

*Note: Some states are using the word “essential” to indicate businesses exempt from social distancing-oriented closures, while others are using “essential” to indicate workers directly or indirectly facing increased job duties under the current public health emergency, and therefore eligible to receive additional state support. States should be thoughtful about clearly delineating between these groups. While states define “essential” expansively in order to maximize the benefits workers have access to if they’re still working outside of the home, public health officials advise maximizing the number of workplaces and facilities that are closed, rather than exempt from closing.*

## **CHILD CARE CLOSURES AFFECT FRONTLINE WORKERS**

As states and cities order the widespread closure of businesses and urge social distancing, many of those still working outside the home face a dearth of child care options. Many school districts have extended spring break or shuttered for several weeks (or even until the end of the school year), and many child care programs have closed temporarily. [Workers on the front lines of the COVID-19 response—who by the nature of their jobs cannot work remotely](#)--may be working longer hours than usual, struggling to find safe and reliable child care that meets their families’ needs. Child care is particularly crucial because of the nature of frontline industries: most workers in health care, grocery stores, and education/child care are women. Mothers’ employment is [particularly likely to decline](#) when child care is unreliable or expensive. Low wages for those who are child care providers, grocery store workers, and many health care professionals mean that these workers may not have sufficient savings to pay for new child care needs. More importantly, these workers lack the time or energy to seek emergency child care for their families when the nature of their job requires their full attention during the coronavirus crisis. In order to support these frontline workers now and in future emergencies, policymakers must 1.) invest in easy to access emergency child care and 2.) financially support current child care providers throughout the course of the pandemic to keep them from permanently shutting down.

## **STATE ACTION ON CARE**

Several places have taken steps to [ensure reliable child care](#) for healthcare workers on the front lines of COVID-19 response; the actions in this memo are not intended to comprehensively cover the work states are doing, but to provide illustrative examples. [Ohio](#) and [New York City](#) will open temporary child care centers to meet increased demands. [Vermont](#) is planning to reimburse private providers for the child care they provide to essential workers. [New Mexico](#) will temporarily expand who can provide (and be reimbursed by the state for) child care, to include family, friends, and neighbor providers, and it provided detailed information about providing and paying for child care. States and cities must work to balance the needs of parents still going to work with those of child care workers. Most importantly, emergency child care facilities must remain safe and healthy environments for both adults and children. This means maintaining regulations around group size and child-adult ratios and maintaining good hygiene. Child care facilities already run on slim margins, and states should support the time and effort of extra sanitization procedures and paid sick leave for child care workers in the interest of public safety. States must also support the child care needs of child care workers themselves by including them on lists of “essential” workers.

Several states and cities have added other vital workers to those who are eligible for direct, government-provided child care or reimbursements for other care. [Minnesota](#), [Michigan](#), [Virginia](#) and [Vermont](#) classify food distribution and grocery store workers as essential, in addition to health care workers, educators and child care providers, and others. Several states have noted that public benefits

counselors (such as those who help claimants apply for Unemployment Insurance) and outreach workers for domestic violence or homelessness services are also providing essential services. It is particularly crucial to maintain these public services during an economic and health crisis, and to account for the other health (including reproductive health) care needs people will need to access to during this time, as they would at any time. Creating a more expansive definition of “essential” will help workers whose services are crucial for current the public health emergency.

States should also be cognizant that cities may have additional and unique economic and public health needs, particularly if they have large hospitals or concentrations of emergency services. Cities should be free to put additional measures in place to support and protect these workers.

The Senate’s most recent effort to provide additional child care assistance includes increased funding to the CCDBG to provide child care assistance to workers deemed essential during the coronavirus response, without regard to income eligibility requirements.

#### **ATTACHMENT: EXAMPLES OF STATE ESSENTIAL WORKERS**

The table below illustrates the types of workers deemed essential by three states, whether in specific language or in general categories. These are groups of workers who are now eligible for child care resources or support from the state. These lists are changing quickly on the state level, so this table is not meant to be comprehensive – instead, it is meant to spark thinking about categories of workers who have an important role to play in a public health and economic crisis.

## Workers classified as essential for the purposes of ensuring reliable child care

*(Note that some states choose to name occupations specifically, while others use broader categories. When specific language was used by state agencies, that language has been added to this table. A check mark (✓) denotes inclusion of an industry, but not a specific occupation. These categories are intended to be illustrative -- things are changing quickly.)*

General employment category	Michigan	Minnesota	Vermont
<i>Health care workers</i>	✓	Health care personnel (including caregiving workers, administrative staff, and child welfare staff)	Providers of healthcare including but not limited to workers at clinics, hospitals, FQHCs, nursing homes, long-term care and post-acute care facilities, respite houses, VNAs
<i>Home health workers</i>	✓	✓	
<i>Direct care workers</i>	✓		✓
<i>Other medical personnel</i>	Emergency medical service providers	Medical examiners	Emergency medical services
<i>First responders</i>	✓	Firefighters	Firefighters, other first responders
<i>Law enforcement personnel</i>	✓	Law enforcement personnel	Criminal justice personnel including those in law enforcement, courts, and correctional services
<i>Child care workers (including any employees acting as child care workers in essential workforce child care centers)</i>	✓	✓	Staff and providers of child care and education services (including custodial, kitchen staff, and other support staff) for children of other essential persons
<i>Critical utilities workers</i>	✓	Water treatment/wastewater; operations for gas and electric utilities; emergency response for gas and electric utilities; public works; solid waste management; telecommunication network operations	
<i>Critical manufacturing workers</i>	✓		
<i>Critical mass transit workers</i>	✓	MNDoT employees	
<i>Critical workers in groceries or other essential supplies, goods, or equipment</i>	✓	Food distribution workers; in-store food personnel (grocery)	Grocery workers

<i>Educators</i>		✓	Staff and providers of child care and education services (including custodial, kitchen staff, and other support staff) for children of other essential persons
<i>Personnel providing correctional services</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Postal workers</i>	✓		
<i>Public health employees</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Child protective services workers and child welfare workers</i>	✓		
<i>Court personnel</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>Foster care workers</i>	✓		
<i>Recipient rights workers</i>	✓		
<i>State employees</i>	Employees of the Executive Office of the Governor, cabinet officers and their designees, Department of Health and Human Services field office staff	MNDOT employees	State employees determined to be essential to this crisis
<i>Shelter staff and outreach workers</i>		✓	
<i>Substance disorder treatment workers</i>		✓	
<i>Unemployment Agency employees</i>	✓		
<i>IT personnel</i>	Other employees identified by the Department of Technology, Management, and Budget	State and local essential IT personnel	
<i>National Guard (if activated)</i>		✓	✓