



NEW YORK STATE
NETWORK FOR
YOUTH SUCCESS

SCHOOL-AGE CHILDCARE (SACC) CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FALL 2020

JULY 2020

PROGRAMS REOPENING

CONCERNS:

- 70% of SAC programs closed during the pandemic with the hopes of reopening in the fall. However, financially, many won't be able to reopen.
- Operating at half-capacity results in lower revenue.
- Necessary PPE and safety precautions (i.e. barriers/partitions, cleaning supplies, etc.) are cost prohibitive.
- If the program was closed for 6 months or more,
 - If using their existing space, they will need to renew their license.
 - If they will operate in a new space, they will need to get a new license and inspection for that space.
- Some programs are currently not taking subsidies due to limited capacity and already low revenues.

RECOMMENDATIONS:



- Allow program waivers, through an Executive Order, to expedite licensing and inspection for new program space.
- Provide discretionary grants to programs to cover reduced capacity and PPE expenses.

SPACE

CONCERNS:

- School Districts are already indicating that they do not want community-based organizations (CBOs) in their space for four reasons:
 - Department of Health (DOH) guidance documents for schools and childcare are misaligned.
 - Schools have expressed they need time to clean the building.
 - Schools say they want to reduce the number of people coming into the building.
 - Schools have expressed they need every space in the school to spread out the students during the school day.
- 65% of SACC programs operate in schools. With staggered school schedules, providers cannot offer care on children's "off" days if school buildings are in use.
- 60% of programs surveyed say they do not have access to alternate space if the school is not available.ⁱ
- Rent could be a challenge if that is required in a new space.
- Physical plant requirements of alternate spaces may be prohibitive if they don't align with Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulations.
- Programs in rural areas will be less likely to have access to alternate spaces.
- Owners of other buildings may not want gatherings in their space, reducing the number of available spaces even further.
- If in an alternative space, children will most likely need transportation to and from the alternative location.
- Internal logistics (hiring, program planning, sites for programming, resources for virtual programming, etc.) will most likely vary for programs in efforts to respond to schools' reopening plans. This will further limit the capacity of programs, decrease their revenues, and strain their resources.



RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Revise “cohort” language in DOH guidance for schools on “before and aftercare” to align with DOH guidance on childcare to avoid confusion and possible citations. Specifically, remove the current language on page 4 on the Interim DOH Guidance for in-person instruction for Pre-K to Grade 12 for before and aftercare, and on page 20 of the full SED Guidance, and inserting the following: *All before and afterschool programs located in the school building must follow June 8th DOH Guidance for Child Care and Day Camps. Before and afterschool programs must share their safety plans with schools/ school districts and building principals for any school in which they operate.*
- Allow program waivers, through an Executive Order, to expedite use of new program space. Waivers would be especially useful for programs moving from one school building to a new school building.
- Provide discretionary grants to programs to cover additional rent or associated space costs.

STAFFING

CONCERNS:

- 70% of SACC programs closed during the pandemic, resulting in large staff layoffs.
- If programs are able to reopen, they will need to hire many, if not all, new staff. This poses several challenges for programs:
 - Increased number of workforce who are untrained.
 - Urgency to go through the background check process and get cleared successfully within a short period of time.
 - Need to understand existing and new childcare regulations.
 - Need to understand additional guidance such as DOH guidance.
 - Need for new and additional training to successfully execute high-quality standards and health and safety protocols.
 - Potential shortage of program staff due to high demand.



RECOMMENDATIONS:


- Provide discretionary grants to programs to cover staff training, recruiting, and orienting.
- Support the Network in upgrading the Afterschool Pathfinder website – a free, statewide job posting and recruiting website exclusively for afterschool programs.

CONGESTION/BACKLOGS

CONCERNS:

- Due to the staffing concerns, a backlog on background checks is anticipated. The impact of this backlog on staff will be aggravated if programs have to follow the “birthday schedule” timeline to conduct criminal background checks.
- Backlog on inspection and licensing is also anticipated. This will affect:
 - Programs with a lapsed license due to closure.
 - Programs in new spaces.
 - Approval of program directors.

RECOMMENDATIONS:


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- Provide a clear, comprehensive, and streamlined process for licensing and criminal background checks.
 - Allow program waivers, through an Executive Order, to expedite the criminal background check process.
 - Dedicate more resources to the criminal background check process to increase capacity.

STATE CONTRACTING – EXECUTION OF CONTRACTS AND REIMBURSEMENTS

CONCERNS:

- Some state contracts with afterschool providers remain unsigned long after the official start date.
- Some afterschool providers continue to see delayed payments on their contracts, making it difficult to operate with limited funds.
- There is lack of clarity around retro payments for programs that began under good faith that their contract would be signed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:


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- Expedite the signing of contracts that have not been fully executed.
 - Provide back pay for contracts immediately upon signing for programs that have already begun in anticipation of their signed contracts.
 - Work with the NYS Network for Youth Success to create templates for programs to easily navigate any adjustments that need to be made to their contracts.
 - Provide timely and open communication between state agencies - specifically the Office of Children and Family Services and New York State Education Department - and providers.

STATE CONTRACTING – RFP REQUIREMENTS AND MODIFICATIONS

CONCERNS:

- Programs receiving public funds (Advantage After School Program, Empire State After-School Program, 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, Extended School Day/School Violence Prevention Program) must be given the utmost flexibility necessary to adapt to support students.
 - Even if programs are able to modify their plans to coordinate with school reopening plans, it is unclear to what extent they will be able to do so under their current contracts.
 - In particular, most funding streams do not currently allow programs to operate during school hours, however they will need to be able to do so to serve students in remote learning environments when they are not in in-person school.
- There is currently no official guidance on contractual flexibility for the Empire State After-School Program (ESAP).
 - It will be difficult for ESAP modifications to align very closely with initial proposals if school districts' reopening plans disrupt the ability and capacity of programs to best serve students as they had initially proposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

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- Extend contractual flexibility for all afterschool program funds (and when not available, provide official contractual flexibility) into the upcoming school year to support an adequate, efficient, and coordinated response to schools' reopening.
 - Provide guidance for program modifications that extend services into the school day hours. This will be critical for programs that support students who are learning remotely or have “off” days from school.

COMMUNICATION TO PROVIDERS

CONCERNS:

- There is lack of timely communication with providers from state agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

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- Provide clear, consistent, and ongoing communications and timely guidance to providers.
 - Ensure frequent and coordinated communication between state agencies.

UTILIZING CARES ACT FUNDS TO SUPPORT SACC PROGRAMS

Proposed Discretionary/Flexible Grants:ⁱ

A flat amount for each interested licensed provider. Providers may apply to receive these one-time funds.

- \$8,000 per program in a school district with less than 25% of students economically disadvantaged.ⁱⁱⁱ
- \$9,500 per program in a school district with 26% - 70% of students economically disadvantaged.
- \$11,000 per program in a school district with 71% or more students who are classified as economically disadvantaged.

The funding can be applied toward any costs associated with operating the child care program during the time period of September – December 2020.

ⁱ Program space survey was conducted by the NYS Network for Youth Success in July 2020.

ⁱⁱ The following states have used CARES Act funds to provide versions of discretionary/flexible grants to support SACC providers: Alaska, Connecticut, Iowa, Minnesota, Washington, Wyoming.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Economically disadvantaged” as calculated on SED Data website.