



Spring 2004

Child Care Chit Chat

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



Funding Boost for Health and Safety

Elizabeth Wagle
Director, Family and Children's Services

Along with this copy of **Child Care Chit Chat**, you have received a copy of **Child Care Matters Update 2003**. I encourage you to read this update to find out about:

- The increase in licensed child care spaces
- The average annual market rate
- The number of Purchase of Service Agreements
- The wait list for subsidy
- The level of provincial funding and much more.

As a result of the Multilateral Framework on Early Learning and Child Care, the Ontario Minister of Children's Services announced, on January 7, 2004, that \$9.7 million in federal funds would be made available to municipalities. York Region received \$753,146 of this funding to address health and safety improvements and the purchase of new equipment by licensed non-profit child care operators serving children under six.



Ontario funding also addresses new equipment purchase

The federal government has recently announced that in 2004/2005, a further \$59.1 million will flow to the provinces and territories for regulated early learning and child care programs for children under the age of six. York Region has not yet been advised what portion of this funding will be allocated to child care services in the region. York Region staff continue to request additional provincial funding for child care fee subsidy, wage subsidy, and services for children with special needs.

Staff will be reviewing program surveys over the next few months and will then proceed with redistribution of existing underspent wage subsidy funding to the priority areas recommended by the Wage Subsidy Reference Group. This group will

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EIS 2003 Family Satisfaction Survey Results

In 2003, Early Intervention Services conducted several family satisfaction evaluation surveys. In total, 219 families responded to surveys or telephone interviews.

Overall, families are satisfied with the majority of the services provided by Early Intervention Services.

Families provided the following positive feedback:

- EIS staff are knowledgeable and empathetic.
- The groups provided by the EIS staff were beneficial to their children.
- The groups helped them to understand programming suggestions and to network with other parents.

The surveys also elicited three common concerns:

- Too much paperwork
- Long waiting periods for service
- A need for more direct occupational and physical therapy involvement.

As a result of these concerns, Early Intervention Services has streamlined its reporting requirements, redesigned the goal plan for its children, and lessened the number of forms left with families during the home visits.

With the implementation of the Individual Service Planning Meeting (ISPM), the waiting period for service has shortened in each office.

While EIS is aware of families' desires for direct therapy, our mandate is for the provision of consultative therapy services. We continue to address the therapy needs of children through referrals to community agencies and private therapists, and through the provision of developmental playgroups with therapy input.

When asked, parents indicated they were very willing to complete the surveys. They expressed appreciation for the chance to give feedback and showed interest in receiving a summary of the results.

Pay Equity Update

Operators eligible to receive Pay Equity funding under the Memorandum of Settlement have received their first instalment of post-1999 Pay Equity funding. Operators will soon be advised of the remaining 2004 payments and of the payment recipients.

If you have any questions related to Pay Equity, please contact Howard Dayton at 905-830-4444 ext. 2027.

Important Dates



June 1st, Web-Enabled Record of Attendance

The much anticipated launch of the Web-Enabled Record of Attendance is scheduled for June 1, 2004. We will be corresponding shortly with all operators to identify which sites will be completing their attendance records via the Internet.

Not ready yet? Don't worry; you can contact Colleen Hildebrant at 905-830-4444 ext. 2158 at any time to indicate your interest in participating.

June 24th, PD Day

On June 24, 2004, elementary school teachers will provide only 150 minutes of education programming, according to the Ontario Teachers' Federation.

The Region will consider this a PD day and pay operators their approved full day rate for children whose families require child care services after participating in their educational programs. Children not requiring additional hours of care will be paid at their approved before school, after school, or before-and-after school age rate.

Questions? Contact Lori Young (North) at 905-830-4444 ext. 5761 or Kathy Lucky (South) at 905-762-1282 ext. 2658.

Friday, July 2nd, Offices Closed

Regional Council has designated Friday, July 2, 2004, as the Regional Corporate Float Day. The Family and Children's Services offices will be closed.

Purchase of Service Attendance Schedules will be sent on Monday, July 5, 2004.

New Child Care Fee Assistance Brochures

Enclosed are copies of the Child Care Fee Assistance Brochure - translated into Chinese, Farsi, Russian, Tamil, Spanish, Italian, and Urdu. Please make these brochures available to families enrolled in your program.

For additional copies of these brochures, please contact Sherri Washington at 905-830-4444 ext. 2032.



Manager's Message

Connie Wilson
Manager, Child Care Services

Welcome from Child Care Services! 2003 was a busy but productive year. Child Care Services successfully used the total 2003 provincial fee subsidy budget. This budget supported a monthly average of 2,710 children of 1,628 households (excluding the 331 children who participated in NCB-funded summer camp programs).

2004 is shaping up to be just as busy. Some accomplishments in the first quarter include:

- Translating the Child Care Fee Assistance brochures into Spanish, Farsi, Tamil, Russian, Urdu, and Italian.
- Flowing \$753,146 of Ontario's share of the Federal Early Learning and Child Care funds to licensed non-profit operators providing care to children birth to 6 years, to address health and safety issues.
- Conducting a survey of waitlisted applicants to confirm their continued need for child care fee assistance and to confirm their involvement in an approved activity such as employment or education.
- Streamlining waitlist management practices to ensure families who are engaged in an approved activity are contacted on a first come, first served

"I was quite impressed with how helpful and knowledgeable the staff were with me and my son. I am very grateful."
(Response to Customer Satisfaction Survey)

basis. Families not engaged in an approved activity will be responsible for reporting their involvement in an approved activity prior to being contacted by the Child Care Services.

- Distribution of the 2004 Annual Request for Market Rate Surveys.
- Distribution of a Consolidated Purchase of Service Agreement.

Each year, Child Care Services conducts a Customer Satisfaction Survey with families who receive child care fee assistance. I thought I'd share some responses to the following survey question:

My child(ren) is/are well cared for at the centre-based/ home-based program.

- "I was quite impressed with how helpful and knowledgeable the staff were with me and my son. I am very grateful."
- "I am very happy and pleased with the day care my son is in. He is very outgoing and hard to handle, but your people have very little problem and know how to deal with him."
- "This centre is great and staff are amazing."

Keep doing what you're doing. You're making a big difference in the lives of a great many children and their families.

Until the next Chit Chat.

School Age Summer Program Rates

A 2004 school-age summer program rate is available for operators who have provided their 2004 summer rates and who list this rate schedule in their operating program handbook. This rate is included in the 2004 Regional Schedule of Rates Child Care Fee Assistance.

Please note that, as part of the Purchase of Service Agreement, operators may not charge applicants of fee-assisted children more than the approved applicant contribution.

If you need clarification regarding any billing practice or procedure, please contact Lori Young (North) at 905-830-4444 ext. 5761 or Kathy Lucky (South) at 905-762-1282 ext. 2658.

PLAY



York Region Family and Children's Services has initiated the Positive Leisure Activities for Youth (PLAY) pilot project, in partnership with local municipal Parks and Recreation Departments.

This spring, children (aged 6 - 12) of eligible families (those in receipt of Social Assistance) have been able to take part in one seasonal recreation program such as swimming lessons, dance classes, or basketball.

For information on this initiative, please contact Bernice Landry, Community Program Co-ordinator, at 905-830-4444 ext. 2024.

Quality Assurance Showcase



Staff of Family and Children's Services participated in the Quality Assurance Showcase on March 25, 2004.

This event allowed us to provide the community with information on the following programs:

- Child Care Fee Assistance
- Early Intervention Services
- Preschool Speech and Language
- PLAY
- Summer Camp Programs

Photo (left to right): Kathy Lucky, Pam Edlund, Shireen Suleman, Bernice Landry, Willie Dingwall

Health and Safety Funding

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be reconvened in 2004 to provide input and advice on the distribution of wage subsidy to preschool and kindergarten programs with varying child:staff ratios.

In 2004, York Region will once again proceed with one-time reallocation of funds to address health and safety concerns in both commercial and not-for-profit licensed child care programs.

As you know, quality child care is an important cornerstone to healthy child development. In addition, research clearly indicates that investment in the early years of life before the formal school system, gives the greatest return.

Every day, York Region administers funding for, or provides services to, an average of approximately 4,000 children. When community partners work together, we can all make a difference.

Thank you for everything you do to improve the well-being of children.

Enhanced Funding for Child Care Special Needs



Enhanced funding allows licensed child care providers to hire additional staff, enhancing their ability to include children with exceptional and significant special needs in their child care programs.

Enhanced funds are a time-limited support to assist child care operators to implement appropriate strategies toward full inclusion of children with exceptional/significant special needs.

For more information, contact Willie Dingwall, Program Coordinator, Enhanced Funding Program, 55 Eagle Street West, Newmarket, ON L3Y 8W5, telephone 905-830-4444 or 1-877-464-9675 ext. 5762, fax 905-895-8377.

Child Care Chit Chat is produced by the Community Services and Housing Department's Family and Children's Services Division. For more information about any of the articles within, or about any issues relating to Child Care Fee Assistance, call Connie Wilson, Manager of Child Care Services at 905-830-4444, ext. 2050. You can also access more information about York Region's Children's Services at:

www.region.york.on.ca