



# INFORMATION UPDATE

<b>TO:</b>	Mayor and Members City Council
<b>DATE:</b>	August 31, 2020
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Child Care Updates (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Paul Johnson General Manager Healthy and Safe Communities Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

Effective September 1, 2020, all licensed child care centres may return to full capacity and licensed before and after school programs are permitted to reopen. Child care centres are required to continue to implement enhanced health and safety measures including additional cleaning, the use of personal protection equipment (PPE), and staff training.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, some parents and caregivers are opting to not send their child back to child care at this time. In other cases, parents and caregivers are opting not to send their child back to school in-person and are looking to their child care provider to continue to offer full day child care for Kindergarten or school-age children.

The City has a policy in place that children that are eligible to attend Kindergarten are not eligible to receive a full day child care fee subsidy. This policy was put in place in 2016 as part of the revised child care funding formula and remains in effective today. This policy remains in effective for a number of reasons:

- The City currently has a waitlist for fee subsidy and is not funded at a level that would permit us to expand eligibility for fee subsidy.
- Child care centres are licensed for specific age groups and may not have developmentally appropriate toys and equipment for children of an older age.
- Permitting Kindergarten children to remain in full day child care would create a bottleneck within the system as younger children age up into those preschool spaces.

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OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

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In response to the school boards implementing staggered start dates for the 2020/21 school year, the City has approved an extension of full day fee subsidy for Kindergarten age children until school resumes. Full day fee subsidies will not be provided after that date.

Some families are also opting to home school or enrol their child in online learning through the school board. These children are no longer eligible for before and after school care since they are not attending school in person. Eligible families in receipt of fee subsidy will be placed on a break in service for the 2020/21 school year and will have the option to receive fee subsidy if their child returns to school at any point during this school year.

As of September 1, 2020, the Ministry of Education has also lifted the requirement for child care operators to hold a child's space if the family chooses not to return to child care. Operators must provide 14 days notice to the family before offering a declined placement to another family.

The City of Hamilton does not have the authority to direct child care operators how they will manage their waitlist for families that choose to return to child care at a later date. The City also does not have the authority to create a policy that prohibits or requires child care operators to allow families to pay to hold their child's space. To support operators in creating these policies, the City is convening the Equity and Engagement Advisory Group (EEAG) to develop community recommendations. The EEAG is comprised of City staff, early years community partners, and parents. Their role is to provide recommendations and advice to the broader early years community with respect to equity and engagement of families. These recommendations will be developed and provided to child care operators in mid-September.

As of September 1, 2020, the Ministry of Education has also lifted the requirement for child care operators to maintain parental fees at pre-COVID-19 levels. Child care operators are responsible for setting their parental fees and the City does not have the authority to mandate fee changes. Children's Services and Neighbourhood Development staff continue to work with child care operators to support affordability for families wherever possible.

The City supports parental choice related to decisions about returning to child care and returning to school. However, the child care system is not positioned, financially and otherwise, to fill gaps within the education system. We will continue to work with child care operators to communicate these decisions to families.

Should you require any further information please contact Grace Mater, Director, Children's Services and Neighbourhood Development at (905) 546-2424 ext. 4979 or by email at [grace.mater@hamilton.ca](mailto:grace.mater@hamilton.ca).

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**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

None