

12 June 2020



To all families, service users and students enrolled in Mothercraft programs:

This week the provincial government announced that child care centres across Ontario would be allowed to open as of today. I am writing to share what is known thus far, how Mothercraft intends to proceed and when families might expect child care operations to resume. For all non-child care service users/students, we have not received any directives regarding the re-opening of Mothercraft's other services (EarlyON, special needs supports, early intervention services or academic programs). As a result, all of those services remain closed until further notice and virtual services will continue to be provided.

Following Tuesday's announcement, guidelines were issued by the province – the licensing body for child care in Ontario – outlining what must be in place before opening, including the expectation that local public health units may identify additional requirements. We expect the City of Toronto will also have protocols to follow. To date, neither Toronto Public Health nor Toronto Children's Services have issued their guideline documents.

We are very concerned about the financial implications of the provincial guidelines and promises recently made by the government. As you may have seen in the media, child care centres must limit groupings to a maximum of 10 people per room (including children and staff); six in infant rooms. This means lower revenues and higher staff costs. Extra staff will be needed at each site to carry out screening and monitoring activities as well as enhanced cleaning protocols. Staff can only work at one location, which creates complexities with replacing anyone who may need to be off work due to illness or other absences. Personal protective equipment and site modifications are additional costs we need to absorb. All of these requirements, coupled with commitments made this week by the Minister of Education mandating child care operators to save spaces for families for up to one year without charge if they do not wish to return to a centre due to COVID, will seriously jeopardize the financial viability of many child care centres in Ontario, including Mothercraft's. The province has indicated that they will unveil a financial framework to support the re-opening of child care soon. I am cautiously optimistic it will address these very serious concerns.

At this point, I cannot say when Mothercraft will be in a position to re-open its child care centres given all of the above. Nor do we know when our other programs will be able to open but please be assured that we will continue to communicate with all service users/students as more is known and we feel comfortable setting specific dates. As always, feel free to contact program managers at any time should you have questions. I wish you continued good health and thank you for your patience.

Sincerely,

Michele Lupa, Executive Director

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|  Head Office EarlyON Child and Family Centre Robertson House Centre for Early Development 32 Heath Street West Toronto, ON. M4V 1T3 Tel: 416.920.3515 Fax: 416.920.5983 |  Mothercraft College Community Data Group 646 St. Clair Ave. West Toronto, ON. M6C 1A9 Tel: 416.483.0511 Fax: 416.483.0119 |  Early Intervention Breaking the Cycle Parent Infant Program 860 Richmond St. West Suite 100 Toronto, ON. M6J 1C9 Tel: 416.364.7373 Fax: 416.364.8008 |  Toronto Eaton Centre Centre for Early Development 14 Trinity Square Toronto, ON. M5G 1B1 Tel: 416.340.9651 Fax: 416.340.7407 |  Brookfield Place Centre for Early Development 10 Front Street West (Mail: 161 Bay St) Toronto, ON. M5J 2S1 Tel: 416.367.1758 Fax: 416.367.3839 |  CITYKIDS 32 Heath Street West Toronto, ON. M4V 1T3 Tel: 416.920.6543 Fax: 416.920.1543 |  Magic Castle Princess Margaret Hospital 610 University Ave Toronto, ON. M5G 2M9 Tel: 416.946.4501 ext. 5157 |
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