

Bill No. 452
2011

By-law No. A.-6117()-amend

A By-law to amend By-law A.-6117-180, entitled "A by-law to adopt the Child Care Fee Subsidy Wait List Policy"

WHEREAS section 5(3) of the *Municipal Act, 2001* provides that a municipal power shall be exercised by by-law;

NOW THEREFORE the Municipal Council of The Corporation of the City of London enacts as follows:

1. By-law A.-6117-180 is amended by deleting Schedule "A" and replacing it with the attached Schedule "A".
2. This By-law shall come into force and effect on the day this by-law is passed.

PASSED in Open Council on November 7, 2011.

Joe Fontana
Mayor

Catharine Saunders
City Clerk

First Reading - November 7, 2011
Second Reading - November 7, 2011
Third Reading – November 7, 2011

SCHEDULE A

Child Care
Policies

24(8) CHILD CARE FEE SUBSIDY WAIT LIST POLICY

GOAL:

To provide a standard approach for managing the fee subsidy wait list.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- every child is important and should have access to quality child care;
- continuity of care for eligible families currently on child care fee subsidy should be supported; and
- access be provided on a first-come, first-served basis

ELIGIBILITY:

1. For parents who are determined to be eligible through an income test and who are :
 - a) working or working towards improving their employability (academic upgrading or job-oriented training); or
 - b) parents whose children need socialization (referral required); or
 - c) parents or children with a special need; and
 - d) Noting that children who qualify in one of the following priorities be provided either full-time or part-time child care fee subsidy depending on need and that this placement be based on their order of application using their date of eligibility.

Notwithstanding the existence of a wait list for eligible parents, immediate placement is given to children assessed by a recognized referral agency to be at a level of risk.

Notwithstanding the existence of a wait list for eligible parents, immediate placement is given to children whose parent(s) leave the social assistance system for employment.

Notwithstanding the existence of a wait list for eligible parents, immediate placement is given to siblings of children of eligible families already receiving child care fee subsidy on a first come, first served basis.

WAIT LIST PRIORITIES:

Within the approved annual budget for the child care fee subsidy program, eligible child(ren) on the wait list will be considered for approval according to their application date.

- i. Children whose parent(s) have an annual adjusted income under the Low Income Cut Off (LICO) measurement
- ii. Children whose parent(s) have an annual adjusted income over Low Income Cut Off (LICO) measurement

Appendix B – Child Care Business Practice Changes

Neighbourhood and Children's Services is experiencing significant financial pressures in all areas of its mandated service delivery, especially with respect to Fee Subsidy. The following changes to Child Care Fee Subsidy Business Practices will assist in maximizing the effective use of available funding.

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1. Reduction of number of allowed sick/absent/vacation days

Child Care Business Practices recognize that children may not attend their child care centre due to illness, vacations, etc. The number of paid sick/absent/vacation days currently allowed under Child Care Business Practices is at the higher end of what other Consolidated Municipal Service Providers allow. When fee subsidies are paid for children who are not in attendance at the child care centre, it reduces the amount of funding available to move children off of the wait list.

It is intended to reduce the number of allowed paid sick/absent/vacation days, (days that children are away from the child care centre), from the current level of 40 days (30 sick/absent, 10 vacation) to a combined Paid Day Absent allowance of 25 days and to prorate the number of days based on both the model of care (i.e. 25 days for a full-time model of care, less for part time model of care) and the time of the year in which the subsidy is granted (25 days for a full year, less for a subsidy starting later in the calendar year).

It is recognized that there are extenuating circumstances under which the allotted number of days for absenteeism may need to be increased for a particular client. The proposed changes to Business Practices would still allow for this flexibility upon Manager's approval.

2. Enhanced monitoring and enforcement of Paid Days Absent Policy

It has been identified that in spite of the presence of Business Practice guidelines, there are a significant number of clients each year that exceed the allotted number of sick/absent days. In 2010 7% of the 2871 children on active fee subsidy used in excess of allotted sick/absent days. In 2011, the percentage is trending higher. Ninety two percent (92%) of client files do not show an explanation for the absence.

Current Threshold/Monitoring Process:

Upon 15 days absent, the Children's Services Community Support Associate (CSA) sends an OCCMS generated Sick/Absent/Vacation letter to the participant and the child care centre stating:

- Their child is nearing his/her maximum allotment of paid sick and/or absent days available from the Fee Subsidy office, quoting the number of days absent and the number of days allotted;
- Their responsibility to provide an explanation to the fee subsidy office when their child has been sick /absent more than 5 days in a row or their subsidy may not be paid;
- If their child uses more than his/her allowed number of sick and/or absent days without explanation and approval from the Fee Subsidy office, their fee subsidy support may end;
- They may be responsible to pay for all of their child care costs for any days taken over and above their absentee allowance; and
- Finally, it states for the remainder of the year, they must notify the Fee Subsidy office when their child is not in attendance at his/her child care centre.

New Enhanced Threshold/Monitoring Process:

It is intended to enhance the monitoring process by including the additional requirement that when the Paid Days Absent for a child reach 5 or more days in 1 month and 10 or more days in total for the year, OCCMS sick/absent/vacation letter will be mailed to participant and the Child Care Centre by the Community Support Associate. Additionally, both Managers and Caseworkers in the Ontario Works office will be made aware of absenteeism issues in their case loads, and will actively participate in the investigation and resolution of absenteeism issues.

3. Model of Care approved for all participants should fit the need for care

Model of Care refers to the number of days for which child care fee subsidy is provided – typically the options are full or part time care; full or half day care; or a combination of both.

It has been identified that in 2010 and to date in 2011, approximately 75% to 80% of participants that had sick/absent days in excess of the allowable amount also had a full-time model of care. This raises the question of whether a full-time model of care is necessary for all clients or whether a part-time model of care might be more financially efficient. Children's Services will be working closely with Ontario Works Case Workers and Children's Services Community Support Associates to confirm that the model of care is appropriate for every fee subsidy placement.

4. **Therapeutic or Third Party Referral process to be more accountable**

Therapeutic referrals are child care fee subsidy placements where a community professional refers a client to Children's Services for placement where there is no approved parental activity.

The current referral business practice allows for any third party agency to provide a referral on behalf of the child or parent, and the rationale for the request is often not well founded. This results in a number of families accessing care who could perhaps utilize other services available in the community for opportunities for socialization (i.e. Childreach, OEYCs, Libraries, play groups, etc.) **Children's Services is intending to update the Therapeutic Referral guidelines, including identifying who in the community is deemed to be qualified to initiate a request, identifying the information that is required in order for a therapeutic approval to be considered, and implementing stricter case review criteria for each approved placement.**