

Yukon daycares can access further funding during pandemic ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The territory's early childhood learning centres and family day homes are getting more funding to keep services going during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Yukon government announced on April 6, that it will subsidize wages and certain building expenses through the Direct Operating Grant.

"Child care is an essential service for vulnerable children and families as well as the workers who must continue to do their jobs as we manage the spread of COVID-19," Pauline Frost, minister of health and social services, is quoted in the release. "Our government is committed to supporting child care operators to continue to provide services during this challenging time in a way that ensures the health and safety of both staff and children."

The government hopes this funding will be enough so daycares don't have to charge service fees to families.

According to the release, the grant will cover all eligible operational costs incurred from March to June. The eligible expenses will include rent, utilities, and cleaning. All working staff wages, along with the employers' contributions to Employment Insurance, the Canada Pension Plan and Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board will also be covered.

If a child care centre closes, the grant will cover only building costs.

Family day homes will see a 50 per cent increase in their grant funding from March to June. The funding is guaranteed whether spaces are full or not.

Grants are suspended for day homes that close.

"At this time, parents and guardians who typically rely on child care services are asked to keep their children at home if possible. Parents who are working from home should keep their children with them. This will make spaces available for people who provide essential services or who cannot work from home," the release said.

Rea Knight, an early childhood educator who wrote a letter in late March outlining concerns to the territorial government over daycares remaining open, said this new funding is just a shuffling of funds that were already budgeted.

She still has questions as both a parent and early childhood educator, she told the News on April 6, explaining she does not understand why early learning centres will be staying open while schools are closed to students.

"I do not feel satisfied with the answer that early learning centres are able to keep smaller numbers of children," Knight said. "If schools were to open exclusively for the children of essential service providers, how would this be different?"

She maintains her position on teaching social distancing to young kids, warning it could have detrimental affects to a child's developing sense of self, social and emotional skills, and healthy attachment.

She adds the effects could be long-lasting if this lasts until September.

"Six months in a young child's life is substantial," she said.

Asked about the difference in treatment between schools and daycares, a government spokesperson declined to answer questions but provided a link to a website outlining the department's reasoning.

"The Yukon's Chief Medical Officer and the Department of Education closed schools to limit the spread of COVID-19. The fewer people there are in close contact, the less chance of spread exists," the website reads.

Schools are likely to have more than 50 people inside when operating and education can continue from home in a "safe and effective way" according to the website.

Child care centres can remain open until the chief medical officer of health orders them closed, and are an essential service for Yukoners

who are essential workers without other childcare options.

The website also states that child care centres are free to close at any time.

Related link: Child care operators receive additional funding ^[3]

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Source URL (modified on 17 Sep 2020): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/04/yukon-daycares-can-access-further-funding-during-pandemic>

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