

# Essential Supplies Purchasing Platform

## Meeting the COVID-19 Supply Challenges of Child Care Providers

### What is the Need?

States have been entrusted with allocating funds to provide assistance to licensed, regulated, registered child care providers for the purposes of cleaning and sanitation/sanitization, health and hygiene support, access to PPE and other activities necessary to maintain or resume operation.

Child care providers are experiencing cash flow issues and increased operating expenses. Some states are directing child care providers to purchase their own supplies and next apply for reimbursement. Child care providers are worried they will purchase supplies that do not qualify as “essential” under the CARES or CCDBG / Consolidated Appropriations (CAA) Act. When child care programs decide not to purchase and receive reimbursement for these essential supplies, critically important funding streams may not be effectively distributed and may leave funding unspent.

While states have begun disseminating COVID-19 vaccines, there is likely continued need over the next year for child care providers to leverage prepaid/funded access to affordable essential supplies to ensure that child care providers and the families they serve remain safe throughout the current public health pandemic.

### How can Public-Private Partnerships Address These Community Challenges?

States need a quick and efficient method to get essential supplies into the hands of child care providers with little manual intervention and that meets administrative management controls and requirements. Child care providers need an easy, effective, and efficient way to access essential supplies without having to submit receipts for reimbursement which can take several weeks, placing further stress on their tenuous budgets. A public-private partnership can respond to these fundamental community needs with an efficient resolution, an online platform solution. Here’s how.

CCA For Social Good and Food & Supply Source created an online child care shared services purchasing platform that allows states to:

- maintain tight control over a pre-defined product catalog of COVID-19 compliant essential items,
- achieve administrative efficiency to easily allocate funds, audit spend on demand, and
- access discounted pricing for PPE, cleaning supplies, and other COVID-19 related products with delivery to individual child care providers in as little as two days, without a delivery charges or minimum order size.

### How Does it Work?

CCA For Social Good, supports 32 states through ECESharedResources.com, an online resource hub that forms an extensive knowledge base of tools focused on supporting the needs of early childhood education and care professionals (child care centers and family child care homes, TA staff, etc.) Licenses are available to states that do not already have a Shared Resources platform within their state. Our partner, Food and Supply Source, is a supplies and services management company offering group purchasing services to social/human service sector organizations throughout the United States. Together, we leveraged our resources to develop the online platform to support states in more efficiently and cost effectively meeting the need of child care providers access to more affordable COVID-19 related products. Together our organizations strengthen the business of center and family-based child care by providing practical cost-effective solutions which are quickly and efficiently deployed across the United States. Today our organizations support over 50,000 child care programs, hundreds of CCR&R’s, multiple Quality Rating Improvement Systems and thousands of quality coaches.

Upon award, CCA For Social Good and Food & Supply Source will work with state agencies or host organizations (e.g., a CCR&R or other nonprofit) to determine the budget for each center or family child care home, communicate with each vendor(s) to restrict purchases to COVID-19 related products and activate online accounts. Each child care program receives login credentials and is provided hands-on support to enable each to select needed items. Tutorials are provided to support child care provider engagement. Online accounts work similarly to a debit card, which is set at a specific limit and drawn

down as purchases are made. Products are shipped directly to providers without a delivery charge. Controls are in place to assure that product is delivered only to the address of record for the registered, licensed or regulated child care program. **No changes** to this information can be made by the provider eliminating opportunity for waste, fraud, or abuse of funding. Once products are shipped, the governing organization will be invoiced. States and/or host agencies receive weekly vendor reports and summary invoices. Weekly conference calls and status reports for staff or administrators will be held during rollout. Upon closeout, Food & Supply Source provides a recap and facilitates complete reconciliation. For accountability and strategic planning, digital records are provided to the governing agency or host that is easily searchable and allows the governing agency to drill down to the most granular data of individual provider purchases, by location, county or region, and by item.

## Has this Service Been Implemented in Other States?

Yes. In 2020, during the worst of the pandemic, CCA For Social Good in collaboration with Food & Supply Source provided doorstep delivery of essential products to child care providers inclusive of metropolitan and rural locations. Over the course of several months, we supported grant fund allocation and purchasing services to states including Arizona, California, New Jersey, North Carolina, New York, Massachusetts, Mississippi, and Montana. The Mississippi spend totaled approximately \$4 million and supported 900 child care programs with access to essential supplies using the online purchasing platform. A simple, user friendly interface provided both “how to” instructional resources (integrated into the shared resources platform) and a one-click link to the online purchasing platform. This easy to adopt process eliminated confusion and resulted in 93% utilization of the monies. The vendor fill rate was a huge success with 95% of product ordered and delivered – again virtually unheard of during this time of extreme manufacturing stress and supply chain shortages.

## How are States Funding These Platforms?

Many states have provided financial support for the ECESharedResources.com platform through the Preschool Development Grant Birth - Five or Child Care and Development Block Grant funding. In 2020, States used CARES Act funding (either through CCDBG or Coronavirus Relief Funds) to support the purchase of COVID-19 essential supplies for child care providers. Some states have used FEMA funding for child care provider PPE, cleaning supplies and other COVID related support. The FY2021 Consolidated Appropriations and COVID Relief Act (P.L. 116-260) increased funding for CCDBG and extended CRF through December 2021. In addition, on January 21<sup>st</sup>, [a federal directive](#) was issued pursuant to the Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5121–5207) to allow states to be reimbursed with 100% federal funding for PPE, disinfecting services and supplies for eligible schools, child care facilities, healthcare facilities, and other eligible applicants through September 30, 2021.

## How long does this take to implement?

For the 32 states that already have the ECESharedResources.com platform, implementing the COVID essential supplies purchasing initiative is possible immediately – within 2 weeks. It’s that easy! For states that currently do not have the ECESharedResources.com platform, we can help you launch a state customized version of ECESharedResources.com in as little as five weeks. During that time, we can also facilitate the launch of the COVID-19 online purchasing platform within 3 weeks.

## What are the costs?

ECESharedResources.com is a licensed web platform available to states in a variety of ways and at multiple price points. While we’d love to have you realize the full benefits of the ECESharedResources.com platform, we understand the importance of getting essential supplies into the hands of child care providers. Accordingly, the online purchasing platform is available as a stand-alone service for the present time. Current state licensees can opt to incorporate the online purchasing platform at any time and without any additional fee. More information about the cost of the ECE Shared Resources platform is available upon request.

## How do I get started?

Getting started is easy. Contact us and reference the *Shared Services Purchasing & Knowledge Platform*:

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