



	REPORT No.: 2020-47
MEETING DATE: OCTOBER 15, 2020	DATE PREPARED: SEPTEMBER 28, 2020
SUBJECT: RECOVERY OF CHILD CARE OPERATIONS	

RECOMMENDATION

For information only.

REPORT SUMMARY

To provide The District of Thunder Bay Social Services Administration Board (TBDSSAB or the Board) with an overview of the recovery of child care operations from Emergency Child Care ending to full reopening.

BACKGROUND

On June 12, 2020, the Premier of Ontario announced the ending of emergency child care as of June 26, 2020 and the reopening of the child care system as of June 29, 2020. To prepare for reopening, the *Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak* document was released to support and guide the safe reopening of child care centres.

Policies and procedures, developed in partnership with the Thunder Bay District Health Unit (TBDHU) for Emergency Child Care, were revised to align with the *Operational Guidance During COVID -19 Outbreak*. Inspections of child care centres were carried out by the TBDHU prior to planned reopening. During inspections, the policies and procedures were reviewed and TBDHU assisted child care centres to prepare for child care under COVID-19.

Once child care centres were ready, an attestation was submitted to the Ministry of Education, Licensing Division, stating that all requirements for reopening under COVID-19 had been met. This was then approved by the Ministry of Education and copied to TBDSSAB.

Under the *Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak* document, child care centres had to follow the 10 cohort model. This is defined as a group of children and the staff assigned to them, who stay together throughout the durations of the program for a minimum of 7 days. The 10 cohort model meant that there could be no more than 10 children and educators in a cohort.

In July, the province permitted child care centres to expand from the 10 cohort model to a 15 children and educators cohort model.

As of September 1, 2020 the centres were able to move back to a ratio-based model as per the *Child Care and Early Years Act 2014*. This is the standard requirement for child care in Ontario.

COMMENTS

TBDSSAB has operating agreements with 20 child care operators. There are 45 licensed child care sites in the District of Thunder Bay, with some operators having multiple sites. The following chart demonstrates the gradual reopening of child care sites:

Month	Number of sites reopening
June	4 sites
July	5 sites
August	12 sites
September	21 sites
October	2 sites
Closure	1 site

The gradual reopening and the actual occupancy have been based on the limitations of the guidelines and the physical space of each child care centre. As a centre has been able to meet the guidelines, and complete an inspection from TBDHU, parents were contacted to establish return dates for the children.

On August 12, 2020, TBDSSAB received notification from W.J. Griffis Childrens Centre, located in the City of Thunder Bay, that they would not be reopening following the COVID-19 closure. As a result, Administration is working with the centre to facilitate the placement of children who had attended this centre. With the announcement of the W.J. Griffis closure, Administration will be sending out an Expression of Interest to determine interest for an additional child care centre.

Federal Safe Restart Funding

On August 14, 2020, The Ministry of Education announced Federal Safe Restart Funding. This funding is provided to support child care and EarlyON centres as they reopen and adapt to the COVID-19 environment and address the unique needs stemming from the pandemic. Criteria for the funding has been set out by the Ministry of Education for: additional PPE, enhanced cleaning, additional staff to meet the health and safety requirements, support for short term vacancies as operators transition to return to full capacity, and minor capital under \$5,000. This funding will help address any requirements in accordance with the Ministry's reopening operational guidance or local health requirements.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres

Policies and procedures for EarlyON Child and Family Centres have been developed in accordance with the Ministry of Education's *EarlyON Re-Opening Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak*. TBDSSAB, TBDHU and EarlyON Operators are working together to ensure the reopening is done in a safe way that protects the participants and staff. Virtual programming will continue and in person programming will be offered with participants having to preregister for programs.

Special Needs

Special Needs resourcing services have aligned with the child care operational guidance expectations. Resource Consultants can attend in person visit to the child care centre, taking the appropriate measures such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and limiting the number of programs being visited. Virtual services continue to be offered through ZOOM and teleconferencing depending on what the family has requested.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS



There are no new net costs expected for TBDSSAB related to this report. Funding for the reopening of child care and EarlyON centres will be determined based on existing formulas and identified pressures. Any future financial implications will be presented to the Board for approval.

CONCLUSION

It is concluded that this report provides the Board with an overview of the recovery of child care operations from emergency child care ending to full reopening.

REFERENCE MATERIALS ATTACHED

None.

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