

Ministry of Education
Early Years Division

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Memorandum To: Children's Services Leads, Consolidated Municipal Service Managers/District Social Services Administration Boards

From: Julia Danos
Director
Early Years Implementation Branch, Early Years Division

Date: April 12, 2017

Subject: UPDATE: Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres and the Journey Together

We are writing to provide an update on the Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres and the Journey Together initiatives. We thank you for the important work that is underway to support these initiatives, which will help us achieve our shared vision ensuring that Ontario's children and families are well supported by an early years system that is high quality, seamless, and accessible for children and their families.

Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres

As we move forward with the provincial plan to establish Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres by 2018, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) recognizes that we are at a critical point in the planning process where Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs)/District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) require information about the allocations to finalize initial plans and work with communities to prepare for implementation. The government remains committed to maintaining its current investment of over \$100M for child and family programs, and continues work to confirm the new funding approach and allocations for CMSMs/DSSABs for this transformation.

As a result of these delays, we are extending the due date to submit initial plans for Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres from May, 31 2017 to **September 29, 2017**. We recognize that 2018 will be a transition year for some communities, and initial plans for Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres will reflect local planning across the province.

As identified in the Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers (page 24), CMSMs/DSSABs are required to submit a summary of their needs assessment and initial plans for Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres. Initial plans must include

an accompanying rationale for site distribution/locations and programs/services to achieve the intended outcomes. We recognize that communities may require time to plan for and transition programs and services in a thoughtful way. In preparation for the transition year, the Ministry is requesting that initial plans describe how programs and services will be delivered beginning January 1, 2018 (i.e., the organizations offering them, where they are located and whether sites are new, enhanced, or relocated) and how the system may be shifted over the course of the year (i.e., May, September, and December 2018).

Additionally, in response to requests for guidance in developing the initial plans, the Ministry has prepared some questions for reflection when finalizing the initial plans (see Appendix A). The Ministry is not expecting CMSMs/DSSABs to answer each individual question, instead consider how the responses have been incorporated into the initial plans. Initial plans for Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres can be emailed to tpa.edu.EarlyLearning@ontario.ca with a copy to your regional contact in the Early Years Implementation Branch.

As a reminder, service agreements between the Ministry and organizations funded for existing child and family programs will remain in place until December 31, 2017. The new Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres funding framework and program requirements will be effective January 1, 2018. Therefore, CMSMs/DSSABs will need to have funding agreements in place by January 1, 2018 for the delivery of Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres. The Ministry is committed to working closely with sector partners to mitigate potential service disruptions to ensure that children and families will continue to be supported during this transition phase. We realize that in order to move forward with a coordinated system of Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres, a carefully planned transition process is required.

Journey Together

We continue to work closely with partners to enhance access to culturally relevant, Indigenous-led early years programs and services off-reserve, including child care and child and family programs, as set out in *The Journey Together: Ontario's Commitment to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*.

A number of partners have expressed that additional time beyond the established May 31, 2017 due date would support meaningful and thorough local collaboration to develop program funding proposals. We are also aware that in many cases planning for Indigenous-specific programs and services under the *Journey Together* is occurring in conjunction with planning processes for Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres.

For these reasons, the due date for off-reserve *Journey Together* proposals will also be extended to **September 29, 2017**.

The Ministry is aware of the significant work underway in communities to support these initiatives, including the collaboration and engagement opportunities taking place across the province. Much strength in our current system has been identified through these

processes, as well as opportunities to be more responsive to the needs of children and families.

Should you have any questions or require further clarification, please contact your regional Child Care Advisor/Education Officer.

Thank you for your continued commitment to delivering high quality early years programs and services in communities across Ontario. We look forward to our continued partnership in 2018.



Julia Danos
Director
Early Years Implementation Branch - Early Years Division

Attachments:

1. Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres Planning Guidelines
2. Reflective Questions to support initial Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres plans

APPENDIX A - Reflective Questions: Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres – Planning for Service System Managers

(Note: Page number references are for the Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres: Planning Guidelines for Service System Managers, 2016)

Summary of Local Needs Assessment, Community Planning Process and Communication Strategy:

1. How does your plan capture the multiple approaches and sources used in the data collection to consolidate information and assist in identifying existing service gaps and duplication in communities? (pages 23-24)
2. Does the plan describe an engagement strategy that was collaborative, transparent and shared broadly for discussion and endorsement? (page 20)
3. Is there evidence that the voices of children, families, caregivers and others working in the system contributed to this plan? (page 20)
4. Does the plan describe what the system will look like in January 2018 and, where necessary, be transitioned over the course of the year? How will this transition be communicated to parents, staff, and service providers (e.g. the initial plan may identify a transition process where a mix of current sites and new locations are identified)? (pages 24-25)
5. Does the plan describe a multi-pronged communication strategy (e.g. service providers, program staff, community partners, families, caregivers, local elected officials)? (pages 24-25)

Key Program Requirements:

6. How does the plan reflect the vision and guiding principles for Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres and align with other provincial priorities, where applicable (e.g. School-Based Child and Family Programs Capital, Community Hubs, Schools-First Approach, Ontario Special Needs Strategy, The Journey Together)? (page 5)
7. How does the plan describe the proposed service delivery methods and locations? How were the results and key learnings from the local needs assessment used to identify service locations and fulfill the mandatory core services and intended outcomes? (pages 11-12)
8. How does the plan address the delivery of mandatory core services (e.g., Engaging Parents and Caregivers, Supporting Early Learning and Development, Making Connections for Families)? (page 11)
9. How does the plan describe ways to build capacity to deliver high quality early years programs and services that align with the pedagogical approaches described in *How Does Learning Happen: Ontario's Pedagogy for Early Years?* (pages 12, 16)
10. How does the plan address the evolving work around staffing requirements? (page 16)
11. How does this plan incorporate considerations for Indigenous and French language programs and services? (pages 21-22)
12. How does the plan build on and expand opportunities for deeper community connections, coordination and integration of services for children and families? (page 13)