



Ministry of Education

Ontario Child Care and Early Years Funding Guidelines

for Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and
District Social Services Administration Boards

Chapter 3, Appendix 1: Policy Statement – Access to Subsidized Child Care

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PART 1: POLICY STATEMENT – ACCESS TO SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE

1.A GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Child Care fee subsidy:

- Funding to offset the cost to parents for licensed child care or approved recreation programs (as described in paragraphs 5, 6 and 8 of section 6 of the O.Reg. 138/15).
- Eligibility for child care fee subsidies: Parents who are eligible for assistance, as identified in section 8 of the O.Reg. 138/15, and parents of children in social need, may be eligible for fee subsidies for children under 13 years of age. Parents of children with special needs may be eligible for fee subsidies for children under 18 years of age if they were in receipt of a service or received financial assistance before August 31, 2017. They will be allowed to continue to receive assistance until that child turns 18, provided that they meet other eligibility criteria that are unrelated to age (see O.Reg. 138/15). Parents eligible for fee subsidies include Ontario Works participants, recipients of income support under the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), as well as other parents who are in financial need. The latter category captures ODSP employment supports clients who are in financial need but who are not in receipt of income support under ODSP.

Service System Manager:

- Municipality or district social services administration board designated as a service system manager by the Regulation. In this policy statement, service system managers are referred to as Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs).
- For the purposes of this policy statement, unless otherwise indicated, CMSMs/ DSSABs refer to the service system manager in the service area in which the parent and child reside, or the 'home' service system manager.

Full-day Child Care:

- Child care that is provided for 6 or more hours in a day.

Children with special needs:

- A child who has special needs means a child whose cognitive, physical, social, emotional or communicative needs, or whose needs relating to overall development, are of such a nature that additional supports are required for the child.

Ministry:

- The Ministry of Education.

Ontario Works child care:

- The provision of funding to participants in employment assistance activities under the Ontario Works Act, 1997, for the temporary care for and supervision of a child where the care and supervision is provided to enable the participants to so participate.
- Ontario Works participants (including participants in Learning, Earning and Parenting (LEAP), as well as ODSP income support recipients participating in Ontario Works) may receive assistance up to the actual cost of licensed care, and up to pre-established ceilings for unlicensed care.

Parent:

- Includes a person having lawful custody of a child or a person who has demonstrated a settled intention to treat a child as a child of his or her family (as per subsection 2. (1) of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*).

Part-day child care:

- Child care that is provided for less than 6 hours in a day.

Recognized needs:

- Reasons for needing child care that are laid out within the scope of this policy statement, and that are to be considered by CMSMs/ DSSABs when determining the amount of subsidized child care to provide. The term may include needs associated with the child, needs associated with the parent, or both.

The Regulation:

- O.Reg. 138/15 (Funding, Cost Sharing and Financial Assistance) made under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.

1.B INTRODUCTION

High quality child care plays a key role in promoting healthy child development and helping children arrive at school ready to learn. It is also an essential support for many parents, helping them to balance the demands of career and family while participating in the workforce or pursuing education or training.

That is why it is important to fund child care fee subsidies in a way that takes into consideration both the needs of parents and the best interests of children.

1.C PURPOSE

This policy statement articulates provincial expectations regarding the provision of child care fee subsidies, specifically clarifying the flexibility available to CMSMs/ DSSABs in determining the appropriate amount of child care for which a fee subsidy may be provided. The policy statement recognizes the decision-making authority of CMSMs/ DSSABs at the local level, and provides them with a framework within which they may exercise discretion in balancing the needs of children and parents.

1.D ROLE OF CONSOLIDATED MUNICIPAL SERVICE MANAGERS AND DISTRICT SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARDS

In their role as child care service system managers, CMSMs /DSSABs cost share, plan and manage prescribed child care services, including fee subsidies and Ontario Works child care, within the parameters of legislation, regulations, standards and policies established by the ministry. CMSMs/ DSSABs are responsible for maintaining a flexible mix of subsidies for part- and full-day child care, across all age groups, that reflects the range of local service needs. They are also responsible for implementing practices that provide for a seamless transition between subsidized part-day and subsidized full-day care as parents' and children's needs change.

CMSMs/ DSSABs are to determine the amount of subsidized child care for each eligible family in accordance with the framework outlined in this document.

1.E STATEMENT OF POLICY

CMSMs/ DSSABs may provide child care fee subsidies to parents who are financially eligible, and to parents of children with special or social needs. In the case of Ontario Works participants, CMSMs/ DSSABs may provide child care fee subsidies or Ontario Works child care. To be eligible for Ontario Works child care, parents must be participating in recognized activities. When providing fee subsidies or Ontario Works child care, CMSMs/ DSSABs should

take into account a family's reasons for needing child care in order to determine the amount of child care to subsidize. Consideration should be given to both the recognized needs of the parent and the recognized needs of the child when determining whether funding for full-day or part-day child care is appropriate. As a general rule, funding for full-day child care should only be provided where the family's collective needs require it.

If the child has a special or social need, the amount of subsidized child care provided should be based primarily on what is in the child's best interests. In all other cases, the amount of subsidized child care should be based on the parent's recognized needs, although even then, the best interests of the child should always be considered in order to help support the child's early learning and avoid undue disruption for the child. This policy statement recognizes certain needs as appropriate for the provision of child care fee subsidies and Ontario Works child care. These are outlined below, by funding type.

1.F DETERMINING THE AMOUNT OF THE CHILD CARE TO SUBSIDIZE

It is important for CMSMs /DSSABs to exercise discretion in determining the amount of child care to subsidize for any particular family. Consideration should be given to the schedules and staffing of child care programs in which subsidized children are enrolled, and allowance should be made for extenuating circumstances (such as a parent's fluctuating work hours), so that as much as possible, unreasonable disruptions to a child's care or a parent's ability to pursue and maintain employment are avoided.

1.G RECOGNIZED NEEDS FOR PROVISION OF CHILD CARE FEE SUBSIDIES

The following is a list of reasons for needing child care that are to be considered by CMSMs/ DSSABs when determining the amount of child care for which to provide a fee subsidy.

- Children's recognized needs
 - A child with special needs: means a child whose cognitive, physical, social, emotional or communicative needs, or whose needs relating to overall development, are of such a nature that additional supports are required for the child.
 - Social need: The child may require child care to address a social need due to issues with the home/family environment, and is referred to the CMSM/ DSSAB for child care by a Children's Aid Society, Public Health Unit, family physician, or another early intervention/prevention agency/professional recognized by the CMSM/ DSSAB. Social need includes situations where the

need is directly related to the child, as well as situations where the child's need is the result of a greater family need.

Child care fee subsidies may be provided where children have special or social needs, even if their parents do not have recognized needs themselves. CMSMs /DSSABs have discretion to determine the appropriate amount of subsidized child care for children with special or social needs. The child's best interests should play a primary role in these decisions, but if the parent also has recognized needs, the parent's circumstances should also be taken into consideration.

- **Parents' recognized needs**

- No parent in a household is able to care for their children due to participation in one or more of the following activities:
 - Employment;
 - Attendance at an educational program, including lab work, field placements, co-op placements, practical, and case studies/team meetings;
 - Attendance at a training program, including lab work, field placements, co-op placements, practical, and case studies/team meetings;
 - Study/preparation associated with education or training; and
 - Travel associated with the above activities.
 - Other circumstances, such as (but not limited to) the following:
 - In the opinion of a medical or other relevant professional, a parent is unable to care for their child because of an illness or disability (if there is another parent, they are engaged in activities as noted above);
 - No parent in a household is able to care for the child in between participation in activities as noted above (for example, while sleeping during the day after working the night shift, etc.); and
 - A parent who already has a child care fee subsidy becomes temporarily unemployed.

CMSMs/DSSABs are responsible for setting local policies regarding how much study/preparation time to permit per parent. Policies should take into account the workload associated with the educational/training programs in which parents are involved.

In circumstances where a parent is not participating in any of the activities listed above, but still requires child care, or needs child care in between periods of participation, determining the appropriate amount of child care to subsidize may be more complex.

CMSMs /DSSABs have discretion to determine the appropriate amount of subsidized child care based on a consideration of the parent’s needs and what would be in the best interests of the child.

It is not possible for this policy statement to capture every specific situation in which it may be appropriate to provide subsidized child care. There may be situations where parents are facing exceptional circumstances, and CMSMs/ DSSABs will need to address those situations on a case-by-case basis.

1.H RECOGNIZED NEEDS FOR PROVISION OF ONTARIO WORKS CHILD CARE

The following is a list of reasons for needing child care that are to be considered by CMSMs/ DSSABs, when determining the amount of child care for which to provide Ontario Works child care funding.

- Parents’ recognized needs
 - No parent in a household is able to care for their children due to participation in:
 - Employment assistance activities under the OWA; and
 - Travel associated with the above activities.

It should be noted that Ontario Works child care funding is not the only mechanism through which Ontario Works participants may receive assistance with their child care costs. They may also have access to child care fee subsidies. If an Ontario Works participant wishes to access a child care fee subsidy, their needs should be considered in accordance with the recognized needs set out in the fee subsidy section of this document.