



REPORT FOR ACTION

Extending Purchase Order #6041569 for the Longitudinal Study on the Impacts of Child Care Fee Subsidies

Date: November 19, 2019

To: Economic and Community Development Committee

From: General Manager, Children's Services

Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report seeks approval to extend a partnership to conduct longitudinal research that will contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding the impact of affordable child care on child and family outcomes. The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education has partnered with Toronto Children's Services to conduct research that will demonstrate how child care fee subsidy impacts child cognitive, language and school readiness outcomes as well as parental behaviours and responsiveness. The research project requires an extension of the original five-year partnership, which started in 2014, for successful completion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Children's Services recommends that:

1. City Council authorize the General Manager, Children's Services to extend purchase order #6041569 with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto for an additional two-year term, ending December 31, 2021, to enhance and quantify the evidence base supporting the impacts on child care fee subsidies on children, families, financial partners and the greater economy.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There is no financial impact contained in this report.

Purchase order #6041569 was issued in 2014 for \$523,034 to support this research. Life-to-date expenditures against this commitment total \$326,572. It is anticipated that

the remaining \$196,462 will be sufficient to conclude the research project no later than 2021.

The additional funding requirement is included in the 2019 and future years' Operating Base Budgets for Children's Services.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

EQUITY IMPACT

Child care fee subsidies are an essential service provided to eligible families with financial need to help afford child care, allowing families, especially women, to focus on education, training and employment.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of February 19 and 20, 2014, City Council adopted CD26.4, authorizing the General Manager, Children's Services to enter into a contract with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto for a five-year longitudinal study.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2014.CD26.4>

BACKGROUND

As service system manager for child care, Toronto Children's Services Division administers 30,700 fee subsidies across the city, enough to support 33 per cent of Toronto's low-income children. There are currently over 15,700 children on the wait list for fee subsidy.

In 2014, Toronto Children's Services entered a five-year partnership with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto to undertake a longitudinal study to measure the impacts of fee subsidy on child and family outcomes. The research examines the effects of receiving or not receiving a child care subsidy on child developmental outcomes such as school readiness measures, cognitive and motor outcomes. The research also explores family indicators including workforce participation and productivity.

COMMENTS

When completed, this research will be the only quantitative measure of the impacts of receiving a fee subsidy on child development and family outcomes. Currently, this longitudinal study follows 400 children from infancy to school entry, while measuring the outcomes of 200 children who receive a fee subsidy and 200 who do not. Given the large size of the research cohort, recruitment of families took place over one and a half

years. Although the original anticipated completion date was December 2019, due to delays in recruiting participants it is expected that the project will be completed in December 2021. At present, the research project is 75 per cent complete.

This study allows Children's Services to learn as the research progresses. Children's Services has already benefited from the initial findings regarding recruitment and how intake services can work more effectively with families. As a result of study findings, Children's Services has reduced the number of missed appointments by adopting text message appointment reminders for families. Moving forward, this study will provide insights into those families who leave the child care system and why children might move through multiple centres. In addition, it will provide information on families who do not receive a fee subsidy and their life experiences. The lived experiences of these families are presently not available to Children's Services. OISE has also recently entered into a partnership with the Toronto District School Board that will allow the researchers to continue to follow the study group through entry to kindergarten. This will allow further exploration of the impact a fee subsidy may have on student achievement.

This research contributes to the evidence base guiding Children's Services provision of fee subsidies, by quantifying the social and economic return on investment in child care.

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SIGNATURE

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