



Should Child Care in Indiana be Open during the Coronavirus Pandemic?

By Educator Barnes – March 26, 2020

During a press conference yesterday Dr. Jennifer McCormick, Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction, shared that her office was working with FSSA to expand child care options in the state. Although schools were ordered to close, child care providers were labeled as essential and are able to operate. Some did close when schools closed because their place of operation was inside of school buildings. New guidance provided by both IDOE and FSSA,

which was shared on [Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb's official Facebook page](#), outlines the precautions providers must follow to provide child care for Hoosiers who need this service such as first responders and hospital staff.

The [Indiana Department of Education](#) and Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA) have teamed to encourage school corporations in Indiana to open schools on a limited basis to provide child care services for emergency workers and others who are working to keep communities safe during the #COVID19 pandemic.

On Friday, FSSA provided new guidance for child care operators who are licensed by the state. Here is the link: <https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/5761.htm>

Today, Indiana Department of Education provided similar guidance to school corporations to care for the school age children of essential workers. The guidance provides specific steps for schools to take to open school facilities as well as how to maintain a safe environment.

<https://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/news/child-care-recommendation-essential-personnel.pdf>

During the press conference on March 19, when Governor Holcomb ordered all Indiana Schools to close until May 1, Dr. Jennifer McCormick said, "You're going to get criticism no matter what you do in situations like this." The angry face emojis and critical comments on the Governor's Facebook page show that all Hoosiers are not on board with this decision.

Cindy Weaver – Are you nuts? I am a custodian and can't even finish cleaning from when the schools were shut down before because I'm not essential anymore now you want to bring in daycare? Why don't you open up the governor's mansion and stay home and babysit? Unbelievable

Billie Blanc – think this is a very bad idea. I feel bad for the people who need child care but this will just put everyone at risk.

Donna Dixon – Explain why it is safer for kids to be in childcare rather than school to protect them from Coronavirus??!!

Joshlyn Bue Thatcher – This is a terrible idea. Kids don't understand social distancing and staying apart. You're only putting everyone else at a larger risk on contracting and spreading the virus.

Not all Hoosiers disagreed with the Governor.

Lora Barlow – Schools have the space to allow for social distancing while caring for groups of children whereas most child care locations do not. Good thinking.

Ashley Smothers – Love this! Thanks for helping us when times are critical! It's hard for us to choose some days! Even being an essential worker, you definitely don't want to put your child in the care of just anyone! Thanks for opening a safe space for these children!

What is clear is that even childcare providers aren't on the same page about what is best.

Amber Lawson – I own two licensed daycare and have shut them down. I don't want to risk myself or my family, my employees, my daycare kids, and families. I get there are essential workers BUT we have to watch out for our well being. Thankfully I have amazing parents that have me no issues. As fast as this is spreading it won't slow down unless there is a complete shut down, daycares included. Kids are getting it and spreading it without showing symptoms.

Shannon Ford – Governor Eric Holcomb we have 14 of our 16 licensed child care centers OPEN and accepting families, including first responders and essential workers! Our early childhood educators at La Petite Academy, Childtime, and Children's Courtyard are ready and willing to fight the good fight!

Despite the pushback from some Hoosiers, organizations like AYS (At Your School) has decided to open back up to provide childcare. AYS President and CEO Chrystal Struben sent an email to AYS families to provide an update:

Starting Wednesday, March 25, AYS will open a childcare program for healthcare workers and first responders at Broad Ripple High School, and will add locations as the need increases. These brave people are on the front lines of this crisis must keep going to work, and it is our responsibility to do anything we can to help them do their jobs. Our dedicated team has worked around the clock for the past couple weeks to collaborate with Indianapolis Public Schools, the United Way of Central Indiana, the City of

Indianapolis, and several youth-serving organizations to strategically band together to address this critical need.

A 15-year veteran AYS employee, Lisa Stockton, is one of the AYS employees returning to work. "When schools closed, we were sent home. When I was at the main office after the closure, I saw some AYS staff crying. I have PTO time and used it while we were closed, but other people didn't and were worrying about how they were going to take care of themselves," Stockton shared. Now, that AYS is reopening, employees are able to earn income. It's not only about the income for Lisa. "We had an entire day of training to make sure we are following the guidelines to keep kids safe and healthy. Opening back up takes some stress off people who have to work like doctors and nurses."

During a pandemic, there are no easy choices. Every decision could potentially lead to a negative outcome even if there were good intentions behind the decision. As time passes, we will learn if this was a good decision or not.