

Memorandum

Subject: Requirements to reopen licensed child care centres in Niagara

Date: June 16, 2020

To: Licensed child care service providers

From: Darlene Edgar, Director of Children's Services, Community Services

On June 9, 2020, the provincial government announced that the licensed child care system may begin to reopen commencing Friday, June 12, 2020, as the province enters phase II of the provincial reopening plan. As well, the *Operational Guidance During COVID 19 Outbreak*, outlining the specific operating requirements for licensed child care under a global pandemic, was released by the Ministry of Education (MEDU).

Further to information shared during a teleconference hosted by Niagara Region Children's Services on June 12, 2020, in order to safely reopen operations, licensed child care service providers are required to adhere to physical distancing protocols, implement new policies and procedures, and enhanced health and safety measures.

On June 12, 2020, the MEDU announced regulatory changes to the CCEYA, in alignment with the *Operational Guidance During COVID 19 Outbreak*. Both the operational guidance and the regulatory changes are intended to guide planning by licensed child care service providers to reopen centres while supporting the health and safety of children, families and staff in a licensed child care setting during the global pandemic. It is important to note that the operational guidance document is in effect until the end of August, at which time, the MEDU will release new operational guidance in anticipation of the next phase of reopening of the licensed child care system.

As mandated by the provincial government, all licensed child care service providers are required to provide the MEDU with a completed attestation a minimum of two days prior to an anticipated opening date. Niagara Region Children's Services is to be copied (cc: jackie.galloway@niagararegion.ca) on the submission of the attestation to the MEDU. The attestation confirms that the service provider has developed and reviewed enhanced protocols with staff and visitors, and that new policies have been made available to parents.

Prior to submitting any attestation to the MEDU, Niagara Region Children's Services, as the local service system manager on behalf of the provincial government, must be advised of the intention to reopen and anticipated reopening date. As well, as per the service agreement with Niagara Region, Children's Services will be reviewing any policies or protocols developed setting out enhanced health and safety protocols in response to COVID 19. Therefore, a minimum of two days prior to submitting the attestation to the Ministry, all licensed child care service providers are required to provide a copy of any policies or protocols developed in response to COVID-19 for

review to kathryn.ballantyne@niagararegion.ca. Based on experience garnered through the operation of emergency child care since early April, Niagara Region Children's Services can further support licensed child care service providers by identifying any issues or concerns prior to reopening.

Lastly, licensed child care service providers must ensure access to child care spaces for prioritized families. As noted in the *Operational Guidance During COVID 19 Outbreak*, because of the limited number of child care spaces, the following prioritization has been set forth by the provincial government:

- Returning children served through emergency child care to their original placement and continuity of service for these families;
- Care for families where parents must return to work and that work outside of the home;
- Families with special circumstances that would benefit from children returning to care, such as children with special needs; and
- Other local circumstances.

Prior to accepting families who were in receipt of child care fee subsidy prior to the provincially mandated closure, licensed child care service providers must contact the Fee Subsidy Caseworker to confirm priority for space for the family looking for care.

Please contact myself or any member of the management team should you have any questions.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darlene Edgar RECE". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Darlene Edgar RECE

Director