



Winter 2007

Child Care Chit Chat

A Newsletter by Family and Children's Services for Child Care Operators

A YEAR OF CHANGE, A YEAR OF SUCCESSES

Cathy Elliott, Manager, Child Care Services

Welcome to the 2007 Edition of *Child Care Chit Chat* for child care operators in York Region. It certainly has been a year filled with changes for all of us in the child care community but it also has been a year filled with successes that we can all celebrate.

IMPLEMENTATION OF INCOME TESTING

On January 1, 2007, the Province of Ontario implemented income testing to determine eligibility for child care fee assistance across the province. This new process requires all municipalities, including York Region, to determine eligibility for child care fee assistance based on family income as identified in the most recent Notice of Assessment(s). Families are no longer required to provide information relating to assets, bank accounts or household expenses.

Child Care Services has been working very hard over the past year to train our staff, review our policies and implement this new approach in determining eligibility for families in York Region.

CONSOLIDATED AGREEMENTS

Family and Children's Services completed a revision to the Consolidated Day Nurseries Agreement in late 2006. By early 2007, we received all new contracts back from operators. It was a large undertaking and we thank all operators in successfully completing this task.

CHILD CARE MATTERS UPDATE

York Region completed an update to the child care service plan, *Child Care Matters*. All operators across the region have been provided with a copy of the *Child Care Matters 2007 Update, Highlights* document that outlines service priorities addressed in 2006 and service priorities for 2007 in the areas of Child Care Licensed Spaces, Child Care Fee Assistance, Children with Special Needs and Wage Subsidy.

People say that sometimes the only constant is change. In York Region, we have been very successful in addressing these changes. As 2007 starts to wind down, and 2008 begins to show on the horizon, I wish all of you the best of the holiday season and look forward our next *Chit Chat*.

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Enhanced Funding Information Corner

Enhanced Funding enables licensed child care providers to hire additional staff to help include children with exceptional and significant special needs in their child care program.

As of September 2007, the Enhanced Funding Program served an average of 34 children per month and an average of 14 groups of children per month. Operators continue to tell York Region how valuable this funding is not only to the programs, but more importantly to the children and families who need the additional supports.

HOW TO APPLY FOR ENHANCED FUNDING

Enhanced Funding is a limited resource and there is a standard funding application process. Funding approvals are limited to a maximum of six hours per day or 30 hours per week.

Operators who want to apply for this funding must have the required Enhanced Funding Schedule as part of their Consolidated Agreement. If you want to add this schedule to your Consolidated Agreement, please contact the Manager, Child Care Services in writing with your request for additional information.

Visit the York Region web site at www.york.ca and click Services>Children's Services to access individual and group application forms.

For additional information about Enhanced Funding, contact Willie Dingwall, Community Program Co-ordinator at 905-830-4444 or 1-877-464-9675, Ext. 5762.

From the Desk of the Director

Elizabeth Wagle,
Director, Family and Children's Services

At this time of year we often take time to reflect on the passing year and look forward to the year to come.

In 2007, through Best Start, we have been able to provide child care fee subsidy to over 500 additional children, increase the number of operators in receipt of wage subsidy, and increase the number of children receiving Early Intervention Services. Subject to provincial and regional funding approvals, we expect to maintain these increases in 2008.

In 2008, service pressures will grow as the child population in York Region continues to increase at the fastest rate in Ontario. The need for provincial funding to keep pace with the population growth has been identified across many service sectors. In 2008 we will continue to do the best we can to address the service needs of children and families across the region.

Wishing you a joyful holiday season and every happiness in 2008.



Web Record of Attendance

Paper, paper and more paper. There is so much paper associated with the administration of a child care program that we have a way to help you limit some of that paper. Why not try the faster, friendlier and paperless Web Record of Attendance. It is quick and simple to use – all you need is a PC with an internet connection.

We strongly recommend that if you currently use the fax in or mail in process, you consider switching to the web. All new operators are required to use the Web Record of Attendance.

Monthly training from York Region staff is available to help support you as you learn this quick and easy way to complete your monthly attendance. Contact Karen Pozzebon at 905-830-4444 Ext. 2040 to get information about upcoming sessions. We hope to see you at our next session.

Health and Safety Funding 2007

The Health and Safety Funding Annual Survey was sent out in August to all operators. We received an overwhelming number of requests for funding. As in past years, the requests for funding exceed the funding available. However, a number of programs did receive approval for critical health and safety issues relating to licensing, food safety and some playground non-compliances. Operators who received approvals must complete repairs/purchases by December 31, 2007 and submit their invoices to York Region no later than January 15, 2008 to receive payment.

Wage Subsidy 2007

Wage Subsidy was introduced in 1987 and enhanced in 1993 in response to low levels of compensation in the child care field and to address issues of affordability and stability in the child care service sector.

York Region has experienced rapid population growth. The resulting growth in child care spaces has increased the number of licensed child care spaces that are eligible for wage subsidy by 94% since 1999. This translates into a significant shortfall in provincial funding as the funding has not kept pace with the growth.

In 2007, York Region has been able to maintain the 2006 level of Wage Improvement funds and Best Start Wage Subsidy funds to eligible operators. In addition, Best Start Wage Subsidy has been provided for 89 licensed child care programs that currently were not receiving wage subsidy.

Operators have recently completed their 2007 program survey which is part of the process required by York Region to determine the amount of Wage Subsidy that a program is eligible to receive.

The Wage Subsidy Reconciliation Statement will be sent out to all operators receiving wage subsidy in the beginning of January and is due back to York Region by the end of January. If you have questions regarding Wage Subsidy, please contact Maria Smith, Manager, Child and Community Programs at 905-830-4444 Ext. 2027.

Swim to Survive

Although we've already seen snow, the Swim to Survive Program continues to promote water safety for children in grade three. The Swim to Survive Program focuses on grade three students and teaches them the skills to survive an unexpected fall into the water. The program has been a positive, collaborative effort between York Region, The Lifesaving Society, nine municipalities, the York Region District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board. Children in grade three are given three hours of pool time to learn three basic survival skills. Barbara Underhill, founder and spokesperson for the Stephanie Gaetz Keepsake Foundation says, "countless lives will be saved through this program".

Early Intervention Services

Early Intervention Services has achieved great success this year. In June 2007, the Multi-Service Hub for specialized services for children and youth opened in Oak Ridges. This achievement was a collaborative effort between York Region, Markham Stouffville Hospital and Children's Treatment Network of Simcoe-York. The Oak Ridges site is the sixth co-located office for Early Intervention Services and Preschool Speech and Language programs. Staff from Children's Treatment Network are also co-located in this site.

Early Intervention Services also celebrated 30 years of service in York Region in November 2007. Guests heard from York Region dignitaries as well as families and children who have benefited from the support of Early Intervention Services. It was a wonderful opportunity to see familiar faces, past and present, as well as many children currently receiving support from Early Intervention Services. It is a program that is truly making a difference in York Region.

Toy Recalls

It seems that it is becoming more common to learn about another toy recall either from the radio or in the newspaper. We all want to ensure that the toys and equipment that is being purchased for your programs is safe and that you have access to the information regarding toy safety. If you have heard about a recall but are not sure how to find out more information, you can access consumer product information on the Health Canada Website at www.hc-sc.gc.ca and click on the Consumer Product Tab on the left side of the screen. You can then search for recalls specifically related to children's products.

Safe Drinking Water Act Compliance

As many operators are aware, you must now be in compliance with the *Safe Drinking Water Act* as part of your licensing requirements. This compliance is regulated through the Provincial Regional offices. Please be reminded that the Consolidated Day Nurseries Agreement requires all operators to be in compliance with all acts, legislation and laws that govern the operation of a child care program. If you have any questions regarding the requirements for operators under the *Day Nurseries Act*, please contact the Ministry's Central East Regional Office at 905-868-8900.

If you have questions regarding the Consolidated Day Nurseries Agreement, please contact the Manager, Child Care Services at 905-830-4444 Ext. 2145.

Child Care Chit Chat is produced by the Community and Health Services Department's Family and Children's Services Branch. For more information about any of the articles within, or about any issues relating to Child Care Fee Assistance, call Cathy Elliott, Manager of Child Care Services at 905-830-4444 or 1-877-464-9675, Ext. 2145. You can also access more information about York Region's children's services at our web site:

Go to www.york.ca and click Services > Children's Services