

Child Care and Work-Life Resources

Pandemic Guide for State Employees

Updated: March 2021



NORTH CAROLINA Office of
State Human Resources

The Office of State Human Resources offers this guide as a resource for state employees needing assistance with child care and work-life balance during the COVID-19 pandemic.



In-person and virtual learning is occurring in North Carolina school districts, requiring families to manage unique challenges in the school year.



This creates tremendous challenges for both parents/guardians who work outside of the home or who currently telework and their employers.



This resource is designed to provide information to parents/guardians and state agency employers about options to assist employees with school-age children.

OSHR is grateful for the dedication of the members of the Child Care and Work-Life Balance Task Force, whose work informed this publication.

Traditional Child Care Options

This section provides information on child care centers, family child care homes, and preschool programs.

[NCDHHS - Child Care Hotline](#)

Families and caregivers in need of child care for children up to age 12 can call the Child Care Hotline at **1-888-600-1685** to be connected directly to care options in their community that meet their families' needs.

[NCDHHS - COVID-19 Information for Families](#)

General information and FAQs.

[NCDHHS - Search for a Child Care Facility](#)

Find a child care provider in your area.

[Search for a Child Care Facility](#)

EAP provider McLaughlin Young (for state agencies) provides a search tool for local child care.

[Child Care Services Association](#)

Operates a statewide child care and referral hotline.

[NCDHHS Child Care Subsidy Information](#)

Find assistance to help pay for child care.

Traditional Child Care Options

continued

[Smart Start](#)

Helps working parents pay for child care and provides health and family support services.

[NC Head Start](#)

Supports low income children and their families and includes a Center locator.

[NC Pre-K Program](#)

Designed to provide high-quality educational experiences for eligible four-year-old children.

[NC Child Care Resource and Referral Council](#)

Assists with finding child care that best meets the needs of your child and family.

[Child Care Aware of America](#)

Serves the U.S. Military and Department of Defense families by providing Fee Assistance and Respite Child Care Programs.

[Childcare.gov](#)

State-based COVID-19 child care information

Child Care and School Options

Contact your [local school district](#) through the NC Department of Public Instruction (NC DPI) for information **on virtual school support programs**. Includes contact information for 100 county districts, 15 city districts, charter schools, and federal schools.

[NC DPI](#) provides information on COVID-19 response and resources.

[CDC: Talking with Children about Coronavirus](#): Recommendations to help **adults have conversations with children about COVID-19** and ways they can avoid getting and spreading the disease.



Employer-Based Options

Resources and options employers may consider to support employees with school-age children.

FLEXIBLE/REDUCED WORK SCHEDULES

If operational needs allow, supervisors may consider allowing employees to flex their regular schedule (or request a reduced schedule) to accommodate their children returning to school or to work around a spouse/partner's schedule so they can switch off caring for the child(ren) in school. In each scenario, it is important to establish parameters.

Employees must acknowledge the flexibility that the agency is trying to provide with work-life balance. This includes mutual acceptance of defined expectations in terms of the critical business needs, routine job tasks, and criteria to determine if responsibilities are being met. If operational needs allow, examples of possible scenarios include:

Scenario 1: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing employees to work a split schedule, such as 6-10 a.m. and 3:30-7:30 p.m.

Scenario 2: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing compressed work week of four 10-hour days (especially if two of those are weekend days, provides three weekdays with children for school).

Scenario 3: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing switching out two weekend days for two weekdays as days off.

Scenario 4: Employees may request supervisor consideration for the ability to telework, coming onsite for important meetings or other required activities.

Employer-Based Options

Continued

Scenario 5: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing ways to create different schedules within a section to meet multiple employees' needs. For example, four-hour schedules per day, 12-hour shifts, rotate weekday/weekend shifts to allow more unscheduled weekdays, etc.

Scenario 6: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing creation of partial onsite/partial telework arrangement with fewer onsite hours and more flexibility to schedule the telework hours at night.

Scenario 7: Employees may request that their supervisor consider allowing employees to reduce their work hours for a period of time.

Note: A reduced schedule may result in a reduction in pay or benefits. Discuss your specific situation with your supervisor.

TEMPORARY REASSIGNMENT OF EMPLOYEES

Agencies may reassign employees as appropriate, balancing employee needs with the agency's operational needs. This could include employees who temporarily share or switch shifts to accommodate child care needs.

Temporary reassignment allows employees who may need a particular schedule to switch with other employees in like-jobs among divisions in an Agency — if the other division has need of that schedule.

Agencies must consider such requests in a manner that is fair and consistent for all employees.

Employer-Based Options

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EMPLOYEE NETWORKS

Employee Networks - Use personal email or social platforms to facilitate sign-up lists, chat rooms, Google Docs, etc. to connect with colleagues who live in proximity or have children in same grades to connect and share supervision and support of students.

Employees may use their own, non-work resources to create lists for:

- Reliable teenagers or known adults available to oversee younger children during virtual school
- Employees interested in establishing a learning pod environment with other families so parents can coordinate schedules and oversight of multiple children
- List of tutoring needs that may be provided by staff (virtual or in-person) on nights/days off to help support each other in subjects of expertise and/or provide breaks between a group of parents.

What Are Learning Pods?

[Learning Pods](#) are an increasingly popular idea being embraced by parents/caregivers across the nation. The learning pod solution is a system in which parents/caregivers form cohorts to monitor and support a small number of students to guide them through virtual instruction.

This solution not only allows the “off-duty” parents/caregivers to focus on their jobs, but also allows students to interact and learn together.

Employer-Based Options

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EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The State of North Carolina knows that there are times when life and work can be stressful, particularly recognizing the challenges created by COVID-19. The [North Carolina Employee Assistance Program](#) (NC EAP) is a state-sponsored benefit program that offers counseling for personal and work-related concerns, as well as resources on personal, financial, or legal issues. It is free for employees and members of their household and completely confidential. For 24/7 assistance, call 888-298-3907.

Note: Employees of the Administrative Office of the Courts use [Deer Oaks](#) and employees of the UNC System use [ComPsych](#).



Employer-Based Options

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LEAVE OPTIONS

In addition to using your earned vacation leave, sick leave, compensatory time, and regular bonus leave, you may be eligible to use a variety of leave options with supervisory approval, if offered at your agency.

These options may include:

- **Advanced Leave** – with approval of supervisor and other top management. The agency shall determine the maximum amount of sick and vacation leave that can be approved for advancement within a 24-month period. Agency may not advance more than the employee would accrue in the time allotted. Time not made up within the agency defined period will be deducted from the employee's pay.
- **Administrative Leave-CDE** – The CDE Policy was activated on March 10, 2020 when Governor Cooper signed Executive Order 116 declaring a State of Emergency to Coordinate Response and Protective Actions to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19. The policy provides up to 80 hours of paid leave during the declared state of emergency due to quarantine. An individual should quarantine due to close contact to someone who has COVID-19, but is otherwise healthy and has not tested positive for COVID-19 and the agency has determined the employee does not have the option to telework
- **CDE Care Leave (Child Care/Elder Care)** – In accordance with the Communicable Disease Emergency policy, permanent employees who cannot work because they have childcare/eldercare needs related to school or facility closings have the option to telework, if approved, or use leave that must be made up within a 24-month period.

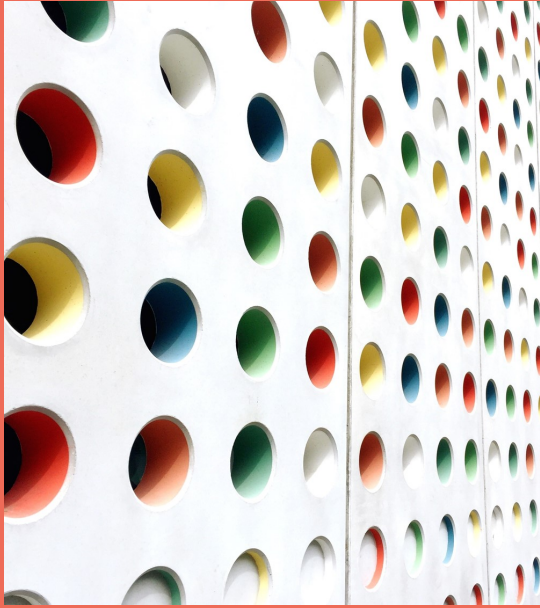
Employer-Based Options

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- **Community Service Leave (Tutoring and Mentoring)** – During the state of emergency and when a school mandates or offers virtual classes, in lieu of the regular Community Service Leave (24 hours), employees may elect the option to **tutor and mentor (up to 36 hours)** in a virtual or in-person setting to support students who require temporary or ongoing support to succeed academically.
- **COVID-19 Leave Bank** – An agency may establish a COVID-19 leave bank for permanent employees who do not have enough leave to cover their approved COVID-19 related absence.
- **COVID-19 Vaccine** – To mitigate barriers to obtaining the vaccine, agencies may allow paid time worked for permanent and temporary employees to receive the COVID-19 vaccine during work hours, with supervisor approval. If an employee experiences, a reaction that prevents them from returning to work, *on the day of the vaccine or the following day*, agencies may allow the use Administrative Leave – CDE provided the employee has not previously used the one-time, 80-hour allocation of Administrative Leave CDE.
- **Expanded Community Service Leave** – Effective January 1, 2021, the ability to use **up to 80 hours** of Expanded Community Service Leave working with non-profit organizations on COVID-19 volunteer activities, with supervisor approval, is available to permanent employees.

All employees who have not been directed by their supervisor to work onsite at any particular date and time may continue to be assigned work.

Those employees are expected to telework, if feasible.



State employees with school-age children who have questions about their specific leave situation are encouraged to contact their Agency Human Resources Office for guidance.



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