

Human Services Announces Study to Assess Impact of COVID-19 on Pennsylvania Child Care Providers

Harrisburg, PA – Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Teresa Miller today announced a partnership between the department's Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) and Penn State Harrisburg's Institute of State and Regional Affairs (ISRA) to study the impacts of COVID-19 on child care providers across Pennsylvania.

"COVID-19 has disrupted daily life in Pennsylvania and around the world, and while these mitigation efforts will save lives, we must also prepare for a long-term recovery period," said Secretary Miller. "Child care providers are critical to allowing parents to go to work knowing their children are safe. Without their service, we cannot have a fully functional economy, and we are committed to helping them weather this tumultuous period."

OCDEL will work with a team of research specialists at ISRA to identify the specific operational and financial challenges that child care providers must overcome to stay open after statewide business and stay-at-home orders are lifted. The research team will survey a statewide representative sample of 1,000 randomly selected licensed child care providers and conduct interviews with program directors and staff.

The study will seek to answer the following questions:

- How have child care providers responded to COVID-19, and what are the financial costs?
- How many child care providers will remain operational without revenue in the next few months?
- What level of investment is needed to cover provider costs to enable their continued operation after restrictions on public movement are lifted?
- What level of investment is needed ensure that child care services are accessible to families during a transition period of low demand because of unemployment and fear of infection?

Researchers will also gather information about the extent to which the interruption of services will impact demand for child care moving forward and what resources and supports are needed to help child care providers navigate the period and provide high-quality child care to Pennsylvania families.

"Pennsylvania has acted swiftly to engage research partners and leverage existing federal grant funds to generate timely information about how child care providers have responded to this public health crisis," said Secretary Miller. "This study will provide state leaders with critical information about how child care providers are responding, and the impact of lost revenue."

"We hypothesize an immediate reduction in the demand for child care followed by a gradual increase in both the demand and supply of child care services. We will track both," said Dr. Philip Sirinides, ISRA Director at Penn State Harrisburg. "There may be a sudden change in the child care workforce as some staff may leave following a period of unemployment and people from other fields look for new work."

Penn State Harrisburg's ISRA furthers the university's public service and applied research mission by using interdisciplinary resources to address challenges facing Pennsylvania's communities. As a Penn State research and services unit in the state's capital region, the Institute serves to foster understanding in the areas of public policy analysis, community, regional and state planning, information management, public administration, evaluation, and economic development. ISRA recently [released a report](#) to help guide strategic planning in response to the COVID-19 in Pennsylvania.

Visit pa.gov for a ["Responding to COVID-19" guide](#) or the Pennsylvania Department of Health's dedicated [Coronavirus webpage](#) for the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19.