

Ontario Helping Parents Return to Work

Province Reopening Child Care with Strict Protocols to Keep Kids and Staff Safe

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TORONTO — Today, the Ontario government announced its plan to reopen child care centres across the province to support the next stage of the province's reopening framework. Developed in consultation with Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health and medical leaders at The Hospital for Sick Children, the plan will require child care operators to follow strict health protocols to ensure the safety of child care staff and children.

Details of the plan were provided today by Premier Doug Ford, Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, and Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education.

"As we prepare to reopen more businesses and services, it is critical that we ensure supports are in place so people can return to work knowing their children will be cared for in a safe and healthy environment," said Premier Ford. "Our child care plan sets out strict protocols that must be followed to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We have made great progress to contain the virus, but we must be mindful that there is still a public health risk."

As the province continues to implement its *Framework for Reopening the Province*, child care centres and home care providers across Ontario will be able to reopen with strict safety and operational requirements in place, similar to the safety guidelines required for emergency child care centres. Centres will be required to adopt specific rules, including:

- Cohorting — putting children and staff in groups of 10 or less day over day;
- COVID-19 response plan — all child care settings will be required to have a plan in place if a child, parent or staff member/provider is exposed to COVID-19;
- Screening — all staff and children must be screened prior to entry to the child care setting. Anyone feeling unwell must stay home;
- Daily attendance records — child care settings must keep daily records of all attendees in order to support contact tracing;
- Cleaning — child care settings must be thoroughly cleaned before opening and frequently thereafter;
- No visitors — only essential visitors are permitted entry into the child care setting;
- Implementing drop-off and pick-up protocols in a way that facilitates physical distancing.

Effectively immediately, staff can re-enter child care facilities and begin preparation for reopening. When these operators have met all the strict and stringent guidelines for reopening, they will be permitted to reopen.

"We know the integral role child care plays in the restart of Ontario's economy, especially when it comes to enabling parents to return to work," said Minister Lecce. "But parents must have confidence in the child care system at this very difficult time. By imposing specific public health requirements, we are signaling our firm commitment to keeping our children, staff, and our families safe."

The Ministry of Education has been working with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development to develop these health and safety protocols. They will enable the safe reopening of child care centres across the province and enhance safety through effective contact tracing. This plan imposes strict requirements on operators, including mandatory training and reporting and support from the local medical officer of health before reopening.

"Having children safely re-engage in learning, play and social activities with other children is of great benefit to their mental, emotional and behavioural development," says Dr. Ronald Cohn, President and CEO of The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids). "Children thrive when they are able to interact with other children. The reopening of child care centres is an important step forward for allowing children to be with their peers and enjoy activities outside of their home environment."

Based on the advice of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and with strict health and safety protocols in place, the government is now enabling summer day camp programs across the province to reopen this summer. [Strict health and safety guidelines](#) were developed by the Ministry of Health in partnership with public health, the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, and municipalities, and distributed to local public health teams earlier this month. At this time, overnight camps are not permitted to operate in the summer of 2020.

QUICK FACTS

- As the province continues to move forward with its reopening plan, emergency child care will wind down effective June 26, 2020 as all licensed child care centres are permitted to open province-wide. Families served through emergency child care will be supported by service system managers to return to their previous arrangement or finding new space during the transition back to regular childcare.
- As child care reopens across the province, if families are not offered access to their previous child care arrangement, operators will continue to be prevented from charging fees for these spaces.

- Ontario is also helping parents pay for the extra costs associated with school and child care closures during the COVID-19 outbreak with the [Support for Families](#) program, by providing a one-time payment of \$200 per child up to 12 years of age, and \$250 for those with special needs up to 21 years of age, including children enrolled in private schools.
- To date, over 1.5 million families have benefited from the Support for Families program.
- The existing child care funding formula will be leveraged to support enhanced cleaning costs and the health and safety requirements set out to support the reopening of child care centres, as well as the continued stabilization of the sector.
- As required by legislation, the Ministry will be seeking input from families and the sector on the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) over the summer, which will inform child care planning for the province.
- There are over 5,500 child care centres and 124 licensed home child care agencies across Ontario.

LEARN MORE

- [Information on Child Care and the Early Years](#)
- [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak — Child Care Re-Opening](#)
- [Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19 For Employers of Child Care Centres](#)
- [Support for Families](#)
- [Visit Ontario's website to learn more about how the province continues to protect Ontarians from COVID-19.](#)

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