

Child care gets a boost to help support essential service workers during coronavirus crisis ^[1]

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EXCERPTED

The B.C. government is enhancing financial support for child care operators, after many raised concerns about staying open during the novel coronavirus pandemic.

On Friday, the province announced that child care providers that stay open will receive enhanced funding to keep operations going.

These centres are eligible to receive seven times their average monthly funding from government, which is expected to cover approximately 75 per cent of a group facility's average monthly operating expenses.

"As a former early childhood educator, I understand how difficult this time is for those working in the child care sector," Minister of Children and Family Development Katrine Conroy said.

"We have heard from many child care providers and ECEs who want to stay open to support families and essential service workers at this time. The measures we're announcing today will give them the support they deserve and the tools they need to continue safely caring for children."

Provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry has provided assurances child care facilities would remain open to accommodate the children of essential workers.

Dr. Henry is advising all parents who can care for their children at home to do so. She also recognized that while some centres may close, child care services can and must be provided in a safe manner for those families whose parents work in critical roles.

The Ministry of Health is still developing detailed guidelines to inform licensees, ECEs and licensing officers on implementing best practice, which will be circulated to child care providers shortly.

"I have received many messages from parents, providers and ECEs as this situation has evolved and this feedback has informed our way forward," Minister of State for Child Care Katrina Chen said.

"These measures will provide some financial support to child care providers who need to close until they can return to providing services for families and ensures parents don't face the economic burden of paying fees for services they aren't using."

Child care providers who close due to COVID-19 will also receive support to help ensure they are able to pay their fixed costs, like their rent, lease or mortgage during the temporary closure, so they can reopen when able.

These centres are eligible to receive two times their average monthly funding from government, which is expected to cover approximately 20 per cent of an average group facility's monthly operating expenses.

To support families who may be struggling with loss of employment and income, child care providers receiving these extraordinary payments must not charge parents fees for any periods of closure or for any vacant spaces while they are open, including when a parent chooses to temporarily withdraw a child due to COVID-19.

The province is also agreeing reserve spaces for families that were accessing their services before the pandemic, even if these families choose to temporarily withdraw, so families can be assured their spot will still be there once the pandemic passes.

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/04/child-care-gets-boost-help-support-essential-service-workers-during> [2] <https://globalnews.ca/news/6711484/child-care-gets-a-boost-amidst-essential-service-designation-by-b-c-government/> [3] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7860> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/funding>