

WakeSupports Update

October 12, 2020



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Background

County received approximately \$194 million in Coronavirus Relief Funds for:

- Necessary expenditures due to the public health emergency with respect to COVID-19;
- Expenditures not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of the date of enactment; and
- Were incurred during the period beginning March 1 and ends on December 30, 2020.

Guidance has been broadly interpreted to include:

- Expenses to “directly respond to the emergency” AND
- “Second-order effects” including “economic support to those suffering from employment or business disruption...”

NC Constitution governs services provided by local governments; cannot fund a service that is inconsistent with statutes, even if allowed at federal level

Federal and State Guidance Language

Federal CARES Act Guidance

If determined to be a necessary expenditure, funds may be used to provide emergency financial assistance to individuals and families.

Individuals must demonstrate a financial need due to COVID-19.

Funds may be provided to cover the costs of distance learning or in-person learning (meeting CDC guidelines).

Statutory Authority for Counties

NCGS 153A-376 authorizes counties:

- To engage in community development programs and activities, including childcare and education.
- To assist persons of low and moderate income with certain necessary services.
- To accept, appropriate, and expend federal and state funds for said activities.

WakeSupports Childcare Subsidy Program

Utilize up to \$5 million of the County's CRF to provide childcare subsidies to qualifying moderate-to-low income households

High-level criteria:

- Applicant must be a Wake County resident
- Will utilize income thresholds used for other County CARES programs
- For children in grades K-6 enrolled in virtual learning programs/childcare
- Retroactive to **August 17** and available until December 30 (or until funding is depleted)
- Households receiving state subsidy will automatically be eligible to have parent fees covered beginning October 1 (**all ages**)

WakeSupports Program Administration

Human Services

HS will administer the program:

- Hire temporary staffing to handle anticipated surge in application and administration
- Pay subsidy directly to the childcare provider
- Utilize online application process
- Providers help identify potentially eligible households and assist with application/reimbursement process

Eligible Childcare Facilities

- Licensed by NCDHHS - Division of Child Development and Early Education
- A Community-Based Organization authorized to provide care for school-age children at a Remote Learning Facility registered with NCDHHS pursuant to SL2020-97
- A Community-Based Organization authorized to operate a Remote Learning Facility for school-age children pursuant to a contract with the Wake County Public School System in accordance with 10A NCAC 09 .3102

State Announces Subsidy Program

On October 1, NCDHHS announced it will provide subsidies for the months of October and November for school-aged childcare

Voucher rates:

- Licensed provider - \$870/month
- Licensed family childcare home - \$645/month
- Community based organization - \$516/month

Eligibility: Program will utilize same income levels used for existing childcare voucher programs

Administration: Parents will apply directly through NCDHHS

Start Date: NCDHHS to launch application program October 23

Updates to WakeSupports

Rates

Wake County will use same rates as NCDHHS (previously \$100/week):

- Licensed provider - \$870/month
- Licensed family childcare home - \$645/month
- Community based organization - \$516/month

Process

Parent application, vendor agreements, and payment processes being finalized

Communications plan being finalized

Working with CBOs and providers to finalize reimbursement process

Eligibility/Payments

Wake will focus on reimbursements for August, September and coverage for December

Wake using higher income limits than NCDHHS – *Wake will subsidize October and November for households not eligible for state program*

WakeSupports Program Timing

Soft Launch – October 15

- Begin making parent payments for households already receiving partial state subsidies
- Begin retroactive reimbursement process with some CBOs
 - Allows County to test communication materials
 - Opportunity to identify gaps in application submittal, review and approval process

Media Launch – October 26

- Follows launch of state program
- Focus direct messaging to:
 - Childcare providers in Wake
 - Parent-focused media and vulnerable populations in County
- Explain how Wake's program wraps around/supplements state program
- Can direct parents to appropriate resources

Summary

County received \$194 million in direct Coronavirus Relief Funds to support the County's response and recovery efforts

County's first priority is to ensure sufficient funding supports our responsibility to contain and mitigate the public health emergency

WakeSupports:

- Children attending a variety of facilities regardless of schools re-opening plans or schedules
- Provides broad financial support to offset costs of virtual learning and households impacted by COVID-19