

May 1, 2020

Questions and Answers for Operators during COVID-19

1. How long will the child care centres be closed?

The Province of Ontario and the Chief Medical Officer of Health mandated that child care centres and EarlyON Child and Family Centres be closed on March 17, 2020 until March 31, 2020. The Province announced an extension for the closure of schools and child care. Schools are closed to children until May 31st, 2020. *Child Care and EarlyON programs are closed until May 19th, 2020 per the Declaration of Emergency which only allows closures to be extended for a one 14-day period at a time.*

2. How will Operators be funded during closures?

The City of Windsor, Children's Services has continued to flow all existing funding to child care operators with a commitment to reconcile funding afterwards. Effective May 1, 2020 an adjustment to the funding took place as follows:

Funding Changes:

- The Affordability Pilot Project, intended to increase affordability for families using child care with infant, toddler or preschool age children, ended March 31, 2020. This project was not extended beyond March 31st, as the closure of the licensed child care centres was ordered on March 17, 2020.
- There will be no Program Support funding at this time, as this funding is intended to lower ratios to support inclusivity of all children, while in child care.
- There will be no Fee Subsidy funding at this time, as this funding is provided to offset per diem costs for eligible families, while in child care.
- Wage Enhancement Grant (WEG) will continue to be flowed and will be reconciled on a quarterly basis. New templates and submission dates will be sent following this letter (see allowable expenses below and in MEDU guidelines).
- General Operating Grant (GOG) funding will continue to be flowed and will be reconciled (see allowable expenses below and in MEDU guidelines)
- Interim General Operating Grant (GOG) funding will be provided to bridge operational/overhead fixed costs (reported the same as GOG, with the same eligibility parameters).

Further details about the reconciliation process will be communicated as information becomes available. We would ask all operators to track any financial pressures as a result of the current situation and we will consider these at a later date.

3. Will the City continue to provide fee subsidy?

The City provided fee subsidy as part of March as there were children in attendance prior to the March 17th Provincial order to close child care and EarlyON CFC centres.

There will be no Fee Subsidy funding at this time, as this funding is provided to offset per diem costs for eligible families, while in child care.

4. Will a child's absence day entitlement be impacted by the closure?

Any absence days incurred that are a direct result of the mandated closure will not be counted towards a child's allowable absent days.

5. How should operators code the closure days in OCCMS?

Reporting in OCCMS for April billing and until further notice, please be advised that attendance is required to be submitted and reported for all licensed child care centres that are closed, as "N", non paid days. There will be no Fee Subsidy funding flowed for April and ongoing, while the licensed child care centres remain closed. Payments for Fee Subsidy may occur as a result of an adjustment of a previous month when the child care centres were operational.

6. When will Operators be able to complete the record of attendance in OCCMS?

Operators should be able to complete the record of attendance in OCCMS, on time, as it is a web-based program. IF you are located in a school board, you may be able to request to attend with their permission to access your computer. Please connect with your individual school board to request this and receive their explicit permission prior to attempting to enter a school.

7. Will subsidy be available to families that accessed it before the closure?

Families who accessed service with you prior to the closure, whether they were in receipt of Child Care Subsidy or not, should automatically resume the same service once operations have resumed. However, some families may not be able to return to their

former work /school schedules. *If this is the case, please remind them to contact their Child Care Subsidy Caseworker.*

8. Who is eligible for the Wage Enhancement Grant?

Only staff who are continuing to be paid by their centre are eligible for Wage Enhancement Grant. Wage Enhancement funding is to top up wages for staff that meet the eligibility requirements. Should these funds not be intended to be allocated to staff or used for something other than prescribed in the guidelines, they will be recovered. Funding for the Wage Enhancement Grant paid during the closure will be reconciled separately. New templates and submission dates will be sent out in May.

“Wage enhancement/HCCFG funding (including the supplemental grant) is an enveloped allocation. Wage enhancement/HCCFG funding must be directed solely to licensed child care staff and home visitors to increase wages and benefits, and to home child care providers to increase daily income. Increasing wages of eligible centre-based staff and home visitors by up to \$2 per hour plus 17.5 percent benefits based on their current wage rate for all hours worked in program, including overtime hours. Please note: the salary increase cannot exceed \$2 per hour in program and the wage cap of \$27.75 per hour. Licensees may exceed 17.5 per cent for benefits if the supplemental grant is used to support additional benefit expenses. (Please see MEDU guidelines for more information). All funds must be utilized prior to December 31, 2020.”

- 9. Will General Operating Grant (GOG) funding continue?** Yes GOG funding will continue to be flowed, and may be used for ongoing costs. This includes staff wages and benefits, lease and occupancy costs, utilities, administration, transportation for children, resources, nutrition, supplies, and maintenance. Ministry funding can only be used to offset salary costs over and above the operator's regulatory requirements for minimum wage and mandatory benefits. (Please see MEDU guidelines for more information). All funds must be utilized prior to December 31, 2020. Increased reporting on GOG is required in particular during centre closures. New templates and submission dates will be sent out in May.

10. Do child care centres qualify for the federally funded wage subsidy for private businesses?

The federal government has announced supports for businesses and individuals related to COVID-19, including the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) for businesses and the Canada Emergency Response Benefit for individuals.

For your ease of reference, below is a link to the federal government site that outlines all federal supports in Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-finance/economic-response-plan.html>

All child care centres will be required to apply for Federal COVID-19 Economic Response Plan funding to support staffing costs retroactively to March 15, 2020.

We encourage child care operators to research and optimize these federal supports for staff not working during the emergency closure period so that they are in a position to re-open following the conclusion of the declaration of emergency and ensure staff are supported throughout the outbreak.

11. Is there Emergency Child Care offered in our community?

The Province of Ontario has approved and is funding the City of Windsor, Children's Services Department's Emergency Child Care Plan. Emergency Child Care is being provided to support Emergency Support Workers that may work in the healthcare sector and other frontline workers, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, firefighters, police and correctional officers. *Licensed Child Care has been approved at a limited number of locations throughout Windsor-Essex County. Four licensed child care centres approved as part of this plan will began operations on Monday April 6, 2020. Child Care is being provided Free of Charge to those identified on the Province's List of Workers Eligible for Emergency Child Care. For more information, visit the City of Windsor website.*

We will continue to provide you with updates as they become available.

With thanks,

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