

Q & A about Saint Mary's Nursery School (SMNS)'s options during COVID-19 crisis

Last edited April 10, 2020, 12:15pm. Ongoing edits will be posted at
<https://www.stmarysnursery.org/smns-covid-19-emergency-fund/>

1. When will SMNS reopen?

SMNS cannot give an answer to this. This is a unprecedented health crisis that is emerging and changing quickly. SMNS will not open during any mandated city or state closure. SMNS does not plan to open if there are clear recommendations to remain closed. The governor's decision to close public and private K-12 schools for the remainder of the school year does not include early childhood programs, though it does illustrate the potential for closures to continue to be extended for our programs.

2. If the governor lifts the mandate for closure will SMNS reopen?

Not necessarily. SMNS will evaluate the safety of opening for staff, children, and parents before doing so. The SMNS Emergency Committee of the Board of Directors and the Board of Directors in partnership with the Executive Director and local and state agencies will cooperate with the recommendation to remain closed until it is legal to open and deemed a safe and reasonable time to do so.

3. When you reopen will you have to do things differently?

We do not currently know. Childcare centers operating now with a waiver to serve essential/life-sustaining employees are using practices that are not usually part of a childcare providers day-- such as temperature checks and other things. It is highly likely that when childcare centers reopen there will be relevant and updated health practices to integrate. Any reopening will have to be accompanied by some days to onboard staff to any of these before serving children and parents and staff should expect new regulations around health and safety when we do open.

4. What does it mean that SMNS has lost all private tuition?

We rely on tuition from private paying families as our primary source of income. Other income includes income from grants, from our annual fundraiser, and 6.5 % of our income comes from governmental subsidies to support low income families. In April, we will no longer receive

tuition from our private pay families due to closure. The state will continue to pay their portion of the subsidy payments through April, but the parent portion will be waived, meaning we will receive roughly half of the regular amount we receive through subsidies. It is not clear whether or not the state will continue to pay their portion after April 30, 2020. Our annual fundraising event has currently been cancelled due to this health crisis as well. We hope to offer an alternative fundraising opportunity, online auction, or smaller event in the future, and are grateful to the sponsors, donors, and auction item donors whose support will make that possible in the future.

5. Can SMNS pay staff until they reopen?

As of March 25th, 2020, the Board of Directors has voted to pay staff through the end of April, using the organization's savings to pay for work time. SMNS will also pay for all health benefits during this month. The Board of Directors will reconvene regularly and access the changing landscape, new government supports, and our fiscal capacity for time beyond April 30th. We have also applied for the Payroll Protection Program Loan, which, if received, would help us to extend the time we can keep staff on payroll.

6. Is SMNS receiving payment from the state or city for subsidized tuition?

The state will continue to pay centers a portion of the payment they regularly pay for all students attending childcare centers using subsidy through the end of April 2020. They have not yet confirmed whether or not this payment will continue past the end of April. Throughout closure, parent co-pays for subsidized enrollment are being waived. SMNS does accept subsidies, so will continue to receive the governmental portion of these payments, however they make up a negligible amount of our income from tuition, about 6.5 %, of which we will be receiving about half.

7. What will you do about staff health care?

Through the end of April, SMNS will continue all health benefits for staff as they are currently supported. In our planning around how long we can pay staff, and how we can maintain funds to sustain the business for reopening after the end of April, it is our goal to include payment of health care costs for staff on our insurance for as long as possible considering the various elements of this situation. Our health care provider has changed their policy requirements during this time, allowing us the option to continue to pay health coverage even if staff have to be moved to unemployment. If we receive funding through the Paycheck Protection loan program, we will have more funds to continue to pay this .

8. Can SMNS take out a loan or apply for one of the loans being offered in the federal packages I'm reading about?

Many new loan programs are being developed in response to this crisis. SMNS is regularly reviewing options being made available through federal, state, and city programs. The [Payroll Protection Program](#) is a loan program we have applied for through our bank; it is through the federal Small Business Administration. PPPL is a loan designed to provide a direct incentive for small businesses to keep their workers on the payroll. SBA will forgive loans if all employees are kept on the payroll for eight weeks and the money is used for payroll, rent, mortgage interest, or utilities. We have also applied for the SBA's [Economic Injury Disaster Loan](#).

9. Are there grants available and if so have you applied for them?

In addition to the loans applied for we have applied for the following:

- Philadelphia COVID-19 Small Business Relief Fund
- Verizon-LISC Small Business Recovery Grant
- Philadelphia Emergency Fund for Stabilization of Early Education (PEFSEE)
- Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loan \$10,000 Grant
- We also initiated an appeal with all stakeholders, netting \$16,000 as of 4/9/20, and the Board of Directors has initiated separate appeal to current families to donate the equivalent of their tuition if they are able to.

10. Will families be charged tuition?

Tuition will not be collected for the month of April; nor will it be charged for days we are closed. April invoices will go out automatically but families are not expected to pay them. Families are welcome to make a donation to SMNS to help us through this time. [Donate Now!](#)

11. What if a family wants to continue to pay tuition?

If a family is in a situation in which they are able and willing to support SMNS at this time, we are grateful. We ask that they do this via our online link for donations: [Donate Now!](#). You can also set up an automatic transfer, either one time or recurring, in order to avoid credit card fees, using this [LINK](#). During our first two weeks of closure, our contract allowed us to use the tuition money collected for the month of March. However, we cannot collect tuition for closure

extensions beyond that day because we cannot collect money for services we do not render that fall out of our emergency closure clause. People are able to make donations to SMNS during this time. You *cannot* pay tuition in advance for a future date.

12. I am a parent or caregiver and I want to make a donation of my regular tuition. I am set up with auto pay; can you just apply this to a donation?

First, we are so grateful for your willingness to support our school in this way! If you do wish to make all or part of your scheduled tuition payment as a donation, we need you to send us an email saying this, and include the amount you want to donate. The email could say: *Please use my scheduled tuition amount of \$X, as a donation at this time. I understand that this is a donation, and is not a fee for service and cannot later be used towards future tuition.*

Alternatively, you can make a donation here for any amount: [Donate Now!](#). You can also set up an automatic transfer, either one time or recurring, in order to avoid credit card fees, using this [LINK](#).

13. What have the teaching staff been doing during the closure and will they continue?

Teachers have created and sent videos to share with families-- videos that can be found on the [SMNS YouTube Channel](#). Head teachers have been emailing families. Teachers prepared and sent out conference materials to families by April 3rd. Our Program Administrator has been sharing resources to support families at home with their children. As long as SMNS is able to continue to pay teachers we will continue to provide new videos and weekly class meetings. Teachers will also be engaging in online professional development in April.

14. Can you ensure that if I make a donation you will only use it for staff?

Any donation made will be used to support the best and most reasonable approach to supporting staff now and ensuring that the business can reopen after a long closure. It would be a donation that we will use to help meet all of the related needs, and this certainly includes supporting staff. Please note that as of April 1st, any days that staff are paid for, any additional paid time off, health insurance, and bills will be days for which no private pay tuition has been collected.

15. Will SMNS reopen when this health crisis passes?

It is our sincere hope that we will, and we are working to make decisions that will most likely ensure that this is the case. However, we cannot make any promises in this quickly evolving landscape and appreciate your patience, understanding and support. SMNS' Executive Director

is working to stay abreast of advocacy efforts and opportunities to invite our community to support.

16. What else can I do to help?

There are many advocacy agencies locally and nationally working to ensure that the childcare sector remains intact and can reopen after this crisis. Emails, letters, and social media engagement impact policy and law makers. Please stay tuned to updates from our Executive Director via email or our [Facebook page](#). Please consider engaging with some of the advocacy agencies working for our field by joining the mailing lists, following them on Twitter or Facebook: [First Five Years Fund](#), [First Up](#), [PCCY](#), [NAEYC](#), [PACCA](#), [America for Early Ed](#), [Zero to Three](#), [Moms Rising](#).