

Re-opening Child Care Right

On June 9, 2020 the Government of Ontario announced that licensed child care programs can re-open starting June 12, 2020, provided they meet and adhere to new provincial guidelines. However, it is important to recognize that there is significant work to be done prior to re-opening. Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) know this and they, along with other sector experts, are committed to taking the time to open programs in a way that is safe for children and staff, and continues to provide high-quality learning experiences that support children's development and well-being.

Successful re-opening cannot and should not be rushed. Sector experts have [clearly indicated](#) that it must be carefully planned, informed by clear operating guidelines and approvals processes, and allow for sufficient time to make modifications to programs and program spaces prior to re-opening. If re-opening of child care is to succeed, it will also require financial support from government to ensure the sustainability of the sector in light of drastically reduced program capacity and increased costs related to cleaning and protective equipment.

Safe re-opening must also include preparation and training time for educators and program staff. RECEs are qualified professionals who are well-equipped to provide care in this new environment. Their expertise and insight must be part of planning for re-opening. As stated by the Atkinson Centre for Society and Child Development ([@AtkinsonCentreUT, posted June 10](#)), *“Early childhood educators are on the front line everyday with children and families, they are skilled to deliver curricula and play-based self-inquiry while maintaining classroom hygiene and safety.”* RECEs, with their knowledge, strengths and skills, will rise to this new challenge when equipped with appropriate training. This training should include reflections on lessons learned during the recent experience with emergency child care.

We know there are leaders across the province working tirelessly to ensure re-opening is done right. They're working shoulder to shoulder with local public health officials to develop resources and convene tables where best practices can be shared and discussed. The College stands ready to support and contribute to this work which will help ensure that centres are safe, RECEs are well-prepared, and families are confident in returning to caring learning environments.

While child care is critical to the recovery of the economy, it's only a small part of the enormous role it plays in the well-being and development of children. The decisions, actions and time we take now to properly re-open will result in benefits for children and families for years to come.
