

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS**  
**SPECIAL NEEDS GRANT**  
**FUNDING GUIDELINES**  
2023-2024

**BACKGROUND**

Since 1982, funding for specialized programs for children with special needs has been available to families through the Child Care Subsidy Program. Approval of funding, however, depended on family income.

In 1986, the Family Support Program also began to assist with the cost of specialized programs. Again, eligibility was determined by an income test. In many cases, parents and centres found themselves involved in complicated administrative procedures in order to access one or sometimes both programs.

In 2002, the Disability Support Program (DSP) began to fund up to 20 hours per week of IBI therapy for children diagnosed with Autism and in 2010 this funding was assigned to the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development. IBI therapy may be offered within the early childhood program.

***SPECIAL NEEDS GRANT***

The Special Needs Grants was introduced to licensed child care centres in October 1988. The purpose of the grant is:

- 1) to support the inclusion of children with special needs in a licensed early childhood setting;
- 2) to allow for appropriate, individualized programs within a licensed child care centre;
- 3) to eliminate the need for parents of children with disabilities to be income tested for eligibility for such additional services;
- 4) to provide for accountability on the part of licensed early childhood centres for funded programs;
- 5) to encourage communication among parents, centre staff, and other professionals involved in working with the child.

In order to achieve the above, funding is available for additional staff to be employed at a licensed early childhood centre for the generalization of developmental skills.

## **CHILD WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

For purposes of this grant, a child with special needs is defined as one who is under the age of 12 years, and in order to attain the usual developmental goals, requires additional and/or specific types of stimulation/care.

## **APPLICATION**

- 1) Application for the Special Needs Grant is to be made by the Supervisor/Operator of the licensed child care centre where the child is registered. This application is to be made to the Manager of Early Learning and Child Care.
- 2) Application includes submission of:
  - a) Child's history.
  - b) Measurable goals.
  - b) Relevant Reports; supporting documentation.
  - c) Funding Request
  - d) Centre's personnel policies.
- 3) Early Childhood Supervisors/Operators shall consult with parents and may consult with other professionals in completion of the application.

## **APPROVAL**

Approval of funding will be made by the Manager of Early Learning and Child Care in consultation with appropriate staff, based on:

- 1) assessment of child's needs;
- 2) appropriateness of proposed program activities;
- 3) availability of funds in fiscal year;
- 4) agreement of centre to administer any funds according to the policies of the Special Needs Grant; and
- 5) receipt of signed government contract.

Approval will be made for a maximum of 12 months, with renewed funding subject to review.

Once a child with autism enters the IBI program, the Special Needs Grant may match their hours up to a maximum of 4 hours per day. Parents are eligible to apply to Autism Funding for financial support for up to 5 hours per day per child. Verification of this financial support will be made by the Manager of Early Learning and Child Care when application for funding is received.

The Supervisor/Operator is responsible to report changes on the monthly expenditure report should a child receiving funding under the Special Needs Grant enter in to the IBI program.

The Manager of Early Learning and Child Care reserves the right to terminate funding based on recommendations of parents, centre staff, and/or departmental staff.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY**

- 1) The Supervisor/Operator is responsible to organize a minimum of one case conference annually. The case conference is to include:
  - a) child's parent(s);
  - b) supervisor of early childhood centre;
  - c) appropriate centre staff, i.e., special needs assistant.
  - d) appropriate professionals working with child (e.g., Speech-Language Pathologist, Physiotherapist, Occupational Therapist, Pediatrician, etc.);
- 1a) The purpose of the case conference is to:
  - a) review original short-term goals;
  - b) review effectiveness of program activities;
  - c) re-establish/revise short term goals;
  - d) provide information for decision on renewal for funding;
  - e) provide an opportunity to problem solve any issues.

## **FUNDING**

Once applications have been approved for funding, centres will submit a monthly expenditure report for reimbursement on or before the last day of every month. Centre operators are responsible to report all changes which includes; staff changes, changes in hours associated with autism funding and attendance. Funding will cover a maximum of 8 hours per day to a maximum of 40 hours per week. Hours approved under the Special Needs Grant will be reduced by hours (maximum 25) paid for IBI therapy (pre-schoolers).

## ACCOUNTABILITY

Centres are responsible to maintain proper accounts and records of all expenditures and commitments under the Special Needs Contract. Audits may be conducted on each centre receiving a Special Needs Grant.

## STAFFING

- 1) The Special Needs Grant allows for additional staff to be employed at a licensed child care facility for up to 8 hours per day to a maximum of 40 hours per week. Such staff are to **lower the child-staff ratio at the centre**, thus allowing all staff to be able to provide for extra/individualized programming for the child with special needs.
- 2) While the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) will lower child-staff ratios, this person is **not** to be included as program staff for licensing purposes. Likewise, if extra staff are provided on behalf of children with special needs, those children do not have to be included in child-staff ratios for licensing purposes.

Children with special needs must, however, be included in the total number of children in determining capacity of the centre.

- 3) The SNA is an employee of the centre, and is to abide by all policies of the centre. The centre's supervisor is responsible for supervision of the SNA. This responsibility may be delegated if appropriate to the centre's organizational structure.
- 4) Personnel policies of the centre are to be submitted to the Manager of Early Learning and Child Care with the grant application. Notification of any changes to personnel policies is to be made in writing to the Manager of Early Learning and Child Care.
- 5) A maximum of \$14.75 per hour April 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023 and \$15.00 per hour October 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024 plus 12.59% MERCs is available for each approved SNA employed by the centre. This amount is to include the hourly wage, vacation, and employer's share of EI, CPP, and Worker's Compensation. Higher salaries would be the responsibility of the centre unless approved for the wage enhancement grant.

Please note: It is the responsibility of the centre to refer to the Employment Standards Act re: statutory holidays, vacation pay, part-time employment, etc.

- 6) If eligible for the wage enhancement grant, certified Special Needs Assistants will be **paid an approved hourly wage based on the hourly wage set out in the certified special needs assistant wage grid.**

Once salary levels are established, any increases to salary will be reported on the monthly expenditure report and confirmed by the Early Years Funding Coordinator.

- 7) It is the responsibility of the Supervisor/Operator to provide/fund time for the SNA to maintain daily records and program plans. Funding will not be approved for an orientation/planning period prior to the program start date.
- 8) Each SNA may be employed on behalf of one or more children, depending on the needs of the child(ren).
- 9) The Supervisor/Operator is responsible for ensuring that appropriate back-up staff are available in case of the SNA being on leave. The Special Needs Grant will approve funding up to a maximum of 12.59% benefits to cover the employers' costs of EI, CPP, Worker's Compensation, and 4% vacation pay. (See # 5).
- 10) If the child is sick, the SNA would assume responsibilities as directed by the Supervisor of the Centre.
- 11) If the child will be absent for more than ten (10) consecutive days, the centre's supervisor must report this on the monthly expenditure report. Application will be reviewed at that time.
- 12) The Supervisor/Operator is responsible to ensure that all special needs assistants realize that their term of employment is dependent on the continuation of the child's program/funding approval.
- 13) If a child's attendance at a centre is terminated without notice, the SNA would be given notice of termination of employment according to the personnel policies submitted to the Manager of Early Learning and Child Care by the centre.

***THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS RESERVES THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THESE POLICIES WITHOUT NOTICE.***