

Emergency child care opens for Durham's health-care and front-line workers ^[1]

Some essential workers eligible for child care while they fight coronavirus

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EXCERPTED

DURHAM — Essential health-care and front-line workers will soon have access to emergency child care in Durham.

"We are proud to help support front-line workers by offering emergency child care during the COVID-19 pandemic," said Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou, Durham commissioner of social services, in a press release. "Our registered early childhood educators are stepping up to help give these essential workers piece of mind that their children are being cared for by professionals in a welcoming environment."

Licensed child care centres and elementary schools were ordered closed weeks ago by the Ontario government amid a COVID-19-related state of emergency in the province.

While some parents can work from home, some essential workers — including doctors, nurses, paramedics, firefighters and more — have been left struggling to find care for their young children while they continued to work.

The Region of Durham is working with local licensed child care operators to open emergency child care, free of charge, to eligible parents. These emergency child care centres will provide 24-hour care for children, from birth up to 12 years old. There will be space for up to 102 children at licensed child care centres and additional spots at licensed home child care agencies.

Durham's Social Services Department (Children's Services Division) has been working with the Durham Region Health Department and the provincial government to ensure the health and safety of children, parents and staff in emergency child care centres. Stringent policies will be mandated to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 — including screening, surveillance, enhanced sanitization practices, and protocols if children or staff have symptoms.

Not all workers are eligible for the emergency child care. An online survey has been launched to help families identify if they are eligible and to apply for a spot. Visit www.durham.ca for ^[3] more information.

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