

TWC COVID-19 Essential Worker – Definition of Health Care Worker Discussion Paper

1 Background

2 On March 24, 2020, the Texas Workforce Commission’s (TWC) three-member Commission
3 (Commission) authorized TWC and Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) to
4 implement emergency child care in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The
5 Commission’s actions included the expansion of TWC’s definition of children needing
6 protective services to include children of specified COVID-19 essential workers, and the
7 distribution of \$40 million to Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) to support
8 COVID-19 child care related costs.

9 Additionally, on April 7, 2020, the Commission authorized the prioritization of child care
10 services within the new TWC COVID-19 Essential Workers eligibility category including
11 designating health care workers as a high priority. Based on this action, Boards must prioritize
12 child care services for TWC COVID-19 Essential Workers in the following order:

- 13 1. Workers in child care services that support workers in other essential functions
- 14 2. Pharmacy workers and health care workers
- 15 3. First responders
- 16 4. Critical infrastructure workers in grocery, utilities, and trucking
- 17 5. Other identified infrastructure workers, which include:
 - 18 a. critical state and local government staff;
 - 19 b. mail/delivery services;
 - 20 c. nursing homes, home health care, and other direct care providers;
 - 21 d. banks;
 - 22 e. gas stations;
 - 23 f. military; and
 - 24 g. restaurants and other food delivery
- 25 6. Other critical occupations identified by the Board

26 Additionally, on March 27, 2020, the U.S. Congress enacted the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and
27 Economic Security (CARES) Act, providing additional funding to states through the Child Care
28 and Development Block Grant to support child care needs related to the COVID-19 global
29 pandemic. On April 14, 2020, the Commission approved a \$200 million distribution of these
30 funds to Boards to fund TWC COVID-19 Essential Worker child care services.

31 Staff have continued to study the potential need for essential worker child care based on this
32 prioritization as well as the impact of the increased cost of care due to public health policies that
33 limit group sizes and require stronger sanitation and health precautions. Staff has identified that
34 the term, “health care worker” needs clarification to align with the Commission’s intent to ensure
35 child care for those providing the most essential services.

1 **Issue**

2 All health care workers can be considered high priority based on TWC’s current prioritization of
3 essential workers. However, many health care workers provide services that are routine or
4 elective. Additionally, not all health care workers have a high risk of occupational exposure to
5 COVID-19 through the course of their work duties.

6 For the purposes of prioritizing limited funds, the Commission may consider refining the
7 definition and prioritization of “health care workers” to recognize those whose work is most
8 essential or involves the most risk for occupational exposure to COVID-19.

9 **Decision Points**

10 Staff seeks direction on defining “COVID-19 health care worker” as follows:

11 A worker who delivers care and services to patients with confirmed, presumed, or
12 suspected COVID-19 infections either directly as doctors and nurses or indirectly as
13 aides, helpers, laboratory technicians, medical waste handlers, and other workers at
14 healthcare facilities who have direct occupational exposure to COVID-19 resulting from
15 the performance of their duties.

16 Staff also seeks direction on revising the prioritization of workers to provide more clarity
17 surrounding health care occupations as follows:

- 18 1. Workers in child care services that support workers in other essential functions
- 19 2. Pharmacy workers and, COVID-19 essential health care workers (as defined above)
- 20 3. First responders
- 21 4. Critical infrastructure workers in grocery, utilities, and trucking
- 22 5. Other identified infrastructure workers, which include:
 - 23 a. critical state and local government staff;
 - 24 b. mail/delivery services;
 - 25 c. other essential health care workers (as defined under “Health Care / Public
26 Health” in the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency’s (CISA)
27 [Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce: Ensuring
28 Community and National Resilience in COVID-19](#));
 - 29 d. banks;
 - 30 e. gas stations;
 - 31 f. military; and
 - 32 g. restaurants and other food delivery
- 33 6. Other critical occupations identified by the Board