

Ontario continues to gradually and safely reopen child care for working parents ^[1]

Strict protocols and additional supports to keep kids safe and align child care with reopening of schools

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EXCERPTS

TORONTO — Today, the Ontario government announced its plan to allow licensed child care centres across Ontario to open at full capacity starting September 1, 2020. This decision was made in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the COVID-19 Command Table. As a result, parents will be able to return to work knowing their children are in a safe and supportive care setting.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres will also be permitted to reopen with in-person programming along with before- and after-school programs for school aged children which will be permitted to operate with standard ratios and maximum group size requirements. All of these programs will be subject to health and safety protocols in order to keep kids safe.

"Our government is gradually and safely supporting child care expansion to ensure moms and dads across the province can return to work with confidence," said Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education. "We will continue to ensure strict health and safety protocols remain in place, to keep our youngest learners safe."

The Ministry of Education will continue to work closely with municipal service managers, First Nations, and childcare operators to maximize capacity and access for families over the coming weeks. This includes revised health and safety operational guidance, additional funding parameters, and direction on providing notice to parents for placements. Licensees will continue to be required to maintain ratios and group sizes as set out under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA).

The government will continue to follow the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the COVID-19 Command Table to ensure the health and safety of the children and staff is never compromised as childcare capacity expands to 100%. The enhanced health and safety procedures that were put in place as part of our re-opening plan, will remain in place, and in some instances strengthened, to protect children, staff and families, including:

- Requiring all child care staff to wear masks at all times, effective September 1;
- Ensuring frequent cleaning of child care centres;
- Screening of children and staff before entering a childcare facility;
- Maintaining attendance records for rigorous contact tracing and coordination with local public health authorities;
- Ensuring frequent hand washing and proper hand hygiene for children and staff; and
- Establishing clear and rigid case management protocols in the event a staff member or child becomes ill, or tests positive for COVID-19.

"Our commitment to the health and safety of the children and staff, will never waver," continued Minister Lecce. "Child care and early years programs will operate with additional health and safety procedures in place upon fully reopening. And rest assured, if at any time the health and safety of the children is jeopardized, we will take action immediately."

Ontario will also provide additional funding, with support from the federal government through the Safe Restart Agreement, to help child care operators and EarlyON Child and Family Centres purchase cleaning supplies, PPE and support staffing needs related to new procedures.

Quick Facts

- Licensed child care centres will be permitted to operate at full capacity beginning September 1, 2020. More information about reopening protocols and guidelines will be shared in the coming days.
- Families whose children attended a licensed child care centre immediately before the emergency was declared must be given at least 14 days notice to accept a placement available on or after September 1, 2020.
- From March 22 – June 26, 2020, the government provided Emergency Child Care to health and front line workers free of charge. On April 10th, 2020, the government committed to protecting parents from financial hardship during COVID-19 by preventing

operators from charging fees while child care centres were closed. On May 9th, 2020 the government announced supports to licensed child care providers to ensure they remain sustainable and ready to open when parents return to work. On June 9, 2020, the government announced its plan to reopen child care centres across the province. On June 12, 2020, child care centres were permitted to reopen once strict health and safety measures had been met.

- Funding is being provided to support enhanced cleaning costs and health and safety requirements set out to support the reopening of child care centres, as well as the continued stabilization of the sector.
- The government of Ontario will supply face coverings to licensed child care settings and EarlyON locations.
- There are over 5,500 child care centres and 124 licensed home child care agencies across Ontario.
- Parents and guardians have until August 31, 2020 to apply for Support for Families. Under this program, parents or guardians of children between 0-12 years old, or up to 21 years old for children and youth with special needs, are eligible for a one-time payment, per child, to purchase educational materials to support learning at home.
- To date, over 1.6 million families have benefited from the Support for Families program.

Related link:

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Source URL (modified on 5 Aug 2020): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/20/08/ontario-continues-gradually-and-safely-reopen-child-care-working-0>

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