

## Resources in Response to COVID-19

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) is offering several programs and services to assist Tennesseans impacted by COVID-19.

### Family Assistance

**TANF Emergency Cash Assistance – Pandemic:** This Emergency Cash Assistance program will provide cash payments to families significantly impacted by the COVID-19 emergency. Beginning Thursday, March 26, families can begin applying online, for up to two months of emergency cash assistance if they were employed as of March 11, 2020 and they've lost employment or at least 50% of their earned income as a result of the pandemic. This money is funded by the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and provides between \$500 and \$1000, depending on household size, to qualifying families. This assistance is available in addition to any unemployment benefits individuals in the family may be receiving. Applicants can complete the application process online at [https://tdhs.service-now.com/relief?id=relief\\_registration](https://tdhs.service-now.com/relief?id=relief_registration).

**COVID-19 Food Assistance:** TDHS is currently working to provide emergency food assistance benefits to Tennesseans impacted by COVID-19. Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

### Child Care

**Child Care Payment Assistance/Smart Steps:** The Child Care Payment Assistance/Smart Steps Program is available to qualifying families. Eligibility criteria and application information are available [here](#). TDHS strongly encourages applicants to apply online.

**Child Care Facilities:** TDHS is encouraging child care facilities to use their discretion in deciding whether to remain open based on the needs in their own community. There are many factors to consider, and each agency's situation will be different. As caring citizens and business owners, each program should make the decision that will be the best fit for the program, the families they serve, and the larger community.

TDHS is currently working with existing licensed providers and potential temporary providers to support safety and continuity of care as families are affected by COVID-19. The Department has taken the following actions:

- **Relaxed Regulations:** TDHS is relaxing regulatory burden on existing licensed child care centers. Governor Lee's Executive Order No. 15 suspends the relevant provisions of Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 71, Chapter 3, Part 5 and related rules to allow the Commissioner of Human Services to waive child care licensure requirements to respond to the effects of COVID-19.
- **Disaster/Emergency Response and Recovery Grants:** TDHS is partnering with the Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee to make \$10 million in new assistance available to help licensed child care agencies that were impacted by the recent COVID-19 emergency and the March 3 tornado disaster. Funding for these grants is provided through the federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Starting March 24, agencies will be able to [apply online](#) for grants covering expenditures including but not limited to:
  - Loss of Income resulting from closing due to the disaster/emergency. Grant awards will be based on the itemized lost operating income for the period of closure.
  - Response & Recovery Operations Costs that occur as a result of the disaster/emergency such as cleaning, utility repair, inspections, and substitute staffing. Grant awards will be based on the costs incurred.
  - Equipment, Materials, and Supplies that were lost or compromised as a result of the disaster/emergency such as area rugs, soft toys like stuffed animals, books, curriculum, learning tools and displays, damaged cabinets and shelving, supplies, and playground surfacing and equipment.

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- Consultants and Coaches that are needed specifically related to disaster/emergency impacts such as helping children, caregivers, or staff through recovery, grief, anxiety, stress, or trauma.
- **Child Care Subsidies:** Child care facilities that currently serve children enrolled in the Child Care Payment Assistance Program will continue to receive CCDF subsidy payments through the end of March, even if they are closed or the child is not currently attending. If a child attends an impacted center and must relocate, TDHS will pay both the impacted center and the new alternative care center through the end of March. Circumstances will be reassessed at that time.
- **Guidance for Temporary Child Care Providers:** As Tennesseans step up and consider providing child care for friends and neighbors with school aged children, these temporary child care operations should follow the guidance provided [here](#) on how to safely accomplish this especially in the wake of COVID-19.

### Accessing Services and Additional Resources

After a careful analysis of foot traffic and the health and safety guidelines for COVID-19 provided by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Tennessee Department of Health, the Tennessee Department of Human Services moved to appointment-only for in-person services beginning Monday, March 23, 2019.

Local offices will have employees available to respond to questions or applications via telephone. Customers can find the number to their local office by going online to <https://www.tn.gov/content/tn/humanservices/families/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/office-locator-family-assistance.html>.

These changes will remain in effect indefinitely for offices in each Tennessee county until the COVID-19 state of emergency is reduced. No issuance of benefits will be impacted as a result of these office closures.

The following TDHS services are always available online:

- The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** provides nutritional assistance benefits to children and families, the elderly, the disabled, unemployed, and working families. Apply for services online at <https://faonlineapp.dhs.tn.gov/>.
- **Families First** provides temporary cash assistance, transportation, child care assistance, educational supports, job training, employment activities, and other support services. Apply for services online at <https://faonlineapp.dhs.tn.gov/>.
- The **Child Support** program provides services that promote parental responsibility to meet the financial needs of children and their families. Apply for services online <https://csonlineapp.dhs.tn.gov/Home/Login>. Payments can be made online at <https://tn.smartchildsupport.com/>.
- **Adult Protective Services** investigates reports of abuse, neglect (including self-neglect) or financial exploitation of adults who are unable to protect themselves due to a physical or mental limitation. Call toll free 1-888-APS-TENN (1-888-277-8366) or report suspected abuse online <https://reportadultabuse.dhs.tn.gov/>.
- The **Child Care Certificate Program** provides child care financial assistance to families who are working or pursuing post-secondary education and who meet certain income eligibility requirements. Apply for Child Care Payment Assistance/Smart Steps online <https://cconlineapp.dhs.tn.gov/Home/Login>.

Learn more about the Tennessee Department of Human Services at [www.tn.gov/humanservices](http://www.tn.gov/humanservices).