

Questions & Answers Intended for Dufferin County Licensed Child Care Providers Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

May 6, 2020 Disclaimer: *These Q&As reflect information and guidelines from the County of Dufferin for licensed child care providers based on the latest information in respect to the emergence of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) to date provided by the Government of Canada, Government of Ontario and Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health. The County of Dufferin continues to monitor the evolving situation and will update these Q&As on an ongoing basis as needed.*

If you have any questions not answered in these Q&As, please email Lori-Jane Del Medico at ldelmedico@dufferincounty.ca

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BACKGROUND

1. Are all licensed child care centres in Dufferin being directed to close? Is this mandatory?

On March 17, 2020, based on advice from Dr. David Williams, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, the Government of Ontario declared a state of emergency due to the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) under the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, 1990*. As a result, all licensed child care centres were legally required to close immediately. As of May 6, 2020, the state of emergency orders have been extended further, and centres are legally required to remain closed until May 19, 2020. This includes the closure of all:

- Licensed child care centres;
- Other facilities providing camps, before-and-after school programs and indoor recreation programs.

2. Who has the authority to close down a child care program?

In Ontario, under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, 1990*, the Chief Medical Officer of Health, and Board of Health (e.g. WDG Public Health) has the authority to issue an order to close premises such as licensed child care centres to ensure the control of infectious diseases.

According to Ontario Regulation 137/15 under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, all licensees are required to adhere to any direction issued by the Ontario Medical Health Officer on any matter that may affect the health or well-being of a child receiving licensed child care services.

CENTRE BASED CHILD CARE

3. What closure date do I follow? Until what date should my centre remain closed?

At this time, all providers are required to be closed until **May 19, 2020**. The County will monitor any new announcements made regarding closure period dates and share new information with all child care providers as this information becomes available. Providers are to remain closed until further notice.

4. Will Providers have to comply with any re-admission protocols before re-opening once the closure period ends?

The Province or WDG Public Health may introduce protocols or measures for Providers to take before re-opening their centres after the closure period. The County will share any direction if this is the case.

LICENSED HOME CHILD CARE (LHCC)

5. Are licensed home child care agencies included as part of the closure? What is the direction for LHCC during the closure period?

No. The County of Dufferin and Providers have received official notice from the Ministry of Education that the closure period does **not** apply to licensed home child care.

During the closure period:

- it is up to individual LHCC agencies to decide as to whether they will continue to operate; and
- as independent contractors, home child care providers can decide if they will continue to provide services to families.

Home child care agencies and home child care providers that decide to remain open during the closure period must adhere to all WDG Public Health Guidelines and Advisories updated on the County's website and/or communicated by email.

6. Will LHCC agencies continue to receive LHCC Base Funding during the closure period?

Yes. Base Funding, for licensed home child care will continue as regularly scheduled during the closure period. Any Base Funding not provided to providers/staff will be recovered by the County through Reconciliation.

7. Are LHCC agencies able to continue charging LHCC providers agency fees in the event that families choose to not send their children to their licensed home child care provider due to COVID-19?

It is up to LHCC agencies as to whether they will charge their providers agency fees during the closure period.

PARENT FEES

8. Are Providers able to charge fees during the closure period?

The Government of Ontario and Ministry of Education have mandated that child care providers are prohibited from charging parent fees during the closure period as of April 9, 2020.

9. Will Service Providers be compensated while not collecting parent fees during the closure period?

The County of Dufferin is exploring what funding supports are available to Providers during the closure period. The Ministry of Education is working alongside Provincial and Federal governments to come up with a support plan for the child care sector.

FEE SUBSIDY

10. Will the County's payment for fee subsidy continue during the closure period?

Fee Subsidy is not being flowed to providers at this time. This will be revisited on a monthly basis. As of April 9, as per provincial order, providers are not allowed to charge parents fees during the COVID-19 duration when child care services are not available, thus Fee Subsidy is not applicable.

FUNDING SUPPORTS

11. Will the Wage Enhancement Grant/Home Child Care Enhancement Grant (WEG/HCCEG) and General Operating Grant (GOG) be continued through the closure?

The Ministry has confirmed that it will continue to flow child care WEG/HCCEG and GOG funding to the County of Dufferin for the month of April. At this time, the County of Dufferin will continue to provide monthly funding allocations to providers for April, and in the coming months, to support long term viability. Please note that this decision to continue monthly funding will be revisited on a monthly basis contingent on the continuation of child care funding from the Ministry of Education. The County will continue to advise providers of the status of child care funding.

12. Will child care providers continue to receive the same amount of GOG and WEG/HCCEG funding through the closure?

The allocations for GOG and WEG/HCCEG for April will remain the same as previous monthly allocations in 2020. At this time, the monthly WEG/HCCEG amounts will remain unchanged beyond April. It is possible that GOG amounts may be adjusted going forward beyond April based on a new formula that the County is working on, and reconciliations may be applied.

13. How should providers be using GOG funding during the closure?

During this mandated closure period only, the County is implementing revised parameters and directing child care providers to use **100% of their GOG funding** for approved operating costs and/or to help compensate for the lack of revenue from fees (subsidy and full fee paying parents) during the closure going forward as of April. The **only exception** is that GOG may continue as direct "GOG" payments added to staff wages (separate payment on their paystub as was done pre-COVID-19) only for those staff that continue to be on regular payroll. GOG should not be provided as direct "GOG" payments to staff who are not working and/or not being paid regular salary during this time (see below).

****Approved uses** of the GOG during the closure include child care provider rent/mortgage for the closure months, utilities (electricity, heat, water, business internet, business phone), site insurance, property tax, services of an accountant to prepare any paperwork related to GOG 2019 reconciliation, and routine office supplies needed during the closure such as printer ink. **Any other uses require approval** in writing from

the Manager of Children's Services. Proof of expenditures/receipts may be required upon reconciliation of 2020 spending.

In addition, if a provider chooses to "top up" monies received by staff from government funding sources (eg. CERB, CEWS) using the provider's own resources, GOG funding may be added to this as part of this top-up.

The GOG is not to be used to cover any expenses from before the closure, such as office supplies purchased in early March.

14. How should providers be distributing WEG funding to staff during the closure?

The WEG should continue as payouts to staff based on their eligible number of hours worked (\$2 per hour or partial payment) as per the provider's application. The "hours worked" should be based on their normal hours of work during the applicable timeframe of the payout. Providers should continue to use the benefits portion of the WEG to pay for mandatory employer paid benefits applicable to the WEG amounts distributed to staff.

15. What should be the timing of WEG payouts to staff and will these payouts impact the eligibility of staff to receive income from the government during the closure?

As per direction from the Ministry, the County advises providers to continue to pay out the WEG to staff on a regular, ongoing basis as per pre-COVID-19 practices. The Provincial Government has recently (April 15, 2020) changed the guidelines for receipt of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) assistance to allow up to \$1,000 of income for eligible applicants during each 4-week eligibility period. Providers are encouraged to investigate any potential impact of income from the WEG (and GOG if used towards a provider top-up) on any other government financial assistance or income sources that may be applicable to their staff.

16. Will the County provide additional funding to providers impacted by the closure?

The County is currently exploring what supports are available for Providers and families in Dufferin.

Providers are strongly encouraged to contact their insurance provider to understand if they have coverage for either Business Interruption Insurance and/or Business Continuity under their policy to compensate for revenue lost during the closure period.

Important: To ensure prudent use of tax payer dollars, the County will consider multiple factors (e.g. parent fees charged, staff payments, insurance etc.) during the closure period to inform decisions regarding Fee Subsidy recovery and provider eligibility for any funding supports pertaining to the closure.

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (EI)

17. If staff are laid-off during the closure period, will they be eligible to receive Employment Insurance (EI)?

According to the Government of Canada, staff may be eligible for EI benefits due to a lay-off. The Government of Canada has also implemented the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) for those individuals who do not meet regular EI criteria. Details about eligibility for the CERB can be found at the following link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/benefits/apply-for-cerb-with-cra.html>

Please be aware, that anyone who applies for CERB should receive the benefit. The CRA will verify eligibility at a later date. Anyone applying for the CERB must ensure they have read and understand the eligibility criteria, in order to avoid repayment of the benefit.

18. Am I able to top-up my staff's EI benefit?

Providers can provide top-up pay to their staff using their own resources and/or GOG/WEG Funding based on regular hours worked to bridge the gap between an employee's EI allotment and their regular salary amount. In order to do so, Providers **must register** through the Service Canada's Supplemental Unemployment Benefit (SUB) Program. For more information, refer to Service Canada's Supplemental Unemployment Benefit Program Guide or contact Service Canada.

REPORTING

19. What reporting requirements remain in place during the closure?

The County is currently in the process of assessing reporting requirement deadlines. We will provide an update soon.

i-CAN SPECIAL NEEDS RESOURCING SUPPORTS

20. What supports are available?

Providers may contact Resource Consultants via phone or email during the closure period. In-person visits to child care programs and face-to-face professional learning sessions through i-CAN have been suspended.

Special Needs Resourcing related inquiries can be sent via email to Dana Ness at dana.ness@dcafs.on.ca

EMERGENCY CHILD CARE

21. Where is Emergency Child Care being offered in Dufferin County?

Emergency Child Care is currently being offered at two locations: YMCA – Credit Meadows in Orangeville and YMCA – Centennial Hylands in Shelburne.

22. Who is eligible for Emergency Child Care in Dufferin County?

Anyone who is living or working in Dufferin County, who has exhausted all other child care options, where both parents/guardians (or a sole parent) are considered an eligible worker, as described in the Government of Ontario's list of Eligible Workers.

This list can be found at the following link:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/child-care-health-care-and-frontline-staff#section-1>

SUPPORTS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

The following information regarding supports for small business has been taken from the Canada Economic Response Plan. There are more supports available for small businesses. The following are some that we thought would be most applicable for our child care providers in Dufferin County.

23. What is the Canada Emergency Commercial Rent Assistance (CECRA) benefit?

The CECRA benefit is in the form of a forgivable loan to commercial property owners, and would cover 50% of three monthly rent payments that are payable by eligible small businesses facing financial hardship in April through June. The property owner must agree to lower rent by 75% under a rent forgiveness agreement to the small business (this leaves the small business to pay 25%, the property owner 25% and the loan to cover 50%). The agreement would include a clause that the tenant cannot be evicted while the agreement is in place.

The following are guidelines for eligibility:

- Monthly rent must be below \$50 000
- The business must have ceased operations
- The business must have a minimum 70% drop in pre-COVID revenues

CECRA should be operational by mid-May. More information about CECRA can be found here:

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/finance-and-investing/covid19-cecra-small-business>

24. What is the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS)

Eligible employers can apply for the CEWS, a government subsidy providing 75% of employee wages for up to 12 weeks. This subsidy is retroactive from March 16 to June 6, 2020. This subsidy has been put in place to help small businesses re-hire employees who were previously laid off due to COVID-19, help prevent future job losses, and better position businesses to reopen when permitted to do so.

Child care providers would typically be considered eligible employers, provided that certain revenue reductions apply over three periods.

Eligibility may differ from one provider to another, depending on the date at which parent fees were no longer being collected and the amount of funding received through the County of Dufferin for GOG/WEG/Child Care Fee subsidy.

For more information and to apply, please visit the following link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/subsidy/emergency-wage-subsidy.html>

25. What is the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA)?

The CEBA will provide interest-free loans of up to \$40,000 to small businesses and not-for-profits, to help cover their operating costs during a period where their revenues have been temporarily reduced.

To qualify, these organizations will need to demonstrate they paid between \$20,000 to \$1.5 million in total payroll in 2019.

Business owners can apply for CEBA through their banks and credit unions.

For more information please visit the following link: <https://ceba-cuec.ca/>

COUNTY OF DUFFERIN UPDATES

26. Have changes been made to staffing in the Children's Services Division at the County?

Yes. While the Ministry of Education is mandating the continuation of EarlyON services, we have reduced the staffing compliment from 12 staff to 3 staff. Programming is being offered by phone, online, and virtually. A number of staff have been redeployed to Dufferin Oaks Long Term Care and a number of staff are on Declared Emergency Leaves. Jean Hamlyn staff have also been either redeployed or have accepted a lay off. One of our two Children's Services Supervisors has been redeployed to support Human Resources, and the remaining Child Care Administrative staff are supporting Emergency Child Care, as well as Covid-19 data and reporting.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Here are a handful of links to multiple government/public health sites with information, resources, and updates regarding COVID-19.

[Government of Canada - COVID-19 Information and Updates](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

[Government of Ontario COVID-19 Information](https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus?_ga=2.19724280.1198686683.1580077106-154659705.1580077106)

https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus?_ga=2.19724280.1198686683.1580077106-154659705.1580077106

[County of Dufferin COVID-19 Updates](https://www.dufferincounty.ca/covid-19)

<https://www.dufferincounty.ca/covid-19>

[Public Health Ontario COVID-19 Public Resources](https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/public-resources)

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/diseases-and-conditions/infectious-diseases/respiratory-diseases/novel-coronavirus/public-resources>

[WDG Public Health COVID-19 Information for the Public](https://www.wdgpUBLICHEALTH.ca/your-health/covid-19-information-public#Daycaresschools)

<https://www.wdgpUBLICHEALTH.ca/your-health/covid-19-information-public#Daycaresschools>

[Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan](https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>