

EDWARD STREET RESPONDS TO COVID-19 WITH CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR PROVIDERS, YOUTH AND FAMILIES



Tuesday, December 1, 2020

In March of 2020, our work became more important than ever.

COVID-19 arrived, causing immediate health risks for children, families and childcare providers; financial hardships for providers; and logistical challenges for communities.

In response, Edward Street expanded its leadership role to help the greater Worcester area and Central Massachusetts fulfill its promise of serving every child and family.

An Education in Coronavirus

In the early days of COVID, and still to this day, trusted information has been at a premium. To help providers meet and exceed regulations, Edward Street rapidly vetted local, state and national resources on behalf of constituents.

Today, the organization organizes and distributes information in myriad ways, including at earlychildhoodcentral.org, as a member of both **Worcester Together** and the **Worcester Education Collaborative**, and through its own weekly **Worcester Area Directors Crisis Support Meetings** with area providers. In

addition, Edward Street and childcare advocates from across the state meet regularly to share expertise and request help with COVID-related issues, such as staffing shortages.

Emergency Funds

Temporary shutdowns and new infrastructure costs have made it difficult for many childcare providers to remain in business, a scary prospect for the families who rely on them.

That's why Edward Street led the **Commonwealth Children's Fund's Massachusetts Family Child Care Emergency Fund**, a collaborative fund that provided grants of \$2,500 to 85 family childcare providers financially impacted by COVID-19.

Remote Learning — from Training and Technology to Logistics

Suddenly, you have to go remote. Do you have the technology? What are best practices for student learning and support? How do you manage it all?

COVID-19 came with serious questions; Edward Street helped childcare providers adapt and move forward with training, programming and more.

- **Training**
Edward Street quickly established new **Virtual Professional Development, Coaching and Professional Learning Communities**, an expansion of its long-standing **Professional Development** and **Master Teacher** initiatives.
- **Tech Support**
Remote learning only works if the technology is there, so Edward Street helped local providers understand and acquire the bandwidth and connectivity needed to power remote classrooms.
- **Programming**
Edward Street was selected as a member of the **Early Childhood Out of School Time Advisory** created by the **Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education**. The advisory provides health and safety instructions, out of school time programming, and best practices for young children, including special education populations.
- **Logistics**
Sometimes it's the little things. When disparate lunch times for siblings in the same household became a challenge for parents working from home, Edward Street helped communities shift to more sensible scheduling.

Play Time — Now More than Ever

Each year, **Edward Street's Annual Day of Play Family Festival** celebrates the value of play time in developing imagination and critical thinking skills. In 2020, with children spending more time at home, play time has never been more important. So, while an in-person event wasn't possible this year, Edward Street and participating organizations shifted the Day of Play to a virtual experience.

Now, at [WorcesterDayofPlay.org](https://www.worcesterdayofplay.org)(link is external), children can find rewarding activities and entertainment to enjoy alone or with siblings and parents.

Advocating for Children and Childcare Providers

At the onset of the pandemic, Edward Street participated in a citywide call that identified the needs of children 0-5 years old, including food stabilization, mental and behavioral health concerns, daily childcare, and housing stabilization.

As chair of **Worcester's Together for Kids Coalition**, Edward Street also successfully advocated for early childhood and early learning to be integrated into the city-led **Mayor's Governance Council on Children, Youth and Family** — a first step in pushing for greater investment at the state level.

Edward Street — Leadership for Lasting Change

COVID-19 has placed a serious burden on vulnerable populations and communities. However, if any good can come from a pandemic it's that it has shed light on inequities and challenges in childcare and created an opportunity for lasting change.