



EarlyON Child and Family Centres

2021 Operating and Business Practice Guidelines

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Section 1: Introduction

Toronto Children's Services (TCS) is pleased to release the 2021 Operating and Business Practice Guidelines for EarlyON Child and Family Centres. This document includes the policy, operational and business practice requirements, and program standards for EarlyON Child and Family Centre service providers who have a Service Agreement with TCS. These guidelines are effective January 1, 2021 and align with the requirements set out by the Ministry of Education.

Due to the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is understood that the landscape is changing regularly. Any additional requirements or program limitations established by Toronto Public Health or the Ministry of Education will supersede the requirements outlined in these guidelines and will be clearly communicated to the sector in a timely manner. Any immediate changes to the regular requirements are noted throughout the document.

Toronto's EarlyON Action Plan

TCS' EarlyON Action Plan (2018-2020) was released in Fall 2018 and was intended to guide system transformation activities from 2018 to 2020. In 2020, the following goals of the Action Plan were accomplished:

- Launch of the EarlyON Managers Networks
- Program Enhancement and Capital Grant Projects
- Virtual Service Guidelines
- Electronic Budget Reporting App

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, several activities and projects identified within the EarlyON Action Plan have been deferred, including:

- Inclusion Model
- EarlyON Program Standards Guidebook and Implementation Tool
- Electronic Registration and Sign-In System
- Funding Framework
- Indigenous Cultural Safety professional learning sessions

Please Note: The launch and completion of these projects will be dependent on alignment with local public health guidance and available resources. Updates will be provided through the EarlyON Leadership Network and email communications, as needed.

Section 2: EarlyON Service Model and Core Services

Toronto's EarlyON Mission Statement

EarlyON Child and Family Centres:

- Support families and promote healthy child development by building strong connections and facilitating access to services that enhance well-being;
- Provide free, inclusive programs delivered by qualified professionals for families, caregivers and children (Prenatal to six years of age), and;
- Reflect their communities and respond to local needs by working with other health and social service providers and program participants.

Toronto's EarlyON Sector Goals

- **Increased Access:** All EarlyON Centres will provide access to an integrated, inclusive early childhood and family system that provides a “no wrong door” approach to accessing community services.
- **Greater Equity:** All EarlyON Centres will apply an equity lens to their programs to ensure services are responsive to the diverse needs of Toronto's families.
- **Higher Quality:** All EarlyON Centres will offer consistent, high-quality services that are guided by evidence informed standards and evaluation tools.

All the activities identified in the EarlyON Action Plan are intended to support the achievement of these goals. We look forward to continuing to identify new and innovative ways to meet the needs of children and families across the City.

Mandatory Core Services

To achieve the intended outcomes of EarlyON Child and Family Centres, the Ministry has identified the following suite of mandatory core services that must be available to children and families at every EarlyON Centre and through virtual/remote programming as follows:

Engaging Parents & Caregivers	Supporting Early Learning & Development	Making Connections for Families
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting conversations and information sharing about child development, parenting, nutrition, play and inquiry-based learning, and other topics that support their role; • Collaborate with responsive support programs to enhance parent and caregiver well-being, enrich adult-child interactions and to support them in their role(s); • Providing targeted outreach opportunities designed for parents and caregivers who could benefit from Child and Family Centre programs and services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drop-in programs and other programs and services that build responsive adult-child relationships and encourage children's exploration and promote play and inquiry. <p>*Please note: the delivery of drop-in in-person programs is subject to approval by Toronto Public Health and the Ministry of Education.</p> <p>Please stay tuned as guidance on this type of programming may change at any time during the pandemic response period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to a parent/caregiver concern about their child's development through conversations and observations • Sharing information and facilitating connections with specialized community service as appropriate. • Ensuring Child and Family Centre staff have relationships with community partners and an in-depth knowledge of their community resources. • Providing Information about programs and services available for the whole family beyond the early years.

Additional programming and services, including registered programs, should only be provided once the core services are in place. To support parents and caregivers in their role, organizations are expected to collaborate in the delivery of specific programs or services and link parents to the appropriate accessible community resources.

EarlyON Program Standards

Developed in 2019, the Toronto EarlyON Program Standards help to guide and empower program leaders and staff to strengthen and plan their programming and environments in alignment with the provincial EarlyON core service requirements. These evidence-informed program standards foster and support a culture of learning through inquiry and reflection that leads to ongoing responsiveness to participant needs as well as building a common awareness and understanding of what program practices are evidence-informed and how they contribute to quality.

The Standards are organized into 11 areas that reflect evidence-informed approaches to implementing high quality child and family services and supports.

- Standard I: EarlyON programs are accessible and welcoming to all, implemented using an inclusive and equity-based approach.
- Standard II: EarlyON programs meet the diverse needs of participants and communities using a family-centred approach.
- Standard III: EarlyON programs support parent/ caregiver well-being, confidence, and competence using a strengths-based approach.
- Standard IV: Regular and targeted outreach is conducted.
- Standard V: EarlyON programs create environments that engage children and adults in children's learning and development.
- Standard VI: EarlyON programs promote responsive adult-child relationships and children's well-being through all areas of programming.
- Standard VII: EarlyON programs plan and implement programs and activities to encourage children's exploration, play and inquiry.
- Standard VIII: Children's developmental progress is observed and discussed.
- Standard IX: Parents/caregivers receive information about relevant local community services.
- Standard X: Partnerships are established with other local community services.
- Standard XI: Monitoring and evaluation practices are implemented to ensure continuous quality improvement and informed decision making.

Note: These standards are also applicable to EarlyON virtual and remote services. We encourage organizations to reach out to their EarlyON Consultant if you have questions on how to embed these standards in your practice.

Pedagogical Framework

EarlyON Child and Family Centres deliver programs that reflect the view of children, parents, caregivers and educators as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential and experience. Guided by *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years (HDLH)*, EarlyON Child and Family Centres provide an environment that engages parents and caregivers as co-learners and leaders in influencing positive child, family and community experiences and outcomes. Local service providers and school boards offering EarlyON Child and Family Centres programs and services are expected to use HDLH to guide the development and delivery of local programs.

Indigenous-led Child and Family Programs

Indigenous organizations that operate Indigenous EarlyON Child and Family Centres are expected to meet the same EarlyON core services requirements, while providing holistic and culturally responsive programming for Indigenous children and families. Indigenous mobile programs (Fathering, Language and Land-based programs) must meet the original program mandates as described in the expression of interests and are not required to deliver the EarlyON core services. Indigenous-led Child and Family Programs are funded as part of a provincial initiative to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action.

Virtual Service Guidelines

Developed in response to COVID-19, the EarlyON Virtual Service Guidelines outline key expectations for EarlyON and Indigenous-Led Program providers who wish to deliver accessible and high-quality virtual services. They include policy, operational and business practice requirements and are to be used when in-person services cannot be delivered and to guide virtual services that complement in-person service delivery.

Section 3: Operational Policies and Procedures

1. Qualified Staff Teams and RECE Requirement

Note: It is understood that it may not be possible to meet the RECE staffing requirement during the COVID-19 response period.

Programming in EarlyON Child and Family Centres should be designed to foster positive outcomes and support nurturing relationships for children, parents and caregivers based on the latest evidence and research. Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECE) play a key role in delivering high quality early years programs and have specialized knowledge and expertise in child development and play and inquiry-based learning.

Children's Services is required to ensure that qualified staff teams are responsible for delivering programs and services at every EarlyON Centre. Qualified teams delivering in-person programs and services **must include at least one** Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE). Whenever possible, it is recommended that programs are delivered by at least two program staff to support the delivery of the full suite of core services, including offering opportunities for early identification and referrals.

EarlyON staff who have a degree or diploma in Early Childhood Education are legally required to register with the College of ECEs as they are working within the scope of practice outlined in the *Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007*. Staff with Early Childhood Education training must register regardless of their employment title or training requirements for their position. For more information on who is required to join and how to register, you can visit the College of ECE website at www.college-ece.ca.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres have the flexibility to determine the appropriate mix of staff and specialized skill sets that is required to be responsive to community needs. For example, staff with expertise in family support, parent engagement and adult education are also highly beneficial given the importance of engaging and meeting the unique needs of parents and caregivers.

RECE Absences

If an RECE is going to be absent for two weeks or less, organizations are expected to find an RECE or another suitable professional to support the delivery of EarlyON programs.

If an RECE on staff is absent for more than two weeks (planned or unplanned), the organization is expected to find another RECE to provide coverage in the area of early learning and development. It is suggested that organizations develop a process in advance to address absences.

RECE Exemptions

Grand-Parenting Provision

Staff in EarlyON Child and Family Centres with more than 10 years of experience prior to January 2019 working in one of the four previous family support program types listed below are not required to obtain their RECE credential:

- Ontario Early Years Centres
- Parenting and Family Literacy Centres
- Family Resource Programs
- Better Beginnings, Better Futures

Grand-parented staff can be used to meet the RECE staffing requirement outlined in the previous section. The grand-parenting provision does not apply to staff who have satisfied the educational requirements to be registered as members of the College but have not yet become members. In addition, this provision does not apply to new hiring for positions that will oversee the delivery of mandatory core services related to supporting early learning and development. For any new hiring for such positions, EarlyON Centres are required to recruit an RECE.

Annual Exemptions

Where an EarlyON Child and Family Centre is unable to recruit at least one RECE or staff with ten years of experience, TCS may grant a temporary, one-year exemption.

The requirements and procedures for requesting RECE exemptions are outlined in the RECE Exemptions for EarlyON Child and Family Centres Policy (see Appendix A). All requests must be made through the EarlyON Budget Application, in the "RECE Qualification" step. Agencies are required to provide an action plan that describes how they will fulfill the RECE requirement as part of the exemption request. If there isn't sufficient space in the Budget Application, providers should e-mail their action plan to their EarlyON Consultant. TCS Consultants will follow up to monitor progress on action plans.

All granted exemptions will be for the operating year identified in the request form and last no more than one year. Service providers can re-apply for a staff person or position that was granted an exemption for all of or part of the previous operating year resulting in an exemption period of no more than 5 years per staff person. This does not apply if the staff has a diploma or degree in Early Childhood Education as they are required to register with the College. Service providers are expected to fulfill all RECE staffing requirements by January 1, 2023.

Qualifications Upgrade Program

EarlyON Child and Family Centres are encouraged to identify and support eligible exempted staff to pursue upgrading their qualifications. The Early Childhood Education Qualifications Upgrade Program (ECE QUP) supports individuals working within the early years sector who have been accepted to an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology to pursue their Early Childhood Education (ECE) diploma and become eligible to apply for membership with the Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE).

Service providers are encouraged to learn more about the Qualifications Upgrade Program, which is available to reimburse tuition fees and other expenses associated with obtaining an ECE diploma for staff currently working in the early years sector.

The program includes a leadership grant stream to support professional development for program staff and leaders. For more information, please visit the program's website.

2. Parent / Caregiver Fees

EarlyON Child and Family Centres provide publicly funded, free programs for children and families and services funded by TCS, and must be available to families, free of charge. Fees cannot be charged for any EarlyON Child and Family Centre programming including excursions, events or special guests. Organizational membership fees that are tied to access to an EarlyON Child and Family program are not permitted. This is to ensure that all families have access and can benefit from the services provided.

3. Child Supervision

Please Note: Child minding cannot be offered during the COVID-19 response period.

EarlyON Child and Family Centre service providers may offer child minding services during parent/caregiver registered programs, or other community services offered at the same location as the EarlyON Centre, provided that parents/caregivers remain onsite in accordance with requirements under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.

The number of child minder(s) provided will be in accordance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* as set out for unlicensed child care. The ratio between

child minders and children will be as follows:

Maximum of 5 children under 13 years old, but no more than 2 children under 2 years old per child minder.

Parents/caregivers are expected to supervise their own children at all other times while attending an EarlyON Child and Family Centre.

4. Respite Care

Please Note: Respite care cannot be offered during the COVID-19 response period within an EarlyON Centre, even when funded through another source.

Respite care cannot be provided using funds provided by TCS for EarlyON Child and Family Centres. Respite care funded through other sources cannot be provided in the same room(s) and at the same time as TCS-funded EarlyON programming. Respite care refers to child care provided on a temporary, short term basis within a child and family centre where the parent leaves the premises.

5. EarlyON Leadership, Manager and Staff Networks

Toronto Children's Services is committed to developing a multi-faceted engagement model by creating new forums to improve information-sharing, planning, professional development and capacity-building, coordination and collaboration. The EarlyON team produces a newsletter 2-3 times per year that provides EarlyON-related updates and information to all EarlyON providers across the City.

The EarlyON Leadership Network is designed for leaders within EarlyON organizations to network, identify emerging issues, ask questions and promote dialogue on the EarlyON Child and Family System. Meetings are held in a central location or virtually when needed.

The EarlyON Manager Networks are quadrant-based and offer EarlyON Program Managers the opportunity to meet 3-4 times per year to collaboratively support program development, service coordination and collective learning and understanding regarding the use of community-based data.

EarlyON Staff Networks provide a structure for professional learning, information sharing, capacity building, collaboration and networking for EarlyON program staff. Staff Networks take place three times annually in each quadrant of the City. There is also a French language network available for French-speaking staff.

Each EarlyON service provider is required to ensure that program staff from their organization attend at least two Staff Network sessions per year. Organizations are allowed and encouraged to close their regular programs up to a maximum of three times per year to support staff participation in the network. Planned closures need to be communicated in writing to your EarlyON Consultant and communicated a minimum of one week in advance to families.

Each organization is also encouraged to establish an internal learning dissemination plan to ensure that staff not in attendance receive relevant information from the sessions.

6. Required Health and Safety Policies

Please Note: Additional health and safety requirements may be established by Toronto Public Health and the Ministry of Education during the COVID-19 response period. In the event of any contradictions, requirements established by Toronto Public Health will supersede the requirements outlined in this document.

TCS is required to ensure that appropriate policies are in place and updated to ensure that EarlyON Child and Family Centres are delivered in a way that promote the health, safety and well-being of children and families being served. EarlyON Child and Family Centres must be operated in accordance with all federal, provincial and municipal legislation and regulations, policies and guidelines, including (but not limited to): fire code, building code, health, municipal, infection prevention and control, employment, pay equity, human rights, and workplace health and safety.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres are expected to maintain these policies, provide staff training with regards to their application, and inform families about them as part of their orientation. These policies must be made accessible for review by Children's Services staff when requested. Providers are not expected to submit individual policies for review.

Vulnerable Sector Screens

All EarlyON Child and Family Centre staff, students and volunteers are required to have a vulnerable sector screen. Vulnerable sector screen documents should be kept in the staff files. Declarations are to be completed annually and screening is to be updated every 5 years.

First Aid

All EarlyON Child and Family Centre program staff are required to have standard first aid and CPR training. Certificates of completion should be kept in the staff files.

Emergency Plans

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must have written policies that require all staff to be aware of and comply with the following required documents and procedures:

- Written evacuation procedures that specify duties of staff members in the event of a fire and align with requirements from Toronto Fire Services;
- A procedure for testing fire equipment/alarm system on a regular basis;
- A procedure for fire drills;

- Written fire evacuation procedures should be posted in conspicuous places for parents/caregivers;
- Program space capacity needs to comply with Fire Code regulations;
- Documented quarterly fire drills that include participants;
- Designated place of shelter;
- Emergency information collected for each staff person;
- Emergency phone numbers are posted by all phones;
- First Aid kits are accessible and well stocked; and
- Crisis Response procedures and action plan are in place.

Environmental Cleaning and Maintenance

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must develop, maintain, and implement procedures to address infection prevention including cleaning requirements in the following areas:

- Washrooms
- Hand hygiene
- Diapering/toileting
- Play spaces
- Toys and equipment
- Offices and meeting spaces

These procedures should identify whom, when and how often cleaning takes place. Procedures for how repairs and maintenance issues will be addressed should also be identified. Consultation with Toronto Public Health is recommended.

Food Safety and Handling Practices

All kitchen and food preparation areas are required to be kept in good repair and maintained in a hygienic condition. In Centres that serve food, at least one staff must have attended a Food Handler course. Verification of completion should be available at the location.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must also have an allergy policy that addresses preventative measures and responses to allergies and anaphylactic allergies at the Centre. Consultation with Toronto Public Health is recommended.

Complaints and Resolutions Processes

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must have written procedures for resolving complaints from the public that include the process to receive, assess and respond to complaints.

Parents/caregivers are also able to send complaints to EarlyON@toronto.ca. Upon receipt of a complaint, Toronto Children's Services will contact the organization in question to work collaboratively to determine an appropriate resolution to the issue.

7. Serious Occurrence Reporting and Duty to Report

Serious Occurrence Reporting

***Please note:** Please refer to Toronto Public Health guidance on enhanced serious occurrence reporting requirements related to COVID-19 in addition to the direction provided in this document.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres are required to report serious occurrences to TCS for monitoring and follow up, within 24 hours of the occurrence, and using the same categories as Serious Occurrences reported by licensed child care under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* (CCEYA).

The Serious Occurrence categories are as follows:

- the death of a child or adult;
- abuse, neglect or an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child while participating in a program;
- a life-threatening injury to or a life-threatening illness of a child or adult while participating in a program;
- an incident where a child goes missing or is temporarily unsupervised, or
- an unplanned disruption of the normal operations of an EarlyON program that poses
- a risk to the health, safety or well-being of children

Serious Occurrences must be reported to the TCS EarlyON Consultant and the EarlyON e-mail account (earlyON@toronto.ca) within 24 hours of the incident.

To ensure the above policies and procedures are consistently followed, EarlyON Child and Family Centres must have in place a Serious Occurrence Policy that includes:

- definitions in line with those outlined in the CCEYA;
- reporting requirements and process that mirror those of the City;
- contact information for reporting occurrences to the City of Toronto;
- expectations of staff and supervisor;
- follow-up procedures; and
- processes for review of policy with all staff.

Duty to Report

Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children, is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. EarlyON Child and Family Centres must have a policy that clearly identifies that people working closely with children have a special awareness of the signs of child abuse and neglect, and a particular responsibility to report their suspicions. Anyone with reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be in need of protection must report it to a Children's Aid Society. More information on the duty to report, what happens when a report is made, and how to recognize signs of abuse and neglect can be found at www.children.gov.on.ca.

8. Other Required Policies

Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must have a written policy that outlines procedures to ensure programs adhere to the Ontario Human Rights Code and to the Declaration of Compliance with Anti-Harassment/Discrimination Legislation & City Policy. Agencies have signed the Declaration of Compliance.

Inclusion Policy

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must have a written policy that describes the procedures and practices in place that ensure that programs are accessible and welcoming of all families and children as described in the EarlyON Program Standards. This applies equally to in-person and virtual programming.

Privacy Policy

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must have a policy that outlines the process of keeping families' information confidential and in accordance to *the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) / Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*.

9. Visual Identity and Branding

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must follow the Visual Identity Guidelines released by the Ontario Ministry of Education for all EarlyON signs and promotional materials in November 2017.

The ministry will continue to provide partners with the opportunity to order EarlyON signage for permanent, temporary and/or mobile EarlyON Centres to build awareness and consistency of the brand for families across the province. For further information on EarlyON signage or to submit a request, please contact: EarlyON@Ontario.ca.

10. EarlyON Consultants

Communication with Toronto Children's Services

Each EarlyON service provider has been assigned an EarlyON Consultant who acts as a single 'point of entry' for communication and support for their EarlyON Child and Family Centre(s). Consultants are responsible for maintaining ongoing lines of communication with service providers, providing operational and capacity building support, and supporting local service planning and integration efforts. Consultants are also responsible for monitoring the Service Agreement, EarlyON Operating and Business Practice Guidelines, and EarlyON Program Standards.

EarlyON Consultants are also available to act as a liaison with other City Services. If organizations need to connect with other Divisions from the City (e.g., Parks and Recreation), they should contact their assigned Consultant for support.

Service providers may contact EarlyON@toronto.ca if they are unable to reach their assigned Consultant.

Reporting Changes

Approval is required prior to making any changes that impact funding or service agreements with TCS including:

- Service changes including hours or days of operation;
- Changes to service locations;
- Changes in staffing information and main staff contacts;
- Budgetary changes; or
- Emergencies requiring program re-location or closure.

Service providers will be asked to provide supporting information or documentation that describes the context and rationale for the change, potential impacts on families, the community and the program, and a plan to implement changes and address any issues or challenges.

EarlyON service providers are to engage with TCS before requesting program and/or location changes. Because changes have implications on resources for families, service providers are highly encouraged to engage service users to inform program changes whenever possible.

Timely updates on any service changes are also critical to ensure that families can access the most current program information through the TCS website and resources. A key objective for EarlyON Child and Family Centres is to increase awareness and access to programs for families.

Service Locations

EarlyON Centres are expected to operate in the same location with a regular and predictable schedule. Programs should not relocate every 6 – 12 weeks unless pre-approved by TCS.

All EarlyON Child and Family Centres must be located in buildings that are accessible to families, in good working order, and where possible co-located or in close proximity to other relevant community services in public buildings.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres that require renovations are encouraged to update their spaces as funds become available and should use the EarlyON Design Guidelines to guide any space upgrades and enhancements.

Section 4: Operating Information and Service Data Reporting

Overview

Monitoring and evaluation are key components of establishing a system that nurtures and supports evidence-informed decision-making and responsive programming. TCS is committed, in partnership with service providers, to developing a service reporting and data management framework that emphasizes program outcomes, adds value to service system planning efforts, and meets Ministry requirements. TCS is continuing to work with community partners to develop and tailor data definition, collection, analysis, and reporting systems to support EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Toronto.

Outcomes and Evaluation

Outcome monitoring and evaluation help ensure that the EarlyON system is accessible, equitable and of high quality and that EarlyON Centres have a positive impact on participants, their families and communities. In support of this direction, one of the new program standards is focused on centre use of monitoring and evaluation.

EarlyON Centres play a pivotal role in ensuring data initiatives are supported, implemented and effective. The basic overall system approach for strengthening monitoring and evaluation capacity and activity for 2021 is presented in Table 1. There is explicit reference to the role EarlyON Centres will assume for each aspect of monitoring and evaluation. Dependent on public health conditions and guidance, in 2021 TCS will be introducing a secure, centralized, electronic registration and sign-in solution to standardize and support the collection of basic data elements such as number of unique participants and number of visits.

Using Evidence-informed Planning

The Toronto Child & Family Network has advanced an approach to measuring well-being outcomes of children and families in Toronto through Raising the Village: Improving Outcomes for Toronto's Children and Families. Further, the Aboriginal Advisory and Planning Committee of the Toronto Child & Family Network supported the development of Indigenous Outcomes as part of Raising the Village. Toronto will aim to align monitoring and evaluation activities for EarlyON Child and Family Centres to complement and advance the population-level outcomes identified through these frameworks.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres are expected to have monitoring and evaluation procedures in place. Centres should refer to the EarlyON Program Standard related to monitoring and evaluation practices to obtain details on process, frequency and use of information collected. EarlyON Child and Family Centres should use data, research, and evidence to inform outreach strategies, program planning and decision-making.

Operating Information

Service providers are required to report operating information in the EarlyON Budget Application and are expected to provide updated operating information as necessary. See detailed information in Section 5 under 2021 EarlyON Child and Family Centres Budget.

2021 Service Data Reporting Requirements

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must report service and financial data semi-annually to TCS, this process is aligned with TCS data reporting to the province. Service data is collected to obtain information on service usage and to inform service system planning activities. The provider-level data elements described below are intended to be collected and 'rolled up' across all EarlyON Centres that a service provider operates. Centre-level data is required for each individual location where programs are offered.

Data requirements for EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Toronto for 2021 are based primarily on Ministry reporting requirements. A list of required data elements and definition of terms is provided in the chart below.

EarlyON Child and Family Centres must provide timely updates to TCS in the event of any changes to contact information (primary program contact, phone numbers, addresses, etc.). This information is shared with the province for use in the provincial EarlyON webpage for parents/caregivers.

Please Note: Data collection requirements related to both in-person and virtual services may change in response to future provincial direction.

List of Data Elements and Definitions

Organization Level Data

Data Element	Definition
Reporting period	Reporting period as either interim (January 1 to June 30, 2021) or annual (January 1 to December 31, 2021).
Organization Name	Name of organization that signs the contractual agreement with TCS.
Organization ID	Identification number of organization assigned by TCS.
EarlyON Child and Family Centre	An EarlyON Centre is a consistent physical location where the full range of core services are offered and families can participate in-person. All of these activities support early learning and development, engage parents and caregivers, and make connections for families.
Number of purchase of service agreements for EarlyON Child and Family Centres	Number of purchase of service agreements held between the EarlyON funded provider and other service providers for the delivery of EarlyON programming.
Number of FTE program staff	The number of full-time equivalent (FTE) staff (in the organization and purchased centres) who are involved in the development, design and delivery of EarlyON Child and Family Centre programs and services. Full-time equivalent is based on a minimum of 35 hours/week at an EarlyON Child and Family Centre.
Number of FTE non-program staff	The number of full-time equivalent non-program staff (including cooks, drivers, housekeeping, clerical, and financial staff and chief administrators) employed by EarlyON Child and Family Centre organization. Full-time equivalent is based on a minimum of 35 hours/week. This excludes FTEs to deliver planning and data analysis services.

Data Element	Definition
Number of FTE program staff who are RECEs	The number of full-time equivalent program staff who hold an RECE. Full-time equivalent is based on a minimum of 35 hours per week at an EarlyON Child and Family Centre.
Number of FTE staff who received a RECE Exemption	The number of FTE program staff that have been granted exemptions from the RECE requirement (excluding the grand-parenting provision). Full-time equivalent is based on a minimum of 35 hours/week.
Number of FTE staff receiving an RECE exemption through the Grand-Parenting provision	The number of FTE program staff that have been granted an exemption from the requirement of having an RECE because they have 10 or more years of experience working with same centre in one of the following: Ontario Early Years Centres, Parent Family Literacy Centres, Family Resource Programs, and/or Better Beginnings, Better Futures.
Number of virtual service sessions	<p>The total number of virtual service sessions held.</p> <p>For "Recorded sessions" this would correspond to the number of videos posted.</p>
Number of virtual service participants	<p>The total number of individual log-ins joining a session whether parents/caregivers or children. One logged-in participant could correspond to multiple people, for example, 2 children and an adult joining a session through one connection. For consistency in reporting, they should be counted as one participant.</p> <p>For "Recorded sessions", this would correspond to the number of views per video.</p> <p>The number of participants is not intended to measure the unique number of participants. As such, the Year End Totals would correspond to the total number of log-ins to virtual sessions and could count the same participants numerous times.</p>

Data Element	Definition
Number of interactive virtual child-focused sessions	These are interactive child-focused sessions held virtually through an online meeting platform. Children and parents/caregivers log-into a virtual meeting and can participate (e.g. live story time).
Number of recorded virtual child-focused sessions	These are videos of child-focused activities developed by the EarlyON program staff. These could be pre-recorded or live streamed and made available for the public to watch.
Number of facilitated virtual parent/caregiver discussions	These are virtual meetings held for parents and/or caregivers to discuss topics related to their children aged 0-6 years old. These could be 1-on-1 sessions or group sessions to discuss a common topic.
Outreach - Number of hours, number of activities and type of activities or events	<p>Number of hours allocated to outreach using different strategies.</p> <p>Number of outreach events or activities.</p> <p>Type of outreach activities such as displays, presentations, partnership tables, stakeholders meeting, public events, open houses, etc.</p>

Centre Level Data

Data Element	Definition
Location name	Name of the program/centre, this refers to the naming convention and how is listed in the website (e.g. Parkway Forest EarlyON Child and Family Centre).
Location type	The type of location as either centre or mobile site.
Organization ID	Identification number of organization assigned by TCS.
Loc ID	Identification number assigned by TCS for the location of an individual centre or mobile service.

Data Element	Definition
Number of children served (in-person)	<p>The number of children, age 0 – 6, that received core services at some point during the calendar year. A child is reported in the initial six-month period in which he/she received services (January-June) and is only counted once in a calendar year.</p> <p>For example, if 15 children received service between January and June, this would be reported at the end of June. If five additional children received service during July – December, 20 children would be reported at the end of December. The total number is cumulative.</p>
Number of visits made by children (in-person)	The total number of visits children made to the EarlyON Centre to participate in a core service. The total number is cumulative.
Number of parents/caregivers served (in-person)	<p>A parents/caregiver is reported in the initial six-month period in which he/she received services and is counted only once during the fiscal year. For example, if 15 parents/caregivers received service between January and June, this would be reported at the end of June.</p> <p>If five additional new parents/caregivers received service during July – December, 20 parents/caregivers would be reported at the end of December. The total number is cumulative.</p>
Number of visits made by parents/caregivers (in-person)	The total number of visits parents/caregivers made to the EarlyON centre to participate in a core service. The total number is cumulative.

Section 5: 2021 Budget and Business Practices Requirements

Purpose and Overview

The primary purpose of these guidelines is to assist the user in understanding the budget process and in completing the budget submission accurately. This document also provides an overview of the City's funding responsibilities, the responsibilities of funded service providers, and a brief outline of the budget analysis conducted by

Children's Services.

Budgets and Their Use to Service Providers and Children's Services

TCS uses the annual budget submission as a mechanism to ensure accountability for the use of public funds which the City extends to service providers. Service providers will use the funds provided only for expenses that directly support the operations of EarlyON Child and Family Centres in the City of Toronto.

Budgets are basic planning tools used by organizations. They provide the user with an overview of operations within an organization. The funding paid to the service providers with whom the City has a Service Agreement are set based on budgeted cost information. As a result, ensuring the reasonableness of the budget information submitted by funded organizations is of critical importance.

Budgets that are submitted with costs that exceed the annual funding stipulated in the service agreement with the agency cannot be approved. You will be directed through the Budget Application to correct over-expenditures. Agencies can agree to cover the increased costs from other sources of revenue. The allocation provided to Children's Services for the funding of EarlyON is a fixed allocation by the Ministry of Education (MEDU). Children's Services ability to address agency's increased costs are contingent on MEDU funding and/or Council approval to increase the budget for Children's Services who then will determine the funding priorities for the sector. This may or may not include increases to agency funding.

What is Budget Analysis?

Analysis of budgets entails a review by TCS of amounts reported in revenue and expense categories by the organization, to ensure reasonableness. Budget analysis also includes a review of the financial health of an organization. The analysis is conducted based on knowledge of the operations of EarlyON Child and Family Centres.

City of Toronto Funding Responsibilities

TCS enters into Service Agreements with EarlyON service providers who provide a set of core services to children and their parents/caregivers which: engage parents and caregivers, support early learning and development, and make connections for families. The City contracts with agencies to provide these services through drop-in, registered and virtual programs. These organizations are required to submit an annual budget which TCS will analyze to ensure reasonableness and compliance with all applicable guidelines and policies.

Service Provider/Organization Responsibilities

Budget

- All funded EarlyON service providers must submit an operating budget that reflects revenue and expenditures at all locations they operate.

- Service providers should be aware that if employees or service workers employed by the Organization work at an EarlyON location as well as at other locations for the Organization, then the Organization must only include their pro-rata share of direct EarlyON salary and/or expenses to the EarlyON budget. An example could be the salary of a cleaner that is used at multiple EarlyON Centres and a non-EarlyON program site. In that case, the cleaner's salary should be prorated to the time spent cleaning the EarlyON site(s).
- A number of supporting documents must be submitted with the annual budget. Failure to submit the required information may result in sanctions being applied. This may include suspension of quarterly payments. Please see the sanctions section for more information. Organizations may be required to provide additional supporting documentation to justify, the reasonableness of allocated expenses.
- The service provider must inform their TCS Consultant immediately of changes to staffing levels, service levels, or any other changes that may affect the approved budget as these may affect the funding level.
- Any planned changes to the operating information detailed in your online budget submission must be forwarded to the TCS Consultant prior to the changes becoming operational. Please note providers will not be able to make changes to their budget submission in the EarlyON Budget Application once it has been submitted and approved.
- A Service/Financial Report must be submitted twice a year. When the variance is more than 10%, a written explanation of the reason for the variance is required.

Audit and Audited Financial Statements

In accordance with TCS and provincial guidelines, all EarlyON Service Providers are required to submit organization audited financial statements. Audited financial statements must be completed in the required format and submitted within four months of the organization's fiscal year end, unless otherwise agreed upon with Children's Services. If the organization is unable to meet the deadline, an extension can be requested in writing. Failure to submit the audited financial statements will result in sanctions being applied, this may include suspending quarterly payments.

Financial Statement audit submission must contain an Independent Auditors Report (Opinion Statement) signed by a Licensed Public Accountant who is at arm's length from the Agency. It is the responsibility of the Agency to confirm the auditor has a valid license to perform Audits in Ontario. For more information about Auditors, Audits and Review Engagements, please contact the Certified Professional Accountants Association of Ontario

Organizations will be required to **revise and resubmit** audited financial statements that:

- Do not comply with Canadian Auditing Standards;
- Are not prepared based on the appropriate accounting standards;

- Are not completed by a Licensed Public Accountant.
- Are not in compliance with TCS Audit Guidelines and financial reporting requirements,
- Do not present revenue and expenses using the same format as in the approved Budget.

For more information related to the required format of the audited financial statements, please review the Audit Guidelines for Agencies, which is available on the 'Early Learning & Child Care Partners - Contract & Financial Information' web page.

Surplus

- Any unspent or surplus funds identified in the audit will be recovered either through a recovery or a reduction in subsequent payments.
- Organizations are required to submit Annual General Meeting (AGM) Minutes to Children's Services. Organization AGM Minutes for 2020 will be submitted to Children's Services in 2021.

Governance

- Definition of Board of Directors should be in adherence with the Not for Profit Corporation Act.
- Joint signature by two Signing Officers of the Board of Directors are required for cheque signing purposes for Not for Profit organization.
- Board members' contact information should be different from that of the organization and deemed to be used for professional purposes. Any changes should be forwarded to Children's Services.
- The list of Board Members, Signing Officers, and other agency contacts must be kept current in the Online Services Contacts and User Management tab. Instructions on updating this information can be found in the Contacts and User Management Guide, which is available on the 'Early Learning & Child Care Partners - Online Services ' web page.

Insurance

- The current minimum level for general liability insurance is \$2 million. As insurance coverage is renewed, a copy of the updated certificate of insurance must be submitted to Children's Services. The certificate must list all EarlyON program delivery locations, contain a cross liability clause, and name the City as an additional insured.

Financial Records

- As per the Organization's Service Agreement with the City, financial and service records must be made available to City staff upon request. The City may request

access to these records any time during the term of the Agreement and for seven years after the expiry or termination of the Agreement.

- In order to ensure compliance with funding guidelines, City staff may also request from the Organization, additional backup and supporting documentation relating to revenues, expenses or any other information contained in any report submitted to the City. These reports include the semi-annual and annual reports and annual Audited Financial Statements, among others.

2021 Budget Guidelines for EarlyON Child and Family Centres

A budget must be submitted for each EarlyON Service Provider through the online portal. Budgets will be completed at an organizational level. This budget shall be reflective of the costs of operating programs at all of the EarlyON Centres the organization operates, including funding provided through subcontracting arrangements with other agencies. This budget is intended to demonstrate to TCS how the organization's 2021 base allocation will be spent. There are spending limitations detailed in each section below that TCS will fund. Agencies may choose to fund amounts over the funding allocation with their other non-City funded revenue sources.

The EarlyON Budget Application include validation rules based on the requirements outlined below and will display error or warning messages if there are any issues that would prevent you from being able to submit your budget electronically.

Officers of the Board and Other Organization Information – Key Contacts Management Page

Complete the required information on the 'Key Contacts Management' page of the Budget Application. Any changes to the Board Members must be submitted to Children's Services. This also applies to changes in Signing Officers.

Child and Family Centre Operating Information – Operation Days and Operation Hours Pages

Up-to-date operating information will assist TCS in providing accurate information on EarlyON Centres to families, as well as contribute to system planning decisions.

In the 'Operation Days' page, service providers must list the planned closure dates and identify the number of operating days in the year.

In the 'Operation Hours' page, for each program type (Drop In and Registered), you must indicate the program start and end times for each day of the week, for each location. The Total Number of Hours should reflect the actual number of service hours available for parents/caregivers to access service, not the hours that the site or building is open. For example, if the program's operating time are from 9:00-3:00, with a one-hour lunch break at 12:00, only 5 hours of service would be recorded for that program on that day.

Staffing

Salaries, wages, and benefit costs comprise a large majority of expenses in a service organization. Therefore, specific detail related to this category will be required and particular emphasis will be given to this area of the budget during analysis.

No salary can exceed the maximum salary paid by the City for equivalent job requirements. Salary amounts greater than the City's Salary Range will not be funded by EarlyON. Agencies may choose to fund amounts over the limit with their other non-City funded revenue sources.

Please note: this applies even if a salary is only partially covered through EarlyON funding and the amount claimed is less than the maximum amount. For example, if 30% of an administrative staff's salary is claimed as an EarlyON expense, TCS EarlyON funding can only be used to cover up to 30% of the maximum salary allowed for that position.

The base salary for all staff must meet Provincial minimum wage standards. Effective October 1, 2019 the minimum wage is \$14.25 per hour.

2021 Salary Schedule

Please Note: Salaries are subject to settlement of compensation for City of Toronto staff.

Program Staff	City of Toronto Salary Range	City of Toronto Hourly Range
Supervisor & Program Coordinator (35 hour week)	\$88,979 to \$104,540	\$48.89 to \$57.44
Program Staff (35 hour week)	\$64,411 to \$70,581	\$35.39 to \$38.78
Casual/Supply Staff	-	\$17.32 to \$34.85
Administration (35 hour week)	\$120,658	\$66.30

Staffing Information – Staffing List Page

Staff Position

Please complete this page providing the information for all staff employed by your

organization for the delivery of EarlyON programs. Do NOT include on this page the names and details for any staff that are part of a subcontracted organization that are delivering services on your behalf. Do NOT include salaried, casual, supply, or relief staff here.

Provide the following information for each position for which the budget is being submitted, all fields are mandatory:

The position (equivalent position types based on level of responsibility are described below);

- The staff name;
- The staff ID/employee ID (this would be the ID used by your organization. If your organization does not have employee ID numbers, you will need to assign a number for each employee for the Budget Application);
- RECE (select Yes or No); Grand-parented Staff (Select Yes if staff has been with the organization for 10+ years).
- Hourly rate;
- # of hours per day; and
- # of days per year

Program Coordinator

The Program Coordinator is a staff person who leads and coordinates the delivery of EarlyON programs, potentially across multiple EarlyON Centres. The Coordinator may be involved in direct service delivery.

Supervisor

The Supervisor is a staff person who supervises EarlyON programs, typically at one specific site but could be responsible for multiple EarlyON Centres.

Program Staff

Program staff work in the direct delivery of EarlyON programs, and include all staff serving the public accessing the programs (e.g. receptionists).

Contracted Caretaker/Cleaner

Cleaning services provided to the centre by an individual not on the service provider's payroll or by a company that issues the centre an invoice for its services (i.e. non-salary) and should be recorded in 'Cleaning/Housekeeping'.

Casual/Supply Staff

Casual/supply staff are staff who are brought in on a temporary basis to cover vacancies during the year due to staff vacation, parental leave, medical leave, etc. Casual/supply staff are distinct from permanent staff positions. Up to **10%** of the total program staff salaries is allowed under these categories to defray the cost of hiring casual employees to replace regular program staff.

Administration Staff

Allowable administration costs are those related to staff (individuals or organizations) who perform administrative functions and should include salaries only. Business travel, office expenses, audit or professional fees, etc. are **not** considered allowable administration expenses and should be recorded under the appropriate expense category (Business travel, Office Related, Business Costs, Professional Fees, etc.).

There are two sub-categories of allowable administration expense: salaried administration and contracted administration. If any salaried employees perform administrative tasks, enter their annual salary (excluding benefits) and percentage allocated on page 4 of the budget. Individual salary amounts allocated to TCS may not exceed the maximum City salaries as per the 2021 Salary Schedule.

If a contracted individual/organization performs administrative tasks, the details should be recorded under Contracted Administration of the budget. Contracted Administration is only paid to a third party and not to an individual employed by the organization and paid through payroll.

Children's Services will fund up to **10%** of the Organization's total program funding for administration costs.

Administration costs are reviewed for reasonableness as part of the budget analysis process, irrespective of the maximum allowable amount.

Other Revenue

The Other Revenue page provides additional fields for you to enter other revenue sources earned or received that will be used towards supporting your EarlyON Child and Family Centre(s). Amounts entered on this page will be carried over to the Other Revenue field in the Operating Budget summary page.

Organization Operating Budget

Budget

Record projected revenue and expenses for 2021. Projected revenue should be based on your 2021 base allocation, and projected expenses should demonstrate how this allocation will be distributed to maintain current service levels.

Surplus / (Deficit)

The surplus / (deficit) line allows agencies to report any planned over or under expenditures for 2021. When completing the 2021 budget, the surplus / (deficit) line should be used by agencies to balance budgeted expenditures against anticipated revenues. Agencies in a surplus position will have those funds recovered and those in a deficit position will be required to submit a detailed deficit letter/business plan with their budget.

Revenue

As detailed in the Ministry of Education EarlyON Child and Family Centres Business Practices and Funding Guideline for Service System Managers (2020), all EarlyON programs are required to be offered free of charge. Parent fees must **not** be collected for any City of Toronto funded child and family programs.

City of Toronto Program Funding

Enter the amount of funding received from TCS for EarlyON Child and Family Centres.

Other Revenue

This line will be populated according to your input on the Other Revenue page.

Expenses

Program Salary

Salary paid to staff who perform direct services to parents/caregivers and children.

Administration Staff

Allowable administration costs relate to staff that perform administrative functions. Business travel, office expense, audit or professional fees, etc. are not allowable administration expenses and should be recorded under the appropriate expense category. Expenses recorded as administration are for individuals or organizations that perform administrative services for the EarlyON Child and Family Centres.

Contracted Administration

If your organization contracts for administration staff, enter the total cost here (e.g. contracting for payroll support)

Benefits

Enter the total value of staff benefits. Please note that benefits, including both mandatory and non-mandatory benefits, are not allowed to exceed **25%** of total staffing costs.

Supply Staff/Casual

Up to 10% of the total salary costs for staff (excluding administration) are allowed under this category to recognize the cost of hiring supply staff to replace regular program staff that are absent or on vacation. Salaried supply staff are those employed by the agency i.e. the agency issues them a T4 or T4A slip. Contracted supply staff are those who are not employed by the agency; rather they are employed by an outside agency who invoices the centre for the services rendered.

Program Related

Include in this category expenses incurred in the direct delivery of core services, (excluding salaries, wages, and benefits). This may include:

- Supplies purchased that are individually less than \$5,000 such as inquiry-based play materials, equipment, or furnishings, as well as maintenance costs related to the general upkeep, safety, and maintenance of EarlyON Child and Family Centre facilities.
- Transportation services to support outreach and program participation,
- Information/resources for families to support parents/caregivers in their role.

Rent

Copy of the current lease(s) must be submitted to TCS and will be retained on file. The lease agreement must support the rent expense included in the budget. If the lease agreement specifies an amount that is charged for utilities and maintenance, these costs should be reported separately from rent under the utilities/maintenance expense line.

In certain cases, a lease letter is acceptable. The letter must be updated annually and include the following:

- Amount of rent expense;
- Address of the rental property, which must correspond to the location of the organization/centre;
- Length of the lease; and
- Description of space being used for the EarlyON Child and Family Centre, or the amount of square footage being used, or the percentage of building occupancy. If the percentage of the building occupancy is included it must be reasonable based on the Consultant's knowledge.
- Documents must be signed, dated and be on the letterhead of the landlord/property management company/property owner.

School Board Permit Fees

Permit fees paid to a school board by EarlyON Service Providers that are not already paid to the school board directly by the City under the School Occupancy Agreement. A copy of the invoice is required to support the permit fees included in the budget submission.

Utilities/Maintenance

Include costs for utilities and maintenance and for the repair and upkeep of the property related to the EarlyON Child and Family Centre(s).

Property Taxes

Property taxes applied to the EarlyON Child and Family Centre should be reported under this category, separate from rent or mortgage carrying costs. If property taxes are incorporated into your rental agreement and monthly rent expense, do not enter property taxes separately on this line.

Business Costs

Include in this line non-staff based administrative/overhead costs related to program management and contracting, e.g. externally contracted IT support. RECE membership fees **are not** an eligible expense for EarlyON Child and Family Centres.

Office Related

Items purchased for office use that are less than \$5,000 such as advertising, telephone, and bank charges are reported in this category.

Professional Fees

Professional fees include audit fees. It does not include bookkeeping costs, which are to be reported in administration (salaried or contracted).

Other

Include in this line any operating costs incurred as a result of transformation activity and/or business transformation supports such as integrating, sun-setting, establishing or relocating centres (e.g. legal fees, lease termination, moving, business planning, recruitment and on-boarding of new staff, staffing transitions). Please provide a description for the expense item in this line.

Start-Up Costs

TCS may have pre-approved start-up costs for new program locations including purchases of equipment, furnishing and other individual assets. Start-up costs should not be included in the budget submission. Start-up costs must be pre-approved and will

only be paid after all receipts and supporting documents have been received. Start-up purchased assets are required to be fully expensed within the same budget year.

Sanctions and Penalties

In order for the City to effectively manage EarlyON Centres and to maintain our reporting obligations to the Ministry, TCS may exercise the right to apply sanctions and penalties to uphold business deadlines. Agencies who fail to submit required budgets, reports and other documents on a timely basis may be subject to the following sanctions and penalties below. Agencies may request an extension in writing from their Consultants in the event of extenuating circumstances.

- Forfeit their funding increases or grant eligibility if no submission is received by budget/grant deadlines
- Payment Schedule adjusted from Quarterly Advances to Monthly Advances
- Payments suspended until issue is resolved
- Further sanctions including, but not limited to: termination of Service Agreement and recovery of funds

Program Funding Level

Toronto Children's Services (TCS) determines increases for EarlyON service providers annually, based on the total costs for all contracted service providers and Council approved funding levels. The City may decrease funding levels based on budget analysis results. When the funding amount received from the City of Toronto changes the organization is issued a revised Schedule 3.1, listing the revised program funding level.

2021 Business Cycle and Requirements

The table below lays out key dates with respect to submissions required by TCS from service providers.

Requirement	Deadline
Budget Submission	December 31, 2020
Annual Year to Date Reporting July 1 - December 31, 2020	January 22, 2021
Semi-Annual Year to Date Reporting January 1 to June 30, 2021	July 16, 2021
Annual Year to Date Reporting July 1 - December 31, 2021	January 21, 2022
Submission of Audited Financial Statements	Within 4 months of the organization's year end
Occupancy Space Verification (only for programs located in Schools)	August 14, 2021
Centre Visits	Completed annually as per agreement requirements

Budget Submission

Organizations will be required to submit their budget through the EarlyON Budget Application. Please follow each step in the submission process in the application and press "Submit" at the end of the 'Financial Flow' page. No hard-copy will be required.

If you have any questions about the budget, please email EarlyON@toronto.ca.

Payment Process

Payments from TCS to providers can only be issued via direct deposit. Children's Services will not be able to issue written cheques. Payments are made quarterly to providers, based on 25% of the funding allocation detailed in Schedule 3.1. Payments are made as per the cycle described below. This payment cycle is subject to timely submission of financial and data reporting by service providers.

Appendix A: RECE Exemptions for EarlyON Child and Family Centres Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure compliance with the *EarlyON Business Practices and Funding Guidelines for Service System Managers (2019)* that outline the requirement for qualified staff teams to include at least one RECE to deliver mandatory core services related to supporting early learning and development at EarlyON Child and Family Centres. This policy also explains how TCS (TCS) will facilitate and monitor temporary RECE exemptions for EarlyON Child and Family Centres that cannot meet the new requirement.

Background:

EarlyON Child and Family Centre providers across Ontario are now required to meet the following staffing requirements as outlined in the *EarlyON Business Practices and Funding Guidelines for Service System Managers (2019)* from the Ministry of Education:

CMSMs and DSSABs are required to ensure that qualified staff teams are responsible

for delivering programs and services at every centre. **Qualified teams must include at least one Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) to deliver mandatory core services related to supporting early learning and development.** The Ministry recommends RECE qualifications for all team staff delivering services related to early learning and development beyond the minimum requirement of 1 RECE at every centre.

...Existing Child and Family Centres that do not currently have RECEs on staff must hire an RECE to deliver core services related to supporting early learning and development.

Exemptions:

Service providers can apply for an RECE Exemption where an EarlyON Child and Family Centre is unable to recruit at least one RECE to deliver core services related to early learning and development. The following requirements are outlined related to RECE Exemptions:

Where a Child and Family Centre is unable to recruit at least one RECE to deliver core services related to supporting early learning and development, the CMSM or DSSAB may grant an exemption from the requirement.

Exemptions are not meant to be extended indefinitely. Exemptions must be reviewed on an annual basis and CMSMs and DSSABs are required to monitor exemptions to identify challenges and develop strategies to support service providers in meeting the requirement. This may include transition planning, ensuring capacity to deliver core services related to early learning and development, and HR approaches (e.g. recruitment and staffing strategies).

Grand-Parenting Provision:

A grand-parenting provision was put into effect April 2019 that specifies that staff in EarlyON Child and Family Centres with more than 10 years of experience working in one of the four

previous family support program types are not required to obtain their RECE credential. Grand-parented staff can be used to meet the RECE requirement.

In order to qualify for this provision a staff person must have been employed for a total of 10 or more years as of January 1, 2019 in one or more of the following child and family programs:

- Ontario Early Years Centres
- Parenting and Family Literacy Centres
- Child Care Resource Centres
- Better Beginnings, Better Futures

Please note the following parameters for the grand-parenting provision:

- This provision does not apply to new hiring for positions, or to persons that have been members of the College of Early Childhood Educators in the past, but have had their membership suspended, cancelled or revoked, or who have resigned or let their membership lapse; and
- This exemption does not apply to those who have satisfied the educational requirements to be registered as members of the College but have not become members.

CMSMs and DSSABs will be required to report the number of service providers and number of staff that have been provided an exemption or have been grand-parented through financial reporting.

Interpretation:

The above requirements specify that service providers must ensure that aspects of their EarlyON programs and services that are intended to support early learning and development are delivered by at least one RECE or a staff person with at least ten years of experience in one of the four previous family support program types listed above. Other core services and administration do not necessarily need to be staffed with RECEs, and non-RECE staff can support RECEs to deliver programs and services that support early learning and development. Examples of programs that must be delivered by an RECE include, but are not limited to, drop-in or registered programs and services that build responsive adult-child relationships and encourage children's exploration, play and inquiry, supported by *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years*.

Procedures:

- EarlyON Child and Family Centre service providers must submit the EarlyON RECE Exemption Request Form with their annual budget submissions or at any time that a position requiring an RECE (see explanation above) cannot be filled with a qualified staff person.
- Following submission of an EarlyON RECE Exemption Request Form, TCS will review the program information and request form to determine if the exemption request will be approved for the current or upcoming operating year.
- TCS staff will follow up with service providers who have been granted an RECE exemption to monitor progress and support planned actions to fulfill RECE requirements

identified in request form. Appropriate actions to fulfill RECE requirements can include (but are not limited to) providers:

- supporting existing staff to apply to an Early Childhood Education diploma program through an Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology (OCAAT) and pursue funding through the Early Childhood Education Qualifications Upgrade Program (ECE QUP);
 - actively recruiting for an RECE staff person;
 - re-organizing schedules and/or roles to ensure an RECE is delivering required programs; or
 - coordinating between two or more locations or agencies to 'share' an RECE.
- TCS staff may ask EarlyON service providers to demonstrate implementation of their plan by providing concrete examples of actions taken to achieve the requirement. Examples can include (but is not limited to) TCS staff:
 - speaking to existing staff about the support provided by the centre to pursue upgrading or requesting academic reports;
 - confirming that part time RECE qualified staff were offered additional hours; or
 - requesting verification of job postings and/or of interviews held for the position.
 - Service providers will be required to update TCS once the RECE requirement is met and the exemption is no longer required or if an RECE position becomes vacant.
 - All granted exemptions will be for the operating year identified in the request form and last no more than one year. Service providers can re-apply for a staff person or position that was granted an exemption for all of or part of the previous operating year resulting in an exemption period of no more than 5 years per staff person who does not fall under the grand-parenting provision. **Service providers are expected to fulfill all RECE staffing requirements by January 1, 2023.**
 - Ongoing unwillingness to pursue an action plan and comply with the RECE staffing requirement may result in TCS withholding funds from the EarlyON service provider (in whole or in part) until the RECE requirement is satisfied, or until TCS is satisfied appropriate action is in progress to meet the requirement.

Reference: EarlyON Business Practices and Funding Guidelines for Service System Managers, 2020; Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014; Memo to Chief Administrative Officers, CMSMs and DSSABs Directors and/or General Managers, Ministry of Education, April 18, 2019.

Date Approved: November 2020

Date Last Updated: October 2020

Effective Date: November 2020