
2024 OPERATING BUDGET BRIEFING NOTE

EarlyON Child and Family Centres

Issue/Background:

- At its meeting on January 18, 2024, Budget Committee requested the General Manager, Children's Service, to provide a briefing note on the following:
 - The total cost of the Ontario Early Years program;
 - Who pays to administer the Ontario Early Years program;
 - The number of Ontario Early Years sites in Toronto; and
 - What has been the change in investment over time as the population grows.
- With the release of the *Ontario Early Years Policy Framework (2013)* and the *Ontario's Renewed Early Years and Child Care Policy Framework (2017)*, the Ontario Ministry of Education laid the ground work for the transfer of responsibility for the local planning, development and management of Ontario Early Years Child and Family Centres (OEYCFCs), to Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) beginning in 2018.
- These centres, previously known under four different names: Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Better Beginnings Better Futures Programs and family resource programs, have been integrated and are being delivered under the common identity of EarlyON Child and Family Centres.
- EarlyON Child and Family Centres offer free programs to parents/caregivers and their children (prenatal to six years of age). These programs support parents and caregivers in their roles, foster early learning and development, and connect families to broader community supports (e.g., employment centres, specialized support services, culturally relevant associations, etc.).

Key Points:

- As the service system manager for early years' programs, Children's Services is responsible for system planning and funding for EarlyON Child and Family Centres in alignment with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and Ministry of Education guidelines.
- Currently, Children's Services holds service agreements with 52 third-party service providers, operating a total of 255 individual EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Toronto. Children's Services provides an up-to-date [interactive map](#) to the public to support service providers and families in locating centres.

- The total 2024 funding allocation for EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Toronto is approximately \$38.670 million in gross expenditures, almost all of which supports operating costs for service providers.
 - The program is cost-shared, with \$11.519 million funded by the Federal government, \$24.522 funded by the Provincial governments, and \$2.629 million funded by City contribution. Of this total, \$4.783 million of the allocation is dedicated to support specific Indigenous-led Child and Family Programs, funded 100% by the Province.
- While the annual funding allocation for the EarlyON Program is not indexed to inflation on an annual basis, overall funding has increased by approximately 16% since the 2018 transfer, driven primarily by increases to federal and provincial contributions through the *Canada-Ontario Early Learning and Child Care Agreement*.
- For many service providers, expenses exceed available funding provided through the total annual allocation. To mitigate these pressures, organizations use a variety of sources for additional support, including self-funding, fundraising, and external funding partnerships (e.g., United Way). In some cases, EarlyON Child and Family Centres have also had to reduce service hours in order to address funding shortfalls.
- As part of the effort to address these structural deficits, Children's Services continues to advocate to the Province through joint provincial-municipal staff technical tables, and in partnership with the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) for incremental investments to support the EarlyON Program. This was formally communicated this to the Ministry of Education through the Provincial/Municipal Technical Table and reported on it to [Council in 2019](#).
- The Division is also undertaking work using a consultative approach to develop cost-of-service benchmarks that will support a consistent, equity-based approach to funding and service expectations within funding constraints, with a prioritization of serving areas with the largest inequities.

Prepared by: Shanley McNamee, General Manager, Children's Services, (416) 392-8128, ShanleyMcNamee@toronto.ca

Further information: Shanley McNamee, General Manager, Children's Services, (416) 392-8128, ShanleyMcNamee@toronto.ca

Date: January 22, 2024