

Addressing the Impact of Covid-19 on the Early Care and Education Sector: Strategies to Support the Sector

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent mitigation measures to contain it have exacerbated long-standing challenges in the early care and education (ECE) sector, affecting families, providers, children, employers, and the economy. Stay-at-home orders and social distancing directives led many ECE providers to close their programs permanently or temporarily, while the providers that remained open faced increased operating costs and strict limitations on enrollment. The result has been a disruption to the supply, quality, and continuity of ECE nationally.

The latest guidance from the Societal Experts Action Network (SEAN) identifies strategies that state and local decision makers can use in mitigating the impacts of the pandemic on the ECE sector.

Strategies for Mitigating the Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the ECE Sector

- 1. Reduce the rate of closures:** Use available recovery funds to assist providers that closed during the pandemic, those struggling to stay open, and those attempting to open new sites. These efforts include providing direct funds to ECE providers to pay salaries for personnel and buy cleaning materials and personal protective equipment.
- 2. Assist the ECE workforce:** Increase compensation, provide bonuses, encourage professional development opportunities, provide mental health supports, and improve overall working conditions to attract and retain qualified staff.
- 3. Modify subsidy reimbursement and payment policies:** Allow state authorities to base subsidy rates on the actual costs of providing high-quality ECE. Examples include basing subsidy rates on enrollment rather than attendance and using cost-estimation methods to pay for the actual costs of providing high-quality ECE.
- 4. Improve coordination of the ECE sector and funding systems:** Coordinate services and harmonize funding across the ECE sector to support continuous quality improvement and increase the quality, equity, sustainability, and efficiency of services. Coordination can also reduce family and provider administrative burdens.
- 5. Integrate data systems across provider and funding types:** Integrate data systems at the state and local levels to assist in rapid-response planning, foster continuous improvement, allow officials access to real-time information, identify gaps in service, and track outcomes.

[Read the Rapid Expert Consultation](#)

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