

**Memorandum To:** Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards  
District School Boards

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

**Date:** November 18, 2020

**Subject** Updates to Operational Guidance for EarlyON Child and Family Centre

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As partners in early years programs, we know that EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs and services have continued to provide vital support to children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many EarlyON partners have offered virtual outreach and connections during this challenging time, however, we know that it is also important for many children and families to continue having access to in-person resources and supports, where possible.

Further to the Memorandum dated August 13: *Operational Guidance for September for Child Care and Early Years Programs*, wherein the ministry detailed that EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs were permitted to re-open as of September 1, 2020, I am pleased to share a revised [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak: EarlyON Re-Opening document](#). This updated guidance reflects the latest advice from the Ministry of Health, Public Health Ontario and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development. This guidance has also been aligned with the [guidance for Child Care and Before and After School programs](#), as well as the provincial [Guide to reopening Ontario's schools](#) and the [COVID-19 guidance on school outbreak management](#), where appropriate.

These updates also reflect the latest advice from Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and the experts at the COVID-19 Command Table. These updates are meant to continue supporting partners with the safe operation of in-person EarlyON programs and services across the province during the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.

Key changes to the ministry's operational guidance include:

- Updated guidance on the health and safety protocols providers must have in place.

- Revised guidance around cleaning and disinfection of EarlyON Centres spaces to reflect updated practices in schools and to align across the early years and child care sector.
- Updated guidance around space/group capacity requirements and suggestions for grouping/cohorting of participants within an EarlyON setting to reflect updated advice.
- Revisions to the masking and eye protection requirements to clarify the difference in requirements between staff/providers, parents or other adults, children in grade 4 and above, and younger children (grade 3 and under).
- Addition of a new section on food and drink to provide guidance on the safe consumption of food and drink within the EarlyON setting.
- Revised guidance around screening practices including information on how to conduct safe in-person screens. Inclusion of the provincial screening tool is also provided.
- Addition of a new section on monitoring and responding to reports of COVID-19 to provide updated guidance on what to do if individual become symptomatic while in the EarlyON setting, including testing and reporting advice, to more closely align with guidance in schools and child care, clarifying that a medical note is not required to return to an EarlyON program after an individual has become ill, and how to treat family members/caregivers of someone who is symptomatic.
- Addition of a new section on outbreak management including specifying that an outbreak may be declared when two or more laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases in children, staff/provider or other visitors with an epidemiological link, where at least one case could have been infected in the EarlyON setting.
- Revised guidance on reporting to the Ministry of Education, including updated direction that only confirmed cases of COVID-19 need to be reported to the ministry.

The health, safety, and wellbeing of children, families, staff and providers across Ontario is our priority and we remain committed to working closely with all partners to ensure that high-quality programs and services continue to be delivered safely during this time. Thank you again for your continued support and collaboration as we work in partnership to maintain the delivery of EarlyON Child and Family programs across Ontario.

Thank you,

Phil Graham