

Request for Decision

Early Development/School Readiness Subsidy and Priority Waitlist Policy

Presented To: Community Services Committee

Presented: Monday, Aug 12, 2013

Report Date Wednesday, Jul 31, 2013

Type: Managers' Reports

Recommendation

WHEREAS the City seeks to continue to provide school readiness, social opportunities and early identification for children of Ontario Works (OW)/Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) recipients, and;

WHEREAS the Social Services Division and Children's Services Section have identified annual funding to continue to provide Early Development/School Readiness (ED/SR) subsidy for toddlers and preschoolers, and;

WHEREAS the City wants to ensure that those children most in need get prioritized access to ED/SR Subsidy within the existing budget;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the City of Greater Sudbury approve the ED/SR Subsidy and Priority Waitlist Policy.

Finance Implications

The total cost of the Early Development/School Readiness Program was approximately \$800,000 in 2012. The policy changes will result in an estimated savings of \$550,000 based on 2012 usage rates. The total budget for the program starting in 2014 will be \$500,000 per year, with half of the costs contributed by Social Services. This will allow for the funding of 23 toddler spaces and 26 pre-school spaces based on the per diem rate that is paid to providers.

Background

This report is a follow up to the June 17th Community Services Committee meeting, whereby staff indicated that they would bring forward further information about the policy change for the ED/SR (formerly known as Socialization/School Readiness Program for High Risk Families). The policy change was part of a series of cost cutting measures recommended to respond to a significant reduction in the Provincial budget for child care and related services.

Signed By

Report Prepared By

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Division Review

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Recommended by the Department

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Early Development/School Readiness Program

This program has been providing subsidized licensed child care to OW clients who do not have to participate in work or school activities due to the young age of their child(ren). ODSP recipients are also eligible for the program and it has been offered for approximately seven years. The intent of the program was to provide social and school readiness opportunities for children who may be at risk based on the social determinants of health and other factors. The program, for children between the ages of 18 and 48 months, was implemented locally and is not provincially mandated.

Program Changes

In order to allow more children to participate in the program within the allocated budget, subsidy for licensed daycare through the ED/SR Program is being reduced from full-time (5 days per week) to a part-time rotating schedule (2-3 days per week).

Financial Savings

The total cost of the Early Development/School Readiness Program was approximately \$800,000 in 2012. The policy changes will result in an estimated savings of \$550,000 based on 2012 usage rates. The total budget for the program starting in 2014 will be \$500,000 per year, with half of the costs contributed by Social Services. This will allow for the funding of 23 toddler spaces and 26 pre-school spaces based on the per diem rate that is paid to providers.

	Budget	Daily Rate	Avg # Days/Yr	# F/T Spaces	Min. # of Children/Yr
Toddler	\$250,000	\$41.00	260	23	47
Preschool	\$250,000	\$37.00	260	26	52

Program Review

In April 2013, it was identified that there were 125 families registered in the program and 135 children between the ages of 18 and 48 months participating.

A survey of 34 users revealed that:

- 100% of parents and children are very happy or mostly happy with the program;
- 97% believe the program will help their child be more successful in school;
- 53% reported that the program met its intended purpose of the early identification of development problems with their child and supported them to get help; and
- 91% of parents have been able to attend to personal issues, such as counselling.

Impact to Current Users

Children registered in the program prior to policy changes approved by the Community Services Committee (CS2013-29), are being 'grandfathered' out of the program; their existing schedules will remain unchanged until they either leave the program or start school.

Bridging the Gap

Children of OW/ODSP recipients who require full-time child care for work or education or who require child care due to medical or family crisis situations will continue to be able to apply for full time child care subsidy with appropriate documentation. Social referral and medical referral forms can be completed by an approved social agency for families who are experiencing a significant crisis or medical issue where the child's participation in a childcare program would alleviate the crisis and/or significantly reduce stress on the family that would otherwise have a negative impact on the child.

Alternatively, parents who would like further school readiness programs for their children can visit Best Start Hubs during the days children are not attending daycare. Best Start Hubs are free family centres located in schools throughout Greater Sudbury. Staff is trained to refer parents and children to specialized programs and services when a need is identified.

Early Development/School Readiness Subsidy and Priority Waitlist Policy

Policy Statement:

Children Services will establish an annual budget to purchase licensed, centre based care for toddler and preschool aged children of OW/ODSP recipients. When the allocated ED/SR budget is being spent at the maximum expenditure level, Children's Services staff will establish a modified first-come, first-served waiting list.

Policy Intent:

To provide school readiness, social opportunities and early identification for children of OW/ODSP recipients.

To ensure that approved funding under the Ontario Works ED/SR is not exceeded.

To ensure that those children most in need get prioritized access to Early Development/School Readiness Subsidy.

Prioritization Procedure

Based on the allocated budget, Children Services will fund a pre-determined number of toddler and preschool spaces at two days a week and three days a week. Families in receipt of OW or ODSP who are not otherwise eligible for subsidy will be approved for these spaces as they are available. When they are all full, Children Services will run a modified first-come, first served waitlist of eligible clients who have been pre-assessed. The waitlist will prioritize those children for whom special needs or socialization referral has been completed by an approved referral agency. All other eligible children will be waitlisted on a first come, first served waitlist. As spaces becomes available, prioritized children will be placed, followed by other eligible children based on their eligibility date.