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State Superintendent of Schools

MEMORANDUM

To: Child Care Providers

From: Steven Hicks
Assistant State Superintendent of Schools
Division of Early Childhood

Date: August 7, 2020

Subject: Kindergarten Attendance Regulations

As local school systems announce their re-opening plans, parents of kindergartners are making decisions on how they will support their child's learning in a distance learning situation. Although kindergarten attendance is mandatory for children who are 5 years old as of September 1st each year, there are regulations that allow for several exemptions. As parents may be asking you questions, we are providing you this information.

Child care providers that enroll 5-year-olds in their programs should use a curriculum that addresses the standards for kindergarten. These can be found in Supporting Every Young Learner: Maryland's Guide to Early Childhood Pedagogy, Birth to Age 8: https://earlychildhood.marylandpublicschools.org/system/files/filedepot/3/pedagogyguide-learningstandards_042015_1.pdf. Child care programs should partner with the local school system, and it may be helpful to use the same curriculum as they are using. Classrooms should have age appropriate materials and furniture for 5-year-olds and teachers trained to provide effective instruction.

Exemptions to Kindergarten Attendance Requirement

A child who resides in Maryland and is 5 years old by September 1st shall attend a public or nonpublic kindergarten program regularly during the school year before entering first grade UNLESS the child is enrolled in an alternative program as listed below OR is receiving home instruction OR requests a level of maturity waiver.

Alternative Program Settings include:

- Full-time in a licensed child care center
- Full-time in a registered family child care home
- Part-time in a Head Start 5 year old program

The parent must notify their local school system before the opening of the school year that they will be enrolling their 5-year-old in an alternative program or providing home instruction. Some school systems may have a form to be completed. The parent should contact the local school system to find out what their procedure is. The parent will verify enrollment in an alternative program by providing the name of the program, the address, and the license number and its expiration date. The following year, before enrolling in 1st grade, the program must provide the parent with proof of attendance including the enrollment date and the attendance record so that the parent can enroll their child in school. In addition, a parent can always change their decision and enroll their kindergartner in public school kindergarten later in the school year.

A parent may also request an exemption from mandatory kindergarten attendance for 1 year if the parent requests a level of maturity waiver from the local superintendent of schools asking that the child's attendance be delayed due to the child's level of maturity. The following year, the child will then be enrolled in kindergarten.

If you have any questions, you can contact Ms. Judith Walker, the Early Learning Branch Chief at Judith.Walker@maryland.gov or Jennifer Nizer, Director of the Office of Child Care at Jennifer.Nizer@maryland.gov.