

TO: Child Care Licensees

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

DATE: December 21, 2020

SUBJECT: **Child Care Impacts of Time-Limited Public Health Actions**

Thank you again for your partnership, flexibility and patience during this unprecedented time.

On Monday, December 21, the Premier of Ontario announced Safer at Home Restrictions for the next 28 days and ordered a range of time-limited public health actions to help curb the spread of COVID-19. One such action is, starting December 26, 2020, all elementary schools, publicly-funded and private, will be closed for in-person learning. Students enrolled in publicly-funded schools will move to virtual learning for the week of January 4 to January 8.

Impact on Child Care Operations

Recognizing the foundational nature of child care in providing a trusted and safe environment for children so that parents can work, the following is being implemented:

- **Child care will remain open** for the duration of these time-limited public health actions. This includes child care offered in licensed child care centres, in home-based settings and by authorized recreation and skill-building providers.
- During this period when elementary schools are operating virtually (i.e., from January 4 to 8, inclusive), licensed child care centres and authorized recreation and skill-building providers will be **prohibited from serving school-aged children***. All before and after school programs are being closed during this one-week period. These programs may resume operation when elementary schools return to in-person learning on January 11, 2021.
- To support the parents of school-aged children who may not be able to support their child's learning/care at home, the Ministry of Education will be implementing **a targeted emergency child care program** for school-aged children, at no cost to eligible parents, from January 4-8, 2021. Please see below for further details.

- Operators of before and after school programs that are required to close from January 4-8, 2021 **are prohibited from charging fees or otherwise penalizing parents** during this time period (e.g., parents must not lose their respective child care spaces).

* For clarity, there may be some children who despite being school-aged (i.e., Junior/Senior Kindergarten) are not registered in school and are currently enrolled in licensed child care. **Operators with Junior/Senior Kindergarten-aged children who are not registered in school but are instead registered in your centres as of December 21, 2020, may continue to serve these children throughout the duration of these time-limited public health actions, including the week when elementary schools have moved to a virtual learning model.**

Everyone in the child care sector has worked incredibly hard to put in place the strict health and safety measures required by the Ministry of Education, in consultation with the Ministry of Labour Training and Skills Development, the Ministry of Health and Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health. As you know, current health and safety measures include but are not limited to the following practices:

- Daily screening of everyone before entering the premises and keeping attendance records for contact tracing;
- Practicing the proper use of masks and eye protection, proper hand hygiene, and physical distancing; and
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of toys, equipment and the premises.

The health and safety of children and child care staff and operators has been our primary concern throughout this pandemic, and it shows. 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 for School-Aged Children

To support the parents of school-aged children who may not be able to support their child's learning/care at home during the week when elementary schools are operating virtually, the Ministry of Education will be implementing a targeted emergency child care (ECC) program for school-aged children, at no cost to eligible parents (see Appendix B for eligibility list).

In order to support the safe and healthy operation of ECC programs for school-aged children, 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 the enclosed Addendum to the operational guidance documents for [child care](#) and [before and after school programs](#) (see Appendix A). All health measures put in place by your local Public Health Unit must also be followed.

The ECC program will once again be implemented in close collaboration with service system managers and First Nations. Licensees may not operate an emergency child care program for school-aged children unless explicit approval is received from the Ministry of Education through a service system manager or First Nation.

If you are interested in operating a targeted emergency child care program for school-aged children from January 4-8, 2021, please contact your service system manager or First Nation. Thank you in advance for considering the needs of our health care and other front-line parents at this time.

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 relating to the impact of these changes on your child care program.

Thank you,

Phil Graham

Appendix A: Addendum to Child Care and Before-and After School
Program Guidance

Appendix B: Complete list of Eligible Workers

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