

TO: Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Service Administration Boards (CMSMs and DSSABs)

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

DATE: March 21, 2020

SUBJECT: Emergency Child Care

Allow me to start by thanking you for your partnership, flexibility and patience during this unprecedented time. We continue to put the health and safety of Ontario's children and families at the forefront and we are basing our decisions on advice from Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and the experts at the COVID-19 Command Table.

As you know, on March 17, 2020, the Premier of Ontario declared a state of emergency, and ordered the closure of all licensed child care centres and all facilities providing indoor recreational programs (including EarlyON Child and Family Centres) until March 31, 2020 unless the state of emergency is terminated earlier. Gatherings of over 50 people have also been ordered cancelled as part of this declaration. The direction from the Premier does not currently apply to home-based child care (licensed and unlicensed).

We recognize that these decisions will affect people's every day lives, but they are necessary so that we can slow the spread of COVID-19. We also recognize health care and other frontline workers must continue to go to work during this time and we must do what we can to support them with the care of their children. That is why, with your partnership, we will work with you to support the provision of licensed child care in specific locations for health care and other frontline workers, free of charge to parents.

Requirements and Criteria

Those eligible for emergency child care include health care and other frontline workers. Please see Appendix A for a complete list of eligible workers.

All child care settings established to support health care and other frontline workers must adhere to the following requirements:

- Only existing licensed settings may be used.
- All requirements set out in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* as well as

all current ministry policies and guidelines must be followed. The ministry will consider amending licenses as needed to support mixed age groupings.

- Your local Medical Officer of Health must be consulted and supportive of all settings established.
- All sites will be required to have a plan/protocol in place in the event that a child, parent or staff member at the site is exposed to COVID-19.
- No site can exceed 50 people per the province's declaration of emergency. Note that this number may change as the pandemic situation evolves.

Funding

The ministry will continue to fund CMSMs and DSSABs at the funding levels confirmed in the October 25, 2019 allocations memo and is directing CMSMs and DSSABs to continue to flow funding to child care centres and agencies.

A maximum daily rate will be set for the emergency child care in alignment with the maximum fee subsidy rate in your respective community. If extended hours or overnight care is being offered, we recognize that fees may be higher than the maximum fee subsidy rate. CMSMs and DSSABs are being asked to keep track of funding associated with managing and operating emergency child care sites, and will be asked to provide a rationale for any increased costs. The ministry will work with you at the conclusion of the state of emergency to consider any funding pressures.

The ministry does not intend to recover funding for early years and child care services as a result of measures implemented as part of COVID-19 preparedness, including complying with closure orders and will work with you on how this funding is considered in our child care recovery plan.

Next Steps

Please be advised that this is confidential information. No public communications are permitted with regards to this initiative at this time. The ministry will advise when public announcements can be made.

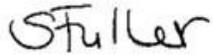
Attached you will find a short planning template that we are asking you, as service system managers responsible for planning and managing early years and child care services within your region, to fill in and return to the ministry by Wednesday, March 25, 2020. This plan will provide the ministry with the information necessary to support the opening and oversight of the emergency licensed child care settings within your communities during this time. We understand that your time is limited and as such, we have made every effort to keep the process short and easy.

Please note the following when filling in the template:

- The ministry understands that not every CMSM/DSSAB will require emergency care settings however, please take the time to indicate so on the planning template (i.e. check "yes" or "no" and provide a rationale if no emergency care settings are required).
- Only settings included in local plans reviewed by the ministry will be exempted from the order to close all licensed child care.

The ministry is committed to working closely with all of its partners to support children and families and to keep everyone safe. The ministry continues to depend on the authority and discretion that service system managers hold in order to make decisions that best support the early years and child care sector in their communities. Please continue to let us know how we can support your efforts during this challenging time.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S Fuller". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Shannon Fuller

Appendix A: Complete list of Eligible Workers
Appendix B: Planning Template - Emergency Child Care