

## **Client Services**

### **Reopening Client Prioritization Guide**

#### **Purpose**

Toronto Children's Services is committed to providing guidance and recommendations to administer fair and equitable re-instatement of child care services and child care fee subsidies to the children/families that we serve.

#### **General**

On March 17, 2020 the provincial government declared a state of emergency, which included closing most child care centres in the Province in order to slow the spread of COVID-19. Although Emergency Child Care (ECC) was provided in certain child care centres as a measure to support provincially-determined essential workers during the COVID-19 outbreak, many families experienced a loss of child care services during this time.

On June 9, the province made the announcement that child care centres can reopen as of June 12, with restrictions. The full announcement can be read at:

<https://news.ontario.ca/opo/en/2020/06/ontario-helping-parents-return-to-work.html>

The Province released a set of guidelines that child care operators must adhere to in order to reopen safely. These guidelines can be found on the Ministry of Education's website at:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/child-care-re-opening-operational-guidance.pdf>.

Additionally, Toronto Public Health released local [guidance](#) that all Toronto child care operators must adhere to as they move towards reopening. The guidelines can be found at:

<https://www.toronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/9571-COVID-19-Guidance-for-Child-Care-Settings.pdf>.

Some of the requirements in the guidelines include limiting classroom sizes, which will reduce the overall number of child care spaces available to families.

Toronto Children's Services has planned for a phased-in approach to reopening child care services that will support the sector to reopen safely when they are ready. Toronto Children's Services recognizes that spaces may not be immediately available to all families as the sector reopens, but will continue to work with families and operators to return children to child care as spaces become available.

To support this process, Toronto Children's Services has developed recommendations to prioritize access to the limited number of available child care spaces in a manner that attempts to address the systemic barriers faced by Black, Indigenous, and equity-seeking communities. This approach is consistent with the Ministry of Education Child Care Re-Opening guidelines as well as Toronto Children's Services Recovery Principles which can be found here:

[toronto.ca/earlylearningpartners](https://toronto.ca/earlylearningpartners), and the goals of the [Toronto Office of Rebuild and Recovery](#).

## Procedure

1. Once operators are ready to open, they will send their attestation to the province and contact their consultant, who will coordinate the assignment of a caseworker. The caseworker will support operators whose families who are in receipt of child care fee subsidy in returning to care.
2. Operators will need to contact all families who were enrolled in their child care program as of March 17, 2020 to confirm whether the family is planning to return and if so, what their requested start date would be.
3. If demand from families exceeds capacity at a centre, Toronto Children's Services recommends considering the criteria below to determine the prioritization of limited child care spaces. These recommendations have been developed based on provincial guidelines and the direction that children who previously had a child care space will continue to have access. These recommendations are also consistent with Toronto Children's Services' plans for transitioning families back into its directly-operated (TELCCS) programs.
4. Once operators have contacted all families, considered enrollment planning, and are ready to begin placement, they will contact the assigned caseworker. The caseworker will complete the placements for all returning families and update the centre's waiting list for those who have chosen to defer their start date or who are unable to secure a placement and will have to continue to wait for a space.

**Ultimately, the decision of which families are prioritized in each centre is up to the operator. Operators are encouraged to have a transparent process for the staggered return of children during the phased return to full operations.**

The following recommended prioritization criteria are offered as a guide and recognize the goal of supporting employment, and the fact that the impacts of COVID-19 have exposed and deepened inequities experienced by Black and other equity-seeking communities, as well as by Indigenous communities.

Recommended Priorities	Process
<b>Priority Category 1 – Emergency Child Care (ECC) recipients who previously used child care in the agency</b>	Return families that were served through Emergency Child Care to their original placement.
<b>Priority Category 2 – Essential Workers who were not placed in ECC (and were previously receiving care in the agency)</b>	Return those families who are considered essential workers as defined by the province at: <a href="https://www.ontario.ca/page/child-care-health-care-and-frontline-staff">https://www.ontario.ca/page/child-care-health-care-and-frontline-staff</a> . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toronto Children's Services recommends that operators consider the following factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lone parent families;</li> <li>○ Two parent families where both parents are required to work;</li> <li>○ Families with children with extra support needs or families facing systemic barriers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Recommended Priorities	Process
<b>Priority Category 3 – Employed/Self-Employed (and were previously receiving care in the agency)</b>	<p>Return families who are employed or self-employed in any other sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toronto Children's Services recommends that operators consider the following factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lone parent families who are currently working or returning to work;</li> <li>○ Two parent families where both parent(s) are either currently working or must return to work;</li> <li>○ Families with children with extra support needs or families facing systemic barriers.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Priority Category 4 – Families with special circumstances (and were previously receiving care in the agency)</b>	<p>Return families with special circumstances that would benefit from children returning to care, such as children with extra support needs or families facing systemic barriers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toronto Children's Services recommends that operators consider the following factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lone parent families;</li> <li>○ This category may also include families who are students or who are looking for work who also have children with special circumstances.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Priority Category 5 – Students (and were previously receiving care in the agency)</b>	<p>Return families who are students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toronto Children's Services recommends that operators consider the following factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lone parent families;</li> <li>○ In two parent families, if one parent is a student, other parent must be employed, self-employed or in school.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Priority Category 6 – Looking for Work (and were previously receiving care in the agency)</b>	<p>Return families who are looking for work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Toronto Children's Services recommends that operators consider the following factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lone parent families.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>