

CCSA's COVID-19 Relief Fund PHASE II



Child care is the backbone of our economy, a fact that became clear for everyone in early 2020, when North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper issued a stay-at-home order for all but the state's most essential workers because of COVID-19. The pandemic was an immediate, overwhelming crisis the likes of which few of us had ever experienced, and it changed every aspect of our lives. During the stay-at-home order (and for months thereafter), the enrollment of child care programs across the state dropped precipitously, presenting an impossible choice for those programs—face possible closure or stay open and risk their own health to care for the children of the state's essential workers during this unprecedented global pandemic.

Because of the drop in enrollment, many programs had to cut employee hours, lay off employees or give up on other vital resources. Some closed temporarily. As the state re-opened, child care programs struggled financially and some parents had few options for child care, forcing them to choose between work and their children.

In March 2020, Child Care Services Association (CCSA) partnered with Smart Start to create the CCSA COVID-19 Relief Fund, supported by generous contributions from the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, the PNC Foundation, the Truist Charitable Fund, ChildTrust Foundation and other private donors. In Phase I of the Relief Fund, CCSA distributed small grants to child care programs that stayed open during the statewide shutdown to help keep child care programs open through the pandemic.

As the pandemic continued, CCSA recognized child care programs' needs for larger grants to meet the more substantial changes they would have to make to continue to keep their staff and the children in their care safe and healthy. In Phase II of its COVID-19 Relief Fund, CCSA distributed larger

grants to 41 child care programs across the state (the average grant was \$3,384.37) to help them purchase the cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, training, self-care programs and myriad other things they needed to remain open and stay the caring, supportive environments that all children need, especially now. Child care is the workforce behind our workforce and it must be protected.

THE IMPACT

CCSA received more than \$1.5 million in requests for Phase II of its COVID-19 Relief Fund, demonstrating the stark need for child care programs across N.C., now more than nine months into the pandemic. The requests for Phase II of the Relief Fund show that child care needs our support more now than ever. Child care requires investment, time, attention and creativity to get through this crisis and help our state and its economy get back on its feet. The next page features just a few examples of the creative, thoughtful, innovative and wonderful ways child care programs found to support the children and families they serve, and the early childhood educators that work so hard to keep those children safe, happy and healthy.



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many parents enrolled in this program started asking First Assembly if they would open a school-age program to help parents who needed to work. "Parents are asking, 'don't you want to keep our kindergartners and 1st graders?'" I plowed ahead, I'm going to open another classroom for our rising kindergartners and several 1st graders, at least until school reopens. It's going to cost but that would be the least of my worries for now. A new classroom means furnishing, centers, supplies and the right teacher...I have a teacher and we started ordering supplies, cubbies, tables [and] dividers for the classroom. Our teacher is eager, positive and familiar with remote learning...She has an innovative approach to remote learning working with the parents [and] our school

Before COVID-19, our center served 36 children. The end of March, April and May, we have lost half of the students and staff. We felt that staying open was the right thing to do, to help our community essential workers of Dare County. June 1, our numbers went up to 36 and staff is back full force...Our classrooms are full again; we love hearing our rooms and hallways busy with chatter and laughter."

—Sharal, Director, First Assembly of God Ministries

system. We'll have a stress-free learning environment by making it fun and giving [the] students choices, while making lessons interactive. We'll use technology, while also having creative classroom games. The teacher will incorporate mystery into lessons and connecting materials to student's lives."

With the grant from CCSA's COVID-19 Relief Fund, First Assembly of God Ministries purchased the tables, cubbies, rest mats, supplies, classroom dividers, manipulatives and arts and crafts supplies for this new classroom. Grant funding also enabled the program to hire an additional part-time teacher and provide bonuses to teachers.



"This grant was such a blessing for our center as well as the families," Sharal said. "The grant helped us provide the families with a safe and secure place to bring their children. We provided a stress-free learning environment by making the classroom fun and educational...Our staff at First Assembly of God Ministries tried to make life as normal as possible for the students."

WONDER YEARS CHILD CARE AND LEARNING CENTER, FAYETTEVILLE, N.C.

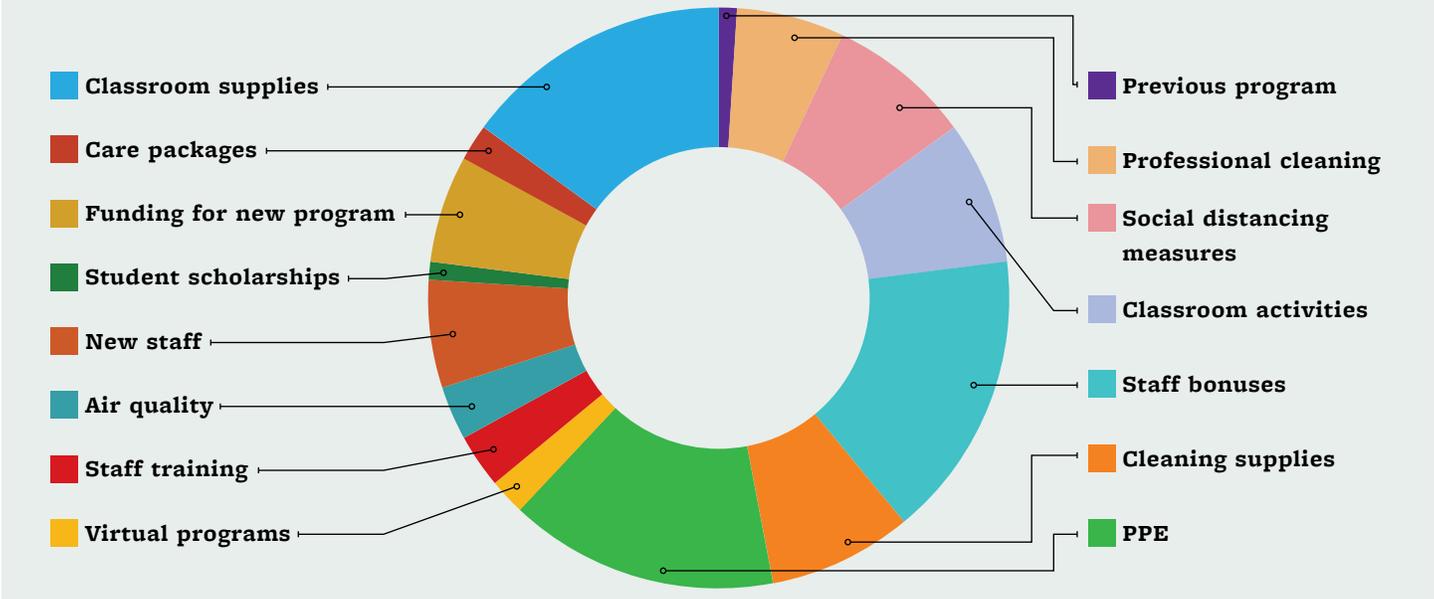
Wonder Years Child Care and Learning Center is a 5-star center that has participated in the NC Pre-K program continuously for 19 years. Before COVID-19, they served 115-125 children daily.

"Since March 14, [2020], our center has been devastated...We had as few as 10 children at the end of March and we currently serve 36-50 children daily," said Betty, center director.

Because of the sharp drop in enrollment, Wonder Years had to make difficult decisions.

"COVID-19 has had a tremendously detrimental effect on our center," Betty said. "We had to reduce staff hours, serve only children of key and essential workers until June 1, [2020], because of guidelines set

FIG 2 Summary of Child Care Program Needs



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[CLICK HERE](#) to view Wonder Years Child Care and Learning Center video



We were able to give take away meals to our families and care packages to the children who were in quarantine.

by the state, send a classroom of children home for up to 14 days after a positive COVID-19 test, reduce or close some programs, struggle to find PPE and cleaning supplies and survive in a generally stressful situation.”

Wonder Years applied to CCSA'S COVID-19 Relief Fund to support the children and their families during this challenging time. To do that, they used grant funds to: 1) set up a parent communication system that helps get information to parents quickly, 2) purchase emotional development activities that address resilience, mindfulness, managing

emotions, self-calming and celebrating diversity for the classrooms to help the children deal with trauma they may be experiencing due to COVID-19 restrictions and isolation, 3) provide “We Care About You” bags with books, activities, school supplies and snacks for children and families that face a

quarantine due to a positive COVID-19 case in their family or families unable to send their child to the center due to the child being high risk for the virus and 4) provide two “Take Away Dinners” for nearly 200 people to help meet the families’ basic nutritional needs and give stressed parents a break.

“...We have tried to make the situation as stress free as we possibly can for the children and the families that we serve,” Betty said. “We have been so appreciative of staff who have stepped up to allow our center to remain open and provide a stable, safe and healthy learning environment for our children.”

“We feel so blessed and fortunate to be a grant recipient. We are so grateful!”

—Betty, Director,
Wonder Years

“Being able to provide the staff the hazardous duty bonus boosts their morale beyond our expectations. Teachers who choose to work in this field, do so out of passion and not for pay. More often than not teachers’ hard work is often overlooked and underappreciated. The hazardous duty bonus allowed us the opportunity to say ‘Thank You’ for your dedication during this pandemic, in a way that we could not afford to do so, due to the decrease in our enrollment.”

—*First Presbyterian Day School, Durham, N.C.*

“Suddenly teaching is fun again and it shows. The children have more fun things to do, they are exploring emotions, which can be overwhelming, and enjoying more movement and relaxation. This grant has provided materials and equipment that allows the school to provide a safe and healthy environment that currently has remained virus free. The overall enthusiasm for teaching and learning and the mental health of all involved has increased.”

—*Wilkes Developmental Day School, Wilkesboro, N.C.*

“After being closed since March, we re-opened our doors in August when our NC PreK Classroom resumed. We were not staffed to have additional employees to help with screenings and temperature checks that were now a requirement. With this funding we were able to add extra support to help with the new regulatory procedures along with helping to keep our environment safe and virus free. We thank you for your help as we try to continue providing high quality care to our students.”

—*A Place to Grow, Lincolnton, N.C.*

On behalf of CCSA and all the child care programs across the state, we offer our most sincere gratitude to the donors, Smart Start and everyone who played a part in this effort to support child care in North Carolina during these challenging times.



CHILD CARE SERVICES ASSOCIATION

PO Box 901
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

(919) 967-3272

(919) 967-7683

www.childcareservices.org

