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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **Vital Child Care Relief for COVID-19 Frontline Workers**

### **Contra Costa County Mobilizes Support for Healthcare Staff, First Responders and All Essential Workers**

**Martinez, Calif.** (April 24, 2020) – In the battle against COVID-19, Contra Costa County healthcare workers are putting in extra hours at hospitals and clinics while juggling the needs of their own families. Child care is a vital necessity for them and many frontline staff whose primary child care providers have closed in the wake of the pandemic. To fill this gap, the **Employment and Human Services Department (EHSD)** is collaborating with several Contra Costa County partners to implement the **Emergency Child Care Program**, offering support for all essential workers as they continue serving our community’s needs during the COVID-19 health crisis.

Fully qualified early care and educational professionals in existing centers and family child-care homes are providing child care in small group settings of up to 10 children. Spaces are available for infants and children up to school age, whose primary caregivers are medical and other essential workers living or working in Contra Costa County. The program serves doctors, nurses, respiratory practitioners and healthcare staff who are providing direct care to COVID-19 patients, as well as disaster service workers, social workers, first responders, and others working at essential businesses throughout the county.

EHSD’s **Community Services Bureau (CSB)**, which operates the County’s federally-funded Head Start child care program for low-income children, is operating three of its existing child care centers for the Emergency Child Care Program. In addition, various child care centers and family child care homes throughout Contra Costa County are available, with hours that vary by location.

“Well-trained and qualified child care workers in Community Services and throughout the County were eager and ready to mobilize, enabling us to have several hundred emergency child care spaces currently available,” said CSB Director Camilla Rand. “We are glad to support those working on the frontlines by providing quality child care to help meet their family needs.”

All classrooms are following guidance for social distancing, maintaining group sizes of no more than 10 children who remain in their same groups each day, as well as sanitation and hygiene. The health and safety practices align with County Health Officer, Community Care Licensing, and the Centers for Disease Control guidance for child care centers.

CocoKids, the County’s resource and referral agency, is handling all enrollment and placement. CocoKids serves as the conduit between providers and families, supporting parents/guardians in finding care that best fits their needs, with consideration to location, preferences and other factors.

“Our case managers are connected to the vast network of providers offering care, and are ready to support parents and guardians in finding the right care during this difficult time,” explained CocoKids Executive Director John Jones.

Essential workers may go to [CocoKids.org](http://CocoKids.org) and click on the Emergency Child Care for Essential Workers banner to complete a request or learn more about available providers. Admission priorities are in accordance with the State Public Health Officer’s designation of [Essential Critical Infrastructure Workers](#) and Contra Costa County Health Officer Guidance for Modified Childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The Contra Costa County COVID-19 Emergency Child Care Program is a collaborative led by EHSD in partnership with the Contra Costa County Office of Education (CCCOE), First 5 Contra Costa, CocoKids, EHSD’s Community Services Bureau (CSB), the Local Childcare Planning Council and Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS). Funding for these programs is possible through a combination of county, state, and federal funding, as well as private donations.

**Contra Costa County Employment & Human Services Department (EHSD)** partners with the community to deliver quality services to ensure access to resources that support, protect, and empower individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency. Based on the core values of promoting organizational excellence, delivering an exceptional customer experience, encouraging open communication, embracing change, practicing ethical behavior, and respecting diversity, EHSD envisions Contra Costa County will continue to be a thriving community where all individuals and families can be healthy, safe, secure and self-sufficient. [www.ehsd.org](http://www.ehsd.org)

EHSD’s **Community Services Bureau (CSB)** is the community action agency for Contra Costa County. In addition to childcare programs, CSB provides an array of safety net services to county residents and is considered an anti-poverty agency that partners with other community organizations to address multiple needs such as legal services for those impacted by domestic violence and homelessness, adult mental health services, hunger, and job training and placement. CSB also administers the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), a federally-funded program to assist low-income households with heating and cooling needs.