

Ministry of Education
Early Years and Child Care Division

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Ministère de l'Éducation
Division de la petite enfance et de
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TO: Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Service Administration Boards (CMSMs and DSSABs)

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

DATE: January 8, 2021

SUBJECT: **Extension of Emergency Child Care**

I would like to extend our sincere appreciation for your ongoing work to support children and families as the province deals with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am especially appreciative of your recent efforts to establish targeted emergency child care programs in your communities within a very short timeframe and under difficult circumstances. Your leadership and commitment has been key to support children, families and Ontario's early years and child care sector.

As announced, I am writing to confirm that with [elementary schools in southern Ontario continuing to operate remotely](#) for an additional two weeks, we will be extending the operation of the targeted emergency child care program for school-aged children in southern Ontario to January 22, 2021.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must continue to remain closed for the duration of the lockdown and may not offer indoor or outdoor in-person programming. EarlyON Centres are strongly encouraged to continue to offer virtual programming during this time.

All child care programs will continue to operate as per the direction outlined for the week of January 4-8 in the memo sent on December 21, 2020. This means that all before and after school programs must remain closed where in-person instruction is not permitted in elementary schools. These programs may resume operation when elementary schools return to in-person learning, which is January 11, 2021, for northern Ontario and January 25, 2021, for southern Ontario. Operators of before and after school programs that are required to close during this period will continue to be **prohibited from charging fees or otherwise penalizing parents** during this time period (e.g. parents must not lose their respective child care spaces).

Targeted emergency child care (ECC) for school-aged children will continue to operate at no cost to eligible parents in southern Ontario. With this extension, we are anticipating an increase in demand, both from those parents who are currently eligible as well as if further additions are made to those that are eligible for the program.

As such, I am requesting that you carefully review your current ECC plans and work with operators to ensure they reflect the additional capacity needs that may be required resulting from this extension. Updated plans must be re-submitted to the ministry for approval at the following address: childcare_ontario@ontario.ca.

School-aged children enrolled in publicly funded or private schools are expected to participate in remote learning when in-person learning is not being delivered in schools. ECC staff/providers should work with parents to create the conditions that support students' engagement in remote learning (e.g. provide a suitable space and time in the ECC program; and support log-in to remote learning, if required). ECC staff/providers are not expected to support curricular outcomes for remote learning and should respond to children's needs for breaks from screen time, participation in active outdoor play and nutritional breaks etc.

Southern Ontario school boards are being requested to continue to make school buildings accessible to allow for the continued operation of both regular child care and emergency child care for school-aged children while in-person learning in elementary schools is unavailable. Please continue to work with your school board partners to ensure collaboration and the smooth operation of child care programs.

Funding

In regards to ECC for school-aged children, the Province will continue to provide funding support for ECC. CMSMs and DSSABs are being asked to keep track of funding associated with managing and operating ECC sites and will be asked to provide a rationale for the incurred costs. The ministry will work with you at the conclusion of the closure period to provide support for all reasonable expenses and consider any funding pressures.

The ministry will provide CMSMs/DSSABs with a reporting template to record costs related to emergency child care. It is also important to note that in 2021 operators should continue to maximize all supports available under the federal government's Canada Economic Response Plan.

The ministry will continue to provide monthly cash flow to CMSMs and DSSABs. We ask that CMSMs/DSSABs continue to flow funding to child care centres and home child care agencies.

Reporting

The ministry is asking that you continue to use the reporting template provided to you to report the number of children served through ECC for school-aged children. Reporting will be due on Tuesday and Thursday at noon to tpa.edu.EarlyLearning@ontario.ca.

Waitlist reporting will now be included in your reporting on the number of children served. When submitting your reports, please indicate in your email to the ministry whether you have a waitlist, and if possible, the number of children on the waitlist.

The ministry is currently considering the eligibility criteria for targeted ECC for school aged children and will provide information as soon as possible should changes be made.

We recognize that the decision to continue virtual learning and ECC for school-aged children will affect people's every day lives, but it is a necessary step in trying to slow the spread of COVID-19. 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.

The ministry continues to put the health and safety of Ontario's children and families at the forefront. We also continue to depend on the authority and discretion that service system managers hold in order to make decisions that best support the early years and child care sector in their communities. Please continue to let us know how we can support your efforts during this challenging time.

We sincerely thank-you for your leadership and commitment to children and families across this province.

Phil Graham