

ECE Provider Conference Call #12
October 14, 2020
2:00 PM

The call began at 2:00 p.m. and Kim Krzanowski welcomed everyone to the early childhood provider call. She explained the call logistics, including the call was being recorded, and that there would be agency updates. She noted Dr. Rattay would be addressing some DPH issues and answering questions today. Any questions should be put in the chat box. She indicated that in addition to Dr. Rattay, the following individuals would provide brief agency updates today:

Kim Klein, Director of Finance, DOE

Betty Gail Timm, Director, Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL), DOE

Thomas Hall, Deputy Director, Div. of Social Services, Purchase of Care (POC) Office

Jamie Mack, Division of Public Health (DPH)

Kimberly Klein, Director, Director of Finance, DOE: Kim provided the following update on Enhanced Reimbursement (ER) following Kim Krzanowski announcing that Kim Klein has been named the New Associate Secretary of Operations Support for the Department of Education:

- The decision was made today that ER is confirmed and will occur in November
- The State's intention is that ER will continue in December, but that will be reviewed, confirmed and announced in November.
- Please keep in mind that ER will end with December, as these federal funds expire at that time. Providers should be keeping that in mind as they begin to make plans for the coming year.
- The November application will open on Nov 15 for those providers who were open and serving families as of July 1, 2020.
- The rules will remain the same for October. Specifically, when you submit your application, it's your licensed capacity and enrollment. Enrollment is the number of kids on your Purchase of Care roster for the application month plus the number of private pays that are paying you as of the 15th of the month.
- Confirmation calls will continue.
- Please keep in mind that we pull the applications each Monday, based on submissions up through Saturday. If you submit on a Saturday, you can expect a call the following week. If you submit on a Sunday, you will need to wait a week before your application will be processed.
- If two weeks have passed and you have not heard from anyone, please email us at enhanced.reimbursement@doe.k12.de.us to check the status.

Betty Gail Timm, Director, Office of Child Care Licensing, DOE: Betty Gail introduced herself and made the following comments:

- OCCL has received many questions from providers who want to comply and do the right thing, so thank you for that.
- Thanks to Jamie Mack who has assisted OCCL with answering your questions.
- OCCL sent out an email on Monday with answers to questions that were sent to us. Be sure to look at that information (also found attached to these minutes as ECE Compiled Questions Answers).

Tom Hall, Deputy Director, Division of Social Services (DSS): Tom introduced himself and thanked everyone for this time. He made the following brief comments and indicated there would be several documents attached to the minutes relative to his presentation.

DSS continues to provide updates to providers through our Provider Portal, Listserv, and the MyChildDE.org website and provide direct assistance to providers through the POC Resource mailbox and POC helpline.

For the months of October and November:

- All open sites will be paid based on enrollment. Enrollment is defined as all POC authorized children at 100% attendance.
 - This means that you should be entering attendance into PSS as if all POC authorized children have attended care for all billable days of the month. On your physical attendance sheets, please continue to mark each child's actual attendance and mark "COVID-19" on the sheet.
- DSS will be paying the parent co-pay.
- Please do not collect copays and please reimburse any families that may have paid in advance for the month of October or November.

It is our intention to pay for enrollment and copays for the remainder of the calendar year.

- It is important to note though that we will need to review monthly to determine if we are able to keep this payment structure in place. A few things we will be looking at each month is POC utilization, POC Spending, Federal and State funding availability, and any new or changed federal guidance. A significant change in any of these factors may require us to modify the POC payment structure.

The Division has contracted with a vendor to start the market rate survey. Currently, we are required to do a market rate survey every three years. William Horace, an economist from Syracuse University, has been our vendor for this study for many years and will be completing the study again this year. We are starting that survey this month. We have sent out notices to all providers that they will be contacted by Research America and asked to provide their current rates. The mailing also included a worksheet, providers can use prepare for the interview in advance of the call. I will share both of those documents with this group so that information can be included in the minutes.

We understand that providers may want to know more about the survey, so we have arranged for William Horace to conduct three informational zoom meetings next week. These meetings are intended to provide information to providers about the survey, how the rates are calculated, and to answer any questions providers may have about the survey. State POC staff will also be available on those calls. Please considering attending a call if you want to know more or have questions about the Market Rate Survey.

Zoom meetings will be held on Monday, October 19 from 1pm to 2pm and from 6pm to 7pm, as well as on Wednesday, October 21 from 6pm to 7pm. I will include the Zoom meeting information in the chat box as well as in today's minutes.

Please join using the following information: Topic: 2020/21 Delaware Child Care Market Rate Survey Information Sessions; Time: 10/19/20 1-2pm; 10/19/20 6-7pm; or 10/21/20 6-7pm; Meeting ID: 898 2713 0859; Passcode: 650527

As always thanks for your hard work and dedication to Delaware's families. At DSS, the POC staff are on duty and ready to accept calls and POC questions via the POC Helpline which is 302-255-9670 or via email at POCResource@delaware.gov. As always please feel to reach out to me directly at 302-255-9605.

Next, Dr. Rattay provided a brief update on the COVID-19 in Delaware. Last time, there was an increase in cases in Delaware in late August/September. We also saw an increase in the percentage of positives in Delaware of those tested. There has also been an increase in hospitalizations.

The good news is the case rates may be leveling off. We now have the highest hospitalization that we have had for quite some time, which is concerning. The biggest increase has been in Sussex County over last week. New Castle County has had a slight increase as well, and sometimes this will result in an increase in deaths too. We believe this increase is being driven by the large University of Delaware community and nursing homes. She reiterated that it is very important to avoid gatherings, wear masks, and practice social distancing. Additionally, testing is helpful, as is contact tracing. We want case rates to lower.

Cases among young children and school age children have increased, and we are looking at it closely with schools and child care programs. There has been limited spread in child care facilities. In schools, there may be more spread from staff. We are doing pretty well overall in schools. The cases we do see are mostly from exposures outside the school setting.

We are seeing our highest rate of cases among 20-35 year olds. Anyone can keep track of data by visiting www.myhealthycommunity.com. Also, be sure to check out the COVID-19 alert app, which uses bluetooth technology to let you know if you have been in contact with someone who has COVID.

Next, Dr. Rattay shifted to questions she received ahead of time or that were in the chat box:

Q. Should we develop a "herd immunity" to address the virus, since worst cases did not result (as in Sweden for example)?

A. There was a good article in Time magazine which addresses why "herd immunity" is a bad approach. It results in a high mortality rate. They did have some measures in place in Sweden, but their lax approach has not been good. It resulted in worst outcomes for kids.

Q. When will we be able to loosen the restrictions currently in place in child care programs and schools?

A. It will still be many months before it is safe to remove restrictions. These restrictions need to be in place until a large portion of our population is vaccinated. Since we left the lockdown we are experiencing more cases. We tried to balance the economy with infections. However, for now, we will still need to social distance, wear masks, etc.

Q. If most of the severe cases are with vulnerable populations – like those 65 and older, why are school-age children not allowed to return to school?

A. Adults and kids can still suffer long term consequences, not just those older populations. Therefore to be cautious we should not return children to school completely at this point.

Q. Is it up to a child's doctor as to whether a COVID-19 test is required, or does every child have to be tested before they return to child care/school?

A. If the child has any COVID-19 symptoms, they should go to their doctor for assessment. The doctors in our state are well versed to assess for COVID-19 as well as other illnesses. DPH suggested getting tested as opposed to not. To clarify, for an individual who is COVID-19 positive, they should get a clearance from DPH that says they are good to return to school/child care. If an individual feels they have been exposed to COVID-19, they need to be in quarantine for 14 days since exposure. No doctor's test or note will shorten the time of quarantine.

Q. What is the reliability of the rapid COVID-19 test? Should they be followed up by a lab test to confirm the results?

A. We do have some concerns with the rapid antigen test. We have seen positive tests, but they are not true positive. If you have a positive antigen test, you should get a PBR test. Treat the test result as a positive until you know otherwise.

Q. Please clarify the best window for testing following exposure to COVID-19.

A. The best time to test is 12 days after exposure.

Q. How many positive cases have we seen in child care programs? Is there an increase in children?

A. We are around 25 positive cases. A positive case is someone who has been in a facility during the time they were contagious. It was noted that child cares are part of regular reports that DPH receives. We are not seeing enough cases to be concerned about.

Q. How is the quantity of testing supplies holding up?

A. We are doing much better than a few months ago. We now have a number of different types of tests. DPH encourages a VAULT test (see DPH Website). A company called MAKO will be doing testing in schools. We have sufficient tests.

Q. Does DPH have materials to publicize testing that providers could post?

A. Yes these are available to programs. Also see the following graphics and testing information:: All the graphics can be found here: <https://coronavirus.delaware.gov/coronavirus-graphics/>
Testing info can be found here: <https://coronavirus.delaware.gov/testing/>

Q. Do we know the percentage of positive averages vs. total tests taken?

A. We have been using a system where we track cases/people. So every time a person gets tested, they may not be captured unless they are positive. The system previously was only tracking # of people tested, as opposed to # of overall tests being done. To date we have over 300,000 people who have been tested in Delaware. There have been half a million tests done. The test based % positive was added because CDC and John Hopkins use these metrics. Previously we were comparing unfavorably, but now we are providing test based metrics and the person based metric. Both have gone down over the last week.

Q. Are pediatricians understanding our concerns and challenges and why we are requesting these notes?

A. We have advised them this is an important role they play. If there are specific concerns, we can come together with them. However, we do see kids with runny noses who test positive for COVID-19. DPH will continue to have conversations with providers.

Q. If someone tests positive, shouldn't DPH ask who they had been in contact with?

A. Yes, there is a clear interview protocol. I don't know why that would happen. Maybe the individual was confirmed positive and the contact tracing call occurred a day or two after the diagnosis.

Q. Are there cases of Multi System Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS) in Delaware and is this data available online for the public to review?

A. Yes, we only have two Delaware children with MIS.

Q. How do you define exposure or close contact?

A. The term is close contact, which is defined as being in close contact with someone for more than 5 minutes within a distance of 6 feet.

Q. Can someone be contagious 48 hours prior to a positive test?

A. Yes, actually that is the most contagious period – the 48 hours before symptoms appear. Asymptomatic individuals spread it during this time.

Q. What if I need help improving my heating/air ventilation system?

A. See attachment on HEPA systems.

Q. Is there a way for child cares to know if a school age child in their care is infected?

A. The provider will be made aware of any age child in your care if they are positive or contagious while in your care.

Q. What protocols do we need to follow for those kids doing hybrid learning, as they may be bringing germs into the programs from school?

A. We are aware of this. Providers should adhere to guidelines – children and staff wearing face coverings, being at least 3 feet apart, facing same direction inside, etc. DPH suggests testing on a monthly basis.

Q. Is close contact defined as being within 6 feet for 15 minutes with or without mask?

A. Close contact is defined as 6 feet for 15 minutes with or without masks in controlled settings.

Q. We know children have a higher recovery rate. Are we striking the right balance between protecting them from the disease and maintaining socialization?

A. We are finding the right balance. We are doing all we can to protect children while letting them attending child care and school.

Q. For those being tested as a precaution, should they be out of work until they get their test results back?

A. They should only remain out of work if they are experiencing symptoms or have reason to believe they are positive.

Q. If a school age in hybrid learning is diagnosed with COVID-19, how does the center get notified?

A. DPH will contact the center if we have not been contacted already by center. Sometimes families get notified before the DPH system does. If parent tells you about a positive case, please call DPH.

Dr. Rattay scanned the chat box and expressed her admiration for providers and recognized the importance of your role and care of children. She called them heroes in their response.

Dr. Kimberly Krzanowski wrapped up the call echoing thanks and appreciation for providers. She noted minutes of the meeting will be prepared. The meeting concluded at 3:00 p.m.