

Child care and Early Learning Updates E-Newsletter

September 11, 2023

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:

- GROW Newsletter – Fall Edition
- 2023 Budget Updates
- Early Childhood Education Diploma Opportunity for Indigenous Learners
- Knowing Our Numbers Survey
- Recording Absent Days on the OCCMS Attendance
- Special Needs Resourcing – The Reset

GROW Newsletter – Fall Edition

The [Fall Grow Newsletter](#) is now available. Check out this edition of GROW for many exciting opportunities for educators and supervisors happening this fall. To receive an email notification when the next issue of GROW is available, select the "Receive email updates" button at the bottom of the [Resources for Child Care Professionals](#) page.

2023 Budget Updates

Licensees enrolled in CWELCC who have experienced changes in enrollment, staffing, and/or expenses and would like these changes reflected in their previously submitted 2023 operator budget may contact Lisa Bruce at Lisa.Bruce@durham.ca to schedule a budget consultation.

Early Childhood Education Diploma Opportunity for Indigenous Learners

Mothercraft College of Early Childhood Education has partnered with Native Child and Family Services Toronto to offer an accelerated, intensive 12-month Early Childhood Education Diploma. The online program starting in December 2023 offers free tuition, small adult class sizes, and access to culturally appropriate support. Spaces are limited. Visit www.mothercraft.ca for more details.

Knowing Our Numbers Survey

The [Knowing Our Numbers Survey](#) is available. If you are part of the early years workforce, if you work in licensed centre or home-based care, EarlyON centres, Aboriginal Head Start, full-day kindergarten, or special needs resourcing programs you are eligible to participate. Results from this province-wide survey will support policymakers to better understand and respond to the professional challenges the workforce faces.

This confidential, anonymous survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Participants will be eligible to enter a draw to win one of five prizes worth up to \$1,000. The survey closes Friday, September 29 at midnight. Click [here](#) for more information.

Recording Absent Days on the OCCMS Attendance

Children approved for Fee Subsidy have an allotted number of approved absent days per year. If all absent days are used, the parent is responsible for paying the service provider the full fee cost of care for any additional absent days used. Parents are informed of this policy when they sign the Terms and Conditions of Fee Subsidy.

Between February and November, a “Child Care Fee Subsidy Absent Allotment” letter will be sent to parents to advise them when their absent allotment has been reduced to 10 days or less. A second absence letter will be sent once the absent allotment has been exhausted. The service provider is copied on this notification.

The service provider must monitor absenteeism.

If there are special circumstances impacting the absent allotment, clients must initialize the appeal process, the outcome of which is determined by the Fee Subsidy Manager. Considerations will be given where high absenteeism is due to communicable diseases, epidemics, or children with special needs experiencing medical issues.

Absent allotment days must be recorded accurately on the OCCMS attendance to identify whether the child is sick, on vacation, or absent for other reasons on pre-approved enrolled days.

Codes to be used when a child is absent from the program:

S – sick – the child is ill and unable to attend child care for the day

V - vacation – the child is on vacation, these days are typically pre-planned

A – absent – the child is away for the day and no reason was provided by the parent

N - non-paid – the child was not expected to attend the day and no payment is expected

Accurate recording of absent days is important for the appeal process, to analyze trends and patterns and explain how the absent days were used and for what reason.

If you are unsure how to record a day on the attendance please reach out to your Accounting Clerk, prior to completing your attendance.

Special Needs Resourcing – The Reset

Context

Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) services provides support for the inclusion of children with special needs in child care and early years settings, and promotes inclusionary practices for staff working within the child care and early years system.

Under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, a “child with special needs” refers to a child whose cognitive, physical, social, emotional or communicative needs, or whose needs relating to overall development, are of such a nature that additional supports are required for the child. Each child with special needs who receives care must have an individualized support plan that describes how the child care centre will support the child to function and participate while in care, and any supports or aids, or adaptations or other modifications to the physical, social and learning environment, that are necessary to achieve optimal participation.

The Reset

The Children’s Services Division, as the service system manager for Durham Region, along with our SNR partner agencies, have been working together to review and align SNR services in order to:

- better support children with special needs and their families,
- build capacity within the early learning and child care system; and
- respond to provincial directives and local need.

This review and alignment brought us back to the SNR service provision model that was developed pre-pandemic and modernized by incorporating recent operator survey data. This ‘reset’ aims to ensure our SNR system remains stable and sustainable.

The Ontario Ministry of Education outlines inclusion, capacity building, integrating supports and the How Does Learning Happen? foundational conditions as principles of SNR service delivery. The Region of Durham partners with five SNR agencies to provide a holistic and complementary set of special needs resourcing services utilizing these principles. Provincial guidelines outline that SNR funding may be used for consultants and support staff, professional development opportunities and specialized equipment that promote inclusion in child care settings. The SNR agencies that support Durham provide a variety of enhanced supports to child care staff, which include:

- On-site coaching and mentorship.
- Training and education (general and targeted).
- Recommendations on improving inclusion, based on observation and analysis.
- Coaching on ways to implement recommendations.
- Resource materials.
- Specialized equipment.
- Funding for enhanced staffing.

What does this mean?

Results from the most recent SNR Child Care Operator Survey tells us that educators are seeking opportunity for increased coaching and mentoring, as well as training and education. The survey also highlights that funding for enhanced staffing is frequently accessed without the benefit of consultation or collaboration with the SNR agencies.

During the SNR reset, we will ensure funding for enhanced staffing is used to support daily classroom programming while educators work with SNR agencies to develop and implement an inclusion plan. Inclusion plans will ensure child care centre staff receive education and training that enhances their skill in providing inclusive programs now and in the future.

Inclusion plans are developed by educators, in collaboration with SNR staff and families, with the ultimate goal of increasing the ability of staff to better support inclusion once the SNR supports and funding for enhanced staffing has ended.

This shift will help child care organizations, SNR agencies and the Children's Services Division work together to build the capacity of child care professionals and cultivate a new generation of educators who are equipped to support children with special needs in their daily programs.

Going forward

The Children's Services Division will continue to work with the Ministry of Education to modernize Ontario's child care system and plan for an increasingly integrated early years system to meet the diverse and changing needs of children, their families and communities.

SNR agencies will work with child care centre staff to provide targeted and general room consultation, mentorship and support in specific areas of child development (i.e. speech and language), as required. Early Learning Inclusion Consultants will participate in the development of collaborative action plans and/or individualized support plans to promote an integration of SNR services.

Child care staff will engage collaboratively with their assigned Early Learning Inclusion Consultant and/or other SNR consultants when supporting children with special needs and ensure that each child that requires an individualized support plan has one in place.

Training and education

In alignment with the services and supports provided by the SNR agencies, the Children's Services Quality Assurance Advisors and Training Specialists also provide support to child care organizations. Training and education opportunities for all early learning organizations can be found on our [Resources for Child Care Professionals web page](#) or in our [GROW Newsletter](#).

Changes to enhanced staffing

Effective January 1, 2024, responsibility for approval and payment of enhanced staffing funding will shift to the Region of Durham, Children's Services Division and be integrated with current service agreements. Beginning in the fall of 2023, the Early Learning team will collect and review applications for enhanced staffing funding eligibility. Approved applications will receive eligible funding allocations directly from the Region of Durham following current payment processes.

Changes to the application will include the requirement for an Individualized Support Plan (ISP) and/or Collaborative Action Plan (CAP) that includes timelines and how funding will increase the success of implementation. Funding applications without an ISP or CAP may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Additional details including the application process and funding reconciliation will follow.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Emily Witlarge, Program Manager, at Emily.Witlarge@durham.ca.