

Ministry of Education Ministère de l'Éducation
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Memorandum To: Child Care Licensees

From: Shannon Fuller
Assistant Deputy Minister
Early Years and Child Care Division

Date: August 13, 2020

Subject Child Care and Early Years Programs Re-Opening in
September: Operational Guidance

As partners in the child care sector, we all know that child care and early years programming plays an integral role in the learning and development of children. It is critical for families so that they can return to work with confidence knowing that their children are in safe environments.

Further to Minister Lecce's announcement on July 30, beginning September 1, 2020, all child care centres across Ontario will be permitted to operate at full capacity, including centres in First Nations communities. Child care centres will be able to return to maximum group sizes (i.e., licensed age groups prior to the COVID-19 outbreak) as set out under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* (CCEYA). EarlyON Centres and before- and after-school programs for school-aged children will also be permitted to operate as of September 1, 2020.

All programs will be required to continue following strict health and safety measures while operating at their full licensed capacity, including but not limited to:

- grouping children and limiting interactions between groups;
- requiring medical masks and eye protection for all adults in the program and requiring non-medical or cloth masks for children in grades 4 and above;
- screening, limiting visitors, and recording attendance for contact tracing;
- developing COVID-19 health and safety protocols; and
- enhanced cleaning.

Operational Guidance

To support the full re-opening of child care and early years programs across the province, I am pleased to share a revised [*Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: Child Care Re-Opening*](#) document which provides new information related to the following key changes for September.

Return to Full Capacity

As of September 1, 2020, the requirement to limit maximum group size to 15 children will be removed and licensees will be permitted to operate at full capacity. Ratios and group sizes as set out in O. Reg. 137/15 must be maintained for all child care programs, including before- and after-school programs for school-aged children.

Parental Fees

As centres return to full capacity, licensees will once again be permitted to begin charging fees or deposits in order to hold a space. Parents must be given 14 days' notice to accept a placement for their child that will be available **on or after September 1, 2020**. Unless the parent declines the placement, it must remain available for the full 14-day period, and no fees or deposits can be charged during that period. Parents cannot be penalized for using the full 14-day period to decide whether to accept the placement.

For placements available on August 31, 2020 or earlier, licensees are still prohibited from charging fees or penalizing a parent who was not offered a placement or did not accept a placement for their child at a child care centre.

Student Placements

Students are now permitted to complete post-secondary educational placements at a child care centre or home child care location. Students are required to abide by all enhanced health and safety measures in place, including being assigned to a single group and limiting their interaction with other groups. Please note that the enhanced health and safety requirement prohibiting on-site volunteers at a child care program remains in place.

Enhanced Health and Safety

The definition of serious occurrence has been expanded to require serious occurrence reporting for suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the following individuals:

- a person who is ordinarily a resident of a home child care premises;
- a person who is regularly at a home child care premises; and
- a student at a home child care premises or child care centre.

Licensees of child care centres are also required to ensure that groups maintain a minimum physical distance from one another in accordance with the requirements set out in the updated *Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: Child Care Re-Opening* document.

EarlyON Child and Family Programs

As of September 1, 2020, the operation of EarlyON Child and Family Programs will be permitted so that operators can resume providing in-person programming. EarlyON programs will be required to operate with enhanced health and safety requirements.

Other Helpful Resources

I am also happy to share the following additional resources that reflect the updated health and safety measures to be in place for the fall and specific program guidance.

1. **Before- and After-School Programs:** The updated [2020-21 Before and After School Kindergarten to Grade 6 Policies and Guidelines](#) document includes COVID-19 operational guidance to support the re-opening of before- and after-school programs with enhanced health and safety procedures.
2. **EarlyON Programs:** The new [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: EarlyON Re-Opening](#) document provides direction to support partners with the re-opening of child and family programs.
3. **Pedagogy:** The recently-released [Building on How Does Learning Happen? Pedagogical approaches to re-opening licensed child care](#) shares ideas, reflective questions and lessons learned from emergency child care to help to support child care and early years settings as they work to provide healthy physical, social and emotional spaces for children and their families as they gradually re-open.

Child Care Funding Supports

To help protect staff and families, the Federal Government has announced additional funding for child care and early years as part of the Safe Restart Agreement. Safe Restart Funding (SRF) will support increased health and safety costs such as personal protective equipment (PPE), enhanced cleaning and additional staff requirements. Further details on the SRF will be provided.

In addition, the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) has been extended until December 19, 2020. Further details on the program extension will be released by the Federal government. Operators should continue to maximize available Federal programs through the COVID-19 Economic Response Plan (where applicable).

All resources have been developed in consultation with the Ministry of Health and through conversations with the sector. We continue to put the health and safety of Ontario's children, families, staff and providers at the forefront, and we are basing the updated guidance on advice from Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and the experts at the COVID-19 Command Table.

I encourage you to reach out to your assigned program advisor for more information and support with questions relating to re-opening your child care program.

Thank you,

Shannon Fuller