

## **Child Care Fee Subsidy Referral Guide**

### **For Referring Agencies and**

### **Professionals**

The Municipality of Chatham-Kent Child Care & Early Years Division provides child care fee subsidy for eligible families. Eligibility can depend on a number of factors that will be outlined in this guide. While we recognize that all children would benefit from early learning environments, fee subsidy funding is limited and we follow the Ministry of Education Funding Guidelines to assist children and parents that have a recognized need. Part of that recognized need could be a referral from you, as a professional involved with the family. **This information guide outlines the necessary steps for a family to secure a child care space and apply for child care subsidy with a referral from your agency.**

**If the family or child you are working with is in a crisis situation and you are actively seeking emergency child care space, please contact our office directly to discuss the situation. Our intake staff can connect you with a Case Manager directly to assist you.**

#### **Steps for Families and Referring Professionals to access child care & subsidy**

**Step One:** Families are required to apply for child care space online through the OneHSN Child Care Registry – found at <https://chathamkent.onehsn.com>. If you are working with a family that you believe would benefit from having a child care space, please ensure the family is aware of how to apply for the child care space. If the family has difficulty with this step, you may assist the family with the online application or direct them to contact our office for assistance from our Client & System Support staff. If the family is requiring financial assistance, be sure to have the family select “yes” to the “subsidy required” question when setting up their application for space.

Please note:

- A. If the family does not require fee subsidy, no referral is necessary. The family can apply for a child care space and pay full fee to the child care centre directly.
- B. We no longer accept referral letters. We now accept one Therapeutic Referral Form per family from a professional that is actively working with the family for the duration of the referral period.

**Step Two:** Once a space at a child care centre has been offered to the family, the family can then apply for financial assistance (if needed). This is the point where we would require the referring agency to submit the completed Therapeutic Referral Form.

**Step Three:** You will find the Therapeutic Referral Form on our website [www.chatham-kent.ca/childcare](http://www.chatham-kent.ca/childcare). Please obtain the required signatures, complete the referring agency sections and send the completed form by email to [ckchildcare@chatham-kent.ca](mailto:ckchildcare@chatham-kent.ca). We are able to accept scanned copies, or electronic copies, however we do not recommend sending by fax. If you are not able to obtain a parent signature on the consent section of the document, we will need a copy of your agency’s consent form.

**Step Four:** Once the family has submitted all necessary documents, including the referral form, a Case Manager will complete an application with the family. The Case Manager may need to contact you to discuss the family’s circumstances as part of that application process.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

**1. Q: Does having a referral mean that a family is eligible for subsidy?**

A: A referral does not automatically mean a family will qualify for subsidy. Please be aware that there are two parts to being eligible for fee subsidy: one is that the family has a valid reason for service **and** the other is that the family is financially eligible. **Both** criteria must be met for a family to receive financial assistance.

**2. Q: What if neither parent is working or in school? Can they still apply for subsidy?**

A: Yes, subsidy is available for part time child care if the child or parent has a “recognized need”. Through completing the Referral Form, you will be explaining the reasons you support this child or parent accessing licensed child care.

**3. Q: Both parents are working, do they still need a referral?**

A: As long as both parents have a valid reason for service, like work, a referral form would only be needed when at least one parent is no longer working, or there is an extenuating circumstance with their work schedule. Typically, referrals are only needed when there is no other reason for service that covers the time the child is in child care.

**4. Q: Can the referral be for the parent’s need or the child’s need?**

A: Yes. It is expected that the referring agency/professional will indicate on the form if the referral is for the parent’s needs or the child’s needs. If you feel there are circumstances for both parent and child, please think of the circumstance that you are most involved in supporting through your professional role. It may help to ask yourself what the primary reason is that you are requesting support for child care for this parent or child. (Please see Question 8 regarding age considerations)

**5. Q: How many days per week of child care is available, once eligible with a referral?**

A: The standard policy is that subsidy will cover 2 full days per week of licensed child care (or 4 half-days if that option is available and appropriate). In the case of a family or child with complex areas of concern, and increased support through child care is recommended, a full explanation of those concerns and the amount of child care recommended would be noted on the form and submitted for review by the Child Care & Early Years Program Manager. This would be for situations where the child, parent or family is considered at high risk, in crisis, or experiencing trauma. Please note that if you are working with a family already receiving subsidy and their situation changes, you can contact our office to update the needs of the family.

**6. Q: What type of detail should be included on the referral form?**

A: If the referral is for the parent, the referring agency/professional would note any physical or mental health limitations the parent may have in caring for the child and how child care will support the treatment of those limitations.

If the referral were for the child, the referring agency/professional would note any specific developmental areas requiring support or family dynamic reasons, as well as targeted goals the agency/professional is working to support.

Please check the appropriate box(es) and give your detailed reasons for the referral in the comments sections. Both steps are required.

**7. Q: Do referral forms expire?**

A: Yes. Be aware that the referral forms are valid for one year from the date written. An application for subsidy happens only when the family has been offered and accepted a child care space at a licenced child care centre or licensed home child care agency. To avoid the referral form expiring before the family secures space, please only submit referral forms for families that have been offered a child care space or are nearing the top of the waitlist for a child care space. There are other circumstances where a referral may no longer be valid or needs to be updated and would be explained by a Case Manager.

**8. Q: Are there age limitations for referrals?**

A: Yes, in certain circumstances. Child referrals are not accepted for children 18 months or younger (infants). If the family is experiencing a crisis or urgent situation, a parent referral can be given for an infant.

Referrals for school age children will be accepted for full day school break care. For summer care, referral time would consist of 4 weeks of care at a licensed child care centre or approved recreation program. Referrals for children to attend before/after school programs are only granted under rare special circumstances and are typically based on a parent referral.

**9. Section B of the referral form asks about the length of time I am requesting the referral for and how long I will be working with the family. Can you explain more about this?**

A: Referrals are accepted from professionals that are actively involved with the child and/or family now. Also, it is expected that the professional will remain involved during the period of the referral. For instance, if a professional suggests 6 months of child care, the professional should be continuing to work with the family during those 6 months. Please note that referrals do expire after 12 months, so that is the maximum time to request the referral.

**10. Q: The family I am working with has a space at a specific child care centre. How do I know which Case Manager looks after that centre?**

A: It is best practice to contact our Client & System Support (intake) staff to be directed to the appropriate Case Manager or coverage worker of the day. We are available to answer any questions or go over any specific circumstances you need to discuss. Please see the end of this document for the contact information for our office.

**11. Q: Is there a way for a parent or caregiver to estimate the amount of financial assistance they will receive?**

A: Yes. There is a Child Care Subsidy calculator on the website at [www.chatham-kent.ca/childcare](http://www.chatham-kent.ca/childcare). The parent would enter the household net income from the last tax year into the calculator. The calculator will show an amount that the family would pay towards the cost of care. If the amount shown is less than the full fee of a month of child care, the family could be eligible for fee subsidy.

Example: Family net income is \$40000.00 per year. Estimated parental contribution would be \$167.00 per month towards the cost of care. If the full fee cost of the child care needed were more than \$167.00 for the month, the family would be financially eligible for fee subsidy.

## Information for Referring Professionals working with families in kinship arrangements

Caregivers that have children placed in their care temporarily through a kinship arrangement could be eligible for child care subsidy. Eligibility would be based on the same reasons for service that parents have available to them. Reasons for service include work, school or therapeutic referral.

The caregivers must also be financially eligible. Caregivers that receive the Ontario Works Temporary Care Benefit for the children in their care would not be required to show their own personal income. The caregivers will be required to show proof of receive of the OW Temp Care benefit. Caregivers that are not receiving OW Temp Care will be required to show their own personal income by providing their most recent Notice of Assessment from CRA, or proof of their own Ontario Works income or ODSP income.

Referring professionals working with kinship families may asked to provide the following for the family to access child care subsidy:

1. Verification of custody by letter
2. Verification of efforts to access the child's birth certificate
3. Completed Therapeutic Referral form – if the caregivers do not have another reason for service like work, or school.

Child Care & Early Years, Client & System Support contact information:

[ckchildcare@chatham-kent.ca](mailto:ckchildcare@chatham-kent.ca) or 519-351-1228 x 2429

Website: [www.chatham-kent.ca/childcare](http://www.chatham-kent.ca/childcare)

*We thank you for your support of the children and families of Chatham-Kent.*