



General Operating Program Policy

Policy

Legislative Reference: Ministry of Education: *Ontario Child Care and Family Support Program Service Management and Funding Guideline 2018*

Purpose

As defined by the Ministry of Education, the purpose of the General Operating Program (GOP) is to support the costs of operating licensed child care programs, in order to reduce wait times and fees for services, stabilize service levels and, where funds allow, improve access to high-quality, affordable early learning and child care services for children and their families.

Eligibility criteria

Child care operators are defined as being licensed by the Ministry of Education and includes: not-for-profit, municipally-operated and commercial child care centres, as well as licensed home child care agencies operating within Durham Region. Child care operators with a Service Agreement (SA) inclusive of a Fee Subsidy Service Description Schedule (SDS) with The Regional Municipality of Durham are eligible to receive GOP.

In keeping with the Ministry's priority to support not-for-profit programs, commercial operators in Durham are eligible for 50 per cent of the calculated entitlement. Not-for-profit operators are eligible for 100 per cent of the calculated entitlement.

Licensed operators must consistently meet the requirements of the SA and SDS with The Regional Municipality of Durham, in order to maintain eligibility for the GOP.

Licensed operators must meet their minimum wage and mandatory benefit costs, in order to qualify for GOP. Operators are required to submit staffing and program enrollment data at least annually as requested.

Distribution process

The five-year redistribution plan, established in 2015, to help mitigate the impact on operators experiencing reductions in funding levels is completed one year early as of January 2018.

Annual allocations based on enrollment in the system and available funding are paid to operators monthly.

The Children's Services Division employees use a calculation tool to provide consistency and higher points to younger children based on the required staffing complement.

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Child care operator allocations are calculated annually based on the size of the overall eligible system and the total funding available. Operators must provide the Children's Services Division GOP data by a required date. The Ministry of Education funding allocation is used to determine annual GOP expenditures.

If available funding allows, a portion of the overall funding will be put aside, in order to bring new licensed child care programs into the system mid-year; and to provide additional support as needed to address community needs (e.g. rural and/or francophone operators).

Allowable expenses

GOP may be used for ongoing costs, including staff wages and benefits (exclusive of minimum wage and mandatory benefits), lease and occupancy costs, utilities, administration, transportation for children, resources, nutrition, supplies and maintenance.

Operators must apply a portion of GOP to wages and benefits above the minimum wage requirement. Operators may use the following sample calculation to allocate a portion of GOP to wages and benefits and still meet the minimum wage and mandatory benefit requirements as set out in Ontario's *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, 2017*.

Sample scenario: An operator receives \$100,000 in GOP funding. The operator expends \$200,000 in salaries for the year. The operator must figure out how much GOP may be applied to salaries. The operator is not allowed to use GOP to meet the requirements of minimum wage or mandatory benefits. The operator may calculate the portion of GOP to apply to salaries using the following process:

1. Multiply \$14.00 per hour by the number of hours worked in the organization.
 - In this scenario it is \$14.00 per hour X 7,500 hours = \$105,000.
2. The operator allocates up to \$100,000 to salaries. \$0 is allocated to mandatory benefits.
3. The operator uses the remaining \$5,000 for other allowable expenses as outlined in this policy. Extended health benefits are an allowable expense.

Effective 2017, a minimum professional Registered Early Childhood Educator wage is set out in the GOP SDS. The rate is adjusted each year based on cost of living, etc.

Operators must not flow out GOP funding to staff in lump sums, as per Ministry guidelines.

Reporting

Operators must complete the GOP Data Collection forms and GOP Utilization/Reconciliation forms provided by the Children's Services Division. Operators must meet the requirements of the SA and the General Operating SDS.

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