

Child care and early learning e-newsletter

September 13, 2021

Welcome to The Regional Municipality of Durham's Child Care and Early Learning updates e-newsletter. These e-newsletters provide licensed child care operators in Durham Region with updated information related to child care.

This edition includes the following topics:

Updates and Federal Election reminder

Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health Direction

Access to Rapid Antigen Tests

Ministry of Education Q & A's (as of Friday, September 9, 2021)

Update from the Durham Region Health Department

Updates

As the Children's Services Division continues to work through the Ministry of Education's mandatory immunization disclosure policy and rapid antigen testing requirements, we have been gathering information and clarifications from Durham Region Public Health and the Ministry of Education, and discussing protocols and processes with school boards. As always, the Children's Services Division is seeking ways to support all child care operators and providers in the Region.

We will continue to provide relevant information and clarifications as they are received. Please note that the information provided is point-in-time information and is subject to change. Be sure to always check original sources for current guidance.

Later this week, we will share a sample of the policy our organization has developed for Regional staff.

Thank you for continuing to provide child care for families in Durham Region.

FEDERAL ELECTION –

Remember to vote! Voting day is Monday September 20, 2021

Information about each federal political party's child care platform can be found [here](#).

Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health Direction

Attached to this email are the email communications and memos to Licensees sent September 2 and 4 from the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health message sent via the Ministry of Education on September 7.

These memos and directives were sent directly to all Licensees.

Access to Rapid Antigen Tests

The Ministry memo dated September 4, has a link to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce Rapid Screen initiative. Currently for Durham, the Clarington, Oshawa, and the Ajax/Pickering locations are participating in the Rapid Antigen testing program.

Please consult the Child Care Licensing System (CCLS) to determine the designated pick-up location(s) for your child care site(s).

Ministry of Education Q & A's (as of Friday, September 9, 2021)

Included are the frequently asked questions about the mandatory vaccine policy and testing requirements. The information below provided by the Ministry of Education.

- 1. Where a special needs resource consultant who is employed by a third-party agency provides services at a child care program, is the licensee able to accept an attestation from the employer which indicates that the individual is fully vaccinated, medically exempt or has completed the education session?**

Yes, licensees are able to accept an attestation from the special needs resource consultant's employer. Licensees will be required to keep a copy of the attestation on file for record keeping purposes.

Where the special needs resource consultant is not fully vaccinated, the licensee will need to comply with the rapid antigen testing requirements as set out in the licensee's vaccination disclosure policy.

- 2. When going online to order the test kits from the Chamber of Commerce it states, "Each company should assign a Screening Supervisor Designate, who will be the contact person. This person is responsible for administering the test and must be the one who picks up the kits."**

Do we need to have a staff member trained and overseeing this process (as there is concern about the feasibility/time involved in assigning a staff member to do

this) or can staff complete the tests independently either at home before they arrive at the centre and/or when they arrive at the centre prior to interacting with children and other staff members?

Anyone who is “trained” can perform a test. Rapid antigen tests can be performed by health professionals or any individual who is trained (including self-swabbing). Any individual is considered trained when they have consulted the appropriate training materials. A trained individual may complete tests independently either at home before they arrive at the centre and/or when they arrive at the centre prior to interacting with child and other staff.

- 3. The EYCCD Memo dated September 4, 2021 states that rapid antigen testing and “verification of negative test results” must be provided “at least two times per week” for individuals who are not fully vaccinated. The CMOH instructions dated September 7, 2021 indicate that testing must occur “at a minimum once every seven days.” Will licensees be in compliance if they follow the September 7, 2021 directive from the CMOH (i.e., once a week)?**

As per the memo dated September 4, 2021 from Phil Graham, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Early Years and Child Care Division, child care programs must require that individuals who are not fully vaccinated submit to regular rapid antigen testing. Individuals subject to testing requirements must provide verification of negative test results two times per week as an added measure to protect child care settings from the risk of COVID-19.

- 4. When a child care centre is co-located with a public school are the staff/volunteers and other individuals associated with the child care centre captured under the school board’s immunization disclosure policy or the licensed child care immunization disclosure policy?**

Licensed child care centres located in schools are NOT to be captured as part of a school board’s immunization disclosure policy as licensed child care programs are required to have their own policy in place. School boards may include authorized recreation providers or other recreation programs operating out of the school consistent with the school board’s immunization policy and direction from the Chief Medical Officer of Health. We encourage school boards/schools and child care centres to communicate at the local level and ensure both parties are aware of their respective obligations.

- 5. What happens if my organization does not have a policy in place for Sept 7?**

The Ministry asks that all school boards/licensees work to have a policy in place by this date. We have provided sample policies for your use and encourage your organization to make best efforts to meet this deadline.

6. I operate a private school and a licensed child care centre at the same location. Do I need two separate policies or can both programs be captured under the same policy?

Private schools that also operate licensed child care may choose to include both programs under the same policy, provided the policy meets all requirements for both private schools and licensed child care; however, statistical data must be reported separately for staff associated with the child care and staff associated with the private school. If there is an individual who works in both programs, please only count them once, where it is most logical to do so.

7. Child care is not captured under the provincial vaccine certificate policy. Can a child care's COVID-19 policy indicate that all individuals who enter the child care premises must be fully vaccinated? Can a child care program deny entry to people if they do not meet the requirements of the policy?

As private businesses, licensed child care programs are permitted to put policies in place that go above and beyond the requirements set out in the CCEYA and its regulations; however, licensees must ensure that these policies and protocols do not conflict with their obligations under the CCEYA and other legislation, including:

Parents of children receiving child care cannot be denied access to their child or to the child care premises based on their vaccine status

8. Do parents have to be allowed inside the child care premises?

The CCEYA sets out that licensees are not allowed to prevent a parent from having access to their child, or from entering the premises where their child is receiving child care, except in certain situations identified in the Act and regulations, such as when the licensee believes the parent does not have a right of legal access to the child. On the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, certain provisions were recently removed from the regulation, including the provision that allowed licensees to prevent parental access through their COVID-19 policy. It is important to note that licensees are still required to prevent parental access if the local public health unit provides direction to do so.

Where feasible, licensees are encouraged to continue to offer drop off and pick up procedures where parents do not enter the building. This supports physical distancing and limits the number of in-person interactions necessary when children are dropped off

or picked up. However, if the local public health unit has not provided direction to limit parental access and a parent wishes to enter the premises, the parent must be permitted to enter and cannot be denied access to their child(ren) or to the physical premises where child care is provided.

Licensees must ensure all requirements for individuals accessing the premises are met, including screening for symptoms of COVID-19, maintaining attendance records that include time in and time out, maintaining appropriate physical distancing and ensuring appropriate personal protective equipment is worn. If licensees wish to change their drop-off and pick-up procedures to allow parents to enter the premises and drop off directly to the child's assigned room/space, they may want to consider how they will limit the number of people in the child care centre at times of high traffic (e.g., typical morning drop off time).

Update from the Durham Region Health Department

Parents as visitors: It is the recommendation of Durham Region Health Department to continue to exclude parents from child care centres, similar to schools that consider parents as non-essential visitors and are discouraged by many school boards to enter school property at this time.