices.
- 20. What are allowable transportation expenses?** Funds can be used for fuel, staffing and/or contracts for transportation services to provide day programming, but they cannot be used to purchase vehicles.
- 21. Is it possible to use this funding to support before and after school childcare?** No. The funding cannot be used to fund the operation of typical after or before school programming that was in place prior to the pandemic or previously budgeted.
- 22. How should a SAU prioritize enrollment in day programming?** The first priority is for resident students who are children of essential workers. The second priority is for resident students who are economically disadvantaged. Once these needs are fulfilled, and there is additional space, other children (including those of staff), may attend.
- 23. Will every SAU receive a CRF childcare grant?** Funding will be allocated on a competitive basis. SAUs with 35% of students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch as of October 1, 2019 will be prioritized for funding. If funds remain, additional SAUs with smaller percentages will be considered.
- 24. Is it allowable to hire an individual to manage the CRF application?** Yes, it is allowable to hire a contractor or support staff to handle the burden of COVID-19 CRF grant submission, reporting, and monitoring. It must be reasonable and necessary. Superintendents may not receive payment for their extra time.