

# Child care and early learning updates e-newsletter

**April 13, 2022**

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:

- **Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system update**
- **Funding applications for COVID-19 related absences – Purchase of Service (POS) operators only**
- **Wage Enhancement updates**
- **Durham Region Operating Criteria/Assessment for Quality Improvement visits returning**

## Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system update

The Regional Municipality of Durham, Children's Services Division is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for child care system planning in Durham. Our division is legislatively responsible for child care system planning including the implementation of the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system.

### **Current status:**

The Children's Services Division received the CWELCC guidelines from the Ministry of Education at the end of the day April 12. The application for enrolment of operators into the CWELCC system will be shared next week. We are working with the ministry to clarify the details of the guidelines in order to support a smooth transition. We will host an information session for licensees next week to discuss details and answer questions you may have. A Microsoft Teams invitation to this event will be sent to all head offices by email.

The provincial government announced that fee rebates may begin as early as May. Please note that funds to operators will be provided after enrollments are complete. This means service agreements must be signed before payments to operators can be made. Child care operators are encouraged to communicate this information to parents to manage expectations about fee refunds and rebates.

The Children's Services Division is committed to working swiftly with the province and existing child care licensees to establish a Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care system that supports and reflects the needs of our Durham Region families.

### **Head office email notifications:**

We communicate CWELCC updates and other information via the Early Learning (EL) updates e-newsletter to the head office email we have on file.

With more than 100 licensees and approximately 300 child care sites in our region, the EL updates e-newsletter is the most efficient method of updating everyone as the CWELCC plan rolls out. Please watch your email for these updates as any information we have will be provided here. Individual communications will be redirected back to the EL update e-newsletter as the most up-to-date source of information. The Early Learning updates e-newsletters are also posted on our website at [www.durham.ca/childrensservices](http://www.durham.ca/childrensservices) under [Operating a Child Care Centre](#).

It is the child care licensee's responsibility to ensure the CMSM and the Ministry of Education have the most up-to-date and accurate contact information on file.

If you require an update to the head office contact for these communications, you can reach out to the Early Learning program assistant for a 2022 Schedule A Information form. Please email [childcareoperators@durham.ca](mailto:childcareoperators@durham.ca) to request the form.

### **Funding applications for COVID-19 related absences – POS operators only**

For 2022, the Ministry of Education has allowed municipalities to use some flexibility within our current budget to maximize support provided to child care operators. There has been no additional funding provided by the province for child care services in 2022.

Our division continues to closely monitor committed spending to meet our mandated obligations, and determine ways to reduce the pressure on child care operators and families due to the COVID-19 absence policies. Supporting children, families and our child care partners is our priority as we move forward with additional funding supports for COVID-19 related absences.

For the **months of January and February 2022**, operators were eligible to apply to receive funding to offset children's absences due to COVID-19 related reasons. Payments to those who applied will be processed in the coming days.

Continuation of this funding for March has been confirmed **to a maximum of five days per child for the month**. Absenteeism funding beyond March will not be available.

The March application template for COVID-19 related absenteeism funding will be posted to the operator portal this week. March applications are due no later than April 22. Applications will be processed as we receive them to ensure allocations occur quickly.

## Eligibility and requirements for COVID-19 related absenteeism funding:

Absenteeism funding supports are available to operators with a Purchase of Service Agreement (POS) only.

To be eligible for COVID-19 related absenteeism funding, operators must not charge fees (or provide refunds/credits) for all children included in the application who are absent due to COVID-19 related reasons.

We encourage all operators to apply for this funding and to work with families to provide refunds/credits for COVID-19 related absences.

Please review the application information page for more details and requirements.

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

## Wage Enhancement/Home Child Care Enhancement Grant (WE/HCCEG)

The Wage Enhancement Reconciliation (WERS) review for 2021 funds is complete. Review results have been provided by email. For organizations that experienced a surplus of funds, repayment to the Region of Durham is required.

For 2022 Wage Enhancement (WE), allocations and monthly WE payments will remain at 2021 levels unless an updated WE application has been submitted and reviewed. For 2022, the ministry has established an hourly wage maximum of **\$28.59** per hour for wage enhancement and **\$285.90** per day for full HCCEG (**\$171.54** for partial HCCEG).

2022 WE schedules will be completed and uploaded to the operator portal in the coming weeks.

WE allocations can only be used on eligible WE spending. Any unspent (surplus) WE funds must be returned to the Region of Durham at year-end. We encourage operators to retain WE funds separately to ensure accurate spending and avoid hardship should repayment be required at year-end.

If you have questions about your WE or your WERS repayment, please email [wageenhancement@durham.ca](mailto:wageenhancement@durham.ca).

## Durham Region Operating Criteria/Assessment for Quality Improvement (DROC-AQI) visits returning

Spring has sprung and with the change of seasons, we are starting to return to our new normal. This will include the quality assurance advisors returning to regular assessments for quality improvement (AQI) in the late spring. As much as we loved supporting you virtually over the last two years, we are excited to be coming back to see you face to face!

We would like to remind you and your team of a few things before we return:

Your Quality Assurance team is here as a support, and that is always our number one priority. We encourage you to reach out for support and help to create quality programs such as program ideas and training opportunities. We want to hear from educators, home providers, supervisors, program managers, home visitors, and operators. All are welcome to reach out to their quality assurance advisor - we would like nothing better than to support you!

The return to Quality Assurance visits is nothing to be worried about. We are on the quality journey with you as a support and partner. To encourage a steady return, we are using 2022 as a transition year. This means that we will not require scores to be posted for 2022. We will work with you and use this year to determine your site's quality assessment new baseline. From there, we will support you to create a Quality Improvement plan. We are excited to come and see you! We want to hear about the amazing things you have been doing and the incredible things you look forward to doing in the year to come. The Durham Region Operating Criteria is the same quality tool you know. We are looking forward to helping you move forward and focus on what you do best – providing high-quality early learning and child care to children and families.

Regardless of whether you kept a firm connection to the Durham Region Operating Criteria or whether you feel you have gone back a few steps...we are here with you. It is onward and upward from here on in. See you soon!