

Child care and early learning e-newsletter

September 1, 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:

COVID-19 immunization disclosure policy

Funding to support COVID-19-related closures and child absenteeism – Purchase of Service (POS) operators only

COVID-19 immunization disclosure policy

As announced on August 17 in the attached memo, the Ministry of Education will require all child care licensees to implement a COVID-19 immunization disclosure policy as an additional tool to advance health and safety, pending regulatory amendments.

Please note that the September 7 date for policy implementation is for the health care field. The implementation date for child care is to be announced.

Licensees will be required to have a COVID-19 immunization disclosure policy that requires licensed child care centre staff, home child care providers, home child care visitors, every person who is ordinarily a resident of the premises, volunteers, students on educational placements, resource consultants, and frequent visitors to do one of the following:

1. Provide proof of full vaccination against COVID-19; or
2. Provide a formal official documented medical reason for not being vaccinated against COVID-19; or
3. Participate in an educational program approved by the licensee.

Individuals listed above who are not immunized, including those with medical reasons, will be required to complete a COVID-19 test on a regular basis, in accordance with provincial testing guidance.

Licensees will be required to track and report on the implementation of the policy and aggregated and de-personalized statistical information to the ministry on a regular basis.

The ministry is working on a guide and sample policy to support licensees in implementing the proposed policy.

Further details about the proposed policy, testing strategy, and reporting expectations will be communicated in the coming weeks.

Funding to support COVID-19 related closures and child absenteeism – Purchase of Service (POS) operators only

COVID-19-related closures due to a Health Order or provincial mandate

Applications for funds to offset COVID-19-related ministry-mandated or Public Health-ordered closures occurring on or after April 1, 2021, will be made available via the Operator Portal next week.

Ministry-mandated closures include closures of school-age programs that occurred from April to June 2021. Health-ordered closures include any room or program closure that occurred due to a positive COVID-19-related outbreak that was ordered or supported by the Durham Region Health Department. Details are included in the instruction section of the application. This funding is for operators holding a purchase of service (POS) agreement with the Region of Durham Children's Services Division.

For any assistance with completing this application, please contact Jackie Adams at Jacqueline.adams@durham.ca.

COVID-19-related child absenteeism

The Children's Services Division is currently reviewing our budget to determine if we are able to support child care costs incurred from COVID-19-related absences. This funding would be available to operators who have a purchase of service (POS) agreement with the Region of Durham Children's Services Division.

For 2021, due to continued uncertainty, the Ministry of Education has allowed municipalities to use some flexibility within our current budget. There has been no additional funding provided by the province for child care services in 2021.

Our Division continues to closely monitor spending to meet our mandated obligations and to review if we have funds to support child COVID-19-related absences. A targeted

funding review is set to occur in September. Should funds be available, we are looking at ways to reduce the pressure on centres and parents due to the COVID-19 absence policies. Supporting children, families and our child care partners is our priority and we hope to move forward with additional supports in the fall.

As decisions for supports are made, we will communicate the processes to child care operators and families. It is advised that you track COVID-19-related absences as of September 1, if not already doing so. An application would be made available on the Operator Portal and eligible absences would be for the period beginning April 1, 2021. Funding for closures and absences prior to March 31, 2021, was provided in the spring via Safe Restart Funding (SRF) and Provincial Reinvestment allocations.

General – closure and absenteeism funding

To be eligible for closure and absenteeism funding, it is expected that parents will be provided with refunds, credited, or not charged fees for days their child was not in attendance for COVID-19-related reasons. Due to limited funding, the ability to refund or credit parents may be limited. Organizations would be expected to work with families to maximize support for absences as much as possible while ensuring operational needs are met.

Operators would be required to submit a reconciliation outlining spending according to the application categories, along with updated policies on fees charged during COVID-19-related absences. Further details on reconciliation will be provided.

Organizations are expected to maximize federal supports including the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), small business supports, and rent relief programs.

For auditing purposes, service providers must maintain financial documentation to verify spending outlined on their reconciliation submissions. This spending must also be reported in organizational audited financial statements. Additional documentation to support what has been reported in the SRF application or financial statements may be requested.

Questions related to funding allocations or contractual obligations can be directed to Julie Gaskin, Manager, Early Learning at Julie.gaskin@durham.ca.