

Child Care Options for Essential Services Workers during COVID-19**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS****Ministry of Children and Family Development**

Updated: March 30, 2020

- For non-medical-related questions about COVID-19, call 1-888-COVID19 (1-888-268-4319). Service is available from 7:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. seven days a week.
 - Call 811 or your primary care provider if you are concerned you may have been exposed to or are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19.
 - For general health-related questions, call 1-833-784-4397. Service is available from 7:00 a.m. to midnight EST.
 - For general information on COVID-19, see the BC Centre for Disease Control online resources at <http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>
 - If you think you may have symptoms, the BC Centre for Disease Control's self-assessment tool can help you determine if you need further assessment of testing for COVID-19: <http://covid19.thrive.health>
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Highlights

- We have developed a system for essential services workers who are in need of child care for children aged 0-5 to be matched with available child care spaces in their community.
- Working with child care licensing at the Ministry of Health, we are compiling a list of all child care centres that are open and have extra spaces, and we will be sharing this list with all contracted child care resource and referral (CCRR) centres across the province.
- Each CCRR will act as a hub and match essential services workers with local child care centres that have available spaces.
- Parents who work in essential services should fill in the following form at www.gov.bc.ca/ChildCareCovid-19Response which will be sent to their local CCRR. Parents will then be contacted by their local CCRR with available options.
- Parents of school age children should contact their school district directly.

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Q1. Is this matching service only for healthcare workers and first responders?

- This system is designed to ensure that parents who work in critical roles are able to access child care so that they can continue to provide the essential services that British Columbians rely on in their daily lives.
- Child care providers are to prioritize placements for children of essential service workers based on the following priority:
 - Tier 1 (highest priority): employed in Health and Health Services, Social Services, Law Enforcement, First Responders, and Emergency Response. For child care, Tier 1 also includes children referred by MCFD and Delegated Aboriginal Agency social workers. (For example, those who provide direct to public health services, like doctors, those who are health service providers like pharmacies, those who work in public safety like fire fighters and those who serve vulnerable populations like residential care for individuals with mental health and substance use challenges.)
 - Tier 2 (second priority): all other occupations not included in Tier 1 that are listed in the Essential Service Workers list. (This list includes grocery workers and others working as critical infrastructure service providers – see below.)
 - Tier 3 (third priority): all other families not employed in an occupation listed in the Essential Service Workers list. Accepting families in the third tier is not required but providers may offer spaces to parents in other fields of work who are unable to care for their children at home during this time.
- For the full list of roles that are considered essential services during this time, visit: www.gov.bc.ca/MCFD-COVID.

Q2. What options are there for someone who is not an essential service worker, but still needs child care?

- Parents who are not in an essential services role are asked to care for their children at home if possible or complete the form to find an available space nearby at a licensed centre after priority has been given to essential services workers.
- This is an extraordinary time and these measures are temporary.
- The Provincial Health Officer and B.C. Government have designated that essential services workers get priority access to child care so they can continue to provide the essential services that people rely on in their daily lives during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- We know that this is a challenging time for all families.
- We are asking everyone to do their part so we can ensure that we are able to provide the essential services people rely on in their daily lives during these extraordinary times.

Q3. If my child care is open, but I get turned away because I'm not an essential service worker can my centre still charge me fees?

- We are optimistic that most providers will take advantage of our emergency funding program that will allow them to continue to operate with reduced enrollment or, if they close, to meet their fixed operating costs like rent.
- Child care providers receiving these temporary emergency payments must not charge parent fees for any periods of closure, or for any vacant spaces while they're open, including when a parent chooses to temporarily withdraw a child due to COVID-19.
- The requirement not to charge parent fees if child care is not being used is to help support families who may be struggling with loss of employment and income.
- Temporary emergency funding will come into effect beginning April 1st for eligible licensed child care providers and if providers opt in, that will be the date when the requirement to waive parent fees will begin for those parents whose child is not attending child care.
- If providers do not opt-in to receive the temporary emergency funding then, although it is discouraged, they are still able to charge parents fees in order to hold a child care space.

Q4. I'm an essential service worker but my child is school age. Do I still fill in the child care request form?

- No, parents of school age children should not fill in this form.
- Instead, you are asked to contact your school principal to arrange care.

Q5. Is child care for essential service workers free during the pandemic?

- Child care will not be free during the pandemic, but many supports are available to reduce the cost to families.
- Centres will continue to be eligible for the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative and the Early Childhood Educator Wage Enhancement, and families accessing care from these providers can access the Affordable Child Care Benefit.
- The Province is also providing temporary emergency funding to support providers to remain open with reduced enrolment and ensure access to child care is maintained for essential service workers.

Q6. Once the form is submitted, what are the next steps for parents? Do they contact the Child Care Resource and Referral Centre?

- Once parents submit the form, their local CCRR will contact them with information on the child care spaces that are available nearby.

Q7. Is there funding/support for essential services workers who have private child care (i.e. a nanny) or do they have to put their child in a group daycare for support?

- Government financial support is only available for licensed child care providers.
- Parents who are essential services workers and who require care for their children should complete the form to find available spaces nearby at licensed child care centres.

Q8. The City of Vancouver already has a matching service – should parents use the Province’s system or the city’s?

- We have been working closely with the City of Vancouver to ensure that parents in essential services roles are able to access child care.
- Essential services workers in Vancouver may use the city’s Temporary Emergency Childcare Referral System or the Province’s system, but please do not sign up through both.
- Parents in other areas of B.C. should use the Province’s referral system.

Q9. Will there be enough child care spaces for all essential services workers? What options are there for parents if there are no available child care spaces nearby?

- We are asking parents who can to care for their children at home, and we expect this to open up enough spaces for the children of essential services workers.
- We are providing additional financial support to providers so they can continue to stay open even at reduced enrollment and are able to safely care for children while ensuring the health and safety of staff.
- Child care providers that receive this emergency funding are to prioritize spaces for essential services workers to ensure they can continue to provide the services British Columbians rely on every day.
- We know this is a challenging time for families and we are doing everything we can to ensure essential services people rely on in their daily lives during these extraordinary times are provided safely and without interruption.
- We will continue to explore all available options to provide supports to essential service workers who are playing such a critical role in our communities.

Q10. Why have I been denied a space by a child care provider when I am an essential services worker and they are not at full capacity?

- These are extraordinary times and we know that child care providers and ECEs have been leading the way in supporting their communities and doing their part.
- Some providers may have health and safety reasons that prohibit them from filling all of their vacant spaces.
- Parents can reach out to their local CCRR if they wish to clarify if there are available spaces at a specific child care centre.

Q11. Why have I been denied a child care space by a provider when I am an essential services worker, even though the parents they are currently serving aren't essential services workers?

- We are optimistic that most providers will take advantage of our emergency funding program that comes with the requirement that they must prioritize essential services workers.
- However, providers who have not opted in to receive emergency funding do not face the same requirement to prioritize essential services workers.

Q12. Will care be provided for essential service workers 24/7?

- Government is monitoring whether the needs of essential services workers for child care outside of regular hours are being met.

Q13. What happens when the pandemic is over?

- When the pandemic is over, parents who pulled their children out of child care have the option to go back to their original spot.
- Essential services workers also return to their previous child care arrangements, whether in a child care centre, using private care options or on a wait list.