

# Helping Essential Service Workers Secure Emergency Child Care During COVID-19

## *Frequently Asked Questions*

### **My existing child care centre advised that they will be staying open for the next three weeks. I thought all licensed facilities had to suspend services?**

Based on public health advice, licensed child centres may choose to continue operating with small groups of no more than 16 children per centre.

Licensed child care centres will be suspending their regular full child care services effective end-of-day Friday, March 20 until April 10 in order to reduce the number of children in centres. This decision was based on advice from public health officials, as a proactive measure to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Child care centres have been asked to remain open with reduced services for up to 16 children and to prioritize spaces for front-line health care workers.

Each centre is governed by a board of directors who will determine the best solution for their facility.

### **My children attend a licensed home-based child care facility. Why haven't home-based providers been directed to suspend services?**

Home-based child care providers are licensed to provide care for up to eight children between the ages of 12 weeks and 12 years. As of March 20, 2020, Manitoba's public health officials have determined that due to the small group size, home-based child care facilities are better able to maintain social distancing and reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19, therefore they are able to remain open at this time and continue providing child care services. The situation will continue to be monitored and we will continue to take advice from public health officials.

### **What should I do if my child care centre is suspending services, but my employer requires me to report to work?**

These are unprecedented times and in order to adhere to Manitoba's public health officials' recommendation to practice social distancing, employers are encouraged to permit employees to work from home if possible.

If working from home is not an option, as in the case of essential services workers, the government recommends making alternate child care arrangements.

### **I haven't found other arrangements and I must go in to work. What can I do?**

For parents unable to make other arrangements, the Department of Families has begun preparations to help parents who provide essential services, such as front-line health-care providers, to continue to access child care options. Families who meet this criteria should contact 204-945-0776, 1-888-213-4754 (toll-free) or [cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca](mailto:cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca) as soon as possible to help support the development of this service.

Families are strongly encouraged to continue to seek alternative care arrangements at this time. While the Government of Manitoba is committed to working with Early Childhood Educators, child care centres, community partners and all Manitobans to support child care needs for front line workers, this task will require support and patience as we face this unprecedented situation.

### **Who is eligible for the emergency child care services?**

Children of essential health care service workers will be given priority. Parents accessing a child care space will be required to pay existing child care fees.

### **My existing child care centre has already collected a list of parents requiring care on behalf of the province. Do I still need to contact the information line?**

No. If you've provided your name and information to your existing centre, you will automatically be added to the list of parents requiring care.

### **I have contacted the information line and left a message. How will I know if my request for child care is accepted?**

The Manitoba government announced the suspension of child care services in advance to allow parents time to secure child care. The Department of Families was also able to begin collecting information to develop a plan to support parents requiring care, so they may continue working and providing the critical services Manitobans rely on during COVID-19.

The Department of Families is contacting all parents who have left messages by voicemail or email to gather further information about the parents' occupations and specific child care needs, including the number of children requiring care. Once the department is able to identify the number of children requiring care and are eligible for the service, you will be contacted and advised of next steps.

**I have already paid my parent fees to my centre for the period in which services are suspended. Am I entitled to a refund?**

The government recognizes that these changes may place a burden on parents and families. As a result, child care centres are urged to reimburse parents and not collect parent fees while services are suspended.

**If my centre is not collecting my fees for my child care space during this time, will I have a space when centres fully re-open?**

Once public health advises that centres can fully re-open, centres will provide you with your child care space and you will resume payment of fees for child care services. If your circumstances change and you no longer require care, you should provide notice to your centre at that time.

**What other supports are available?**

The federal government announced a new set of measures to support Canadians during this time. There are a number of supports available for parents that may support you. More information on those supports are available at:

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