

Head Start Helps

Responding, Innovating and Advocating
for State and Local Needs in the Wake of
the Coronavirus Pandemic



Head Start's 153 grantee sites in California serve more than 100,000 children and their families from high-needs backgrounds.

As the pandemic evolves, Head Start's priorities in California are to:

1. Respond immediately to ensure children and families from at-risk backgrounds continue to get the critical stabilizing support they need.
2. Innovate service delivery to provide school readiness, health, and family support services in new ways during this crisis and as communities recover.
3. Advocate for child care programs, schools and other partners to ensure young children, families and the early childhood workforce receive expanded investments and necessary support services.

How we are responding

During this crisis, most Head Start and Early Head Start facilities are closed due to state and local orders. However, thanks to ongoing federal support and flexibility from the federal Office of Head Start, local programs continue to serve their communities in some or all of the following ways:

- Some Head Start programs are serving children of essential workers, in areas where this is possible and in partnership with local community leaders.
- All Head Start programs are operating and working quickly to provide remote learning opportunities and ongoing family support, including addressing food insecurity, letting families know of additional flexibility in Medicaid, unemployment benefits and other supports, and sharing educational information about coronavirus and staying healthy during this crisis.

Encompass Community Services Watsonville, CA



Encompass Community Services Head Start has set up drive up care package distribution to serve the needs of its Head Start and Early Head Start families with critical needs like formula and diapers. While child care sites remain closed, teachers are conducting circle times and interacting with kids in virtual classrooms.

- Head Start programs are providing staff with the flexibility to work for other programs outside of their regular work schedules, recognizing the critical partnerships they have with state funded child care (CCTR) and pre-school (CSPP), child care and other early childhood systems.
- Head Start teachers have been engaging in myriad online learning opportunities to increase their professional capability to serve the emerging needs of families and children with trauma.
- Head Start programs are extending their facilities, where possible, and expertise to partners, including mental health consultation and family engagement supports.
- Head Start programs are addressing food insecurity, delivering food to families and taking advantage of flexibility around the Child and Adult Care Food Program to offer congregate feeding.

E-Center Head Start Yuba City, CA



E-Center Head Start continues to support families with daily storytimes on Facebook live. On April 23, teachers and staff handed out activity packets to help children continue learning at home.

Kidango Fremont, CA



Kidango closed its centers in mid March but has since reopened 10 centers in response to requests from county governments, First Five Santa Clara County, and large health care providers. Two of the emergency centers are located in hospitals and others are near health care facilities.

In addition to more demanding cleaning and sanitizing, the biggest change is that children are in stable groups

of ten only (down from a typical classroom of 24) with the same teachers. In order to minimize interactions with other students and teachers, they don't, for example, play outside at the same time as children in other groups. Kidango is providing hazard pay of \$20 an hour on top of their regular pay, a level of compensation Chief Executive Officer Scott Moore said he felt was important both to acknowledge the risk teachers are taking and the essential nature of their work during the pandemic.

Kidango is also paying special attention to the emotional health of children and families, both those attending their emergency centers and those at home. Kidango serves primarily low-income families and their top request is for help in filing for unemployment.

Moore said this crisis is shining a light on the crucial nature of caregiving to the fabric of our lives.

<https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/edcentral/caring-children-healthcare-workers/>

