

Manitoba provides update on child-care options for families during COVID-19 response ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Begin video at [19:45] ^[3]

EXCERPTS

The Manitoba government is expanding efforts to connect families with child care, ensuring critical services workers and their children can access child care if they absolutely need it during this difficult time, Families Minister Heather Stefanson announced today.

“Child-care centres and homes that are opening their doors to children and their families during this challenging time are truly heroes helping heroes,” said Stefanson. “We continue to call on child-care facilities and early childhood educators to be part of our provincewide response to COVID-19. Together, we can ensure children can continue to learn and grow in a safe, caring environment as their parents go to work helping those most affected by COVID-19.”

As of today, more than 1,900 children of health-care and other emergency services workers have been matched with an available space by staff within the Department of Families. These parents include health-care providers, emergency service providers, corrections workers, law enforcement workers, fire and paramedic workers, and direct social services and child protection workers. Over the next several days, staff will work to match parents remaining on the waitlist for child care before moving toward the new online system.

Beginning on Tuesday, April 14, all parents who work in critical services, as defined by the chief provincial public health officer, will be eligible to access child-care spaces available in licensed facilities. This includes support staff at hospitals and clinics, grocery store staff, farmers and farm workers, construction workers, bank or credit union employees. Starting Friday, parents working in these sectors who have been unable to make other child-care arrangements will be able to go to www.manitoba.ca/covid19 ^[4] to see which facilities have spaces and work directly with them to secure child care.

The minister encouraged licensed child-care facilities that want to help by re-opening or continuing to have spaces available to notify the province by submitting an updated facility status form through Manitoba Child Care Online at www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/index.html ^[5].

The full provincial operating grant, over \$30 million, continued to flow to all licensed child-care facilities on April 1. The Government of Canada has also confirmed that child-care centres are eligible for the federal emergency wage subsidy, which provides up to 75 per cent of employee wages for businesses and non-profits.

“Our government is providing child-care centres and home-based providers with the support they need to continue operating during this difficult time,” said Stefanson. “We will continue to do what we can to ensure that vital critical services workers can access child care so

that they continue working on the front lines of this pandemic.”

The Manitoba government also launched an \$18-million grant program to help early childhood educators begin independently offering child-care services in their homes or in the community, administered by the Winnipeg and Manitoba chambers of commerce. Early childhood educators can apply for the grant by filling out the Temporary Child Care Service Grant Form at <https://forms.gov.mb.ca/temporary-child-care-service-grant/> [6].

Manitoba continues to follow the advice of the chief provincial public health officer, who has advised that licensed child-care centres can continue to provide services to children as long as the care is limited to no more than 16 children per centre. Some larger centres with segregated rooms and separate external entrances are able to offer care for up to 16 children per room. Home-based child-care providers can also continue to operate with up to eight children.

Manitoba has distributed a COVID-19 practice guideline outlining the hygiene and other recommended measures for child care in Manitoba. In addition, Dr. Brent Roussin, the chief provincial public health officer, has provided a circular to all centres advising them of infection prevention protocols during this time and will be available to answer questions from child-care centres and providers next week. The province is also committed to providing child-care providers with additional supplies and equipment to help prevent the spread of the virus as recommended by public health officials, the minister noted.

Parents are reminded that children experiencing cold or flu symptoms, have travelled in the last 14 days or who have been exposed to others with a confirmed case of COVID-19 cannot be dropped off at a child-care facility and should remain at home.

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Links

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