

Summer 2020 Enrollment & Eligibility Guidance for EarlyLearn Centers

(Released July 21, 2020)



Note: This guidance applies to all EarlyLearn center-based programs that transitioned from the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) in July 2019 and are now contracted by the NYC Department of Education (DOE) to provide year-round services to eligible infants, toddlers, 3-year-olds, and 4-year-olds.

*This guidance is only applicable for contracted EarlyLearn services in **July and August 2020**. The DOE will release new guidance on enrollment and eligibility for September 2020 later this summer.*



- All contracted EarlyLearn programs are expected to provide services, in some form, to **all** eligible children and families **currently enrolled** in their DOE-funded EarlyLearn classes. **No children or families should be dropped from program rosters at this time.**
- **The needs and preferences of your enrolled families are likely different, and the services provided by programs need to reflect these differences.** Some families may not be able or ready to send their child to a program for in-person learning this summer; other families may need full day and full week care; others may be able to accommodate a more flexible schedule that includes a combination of in-person and remote learning.
- Programs may serve currently-enrolled children and families through **three potential learning models**:
 1. Full-time in-person learning;
 2. Full-time remote learning; or
 3. Blended learning (a combination of in-person learning and remote learning).
- In a child's early years, learning is most impactful when it takes place in person. **All EarlyLearn programs should plan to provide some level of in-person learning services in DOE-funded EarlyLearn classrooms this summer.** We anticipate that most programs will provide a combination of the learning models listed above, depending on families' needs, group size requirements, and staffing limitations.
- At this time, programs must continue to provide remote learning services to all currently-enrolled children until they resume in-person services. Additional guidance may follow.
- To maximize in-person learning opportunities for currently-enrolled children, programs may:
 - Request flexibility in their operating hours for in-person services in DOE-funded EarlyLearn classrooms, **including providing fewer than the usual 10 hours per day.** Programs requesting this flexibility will be required to continue to provide a minimum of 7 hours per day. Programs should request this flexibility through their assigned DECE readiness staff member, and must clearly communicate operating hours in advance to families.
 - Request to **provide in-person services to children in mixed-age groups**, as long as they continue to comply with applicable [Article 47](#) regulations. Programs should also request this flexibility through their assigned DECE readiness staff member.



- Families who opt for full-time remote learning through the end of summer should be able to review this decision at the beginning of September, and may opt back into in-person learning if they would like to do so.
- Programs are invited to submit any comments on this guidance document through their assigned DECE readiness staff member for review and discussion.



Priority for in-person services for Head Start, City Transitional Head Start, and Child Care



- Programs should provide in-person services this summer to as many currently-enrolled families as possible, given family needs, group size requirements, and staffing limitations.
 - **Head Start and City Transitional Head Start:** In the event that it is not possible to provide in-person services this summer to all currently-enrolled families who request them, programs should use their existing Selection Criteria to prioritize in-person services. Programs may also choose to create Selection Criteria specific to this circumstance in consultation with their Delegate Agency Policy Committee and Governing Board. The table below is a suggestion for prioritizing in-person services.
 - **Child Care:** In the event that it is not possible to provide extended day, in-person services this summer to every currently-enrolled family eligible for child care assistance who requests them, programs should prioritize in-person services to priority groups. The DOE has provided recommended priority group criteria in the table below; programs may use discretion based on the needs of their program community.

Recommended Tier 1 criteria to prioritize currently-enrolled <u>families</u> for in-person summer services	
Priority 1	Protective Cases – Referrals from ACS for protective reasons.
Priority 2	Preventive Cases – Referrals from ACS or Preventive Services Agencies for preventive reasons. Foster Care cases are also included in this category.
Priority 3	<p>Cash Assistance and Transitional Child Care</p> <p>Employment – Cash Assistance (CA) recipients who are employed in an approved work activity or receiving transitional benefits.</p> <p>Training – Public Assistance (PA) recipients who are in an approved training/education program.</p> <p>Transitional Benefits – A working client whose CA case was closed because of employment.</p>



Priority 4	<p>Domestic Violence – Families receiving services due to domestic violence.</p> <p>Homeless – Families who are homeless. For child care eligibility, the family must also be income eligible.</p>
Priority 5	<p>Employment – Employed parents/guardians who meet the “essential worker” eligibility criteria defined by the DOE Regional Enrichment Centers (RECs).</p>

- If all families in the Tier 1 priority groups who request them are provided in-person services, the DOE recommends that programs then prioritize in-person services for currently-enrolled children as follows.

Recommended Tier 2 criteria to prioritize currently-enrolled children for in-person summer services <u>after</u> all interested families meeting Tier 1 criteria are served	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) and Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) • Emergent Multilingual Learners (EMLLs) - children whose home language is not English • Infants and toddlers
Notes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommended Tier 2 priority <u>does not</u> include a priority for currently-enrolled siblings, unless they also belong to one of these groups. • IFSP or IEP services will be provided either through remote teletherapy or in-person services, depending on parents’ preference and applicable health and safety considerations. Teletherapy will continue for parents who wish to remain remote, and for families who would like in-person SEIT, services can be provided at childcare locations. The DOE is currently working with partners at the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to understand how additional in-person services will work for children with IFSPs and IEPs.

- **After programs have ensured full-time, in-person services to the above Tier 1 and Tier 2 priority groups, they should then aim to provide at least 1/3 of services in person to any other currently-enrolled family who requests them (i.e., at least 1 in-person day out of every 3 possible program days).** If programs have additional capacity after ensuring at least 1/3 of services in person to all currently-enrolled families who request them, they should provide additional in-person services to currently-enrolled families who request them.
 - Programs that are concerned about their ability to provide at least 1/3 of services in person to any currently-enrolled family who requests them should reach out to their assigned



DECE readiness staff member.

- Programs that have additional capacity to provide in-person services, beyond what has been requested by their currently-enrolled families, may open up in-person services over the summer to eligible families who are newly matched for September.
- If a currently-enrolled family changes their preferences and wants more in-person care, the program should prioritize the family according to the above guidance based on capacity, but should not change the services for other currently-enrolled families. Families should be given the opportunity to change their preferences for in-person and remote learning services again after the summer.
- Programs should keep detailed records reflecting the days on which enrolled children received in-person services and the duration of those in-person services using existing attendance tools.
- Programs are not allowed to enroll additional children at this time, unless they are currently under-enrolled and have additional capacity to provide in-person services, beyond what has been requested by their currently-enrolled families. In this case, programs should prioritize enrolling families whose current program cannot accommodate five days of in-person care for them and in accordance with the recommended Tier 1 and Tier 2 criteria above. Any new enrollments this summer would be temporary enrollments, unless the program is also under-enrolled for September.
- Programs can direct currently-enrolled families to DOE's Outreach team if they are not able to provide as much in-person services as a family requests and is eligible to receive. DOE's Outreach team will work with the family to see if there are any other program options available. Families can contact DOE Outreach by emailing OutreachTeam@schools.nyc.gov.

Eligibility determination for Head Start and Child Care Assistance

Head Start

- Head Start programs continue to be responsible for determining eligibility of children based on the Head Start Program Performance Standards.

Child Care Assistance

- Until further notice, programs and families should only submit both new child care assistance applications and recertifications via email to earlylearn@schools.nyc.gov or mail to:

NYC DOE - Office of Student Enrollment
PO BOX 377
Maplewood, NJ 07040

- Programs and families should not submit the same application to both the email inbox or mailing address.
- All DOE Family Welcome Centers are currently closed for in-person services. Programs and families should not plan to visit in person at this time.



- For assistance with child care applications, families and programs can also contact the DOE by emailing earlylearn@schools.nyc.gov or calling 718-935-2009. Interpretation services are offered in over 200 languages.
- If due to COVID-19, families cannot obtain the required documentation for either new child care assistance applications or for eligibility redetermination, they can submit an attestation available on the [ACS Division of Child and Family Well-Being \(CFWB\) website](#).
- **Child care eligibility redetermination has been postponed due to COVID-19** for families who were originally due for eligibility redetermination in March, April, May, June and July. These families will need to submit their recertification application for redetermination according to the dates provided in the table below.

Postponed eligibility redetermination date for child care assistance due to COVID-19		
Original date for family eligibility redetermination	Revised date by which family must submit recertification packet	Revised date family will lose child care benefits if not redetermined eligible
3/31/20	7/14/20	7/29/20
4/30/20	7/14/20	7/29/20
5/31/20	8/14/20	8/29/20
6/30/20	9/13/20	9/28/20
7/31/20	10/14/20	10/29/20

- If families do not submit the completed recertification application and required documentation by their designated date, they will stop receiving child care benefits. Families and programs will receive the Notice of Intent to Discontinue Child Care Benefits, which will advise again when child care benefits will be discontinued and what rights families have to appeal the action.
- At this time, the original eligibility redetermination dates for all other families remain the same.

