



Chisago County Health and Human Services Public Health Division



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Essential but Undervalued: How can work worth so much be worth so little?

****MEDIA ADVISORY****

The rapid spread of COVID-19 is reminding us just how interconnected we all are. It's also shining a light on the ways that our public and community infrastructure have long been lacking—especially when it comes to child care. Child care is the long-neglected backbone of our economic and public health infrastructure. Our health and safety, and that of our communities, must come first. Yet, for the child care sector, this is like driving a tank over an already crumbling bridge—the already undervalued sector cannot withstand this pressure. Early childcare educators have always provided a critical service that allows other workers to do their jobs. But during this pandemic, they are being asked to serve children of other essential workers without the appropriate pay, health care, and personal protective equipment (PPE) or recognition that should come with risking their lives.

Back in March, Governor Walz urged childcare providers to stay open to continue to care for kids and their families. Thankfully, on July 7, Walz announced a plan to distribute \$56.6 million in CARES Act funding for child care providers. Chisago County Child Care Licensor, Lanay Miller says, "I have heard that child care providers are suffering financially because they have lost families. The latest round of grants (the 56 million) should be helpful. In Chisago County most providers are doing okay [remaining open] but I have had a couple [child care facilities] that lost all of their families and are staying licensed in hopes they'll get families back."

In addition, child care workers themselves are underpaid relative to the extraordinary role they play. The most important part of brain development happens during early childhood. In the first few years of life, more than 1 million new neural connections are formed every second. This period is crucial for emotional-social development and cognitive-linguistic abilities that form the basis for later success in a child's life.

Even in better times, the early care and education requires rights, raises, and respect, such as:

- Health Insurance and paid sick leave
- Living wages
- Safe work environments
- Recognition for their vital work

For the latest information about COVID-19 in Chisago County, visit @ChisagoCountyPublicHealth on Facebook or the [Chisago County COVID-19 Information Page](#).