



Honourable Stephen Lecce
Minister of Education
438 University Avenue, 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N3

Honourable Christine Elliott
Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
777 Bay Street, College Park, 5th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2J3

January 5, 2022

Urgent: COVID-19 Health and Safety Measures for Child Care

Dear Ministers Lecce and Elliott,

The College of Early Childhood Educators (the College) urges you to ensure appropriate safeguards are in place for Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) and others working in child care, including:

- priority access to COVID-19 vaccination boosters,
- rapid antigen tests and access to PCR testing, and
- personal protective equipment including N95 masks.

As Ontario faces the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, families and the Ontario economy are once again relying on the essential work of RECEs, both those providing emergency child care to school-age children of other essential workers and those providing care to younger children.

The province has rightly recognized the crisis in the health-care workforce, exacerbated by high levels of COVID exposure and infection as well as exhaustion and burnout, and has taken steps to address it. The same issues affect the workforce in licensed child care, and if appropriate measures are not taken, Ontario risks a crisis in which child care programs may be unable to operate due to shortage of qualified staff.

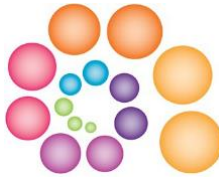
RECEs are professionals accountable for providing safe and healthy learning environments for children. To ensure the safety of the learning environment, they themselves must also be safe and healthy. While RECEs have adapted to the changing environments and embraced new safety protocols, they work in situations where physical distancing is difficult, if not impossible, and with young children who are frequently both unvaccinated and unmasked.

The College is hearing urgent concerns from RECEs and employers in the licensed child care sector regarding lack of access to COVID-19 vaccination booster shots, appropriate testing and high-quality masks, in addition to challenges related to staffing levels and burnout. We are concerned that the implementation of current measures to manage the transmission of COVID-19 do not include assurances that protection will be provided for those working on the frontlines with young children. We urge you to address this immediately as the sustainability of Ontario's licensed child care system affects all Ontarians.

Sincerely,

Beth Deazeley
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Kristine Parsons RECE
Council Chair
chair@college-ece.ca



cc.: Nancy Naylor, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education; Holly Moran, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education, Early Years and Child Care Division; Alison Blair, Associate Deputy Minister, Ministry of Health, Pandemic Response and Recovery; Julia Danos, Executive Lead, Education Reopening Secretariat.