

March 25, 2020 Governor's Press Conference

Dr. Salmon Remarks

After lengthy discussions with health experts from around the State, I have made the decision along with the State Board of Education to extend the closure of all public schools in Maryland for an additional four weeks through April 24, 2020.

We do not make this decision lightly. However, with the challenges facing our State and our country, we have a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of our school communities and the community at-large.

I am working in concert with all local school system superintendents, including multiple calls per week, in order to provide the continuity of learning to all of our students in every jurisdiction across the State of Maryland during this time.

We are already working very closely with every school system to address issues affecting their ability to provide educational services to all of their students. It should also be noted that we will be diligent in providing educational services to our students with disabilities.

Local superintendents have provided me with their plans for the continuity of learning during the additional closure period. My staff at the Maryland State Department of Education has been reviewing the plans and determining what supports and resources the State can provide where needed.

More information will be available in the coming days as we work collaboratively on a statewide plan that maintains equitable standards and expectations for students. Local school systems will be communicating with their individual school communities as they move forward with implementing their plans.

We plan to resume the continuity of learning next week, and we will be working closely with local superintendents, school administrators, and our teachers to activate that plan.

While it is too early to say when schools will reopen, we will continue to reassess the situation as we move forward and see where we are in a few weeks time. Additionally, while child care and day care facilities throughout the State may remain open at this time, our urgent focus is ensuring there are child care options for the children of essential personnel.

We understand that those in the workforce providing essential services, such as those in our hospital and health care facilities and food distribution sites, may need child care provided to continue in their roles. However, if another parent or guardian is able to stay home with your children you should do that.

For those essential personnel that are unable to provide care, we have worked diligently in the past week to identify locations across Maryland that will provide child care.

At this juncture, we have identified space for more than 1,200 school-aged children (ages 4-12) of essential personnel at various locations throughout Maryland in spaces such as YMCAs, the Maryland School for the Blind, public libraries, Parks and Recreation facilities, and Boys and Girls clubs. We are hoping to increase this capacity to more than 2,500 spaces in the coming days.

Essential personnel working in response to the COVID-19 pandemic who require child care are immediately able to find these services through a free referral hotline called LOCATE. The number to reach this referral service is 1-877-261-0060. We will provide additional guidance and information immediately following today's press conference.

I am so grateful to our educators and child care providers across the State for their commitment to our children and their school communities.

I also want to recognize the incredible dedication and commitment that our food services staff and volunteers have exhibited as they have continued to serve and transport meals to children at the 500+ food distribution sites we have set up across Maryland. Just as a reminder, for any family looking for a location to pick up meals for a student, please visit mdsummermeals.org for a list of locations in your area.

I appreciate everyone's cooperation during this difficult time, and I am looking forward to working with our local superintendents and school leaders in the coming days as we move forward.