

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING
SPECIAL NEEDS GRANT
FUNDING GUIDELINES
2022-2023

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) Agreement Form
 - b) Application Outline (items 1 - 4)
 - b) Table 1 and Table 2
 - c) Funding Proposal Form
 - 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 inform the Manager of Early Learning and Child Care 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

Funding will be approved on a quarterly basis, in **April, July, September, and January**. Grants will be paid directly to the centre, in 3 month advance instalments.

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) or for home based supports (school age).

ACCOUNTABILITY

Centres are responsible to maintain detailed statements on grant expenditures. Audits may be conducted on each centre receiving a Special Needs Grant after 12 months, or sooner if the Special Needs Grant is terminated. Any adjustments to be made as a result of the audit will be made in the subsequent quarter.

Applications approved within the quarterly period will be for the amount needed for the balance of that quarterly period.

If a child with special needs leaves the centre before the end of the funded quarter, the centre must return any unused portion of the grant, to the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning within 30 days of the child's last day of attendance.

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 March 31, 2023 and/or pay an approved hourly wage to certified special needs assistants based on the hourly wage grid set out in Schedule "B" in the agreement. Plus 12.59% MERCS is available for each SNA employed by the centre. This amount is to include the hourly wage, staff benefits, and employer's share of EI, CPP, and Worker's Compensation.

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) Salary levels may be recommended by the centre. Grant payment, however, will be to cover the **actual cost to the centre only, up to a maximum of \$14.75 per hour April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 or pay an approved hourly wage to certified special needs assistants based on the hourly wage grid set out in Schedule "B" in the agreement.** Higher salaries would be the responsibility of the centre.

Once salary levels are established, any increases to salary may only be made after a written proposal to the Manager of Early Learning and Child Care, followed by written approval.

- 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 notify the Manager of Early Learning and Child Care. 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 LIFELONG LEARNING RESERVES THE RIGHT TO CHANGE THESE POLICIES WITHOUT NOTICE.

