

TO: Child Care Licensees

FROM: Phil Graham
Assistant Deputy Minister
Early Years and Child Care Division

DATE: January 8, 2021

SUBJECT: **Extension of Emergency Child Care**

I would like to extend our sincere appreciation for your on-going work to support children and families as the province deals with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The efforts of child care leaders, supervisors, Early Childhood Educators, program staff and others on your teams have been instrumental in helping to keep children safe and families supported during a very difficult time. The role you have played in particular with respect to the targeted emergency child care program and your ability to establish capacity for families in need within a very short timeframe and under very difficult circumstances demonstrates your commitment and leadership to supporting Ontario's families.

As announced, I am writing to confirm that with [elementary schools in southern Ontario continuing to operate remotely](#) for an additional two weeks, we will be extending the operation of the targeted emergency child care program for school-aged children in southern Ontario to January 22, 2021.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must continue to remain closed for the duration of the lockdown and may not offer indoor or outdoor in-person programming. EarlyON Centres are strongly encouraged to continue to offer virtual programming during this time.

All child care and early years programs will continue to operate, as per the direction outlined for the week of January 4 to 8 in the memo sent on December 21, 2020.

This means that all before and after school programs must remain closed where in-person instruction is not permitted in elementary schools. These programs may resume operation when elementary schools return to in-person learning, which is January 11 for northern Ontario and January 25 for southern Ontario.

Operators of before and after school programs that are required to close during this period will continue to be **prohibited from charging fees or otherwise penalizing parents** during this time period (e.g. parents must not lose their respective child care spaces).

The health and safety of children and child care staff and operators has been our primary concern throughout this COVID-19 outbreak. The strict health and safety measures we have in place have helped to keep child care settings safe and healthy places for our children to learn and thrive, and it is of the utmost importance that all child care settings continue to adhere to these measures.

Targeted Emergency Child Care

Targeted emergency child care (ECC) for school-aged children will continue to operate at no cost to eligible parents in southern Ontario. Those eligible for targeted emergency child care for school-aged children include health care, public safety and other frontline workers whose children are enrolled in school.

School-aged children enrolled in publicly funded or private schools are expected to participate in remote learning when in-person learning is not being delivered in schools. ECC staff/providers should work with parents to create the conditions that support the student's engagement in remote learning (e.g. provide a suitable space and time in the ECC program; support log-in to remote learning, if required). ECC staff/providers are not expected to support curricular outcomes for remote learning and should respond to children's needs for breaks from screen time, participation in active outdoor play and nutritional breaks etc.

All established ECC programs must continue to adhere to all requirements set out in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and all current ministry policies and guidelines, including operational guidance to safely operate during the COVID-19 outbreak. All health measures put in place by your local Public Health Unit must also be followed.

If you are located in southern Ontario and you are not currently operating an ECC program and are interested in doing so for the period of January 11 – 22, please contact your service system manager or First Nation.

The ministry is currently considering the eligibility criteria for targeted ECC for school aged children and will provide information as soon as possible should changes be made.

We recognize that the decision to continue remote learning and ECC for school-aged children will affect people's every day lives, but it is a necessary step in trying to slow the spread of COVID-19. Everyone has worked incredibly hard to keep our child care settings as safe and healthy as possible, and with your continued support we can do our part to keep everyone safe.

I encourage you to reach out to your assigned program advisor for more information and support with questions related to the impact of these changes on your child care program.

Thank you,

Phil Graham

- c. Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards