



July 24, 2020

Dr. Kristi Snuggs, Interim Director
NC Division of Child Development and Early Education
2201 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2200

Dear Dr. Snuggs,

I am writing to you with a sense of urgency about school-age care and NC Pre-K, both tied to the start of school in North Carolina. Because these topics are so important for North Carolina families and licensed centers – and because the start of the new school year is fast upon us – please let me hear back from you before the end of July.

In light of Governor Cooper’s recent announcement of the State direction on reopening public schools (which includes a combination of in-person and remote instruction), and given the varying school reopening plans already being announced across different local schools systems, I am writing to inquire about the Division’s plan to help North Carolina families access safe, supportive care for school-age children so they can work to provide for their children at home. Most important, I respectfully request that decisions about how to best help families access needed school-age care be made through collaboration that involves licensed child care centers – that the child care industry have input into these decisions and plans. I’ve seen the survey asking programs about capacity and that appears to be a good start; however, helping solve the school-age care dilemma for families will require more than capacity.

State-licensed child care centers, many of which have experience providing before- and after-school care for school-age children, are among the safest, most supportive environments for them. As such, licensed centers need DCDEE to be an advocate for them. Here are two specific examples of how DCDEE and the Administration should help licensed providers assist families with school-age care:

- 1) Work with licensed centers to provide reasonable regulatory flexibility to better accommodate the needs of families and school-age children. Modifications to screen time policies and rules is just one example of regulatory flexibility needed.
- 2) During the pandemic, change the way licensed centers are reimbursed for school-age care from a “blended rate,” which significantly underpays providers for school-age services, to a rate that fairly reimburses them for the day-long care they have been providing and that parents will continue to ask them to provide.

Regarding to NC Pre-K, DCDEE should assume leadership regarding NC Pre-K policies and payments. With uncertainty surrounding delayed school openings (in-person instruction) and ongoing fluctuations with NC Pre-K attendance, child care providers desperately need consistent policies and information and whatever certainty can be provided. Rather than a mix of policies determined by local committees, we are asking DCDEE to lead on the creation and implementation of some important, specific statewide NC Pre-K policy and to involve licensed centers in discussions and decision-making around those policies.



More specifically, on behalf of licensed centers that are willing and able to operate NC Pre-K programs, we are also asking the Division to:

- 3) Pay all NC Pre-K slots for a full ten-month period based on slot allocation and not on assigned (placed) students or attendance.

We are already hearing that NC Pre-K signups are lagging. Centers cannot afford to operate NC Pre-K on reduced enrollment and need to be making informed decisions about staffing now. If DCDEE takes the lead and directs local committees to implement this recommended payment policy, it will go a long way toward preserving both NC Pre-K teacher employment and access for families, as well as provide some much-needed certainty for the program and the centers that participate.

Given the urgency and timeline for the start of K-12 public schools (Aug. 17), we hope to begin working with the Division immediately to help solve the dilemma for families around school-age care and help ensure that families and children served by NC Pre-K continue to have access to the programs they count on. Please let us hear back from you soon.

Thank you for your attention and responsiveness.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kevin Campbell".

Kevin Campbell, President

We work to ensure a successful future for young children and their families by working to ensure the success of those who provide licensed early care and education.