

Introduction

The 2010-2014 Toronto Child Care Service Plan is the City's fourth service plan since 1993. The City in its role as Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) of child care services in Toronto is required to develop and submit a service plan to the Province of Ontario for approval. Once approved by Toronto City Council, the service plan forms the basis of the contract between the City and the Province for provincial cost sharing. The service plan is much more than a statutory requirement of provincial funding. The plan forms the foundation – and is the framework – that guides planning and decision making in Children's Services. The plan provides a comprehensive overview of child care service needs, gaps, issues, goals and actions and identifies the mix and level of child care services appropriate to local needs and priorities.

Development of the 2010–2014 Child Care Service Plan

This plan sets directions to address strategic leadership, quality, access and equity, system integration, and the transition to an early learning system. It is organized into three sections:

1. Toronto's Child Care System
2. Pressures on the Child Care System
3. Setting Directions

This plan has been developed within Toronto's Strategy for Children. Through the plan's principles, it sets the course for managing resources to address new policy directions and pressures over the next five years (or term of this service plan). It adheres to the following principles and policies approved by Toronto City Council in December 2008 with a subsequent amendment in May 2010 adding the words "including those with special needs" to principle e:

- a. Service access based on age and geographic equity
- b. Publicly planned and accountable service outcomes
- c. Service options consistent with informed parental choice
- d. First-come, first-served admission to subsidized care
- e. Recognition that child care services provide developmentally appropriate beneficial care for children, including those with special needs, as well as important family and community support
- f. Recognition that services for children and families should be planned and delivered in an integrated way that promotes seamless service transitions
- g. Agreement that expansion of the child care system take place through public and/or not-for-profit delivery
- h. Commitment to advancing quality and directing resources to the improvement of quality for children's services in Toronto.

In developing the Child Care Service Plan, Children's Services embarked on community engagement with its stakeholders, including service providers and users. In the spring of 2009 stakeholders were asked to provide feedback on the principles of the service plan. This included a web-based survey for users and operators (Appendix A), face to face meetings with users and presentations to existing networks and planning groups. These groups included Children's Services Advisory, Child Care Advisory, Best Start Network, Aboriginal and French Language Networks, and various City divisions. The feedback was considered in developing the plan and a summary of responses is found in Appendix B.

The development and release of the 2010-2014 Child Care Service Plan was postponed due to the anticipated release of *With Our Best Future in Mind—Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, a report to the Premier by the Special Advisor on Early Learning, Charles E. Pascal, and the subsequent Provincial announcement on early learning. Following the Provincial announcement, Children's Services presented an overview of the plan's principles and an update on its goals and key strategies in the spring of 2010. These presentations were given to existing networks and planning groups across the city. Feedback from these sessions is reflected in the strategies outlined in this report. In addition, an amendment to the principles to address special needs was recommended.

Although not all services are legislatively mandated in the Province, Children's Services performs the following roles:

→ **System planning** – improving equitable access to child care services through:

- Service planning
- Capital development
- Co-ordination of planning activities with other municipal divisions and non-government organizations
- Support for service delivery, planning and advocacy through technology
- Placement of eligible clients in accordance to the principles of equity

→ **System management**

- Determining eligibility, financial assessment and placement of subsidized clients
- Payments to service providers on behalf of subsidized clients
- Funding of family support programs
- Support to children with special needs attending child care programs
- Funding of wage subsidies for programs providing child care services

→ **Quality assurance** – promoting and ensuring quality child care services through:

- Operating Criteria for child care centres, licensed home child care, family support programs, special needs agencies and After School Recreation Care programs (ARC)
- Maintaining a Serious Occurrence Reporting System as a quality assurance and training tool
- Training opportunities for child care providers, including anti-racism, anti-bullying, child abuse reporting, inclusion, financial management and Early Learning for Every Child Today framework.

→ **Direct delivery** – Municipal Child Care Services

- Operating 57 child care centres and one home child care agency in Toronto
- Setting priorities to address the child care needs of the city's youngest and most vulnerable children
- Planning and delivery of services following the principles of the Toronto Child Care Service Plan