



# Technical Assistance Brief: How Child Care Stabilization Grants Can Improve Nutrition & Physical Activity

## Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic shined a spotlight on the importance and fragility of the early care and education (ECE) sector. ECE programs, from Head Start to family child care homes, are an essential resource for children and families. During the pandemic, ECE programs experienced temporary or permanent closures, reduced enrollment, and increased operating costs to keep everyone safe when open.<sup>1</sup> Before the pandemic, ECE programs were already strained by razor-thin margins, an economically vulnerable workforce, and a lack of resources to support facility improvements, equipment purchases, or professional development.<sup>2</sup>

In March 2021, Congress passed the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, a \$1.9 trillion relief package that includes \$39 billion in relief funds for the ECE sector. This historic measure represents the largest one-time federal investment in child care. Of the \$39 billion, the ARP appropriates nearly \$24 billion for “child care stabilization grants.” In May 2021, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children (ACF) and Families’ Office of Child Care (OCC) released [implementation guidance](#) for these funds.<sup>3</sup>

ARP stabilization funding will flow to states via the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) with few restrictions, reporting requirements and eligibility qualifications. This makes them ideal supports to enhance nutrition and physical activity in ECE programs, particularly in under-resourced communities most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>4</sup> A lasting and equitable recovery must include not only an immediate response to the pandemic, but actions to address the underlying social determinants of health.

## Purpose of the Technical Assistance (TA) Brief

Nemours Children’s Health System developed this brief primarily for state partners of Healthy Kids, Healthy Future Technical Assistance Program (HKHF TAP) and Better Together. Other organizations promoting nutrition and physical activity in ECE, including recipients of CDC’s State Physical Activity and Nutrition (SPAN) funding, could also benefit from the information presented here. This TA Brief provides recommendations on how child care stabilization grants could strengthen healthy eating and physical activity practices in ECE programs. While there are multiple streams of federal funds flowing into the ECE sector, this brief focuses exclusively on the child care stabilization grants. Federal guidance for these funds was released in May 2021 and states are beginning to release their respective [grant applications](#). To support state partners, this brief aims to:

- Orient Nemours’ state partners on the general timing, dissemination, and requirements of the child care stabilization grants and highlight opportunities for promoting best practices based on the ACF/OCC guidance to Lead Agencies;
- Support partners in collaborating with Lead Agencies to promote the sample activities into their state’s stabilization grant application process and TA provision; and,
- Provide sample activities and resources for use by ECE programs when applying for child care stabilization grants since they may not be aware that these funds could support health and wellness.

## Contents

1	Introduction
1	Purpose of the Technical Assistance (TA) Brief
2	Overview of Child Care Stabilization Grants
3 - 6	How Child Care Stabilization Grants Can Support Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
6	Self-Assessments to Guide Investments in Nutrition and Physical Activity
7	How State Partners Can Support Lead Agencies and ECE Programs
8	Equity Considerations and Strategies
8	Additional Assistance Available
9	Notes

# Overview of the Child Care Stabilization Grants



The \$23.975 billion in child care stabilization grants follow the rules of the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act, but states can spend up to 10% of their allotments on administration and TA to ECE providers.<sup>5</sup> Lead agencies must spend most stabilization funds (at least 90% for states and at least 80% for tribes) as subgrants to qualified child care providers to support the stability of the child care sector during and after the COVID-19 public health emergency. Table 1 highlights total child care stabilization funding anticipated for HKHF TAP and Better Together states. The [White House American Rescue Plan Funding Fact Sheet](#) provides additional information on anticipated funding levels for all other states.

The stabilization grants will flow directly to ECE programs through state CCDF Lead Agencies. The broad categories of eligible expenses include:

- Personnel costs: salaries, wages, and benefits;
- Rent (including rent under a lease agreement) or payment on any mortgage obligation, utilities, facility maintenance or improvements, or insurance;
- Personal protective equipment, cleaning and sanitization supplies and services, or training and professional development related to health and safety practices;
- Purchases of or updates to equipment and supplies to respond to the COVID-19 public health emergency;
- Goods and services necessary to maintain or resume child care services; and,
- Mental health supports for children and employees.<sup>7</sup>

States must obligate these funds by September 30, 2022 and programs must spend them by September 30, 2023. By December 31, 2021, Lead Agencies must notify the ACF if it is unable to obligate 50% of its stabilization funds.<sup>8</sup> Lead Agencies, early childhood organizations, and ECE programs need clear guidance, examples, and evidence-based resources to inform the planning process, funding requests, and grant applications.

Of the broad categories of eligible expenses, there are four that most lend themselves to supporting healthy eating and physical activity best practices. The following pages present activities that align with the intent of the federal funding, correspond to each of these eligible cost categories, and support high impact obesity prevention standards. State partners could provide the sample activities to Lead Agencies to use when developing stabilization grant applications, guidance, and when providing TA to ECE programs.

**Table 1. Child Care Stabilization Funding by State<sup>6</sup>**

HKHF TAP States	Child Care Stabilization Funding \$ Million (M) / Billion (B)
Alabama	\$451M
Florida	\$1.52B
Georgia	\$968M
Iowa	\$228M
Kansas	\$214M
Louisiana	\$476M
Maine	\$73M
New Jersey	\$428M
South Carolina	\$437M
Virginia	\$489M
Wisconsin	\$357M
<b>Better Together States</b>	
Arizona	\$596M
Arkansas	\$286M
Indiana	\$540M
Mississippi	\$319M

*Nemours works at the intersection of child health and early childhood in 25 states:* Launched in 2018, Healthy Kids, Healthy Future Technical Assistance Program (HKHF TAP) provides TA and resources to state partners to integrate healthy eating and physical activity best practices into ECE systems and settings. Through HKHF TAP, Nemours partners with departments of health, child care resource and referral agencies, and other ECE organizations to improve nutrition and physical activity for young children.

Better Together is a privately-funded three-year program designed to help instill healthy eating and physical activity habits early in life through program level and state system-level improvements in ECE. Better Together is implemented by the Nemours Children’s Health System and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

## How Child Care Stabilization Grants Can Support Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

Eligible expenses: Rent (including rent under a lease agreement) or payment on any mortgage obligation, utilities, facility maintenance or improvements, or insurance

### Support breastfeeding mothers and staff

Recommendation	Sample activities	Resources
<p><b>Improve facilities to support breastfeeding mothers:</b> Per page 5 of the <a href="#">implementation guidance</a>, ACF/OCC encourages Lead Agencies to increase the supply of child care for underserved populations, including infant and toddler care. To best serve infants, ECE providers could apply funds to facility improvements and “minor renovations” to encourage breastfeeding mothers to feed their children on-site. Facility improvements could support the creation of a lactation room which supports both mothers and program staff.</p>	<p><i>Stabilization funds could be used to enhance the child care facility or family child care home to promote breastfeeding and support breastfeeding mothers and staff.</i></p> <p><i>Breastfeeding support activities include minor improvements to create comfortable and private space for mother to feed child or pump, including adding a permanent or movable partition to support mothers that prefer a private space. Other activities may include creating a more formal lactation room consisting of: private room/space with lock; access to an electrical outlet; comfortable chair; small table; waste basket; nearby sink with water; access to refrigerator or storage space for cooler.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute Breastfeeding-friendly Child Care</a></p> <p><a href="#">Alabama Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Certification and Resources</a></p> <p><a href="#">Kansas Breastfeeding Recognition Toolkit</a></p> <p><a href="#">Wisconsin Ten Steps to Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Centers Resource Kit</a></p> <p><a href="#">CLASP: Considerations related to facility improvements with federal funds</a></p>

### Increase access to nutritious meals, snacks, and water.

<p><b>Improve program quality through improved nutrition:</b> Meeting healthy eating best practices improves ECE program quality. In many states, improving menus, offering healthy snacks, increasing water availability, and serving more nutritious meals could enable an ECE program to apply for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), reach quality benchmarks through Quality Rating Improvement Systems (QRIS), and receive recognition from a state recognition program for healthy eating and physical activity.</p> <p>Smaller ECE centers and family child care homes often have limited food storage and preparation space. Stabilization funds provide an opportunity to improve kitchen, storage, as well as indoor and outdoor spaces.</p>	<p><i>Stabilization funds could be used for facility level improvements to enable an ECE provider to expand fresh fruit and vegetable offerings. Activities could include minor renovations to expand food storage and preparation areas for fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables. Activities may include adapting or expanding pantry space, shelving units, refrigerators and freezers.</i></p> <p><i>Minor facility improvements could also increase children’s access to water indoors or outdoors. Funds could support the installation of water fountains outdoors or the purchase of water dispensers for indoors and outdoors.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Nemours Best Practices for Healthy Eating / Buenas prácticas para una alimentación saludable</a></p> <p><a href="#">Institute of Child Nutrition</a></p> <p><a href="#">Healthy Bites: A Wisconsin Guide for Improving Childhood Nutrition</a></p> <p><a href="#">USDA Recipes for Healthy Kids: Cookbook for Child Care Centers</a></p> <p><a href="#">Virginia Rev Your Bev Campaign</a></p>
<p><b>Expand children’s experiences with food and agriculture - Farm to ECE:</b> Young children develop habits by experiencing food through different ways, including building an understanding of how it grows and where it comes from locally. Farm to ECE is an extension of the Farm to School movement and offers increased access to local food sourcing, school gardens and education experiences for all types of ECE programs.<sup>9</sup></p>	<p><i>Stabilization funds could be applied to facility improvements to expand healthy eating in child care by installing or expanding space for an outdoor garden to support learning experiences with gardening, fruits, and vegetables. This could include storage and supplies to teach children about composting, recycling and growing fresh fruits and vegetables. ECE programs could also improve outdoor conditions for growing with facility improvements and landscaping services such as weed removal and pruning, irrigation, hauling and removal of unwanted items.</i></p> <p><i>For ECE program with limited outdoor space, stabilization funds could be used to purchase indoor growing equipment to demonstrate the process of planting, growing, and harvesting food to children.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">National Farm to School Network - Farm to Early Care and Education</a></p> <p><a href="#">North Carolina State University – Natural Learning Initiative Gardening Series</a></p>

*Disclaimer: The table on pages 3 - 6 includes sample activities based on the description of eligible expenses in the [federal implementation guidance](#) for child care stabilization grants. This does not represent official state guidance for the funds issued by any state. These recommendations and table are based on Nemours’ review and interpretation of federal implementation guidance and for information purposes only. State partners and ECE programs must confirm expense eligibility and grant requirements issued by their specific state agency.*

Eligible expenses: Rent (including rent under a lease agreement) or payment on any mortgage obligation, utilities, facility maintenance or improvements, or insurance (continued)

*Promote physical activity through adequate space for indoor and outdoor play*

Recommendation	Sample activities	Resources
<p><b>Expand and improve outdoor environments:</b> In response to COVID-19, child care programs increased their use of outdoor spaces. Beyond reducing virus transmission, outdoor play has significant benefits for promoting physical activity and connecting children with natural settings. Nurturing children’s outdoor experiences supports active living, healthy eating, outdoor learning, and positive social interactions. Creating a natural learning environment can also be more cost effective than building or purchasing standard playground equipment.</p>	<p><i>Stabilization funds could support minor renovations to outdoor space to promote physical activity and positive social interactions. In addition to building or upgrading playgrounds and play spaces, minor renovation activities could include but are not limited to adding shade structures, installing natural play settings, installing an outdoor garden with plants, vegetables, and/or fruits, creating outdoor gathering settings, or natural play areas.</i></p> <p><i>ECE programs could also consider the installation of playground railings and ramps to make the outdoor environment more accessible and facilitate physical activity for children with disabilities. Enhancements of indoor and outdoor play equipment and settings, including new or replacement equipment, could also be funded through stabilization grants.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">North Carolina State University – Natural Learning Initiative Info Sheets</a></p> <p><a href="#">Be Active Kids: Resource pages on using low-cost equipment to support physical activity</a></p>

Eligible expenses: Personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning and sanitization supplies and services, or training and professional development related to health and safety practices.

*Training and professional development on nutrition and physical activity best practices.*

<p><b>Train ECE workforce on best practices in nutrition and physical activity:</b> Page 19 of the implementation guidance notes that stabilization funds can be used for training and professional development beyond those focused on health and safety issues specifically related to COVID-19 response and virus mitigation.</p> <p>ECE programs could use the stabilization funds for staff training and professional development to meet state and local health and safety guidelines. Increasing staff capacity on health, nutrition, and movement also contributes to increasing overall program quality.</p>	<p><i>Stabilization funds could support in-person or virtual training of ECE staff, including training related to nutrition best practices, food safety and handling, cooking and knife skills, in addition to training on physical activity and outdoor learning environments.</i></p> <p><i>Stabilization funds could support the registration costs and continuing education fees for the training as well as the supplies and wages for staff that take part in the training.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Better Kid Care: Health, Safety &amp; Nutrition On-Demand Modules</a></p> <p><a href="#">Go NAPSACC</a> (training resources available for providers in participating <a href="#">Go NAP SACC states</a>)</p> <p>Institute of Child Nutrition</p> <p><a href="#">Cooking Matters: Cooking Matters for Child Care Professionals</a></p> <p><a href="#">Natural Learning Initiative’s Outdoor Learning Environments Certificate Program</a></p>
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Eligible expenses: Goods and services necessary to maintain or resume child care services

*Integrate healthy habits throughout the classroom.*

<p><b>Support nutrition education and active play:</b> Promoting healthy habits in young children does not just happen at mealtime. Habits are best supported when they are integrated throughout the program environment. Young children learn and adopt best practices when experiencing them through different formats.</p> <p>While one set of materials (books, curricula, etc.) may be the minimum an ECE program needs, additional sets or a broader range of materials allows multiple classrooms or age groups to participate simultaneously.</p>	<p><i>Stabilization funds could be applied to expand and refresh classroom supplies, including books, curricula, classroom materials, and equipment to support physical activity. Ensure goods, materials, and facility improvements are inclusive and meet needs of all children in your program.</i></p> <p><i>To support nutrition education, stabilization funds could support the purchase of items for use in dramatic play such as plastic or wood fruits and vegetables, child size pitchers, tongs, and bowls to practice serving and promote gross motor skills. Materials to support physical activity include: active play and yoga cards, bean bags, scarves, poly spots, playground balls, cones, beachballs, jump ropes.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Healthy Habits for Life Child Care Provider Resource Kit</a></p> <p><a href="#">Healthy Kids Healthy Future: Books to support healthy eating and movement</a></p> <p><a href="#">Farm to School Bookshelf</a></p> <p><a href="#">Book list for positive food, nutrition and physical activity messages for young children</a></p> <p><a href="#">Active Play Book</a></p>
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Eligible expenses: Goods and services necessary to maintain or resume child care services (continued)

*Increase access to nutritious meals and snacks by becoming a CACFP program.*

Recommendation	Sample activities	Resources
<p><b>Invest in goods and services to qualify for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP):</b> CACFP provides reimbursement to ECE programs for nutritious meals and snacks served to eligible children. CACFP contributes to the health and wellness of young children and also defrays meal costs for ECE programs. Stabilization funds could enable an ECE program, especially small centers and family child care homes, to invest in equipment, materials, and services to help them meet CACFP requirements. Per page 19 of the ACF/OCC implementation guidance, stabilization funds can even support “food and equipment and materials.” For programs that have not previously participated in CACFP, the stabilization funds could potentially serve as seed funding to purchase the materials and services necessary to become a CACFP provider. These programs would then benefit from on-going reimbursements, TA, and resources from their state CACFP agency.</p>	<p><i>Stabilization grants could support the purchase of equipment and materials to facilitate the provision of nutritious meals and snacks. This may include: refrigerators, freezers, mobile heated cabinets, microwaves, cook and hold ovens, stoves, counters, cabinets, shelving, pantry space, utility carts, small appliances (rice cooker, dicer, scales), pots, pans, mixing bowls, cutting boards.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Child and Adult Care Food Program Overview</a></p> <p><a href="#">CACFP State Agencies</a></p> <p><a href="#">CACFP Sponsors Association</a></p>

*Create an enabling environment for healthy eating.*

<p><b>Enhance the mealtime environment to support healthy eating practices like Family Style Dining:</b> Family style dining is an evidence based practice that supports social interaction and promotes portion control as children learn to serve themselves. While COVID-19 has placed a temporary pause on Family Style Dining in child care settings, this practice is still a part of a quality program. ECE programs could consider using stabilization funds to support a return to Family Style Dining once allowable by your state or per USDA/CACFP guidance.</p>	<p><i>Stabilization funds could be used to purchase supplies and equipment for family-style dining. This can include dining sets (plates, flatware, cups, etc.) designed for children, serving bowls, child-sized serving utensils, pitchers, and supplies to measure out child-sized portions.</i></p> <p><i>Funds can also be used to purchase supplies and equipment needed to offer more fresh foods, such as cutting boards, knives, baking sheets, pots and pans, etc.</i></p> <p><i>Stabilization grants could also enhance the quality and variety of foods served in ECE settings, including the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables, produce from farmers and farmers’ markets, and other seasonal items.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Nemours Family Style Dining Toolkit</a></p> <p><a href="#">National CACFP Sponsors Association Tips for Family Style Dining</a></p> <p><a href="#">Transitioning from Family Style Service to Plated Meal Service: Maintaining Responsive Feeding and Responsive Eating in Child Care during COVID19 Pandemic</a></p> <p><a href="#">Farm to Early Care and Education Local Food Purchasing Resources</a></p>
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Eligible expenses: Mental health supports for children and employees.

*Increase access to mental health supports for children and staff.*

<p><b>Introduce and/or expand staff wellness supports:</b> As role models and trusted resources for families, child care staff affect the development of young children’s behaviors, including healthy eating, physical activity, and social-emotional skills.<sup>10</sup> However, as low-wage employees, ECE staff often do not have the financial means or access to programs and services to support their own health and wellness. Stabilization grants provide an opportunity for ECE staff to access much needed resources to help them recover from the pandemic and improve their own wellness over the long-term. Improving wellness also helps to reduce absenteeism and healthcare costs, and, improve employee productivity and morale.<sup>11</sup></p>	<p><i>ECE programs may consider covering the cost of mental health consultations for staff, providing wellness activities for staff (yoga or meditation, etc.), or wellness resources and tools. Funds could support wellness books, subscription to wellness apps or other materials to promote mental health. Programs could also provide training and supports for stress management and coping.</i></p> <p><i>ECE providers that offer health benefits to their staff could use stabilization funds to ensure that they have a robust mental health benefit that provides comprehensive care and access to services. Stabilization funds could also cover paid time off for staff to attend appointments with mental health care providers. Funds could also support new health benefits, including health insurance and mental health benefits.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Nemours KidsHealth &amp; Michael Phelps Foundation’s imHealthy and imSuccessful learning programs</a></p> <p><a href="#">Office of Child Care Mental Health and Wellness Resources</a></p> <p><a href="#">National Head Start Association Nurturing Staff Wellness Toolkit</a></p> <p><a href="#">Head Start: Promoting Staff Well-being</a></p>
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Eligible expenses: Mental health supports for children and employees.

*Increase access to mental health supports for children and staff.*

<p><b>Enhance family engagement and support through facilitated dialogue:</b> ECE staff, families, and children were all significantly impacted by the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic. While ECE programs should be encouraged to invest in formal mental health supports, referrals, and services, demand for such supports will certainly exceed supply. This will be especially true in rural and underserved communities. ECE programs could apply stabilization grants to activities that support family engagement and enhance both the provider-family connection and the family-family connection at their programs. These activities can provide informal supports for mental health and wellness.</p>	<p><i>Stabilization funds could be used to engage organizations with expertise in training and delivering Caring Cafes, family cafes or other facilitated conversations. Funds could support expenses associated with delivering Cafes, including facilitators, food, child care expenses, stipends for participating parents and staff.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">Center for the Study of Social Policy’s Strengthening Families: Using Café Conversations to Build Protective Factors and Parent Leadership</a></p> <p><a href="#">Curricula Concepts: Training on Caring Conversations Cafés</a></p>
<p><b>Create nurturing classrooms and increase staff capacity on trauma-informed care:</b> Given the prolonged pandemic and significant impact on communities of color, ECE professionals will encounter children and families that have experienced trauma. Young children that experience trauma, stress, fear, and loss are more likely to exhibit challenging behaviors. They may also present delay or impairment across the development domains, i.e. physical, cognitive, social and emotional, language, and literacy.<sup>12</sup> To meet these needs, ECE programs could use stabilization grants for training on trauma-informed care and creating nurturing classrooms. Besides understanding the impact of trauma on children, ECE programs should also explore how to promote and enhance positive-based experiences for children. There is growing evidence that positive childhood experience can have significant effects on a child’s health and development.<sup>13</sup></p>	<p><i>Stabilization grants could be used to support training for staff on trauma-informed care and/or positive-based experience approaches. Funds could also support the purchase and integration of social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and classroom resources.</i></p>	<p><a href="#">ACF Resource Guide for Trauma-Informed Human Services: Early Childhood Programs</a></p> <p><a href="#">NAEYC Creating Trauma-Sensitive Classrooms</a></p> <p><a href="#">Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: Finding Social Emotional Curricula</a></p> <p><a href="#">HOPE: Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences &amp; The Four Building Blocks of HOPE</a></p>

### Self-Assessments to Guide Investments in Nutrition and Physical Activity

There are several tools available to help ECE programs determine their strengths and areas for improvement in meeting healthy eating and physical activity best practices. The results of such assessments could help ECE providers to use the stabilization grants effectively and for lasting impact. State partners should encourage ECE providers to complete or re-visit a self-assessment when planning use of the stabilization grants. While several national and state-specific tools are available, state partners should promote the self-assessment tool that best meets ECE program's needs. Nationally available tools include:

- [Go NAPSACC](#) is a suite of online tools to help ECE providers to improve the health of young children through practices, policies, and environments. Go NAPSACC is currently available in [21 states](#).
- Head Start’s [Positive Eating Environment Self-Assessment for Early Care and Education \(ECE\) Programs](#) offers a brief, user-friendly way to assess basic mealtime practices. The tool is designed for center-based and family child care programs that serve 3 to 5 year olds. Staff can use this tool to evaluate the availability of healthy nutrition and mealtime environments. It can also be used for staff discussions and policy planning. The Positive Eating Environment Tool is an interactive companion to the PDF version of the tool.
- [Wellness Policy Workbook for Early Care and Education](#) was developed by Nemours and the American Heart Association as part of Healthy Way to Grow (HWTG). HWTG was a national, science-based, early childhood technical assistance program to help improve practices and policies for obesity prevention.

## How State Partners Can Support Lead Agencies and ECE Programs

State partners can build on their current initiatives with ECE programs to support Lead Agencies in promoting the child care stabilization funds, advancing equity strategies, and providing TA to ECE programs on use of grant funds for nutrition and physical activity program improvements. State partners can:



Review the state's final CCDF plan and engage with the Lead Agency to understand their plan for issuing the stabilization grants.



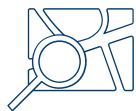
Promote the stabilization grants through your networks, list-servs, social media, or upcoming trainings for ECE providers.



Encourage the Lead Agency to explicitly highlight nutrition and physical activities as eligible expenses for grant funds. The Lead Agency can customize the sample application materials developed by ACF/OCC.



Contact ECE providers that have participated in your trainings, like learning collaboratives and Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS). Inform trainers and ECE providers of the availability of the grants and how they could support nutrition and physical activity.



Re-purpose GIS Story Maps originally created for CACFP outreach under HKHF TAP. The story maps identify ECE programs located in food deserts and high-poverty communities. Partners could target communications and TA to these programs.



Promote the stabilization grants on your state's recognition program website. Provide sample activities to assist ECE providers in using stabilization resources to support healthy eating and physical activity best practices.



Engage the individuals in your state who have completed NC State's Early Childhood Outdoor Learning Environments certificate. Inform them of the availability of stabilization grants and how these funds could enhance outdoor spaces. State partners could create a roster of individuals willing to provide TA on outdoor learning spaces to ECE programs.

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## Equity Considerations & Strategies



ARP stabilization funds are among the many federal resources now in the hands of states as they rebuild and enhance their ECE sector. Lead Agencies face immense pressure to quickly disperse these funds but to also ensure broad access to the grants. The federal implementation guidance offers broad program eligibility criteria, noting that non-CCDF providers can also access these resources, along with ECE centers who have not previously received federal assistance.

Lead Agencies and state partners should center equity strategies in their grant-making processes to increase access among small centers, family child care homes, non-English speakers, and those from diverse communities. State partners and Lead Agencies should review and integrate recommendations from OCC's [American Rescue Plan Act Stabilization Subgrants for Child Care Providers: Application Tips, Considerations, and Sample Forms](#). The document provides important considerations for developing 'provider-friendly' grant applications and processes. Child Care Aware of America has also recently developed a [Relief Funding Best Practices Checklist for Child Care Advocates](#) to support state partners in developing an equitable grant-making effort. Additionally, Nemours recommends that state partners and Lead Agencies consider promising equity strategies such as:

- Additional grant funds or “Equity Bonuses” to ECE programs located in communities facing multiple systemic barriers to health, wellness, and/or economic development. The [Connecticut Office of Early Childhood](#) uses CDC’s [Social Vulnerability Index\(SVI\)](#) to provide additional stabilization funding to ECE programs in under-resourced communities. The SVI helps public health officials identify communities that most likely need support before, during, and after natural or human-caused disasters.
- Set-aside rounds of grant funding for specific categories of ECE providers, such as family child care homes, small businesses, non-English speakers, and programs in under-resourced communities. Or open the application earlier for these types of providers.
- TAPS and SPAN state partners should build on previous equity training and efforts to ensure broad access to grant funds. In partnership with the Institute for Public Health Innovation (IPHI), Nemours has supported equity training and TA to several TAP and SPAN states since 2019. Share equity strategies and support to the CCDF Lead Agency based on lessons learned from your respective equity efforts.

## Additional Assistance Available

The federal and state funding landscape is rapidly changing for ECE programs. As a national TA provider, Nemours continues to monitor federal funding streams and implementation guidance to states. Please contact [hkhftap@nemours.org](mailto:hkhftap@nemours.org) with questions or comments on this TA brief or to submit requests for additional support related to the child care stabilization grants.



## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> "Coronavirus Pandemic Could Lead To Permanent Loss Of Nearly 4.5 Million Child Care Slots - Center For American Progress". 2020. Center For American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/news/2020/04/24/483817/coronavirus-pandemic-lead-permanent-loss-nearly-4-5-million-child-care-slots/>.

<sup>2</sup> "6 Policies To Support The Early Childhood Workforce - Center For American Progress". 2017. Center For American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2017/02/06/298085/6-policies-to-support-the-early-childhood-workforce/>; National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, "Early Care and Education Program Characteristics: Effects on Expenses and Revenues," (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014), [https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/pcqc\\_ece\\_characteristics\\_final.pdf](https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/pcqc_ece_characteristics_final.pdf); Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, "National Survey of Early Care & Education Fact Sheet: Characteristics of Center-based Early Care and Education Programs," (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014), [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/characteristics\\_of\\_cb\\_fact\\_sheet\\_final\\_111014.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/characteristics_of_cb_fact_sheet_final_111014.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, "INFORMATION MEMORANDUM: ARP ACT CHILD CARE STABILIZATION FUNDS" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, May 10, 2021), <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/CCDF-ACF-IM-2021-02.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> J. Nadine Gracia, "COVID-19's Disproportionate Impact on Communities of Color Spotlights the Nation's Systemic Inequities," *Journal of Public Health Management and Practice* 26, no. 6 (November/December 2020): 518-521, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1097/phh.0000000000001212>.

<sup>5</sup> Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, "INFORMATION MEMORANDUM: ARP ACT CHILD CARE STABILIZATION FUNDS" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, May 10, 2021), <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/CCDF-ACF-IM-2021-02.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> "FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Announces American Rescue Plan Funding to Rescue the Child Care Industry so the Economy Can Recover," The White House, April 15, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/04/15/fact-sheet-biden-harris-administration-announces-american-rescue-plan-funding-to-rescue-the-child-care-industry-so-the-economy-can-recover/>.

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<sup>8</sup> Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, "INFORMATION MEMORANDUM: ARP ACT CHILD CARE STABILIZATION FUNDS" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, May 10, 2021), <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/occ/CCDF-ACF-IM-2021-02.pdf>.

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<sup>10</sup> "Nurturing Staff Wellness - NHTSA". 2021. NHTSA. <https://www.nhtsa.org/quality-improvement-toolkits/nurturing-staff-wellness/>.

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<sup>12</sup> Koomar, J. 2009. "Trauma-And Attachment-Informed Sensory Integration Assessment And Intervention". SemanticScholar.Org. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Trauma-and-Attachment-Informed-Sensory-Integration-Koomar/377d2181e8020abe5883b7e504a30cfc76ee5bdf>.

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