

**Ministry of Education  
Early Years Division**

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**Ministère de l'Éducation  
Division de la petite enfance**

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**Memorandum To:** Chief Administrative Officers, CMSMs/DSSABs  
General Managers/Commissioners, CMSMs/DSSABs  
Children's Service Managers, CMSMs/DSSABs

**From:** Nancy Matthews  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Early Years Division

**Date:** February 22, 2016

**Subject:** Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres

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On February 19, 2016, the Minister of Education announced the Ministry of Education's (EDU) provincial plan for moving forward with the integration and transformation of child and family programs. This fulfills the commitment made in the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework (2013) and reiterated in *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario* (2014) to develop an approach for integrating EDU-funded child and family programs.

EDU is committed to building an early years system that is high quality, seamless, and accessible for children and their families. Since 2010, the government has taken a number of steps toward this vision, including the implementation of Full-Day Kindergarten, the release of a new child care funding formula, the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework, *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*, and the recently proclaimed Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014. The next step in this journey is integrating and transforming EDU-funded child and family programs as part of a cohesive system.

By 2018, all EDU-funded child and family programs (Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Better Beginning, Better Futures, Child Care Resource Centres) will be part of an increasingly integrated, cohesive system of services and supports for children ages 0-6 and their families known as Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs). All OEYCFCs will be guided by a provincial framework, a common identity and a new funding approach. This transformation will help us achieve our goal of establishing increasingly integrated early years programs and services in Ontario.

The purpose of this memo is to outline the important role that Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Service Administration Boards (DSSABs) will play as leaders in this integration process as service system managers.

## Service System Manager Roles and Responsibilities

The service system manager role is critical to the success of early years system transformation. Beginning in 2018, CMSMs and DSSABs will be responsible for the local management of OEYCFCs as part of their existing responsibility for the service system management of child care and other human services.

CMSMs/DSSABs will be required to manage the delivery of a suite of core OEYCFC services related to engaging parents and caregivers, supporting early learning and development, and making connections to other family services. CMSMs/DSSABs will have the flexibility to determine how these core services are delivered and by whom, through local service planning.

CMSMs/DSSABs will also have the flexibility to offer customized services including co-located, specialized community services or to consider alternate service delivery methods such as virtual hubs and mobile sites. These services can be uniquely tailored to be responsive to diverse populations [e.g., newcomers to Ontario, Francophones, First Nations, urban Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit, Lesbian Gay Bi-Sexual Transsexual (LGBT)]. CMSMs/DSSABs can also choose to offer OEYCFC services directly or through third party service organizations. EDU will also encourage the use of a schools-first approach in alignment with other child care and early years initiatives.

Key responsibilities for CMSMs/DSSABs related to the implementation of OEYCFCs include:

- Conducting a local needs assessment and an inventory of existing child and family programs and services;
- Engaging parents and caregivers to inform the planning and delivery of OEYCFC programs and services;
- Facilitating meaningful engagement with early years partners (school boards, child and family program agencies, parents/caregivers, community partners and others) to inform service system planning using new or existing tables;
- Integrating OEYCFCs into local service system plans for early years programs and services;
- Managing provincial funds and any third party contracts associated with the delivery of OEYCFC programs and services; and

Measuring and reporting on the impact of OEYCFC programs and services on children, parents and caregivers. EDU will work with municipal partners to develop tools and resources to guide and support the implementation of OEYCFCs.

## OEYCFC Provincial Service Guidelines

OEYCFCs will be guided by provincial service guidelines that will be released in late 2016. The provincial service guidelines will describe the province's vision for OEYCFCs to enhance service quality and consistency across the province. The guidelines will describe the intended outcomes of OEYCFCs, the guiding principles and the expectations for core and customized

services. These guidelines will also name *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* as the guiding pedagogical framework for OEYCFC programs.

The provincial service guidelines will help to ensure that children and families have access to a suite of high-quality, core OEYCFC services regardless of where they live in the province. They will guide CMSMs/DSSABs and service providers as they integrate and enhance programs and services in their communities, and seek to minimize service disruptions for families.

The province will work collaboratively with CMSMs/DSSABs to set expectations for service integration and to determine appropriate accountability measures.

### Local Service System Planning

Making the transition to a coordinated system that aligns with the broader early years sector will require a carefully planned transition process that engages all local partners and minimizes service disruptions for children and families.

To support planning for the implementation of OEYCFCs, CMSMs/DSSABs will be given access to the Ministry's web-based mapping tool, which pinpoints the location of existing programs and provides relevant data such as population density, Early Development Instrument (EDI) scores, educational attainment, etc. Based on this information and collaboration with community partners, some CMSMs/DSSABs may choose to retain existing programs, while others may need to be redesigned or redistributed to align with the provincial framework for OEYCFCs and to be responsive to local community needs. Additional details will be provided regarding how to access this information later this year.

The intent of this integration process is for CMSMs/DSSABs to make thoughtful and informed decisions about program and service delivery with the support of local early years partners. We want to build on the successful practices that are already in place, and ensure that adjustments are made where required to be responsive to the strengths and needs of children and families.

### Partnership Planning and Engagement

Meaningful engagement and joint planning and coordination between CMSMs/DSSABs and school boards including Early Years Leads, community planning tables, local public health, First Nations, urban Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit organizations, Francophone organizations, parents and caregivers will be essential to the planning of OEYCFC services and sites. This collaborative approach is essential to achieving early years system integration and will support the development and delivery of programs that are responsive to the needs of the community.

The Ministry is committed to engaging a wide range of stakeholders throughout the system transformation process. With respect to municipal engagement, the Ministry will work closely with the Provincial-Municipal Early Years Reference Group (PMEYRG) and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) to receive advice and inform the planning process. The Ministry will also engage members of the Minister's Early Years Advisory Committee and the English and French language Early Years Advisory Groups to solicit feedback over the coming months. Please feel free to reach out to your colleagues that represent municipal interests at these tables to share your input on system transformation (see attached PMEYRG contact list).

Your regional Early Years Division Child Care Advisor and Education Officer will also continue to engage with you as part of their regular communications and activities.

### Funding Approach

Integrating and transforming child and family programs to create OEYCFCs is not a cost-saving exercise. The government is committed to maintaining its current investment of over \$97M in child and family programs. This includes funding for program delivery, planning and administration, which will be redistributed to CMSMs/DSSABs using a new funding approach by 2018.

This approach will redistribute funds that are currently allocated to a mix of agencies, school boards and municipalities. The funding framework development process will align with the approach taken to develop the child care funding formula released in 2013, which was developed in collaboration with municipal partners. It is anticipated that the funding approach will be approved and communicated to CMSMs/DSSABs in 2017 to support local community planning discussions. The new OEYCFC allocations and provincial service guidelines will be implemented beginning in 2018.

As part of this redistribution, funding for Data Analysis Coordinators will be transferred to CMSMs/DSSABs to support local service planning for early years programs and services. Additional information about the transfer will be provided in the coming months.

### OEYCFC Name and Identity

Based on consultations and public opinion research conducted by the Ministry, we know that many parents and caregivers are not aware of available child and family programs. To improve public awareness of available programs and services, all communities will be required to use the common, provincial name and visual identity of OEYCFCs. EDU recognizes that the OEYCFC name differs from the names currently used for the four funded child and family programs in Ontario, which is why a phased implementation process will be used to minimize impacts.

The province will be responsible for leading branding and public awareness activities for OEYCFCs at the provincial level. More information on these activities will be shared as it becomes available.

### Service Agreement Management

The Ministry currently holds service agreements with child and family program agencies, school boards and CMSMs/DSSABs for the delivery of child and family programs. Existing child and family program service agreements will be maintained in 2016 while CMSMs/DSSABs work with community partners to prepare for the implementation of OEYCFCs.

CMSMs/DSSABs will be notified of their new allocations under the new OEYCFC funding framework in 2017 for implementation in 2018. CMSMs/DSSABs will assume responsibility for OEYCFC service system management at this time. As mentioned above, CMSMs/DSSABs may choose to directly deliver services or continue to deliver services through contracts with child and family program agencies or school boards. More information about the goals and

expectations of system transformation will be provided in the provincial service guidelines later this year.

### Key Dates

The Ministry will work closely with CMSMs/DSSABs on the implementation approach for OEYCFCs including the funding approach, provincial service guidelines, and community engagement to mitigate potential service disruptions and provide adequate time and space for families and the early years sector to adapt to the changes.

Key dates to be aware of include:

- Release of provincial service guidelines and launch of local needs assessment processes (2016)
- Conducting local needs assessments and development of local service system plans (2016 – 2017)
- Release of new OEYCFC funding approach and allocations (2017)
- Implementation of OEYCFC funding approach (2018)
- Launch of new provincial website for OEYCFCs (TBD)

Information about the creation of OEYCFCs has been posted on the Ministry's website so that families and the broader early years sector are aware of the provincial implementation plan as we move toward an increasingly integrated early years system.

Thank you for your continued commitment to delivering high quality early years programs and services in communities across Ontario. Our strong partnership will help to achieve our shared goal of establishing an increasingly integrated system of early years programs and services.



Nancy Matthews  
Assistant Deputy Minister  
Early Years Division

Attachment: Provincial-Municipal Early Years Reference Group Member List

**Provincial-Municipal Early Years Reference Group Member List**

<b>CMSM/DSSAB/ Organization</b>	<b>Member</b>
AMO	<b>Michael Jacek</b> Senior Policy Advisor
OMSSA	<b>Petra Wolfbeiss</b> Director of Policy and Public Affairs, OMSSA
City of Toronto Children's Services	<b>Elaine Baxter-Trahair</b> General Manager, Children's Services
Niagara Region Children's Service	<b>Darlene Edgar</b> Acting Director, Children Services Division
Region of Waterloo	<b>Nancy Dickieson</b> Director, Children's Services Community Services
Halton Region Children's Services	<b>Mary-Beth Jonz</b> Director, Children's Services
City of Ottawa, Children's Services Division	<b>Rachelle Clark</b> Manager, Children's Services
Prescott-Russel, Gestion Services Sociaux	<b>Anne Comtois-Lalonde</b> Administratrice, Gestion Services Sociaux
Bruce County Social Services	<b>Brenda Wilton</b> Manager, Children's Services
Nipissing District Social Services Administrative Board	<b>Lynn Demore-Pitre</b> Program Supervisor, Children's Services
District of Timiskaming Social Services Administration Board	<b>Dani Grenier-Ducharme</b> Manager, Children's Services
Durham Region, Children Services Division	<b>Roxanne Lambert</b> Director, Children's Services Division
City of Greater Sudbury Children's Services	<b>Tyler Campbell</b> Manager, Children's Services