

Attendance Policies and Procedures in Municipal Child Care Centres

Date:	April 23, 2009
To:	Community Development and Recreation
From:	General Manager, Children's Services
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

A report on attendance policies and procedures in municipally operated child care centres was requested by Councillor Frances Nunziata at CD23.6 as a result of an incident at Hollis Resource Child Care Centre, a municipally operated child care centre in Ward 11, York South-Weston. The report includes information on the Division's attendance Policies and procedures, and the actions taken to ensure the policies and procedures are followed.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This report will have no financial impact.

DECISION HISTORY

None.

ISSUE BACKGROUND

A letter from Councillor Frances Nunziata, Ward 11, York South-Weston of March 23, 2009 to the Chair and members of the Community Development and Recreation Committee was received. It concerned an incident at Hollis Resource Child Care Centre, a municipally operated child care centre, whereby a preschool child was left unattended in the child care centre for more than four hours after the centre had closed. The letter was referred to the General Manager, Children's Services, to report back on the attendance policies and procedures in municipally operated child care centres, and the actions taken to ensure these policies and procedures are being followed. Councillor Nunziata also asked whether a review of these policies is required.

The attendance policies and procedures in municipally operated child care centres are outlined in the Children's Services Municipal Child Care Services (MCCS) Child Supervision Policy and the MCCS Attendance Procedures. The latter procedure was introduced in 2008 to enhance the "Statement of Child Supervision Policy". Both are attached as appendices to this report. The Attendance procedure was introduced to ensure that attendance is verified for each child during arrival, transitions and departures. Copies of the policy and procedures are available in every municipal child care centre. All centre staff are trained on MCCS policies as part of their orientation and staff are required to sign off that they have read and understand the policies and procedures and have reviewed MCCS expectations of them. Their annual sign off is witnessed by management and placed on file. Every municipal child care centre is also subject to an annual quality assessment by Children's Services Consultants using the Operating Criteria, which includes a review of supervision policies and attendance procedures. The results of this assessment are posted on the Children's Services web-site.

The incident at Hollis Family Resource Centre was a very serious, but fortunately is an isolated incident. Due to the seriousness of the incident, the following actions were taken.

The General Manager immediately initiated a review of attendance practices in all municipal child care centres.

At Hollis Resource Child Care Centre, the Children's Services Consultant responsible for monitoring compliance with the operating criteria worked with the MCCS Program Manager and the Centre Supervisor to establish enhanced supervision and monitoring practices related to attendance. This was implemented immediately following the incident.

At the same time, the Director of Municipal Child Care Services established an "Enhanced Monitoring Initiative" for all 57 municipally-operated child care centres. It consists of the following steps:

- 1) All MCCS Supervisors were directed to meet with their staff teams to discuss the importance of making sure that centre staff know at all times where the children are and who they are with.
- 2) Each staff member was to be given a copy of the Child Supervision Policy and Attendance Procedures for their reference and to clarify the expectation of accurate attendance records at all times.
- 3) All MCCS Supervisors were asked to develop with their staff a site specific action plan that takes into account the uniqueness of the specific program, and submit it to their Program Manager within 10 days. Action plans must ensure that at the end of each day, a visual check of the centre is completed and that attendance records are reviewed to confirm that all children are properly marked out.

- 4) All MCCS Supervisors were given a template to complete at random times throughout the week in each room as an extra check. A check must consist of: verbal confirmation with staff of the number of children in the room, attendance form check and head count of children in the room. All aspects of the check must match. They were asked to confirm that they have undertaken at least one or two random checks per room each week at different times of the day.

Children's Services child care consultants are currently visiting all municipal child care centres to review the action plans with the Centre Supervisors and ensure there are no outstanding attendance management issues, and that the centres are in compliance with the operating criteria. The visits to the 57 sites will be completed by the end of June 2009.

COMMENTS

Toronto Children's Services primary concern is for the safety and well being of the children in our care. The Division has clearly defined policies relating to the supervision of children and well established procedures and practices for ensuring the safety of the children entrusted to its care. The incident at Hollis Resource Child Care Centre was a very serious but fortunately an isolated incident. However, due to the seriousness of the incident, in addition to the actions taken at Hollis Resource Child Care Centre, the General Manager initiated an overall review of the Child Supervision Policy and Attendance Procedures in all municipal centres. This report outlines these actions.

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SIGNATURE

Nancy J. Matthews, General Manager of Children's Services

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Children's Services Municipal Child Care Services Child Supervision Policy
- 2) Children's Services Municipal Child Care Services Attendance Procedures