

CIRCULAR

Date: April 3, 2020

CIRCULAR NUMBER: COVID-19: 2020-41

To: Child care facilities, ELCC program staff

Subject: Frequently Asked Questions from Early Learning and Child Care

Program(s): All

Type: Policy For Internal Reference Only
 Procedure Information Only

Effective Date Immediately

Topic: Answers and guidance regarding frequently asked ELCC questions

Information

1) Where can I access information about the child care sector from the Manitoba government?

- As of March 23, the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) program began providing all child care providers with information and direction in circulars. This approach is being used throughout the Department of Families to provide the most up-to-date information. Please regularly monitor your emails to ensure you stay informed or visit [Covid-19 Families Circulars](#)

Source: CIRCULAR: COVID-19: 2020-24

2) Who can I contact if I have a question about the ELCC program?

- Please contact Manitoba Government Inquiry for a timely response, at 204-945-3744 or toll free at 1-866-MANITOBA (1-866-626-4862).
- Manitoba Government Inquiry will work with the department to respond and refer calls and emails when necessary to the ELCC Program.

Source: CIRCULAR: COVID-19: 2020-24

3) Where can I access public health information, including information on social/physical distancing related to the child care sector?

- Public health information for the ELCC sector is available at www.manitoba.ca/covid19 under Information for Manitobans. Click on the link for Licensed Child Care Facilities and Child Care Programming or Home-Based Child Care Providers for up-to-date resources.

- These include information on general child care, centre and parent specific questions and answers, guidance for ELCC providers to limit the spread of the coronavirus, a document about talking with children and youth, and a handwashing poster.
- The provincial public health order limiting public gatherings to 10 people or less (effective April 1) does not apply to child care facilities. Licensed child care facilities may remain open for up to 16 children.
- The ELCC sector is encouraged to regularly check the circulars issued by the Department of Families regarding specific protocols related to the child care sector. Information can be found at:
<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/infomanitobans/famcirculars.html>

4) Do ELCC facilities need to limit children’s use of outdoor play equipment?

- Maintaining familiar activities and routines will reinforce a sense of security for children.
- Getting outdoors for walks or to the park with the children are generally safe activities but play structures should be avoided.
- Remember to have everyone wash their hands when they re-enter the centre.
Source: COVID-19 ELCC Practice Guide - March 30, 2020.

5) What protocols should be in place to ensure children and staff who are sick stay at home?

- While the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve in Manitoba, www.manitoba.ca/covid19 will continue to have the most current direction from public health officials. Please check this site regularly.
- All screening for suspected cases of the virus are be referred to Health Links at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257.
- Please refer to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) ELCC Practice Guide, which was developed to help facilities respond and function during the COVID-19 emergency. It includes information on:
 - prevention measures
 - screening (with a Risk Assessment Screening Questionnaire and Incident Reporting Form)
 - visitor access
 - day-to-day prevention
 - exhibited symptoms by child/staff
 - daily care during the COVID-19 emergency
- The guidelines are effective immediately, and will be updated through circulars when required. The guide aligns with current public health direction to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and ensures facilities have access to information that will guide their daily practice. It is not intended to displace current public health advice available at www.manitoba.ca/covid19.

Sources: www.manitoba.ca/covid19 and the COVID-19 ELCC Practice Guide - March 30, 2020.

6) What will happen after April 10, when the timeline for suspending the operation of child care centres is over?

- Licensed child-care centres will continue to be limited to 16 spaces to support social distancing and infection prevention measures based on the advice of the chief provincial public health officer.
- This will continue indefinitely in alignment with the decision regarding kindergarten to Grade 12 schools.
- The Department of Families will continue to follow public health advice from provincial officials.
- Child care facilities should continue to monitor their emails for circulars and the Manitoba government website for COVID-19, which will provide any new information and direction from public health officials

Health and Safety

7) Does the March 30 public health announcement on restricting operations of non-critical businesses and limiting public gatherings to no more than 10 people affect the child care sector?

- The public health orders specifically **excludes** child care and social services providers.
- Licensed child care centres can continue to provide services to children as long as the care is limited to no more than 16 children per centre.
- Some larger centres with segregated rooms and separate external entrances are able to offer care for up to 16 children per room.
- Homebased child care providers can continue to provide care to the number of children for which they are licensed.
- For more information on the new public health orders, please review the Manitoba government [news release](#).

8) How can staff in the child care sector access personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning supplies?

- The Manitoba government understands the growing concerns associated with maintaining health and safety recommendations during a time where supplies are limited.
- The province is helping child care providers access PPE and supplies when they are unable to follow their regular procurement process.
- The distribution of supplies and equipment will be based on the current supply available to the Manitoba Government and the needs and supply of each facility, as indicated in the Inventory/Order Form attached to Circular: COVID#: 2020-48.
- If your facility is open to provide child care services to critical service workers and you can't secure necessary supplies and PPE, please complete the inventory for

each of your program sites. Supplies are limited so we ask that facilities only use this request form when needed.

- Please complete the Inventory/Order Form and return to cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca, indicating “Supply Inventory/Order Form” in the subject line.

Source: Circular: COVID#: 2020-48

9) Where can I access policies and procedures related to healthy and safe practices for child care programs?

- Please refer to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) ELCC Practice Guide, which includes information regarding healthy and safe practices.

10) Should ELCC workers be tested for COVID-19?

- All Manitobans, including child care providers and staff should stay home if they are feeling sick to avoid spreading the illness to others.
- All screening questions should be referred to Health Links at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257. An online self-assessment tool is also available at www.manitoba.ca/covid19.

Funding and Workforce

11) What is happening with provincial funding for child care providers?

- All non-profit child care facilities are continuing to receive their full provincial operating grants, whether they remain open. Payments will begin flowing as scheduled on April 1.
- Those providing child care services for up to 16 children of critical service providers during COVID-19 may also continue charging the regulated maximum parent fees.
- ELCC program staff will work with facilities that remain open to address financial pressures due to reduced fees. To discuss this further, send an email to cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca with the subject line “staying open - financial pressure”.

Source: Circular: COVID-19: 2020-40

12) What is the process for attendance reporting and subsidy payments during the COVID-19 response?

- All facilities are required to submit attendance reports following the usual procedures.
- Centres and homes should continue the regular process of reporting attendance to the Child Care Subsidy Program, based on the regular and ongoing four-week billing cycle.
- Centres and homes are to report actual attendance on their reports.

- Subsidy payments will be based on the four-week billing cycle from February 9 – March 7 for the March 8 – April 4 and April 5 – May 2 billing cycles.
 - Facilities who have children eligible for subsidy who are not covered by this approach should contact the Child Care Subsidy Program intake line at (204) 945-8195 or 1-877-587-6224 to address the issue.
 - If the centre has suspended operations, indicate all children as not in attendance. The subsidy grant payment will continue, matching the February 9 – March 7 four-week billing period until May 2, after which time the subsidy payments will be reviewed.
 - Subsidized families that are not accessing child care should not be charged parent fees.
 - Facilities that are block funded will receive their next quarter payment as usual.
- Source: Circular: COVID-19: 2020-37

13) What else has been done to assist the child care sector during the COVID-19 emergency?

- In addition to providing operating grants to all facilities, the province has announced \$18 million to provide up to \$3,000 in grants to child care workers so they can help take care of children in homes and other arrangements in the community.
- A \$2 million trust has also been established with the Winnipeg Foundation to provide capital grants to child care providers.
- For more information: <https://news.gov.mb.ca/news/?archive=&item=47138>.

14) What supports are available for child care staff and employers? How are retirement plans affected?

- If you are required to lay-off staff, we encourage you to direct staff to the Government of Canada website regarding [Employment Insurance](#) benefits.
- The situation is evolving rapidly and other supports, such as the Canada Emergency Response Benefit may also be available for staff whose employment has been suspended or terminated. For more information on eligibility and how to apply, please visit the [Canada Emergency Response Benefit website](#).
- Employers, including non-profit organizations, may be eligible for the proposed Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy Program. For more information, please review the Government of Canada's [news release](#) and [Canada's COVID-19 Economic Response Plan website](#).
- Additionally, child care employees eligible for retirement remain eligible for retirement benefits. The ELCC program will continue to reimburse employers' pension plan contributions to eligible child care centres. The reimbursement amount covers the actual employer contributions to the centre's pension plan, equal to four percent of staff wages. A facility's financial analyst can answer specific questions about retirement benefits.

15) Will the Manitoba government provide enhanced funding for child care programs and staff that are continuing to provide care?

- All non-profit child care facilities will continue to receive their full provincial operating grants, regardless of whether they remain open. Payments will occur as scheduled on April 1, 2020.
- Those that remain open to provide child care services for up to 16 children of critical service providers during COVID-19 may also continue charging the regulated maximum parent fees to the parents of those children receiving the service.
- ELCC program staff will work with facilities that remain open to address financial pressures due to reduced fees. To discuss this further, send an email to cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca with the subject line “staying open - financial pressure”.

Source: Circular: COVID-19: 2020-40

Other FAQs:

16) What is the process for connecting critical services providers with child care centres and homes willing to provide care?

- In the first phase, the Department of Families focused on immediately identifying critical services providers and matched them with centres willing to remain open.
- Beginning on Tuesday, April 14, all parents who work in critical services, as defined by the chief provincial public health officer, will be able to access child-care spaces available in licensed facilities.
- Parents working in these sectors who have been unable to make other child-care arrangements will be able to check which facilities have available spaces at www.manitoba.ca/covid19 and work directly with them to receive a spot.
- Please continue to monitor your emails, as additional details about this process will be shared through circulars.

17) My facility has suspended care, and I have been accepted into another child care program as a critical service provider. Am I required to pay the fees at both facilities?

- Child care facilities are strongly encouraged to refund parent fees to families no longer receiving services at this time, or consider issuing families credit for future care for fees already paid. Speak with your child care centre to find a workable option.
- Facilities that are open to provide child care services for up to 16 children of critical service providers during COVID-19 may continue charging the regulated maximum parent fees to the parents of those children receiving the service.

Source: CIRCULAR: COVID-19: 2020-40

18) My child has additional support needs and receives inclusion support. Our centre has closed temporarily. Will my child continue to receive inclusion support at a different facility?

- The Inclusion Support Program grant may be used to hire a staff member to enhance the ratio for child(ren) who require additional support in child care facilities that do not have the capacity to meet those needs otherwise.
- At this time, aligning with public health advice, child care centres are only permitted to offer care for small groups of children, which naturally allows for an enhanced ratio.
- If facilities require additional inclusion support, contact Manitoba Government Inquiry 204-945-3744 or toll free at 1-866-MANITOBA (1-866-626-4862) to be directed to the ELCC program. ELCC staff will work with the facility and expedite the application process to get the necessary supports in place as quickly as possible.

19) What should a facility do if a parent informs us that they tested positive for COVID-19?

- It is important that services continue to be delivered safely for staff and children. Centres and the department will continue to follow the direction of public health officials.
- When there are changes at your centre or home related to COVID-19, please complete the Incident Reporting Form and send to cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca with the subject line: COVID-19 Incident Reporting.
Source: CIRCULAR: COVID-19: 2020-22 (includes detailed information about what to include in the form).

20) Are centres being advised to update their Enhanced Safety Plan to include a response for COVID-19? Do you have any recommendations?

- This is an unprecedented situation for Manitobans and so it is understandable that child care facilities may not have a plan to respond to a pandemic of this nature in their Enhanced Safety Plans.
- Information about managing the response to future pandemics will be sent to facilities as it becomes available.
- The ELCC program is taking direction from public health officials, and updated information will continue to be available at www.manitoba.ca/covid19.

21) Can staff refuse to return to work in the child care centre if they feel their health is at risk?

- Under The Workplace Safety and Health Act, workers have the right to refuse work that they reasonably believe constitutes a danger to their safety and health, or that of another person should they perform the task.

- There is a legal process that work refusals must follow. Workplaces with collective agreements in place may have additional steps or requirements.
- For additional information, visit https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/workplaces-right-to-refuse-dangerous-work.pdf

Thank you.

Early Learning and Child Care Program