



School-Age Care Guidance and FAQ for 2020-21 School Year

Equitable and affordable school-age child care programs are essential to support working families and provide enrichment and care for students. Over one hundred thousand students across the state rely on school-based child care programs as their trusted child care provider.

Care for school-aged children, especially those children of workers in critical sectors, will continue to be crucial for frontline workers to continue to confront the pandemic. The state will continue to work with child care providers, school-age programs, schools, and all other child care settings to prioritize this need.

Executive Order 20-82 indicates that a school district or charter school that operates a hybrid or distance learning model “must provide school-aged care for Eligible Children at no cost during the time those children are not receiving instruction in the school building during regular school hours.”

The school-age care for children of critical workers is intended for extreme circumstances in which no parent or guardian is at home, due to employment as a critical worker.

This school-age care must be provided for district or school-enrolled school-age children age 12 and under who are children of critical workers in Tier I of the state critical worker list. Children of Tier I workers only will be cared for at no cost during the typical school hours. The Tier I list of eligible children is below.

Tier I: for more details on what is included in each sector listed below, view Appendix A at the end of this document.

- Healthcare and public health
- Law enforcement, public safety and first responders
- Food and agriculture
- Judicial Branch (essential services)
- National Guard (activated under a Governor Executive Order)
- Educators in pre-K through grade 12 settings
- School staff caring for children of critical workers
- Child care and school-age care providers

During a hybrid or distance learning model when students are not receiving in-person instruction, districts and charter schools should carefully consider their local community needs related to care for children of critical workers beyond Tier I areas. Based on community workforce needs and local staffing and space considerations, school districts and charters may provide care for children of workers outside of Tier I and if capacity is limited, prioritize enrollment for these families in such programs.

Fees can be charged for care for children beyond Tier I workers or for any care provided beyond the typical school hours based on your district’s current fee-based model and as capacity, staff and facilities allow given that you must follow MDH health and safety regulations. If the district has capacity to serve more than the children of Tier I workers during the school day during hybrid or distance learning models, this should be done

on a sliding fee basis, and utilizing publicly available funding to help make it affordable for families. **Priority should be given to those most underserved families in your communities.**

Schools are not required to provide this care during previously scheduled breaks reflected on a school-board approved calendar.

1. Can a district or charter school charge families for school-age care under a distance learning model?

Children of Tier I critical workers cannot be charged a fee during the school day. If you have enough staff, facilities and can follow MDH health and safety guidelines, you may care for children beyond Tier I following your normal fee structure.

2. How should schools verify “eligible school age children”?

School districts, charter schools and Community Education programs will determine how they choose to verify Tier I employment. This could include asking parents/guardians to provide identification, an employment badge, a security card, a letter from the employer, etc. that indicates what critical sector they work in.

3. Which employees are eligible to receive school-age care for their children during the school day without a fee?

Please see Appendix A at the end of this document.

4. Are preschool children of Tier I workers eligible to receive school-age care during the school day at no cost?

School-age care is available at no cost for children age 12 and under, who are district- or school-enrolled children of Tier I workers. This includes those enrolled in Voluntary Prekindergarten or School Readiness Plus.

5. If a district or school voluntarily chooses a distance learning-only model, can the district still provide school-age care to non-Tier I workers?

Yes. As long as children of Tier I workers are served first (free of charge during the school day). If the district or school has enough staff, adequate facilities and can adhere to MDH guidelines, care can be offered to school-age children of non-Tier I workers (may follow normal fee structure).

6. If a Tier I critical worker is working from home, would their children be eligible for school-age care?

School-age care for children of critical workers is intended for extreme circumstances in which no parent or guardian is at home, due to employment as a critical worker. School districts and charter schools are encouraged to provide free school-age care for children of any essential worker, even if they are working remotely, but this is **not** required and would depend on capacity.

7. Are school districts and charter schools required to provide school-age care available to children of Tier I essential workers who choose distance learning when the district or charter school is implementing an in-person or hybrid model?

No, a school district or charter school is not required to provide school-age care for critical workers when the school is offering in-person learning.

- 8. Would school-age care be offered by the district or school where the eligible student is enrolled, or can a parent/guardian choose to receive school-age care for their children at a school that is closer to where they work?**

The district or school where the child is enrolled is required to serve the child. However, if an essential worker can arrange for care in a district or charter school closer to where they are employed, that is an option as well. Districts and charters may provide care for school-age children of essential workers living outside of their district if they have capacity after first serving children of critical workers enrolled in their district, but are not required to do so.