

# CHILD CARE FUNDING MODEL

## FACT SHEET: FULL-TIME ACCESS TO SERVICE POLICY

### OVERVIEW

Operators have discretion to set the hours of service for their childcare centres. In some cases, part time hours of operation have resulted in a patchwork of services for families in receipt of fee subsidy, with some families needing to access multiple child care programs to fill all of the days and hours for which they need care. This is particularly challenging when considering waitlists and the high demand for childcare. The need for full-time childcare for families was raised during consultation with families and the funding model stakeholder consultations.

Responding to this, a policy of the funding model requires that Operators receiving a fee subsidy agreement provide "full time access" to care. Operators can apply for an exemption to this policy if the exemption criteria is met.

### WHAT IS "FULL-TIME ACCESS"?

Full-time access refers to the number of hours throughout the day and number of days throughout the year that a program is available to families. The required number of hours and days is different depending on the age of the child, as explained in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Definition of Full-time by Age Group

Age Group	Definition of Full Time
Infant, Toddler and Preschool Groups	Provides a minimum of 7 hours continuous service per day for a minimum of 11 months/239 operating days per calendar year.
Kindergarten and School Age groups	Provides a minimum of 11 months/239 operating days which includes a minimum of before and after school during instructional school days and 7 hours continuous service per day during non-instructional school days.

### HOW THE POLICY IS APPLIED

The policy is applied in two ways, depending on whether an operator is a new applicant for a fee subsidy agreement or has an existing fee subsidy agreement as of December 31, 2015.

#### Operators applying for a Service Agreement for Fee Subsidy who do not currently have a service agreement for fee subsidy

If the Operator:

- **meets** full-time access to service criteria **no further action is necessary**
- **does not meet** full-time access to service criteria, they are **not be eligible** for a fee subsidy agreement

## Operators with a current Service Agreement for Fee Subsidy

If the Operator:

- **Meets** full-time access to service criteria, **no further action** is necessary
- **Meets** full-time access to service criteria **but is planning a reduction to hours of service resulting in less than full time access (7 hours continuous service)**, the operator is **not eligible** for an exemption, and may have their fee subsidy agreement and, if applicable, General Operating Grant Service Agreements, terminated.
- **Meets** full-time access to service criteria **but is planning a reduction to days of service resulting in less than full time access (239 days of service)**, the operator may apply for an exemption if the exemption criteria are met (see page 3):

***If the exemption is approved***, the centre retains its current fee subsidy and retain any Legacy General Operating grant component of funding. The General Operating Grant component of funding will be re-calculated to reflect the centres actual operating days.

***If exemption application is not received or is not approved***, the fee subsidy agreement and, if applicable, General Operating Grant Service Agreements may be terminated.

- **Does not meet full-time access to service criteria, the centre:**

- retains its current fee subsidy agreement and its Legacy General Operating Grant component of funding, as long as there is no change in capacity.
- is not be eligible for the General Operating Grant component of funding.

If a centre is serving Infant, Toddler and Preschool children for a full day, but less than 239 days a year, it **may apply for an exemption** for additional General Operating Grant funding if it meets one or more of the exemption criteria (see page 3).

***If the exemption is approved***, the centre is eligible for a General Operating Grant (GOG). The amount of GOG it receives will be calculated based on its actual days of operation, and in accordance with the GOG guidelines. Centres that have a Legacy General Operating Grant component should consult the guidelines to see how this could impact the amount of GOG funding they receive.

## WHAT IF A FEE SUBSIDY AGREEMENT IS TERMINATED?

In any scenario where an operator has a fee subsidy agreement and the agreement is terminated, the General Operating Grant funding agreement will also be terminated

## CRITERIA TO MEET TO APPLY FOR AN EXEMPTION

One or more of the following criteria must be met to apply for an exemption:

- **Merged programs:** One or more programs merge to one location for periods of the year (e.g. Christmas and summer break period) and continue to provide services for all families requiring care. Families must be aware of this practice upon admission to the program;
- **Religious observance:** Additional days of closure are clearly documented and are for religious observance;
- **No need for care:** All families have been surveyed three months prior to the planned closure and it has been confirmed there is no demand for care;
- **Financial/operational hardship:** Providing full time service will cause financial/operational hardship on the operator due to extremely low demand for service.

## HOW TO APPLY FOR AN EXEMPTION

Operators who wish to apply for an exemption may submit a letter of request to their Children's Services Consultant. Operators whose service is changing from full time to part time, will need to apply for an exemption three (3) months prior to the change in service in order to have their exemption request considered.

The letter of request must explain the reasons for requesting an exemption and must demonstrate how one or more of the above exemption criteria are met.

Children's Services will review the circumstances for each exemption request and provide a written response to the Operator confirming if the request is approved or denied.