

Province allots \$10M in pandemic staffing support for child care, child welfare, disability services ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The provincial government has earmarked \$10 million in pandemic staffing support for child care, child welfare and disability services.

The Pandemic Staffing Support Benefit will be available to help organizations meet staffing challenges due to the pandemic, including overtime costs, replacement staff or paying for sick time.

Funds could also support ongoing staffing costs if public-health officials order an early learning and child-care facility or a specific cohort to close for a short-term isolation period in response to a case of COVID-19.

Families Minister Heather Stefanson said as COVID-19 has spread through the province, there has been a "significant spike" in cases among staff that serve children and Manitobans with disabilities.

There are currently 25 agencies funded through the province's community living disabilities service programs with active COVID-19 cases. This includes 34 program participants and 67 staff who are positive with the virus, Stefanson told a news conference Wednesday.

"This rate of spread in our disability-services sector is creating staffing challenges for many of our agencies," she said.

"Today, I want to assure vulnerable Manitobans and their families that our government is taking action to address these staffing challenges so that our citizens continue to receive quality care."

The \$10-million program is in place until March. Stefanson said it could be extended beyond that date. Application forms for the financial support are already available online, she said.

Non-profit Community Living disABILITY Services residential home providers, child and family services group home providers and child-care centres are able to apply for the benefit.

If needed, the first instalment will be provided up front, with subsequent payments based on an assessment of ongoing needs.

Based on provincial projections and the number of the front-line staff in each sector, about \$6 million will be allocated to the disability sector, \$3 million to child care and \$1 million to child and family services agencies.

The province has previously created a COVID-19 rapid response team, which includes eight staff from Manitoba Families, ready to respond to calls for support from any of the 100 agencies serving adults with disabilities throughout Manitoba.

Beginning today, agencies that need additional on-site support, guidance from public-health officials, or help with any other critical issues that might affect the care they provide to clients during the pandemic can call (toll-free) 1-866-906-0901. The team will staff the phone line around the clock, triage calls and help connect to whatever assistance is needed. Further details will be shared with the sector in the coming days.

Region: Manitoba ^[3]

Tags: investment ^[4]

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