Day Camps
What Parents and Providers Need to Know

Camps offer children an excellent opportunity to learn and participate in different activities while staying active. Younger children are a more vulnerable population, and we want to do everything we can to keep all kids safe. Requiring Ontario camps to have a child care licence – if they are serving children under four years of age – places an emphasis on children’s protection and safety.

What is the new Child Care and Early Years Act?

The new Child Care and Early Years Act came into effect on August 31, 2015. This legislation replaced the outdated Day Nurseries Act and established new rules for child care in Ontario.

As part of Ontario’s plan to modernize its child care system, the new rules support the health and safety of children, increase the government’s oversight of caregivers, and help parents make informed choices about child care options.

Do all day camps require a licence?

Under the new child care legislation, a day camp does not require a child care licence if the program or service:

• Operates for up to 13 weeks in a calendar year;
• Does not operate on school days;
• Does not operate in a person’s home; and,

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• Only cares for children who are four years or older – or, if the program is offered on or after September 1, for children who will turn four by the end of the calendar year.

A camp may offer a separate unlicensed child care program where there are five or fewer children. Please see below for further details.

**What’s changing for day camps in Ontario?**

Day camps in Ontario serving children who are younger than four years of age require a child care licence. This places an emphasis on protections and standards for young children as they are a more vulnerable population.

**Can a camp only license the portion of their program that serves children under the age of four?**

Day camps that wish to provide care for children under the age of four must apply for and obtain a child care licence for their entire program. If a day camp wishes to operate an unlicensed camp for children over the age of four, and operate a licensed child care program only for children under the age of four, the two programs must be separate. They can share access to the same premises and facilities (e.g., washrooms); however, the two groups of children cannot be combined or mixed and joint programming is not permitted (e.g., large group games, lunch).

**Can a camp provide unlicensed child care if they have five or fewer children under the age of 4?**

A camp may offer a separate unlicensed child care program where there are five or fewer children. However, as noted above, these children would need to be separate from the older children and would be subject to the rules for unlicensed child care. Those rules provide that, among other things, there can be no more than two children under two years of age.

Unlicensed child care programs are also required to inform parents/guardians in writing that they are an unlicensed provider. This notification should say, “This child care program is not licensed by the Government of Ontario.” Providers must keep a copy on file for two years.

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1 For camps operating on or after September 1, children must turn four by the end of the calendar year.
Do providers have a transition period to comply with the new rules affecting day camps?

The new rules came into effect on August 31, 2015 when the CCEYA came into force.

However, to provide time for providers and families to transition to the new rules, certain programs can operate without a licence until January 1, 2017, provided that the program:

- Does not operate for more than 3 hours in a day; and
- Is operated by:
  - A Children’s Recreation Service Provider set out in the Schedule to Regulation 797 made under the Ministry of Tourism and Recreation Act. This includes members of the Ontario Camping Association and municipal recreation committees.
  - Ontario’s After School Program funded by the Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport.
  - A family support program funded by the Ministry of Education that provides programming for children who are four years or older (or, if the program is provided on or after September 1, will attain the age of four by the end of the calendar year).

This exclusion in the regulation is temporary and will no longer apply as of January 1, 2017.

What is involved in getting licensed?

The Ministry of Education does not have a specific licence for day camps. Day camps that require a licence must meet all licensing requirements for a child care centre licence.

Licensed operators are responsible for the operation and management of their program, including staffing and human resources, financial administration, and programming that meets social, emotional and developmental needs for children. They are also required to meet all licensing requirements of the new child care legislation and its regulations.
What are the specific requirements licensed child care operators need to follow under the new legislation?

Licensed operators must meet and maintain specific provincial standards according to legislation, regulations and ministry policy. This includes requirements regarding:

- Age grouping, ratios and group size
- Building, equipment and playground (e.g. square footage per child, designated spaces, outdoor play)
- Health and medical supervision (e.g. immunization, serious occurrence reporting, anaphylaxis policies, administration of medication)
- Nutrition (e.g. provision of meals, posting of menus and allergies)
- Programming for children (e.g. parent handbook, program statement, rest and play periods, individual support plans)
- Staff qualifications and screening (e.g. supervision, program staff, First Aid, Registered Early Childhood Educator qualifications, Vulnerable sector check)
- Emergency preparedness (e.g. emergency contact information, fire safety procedures)
- Administration (e.g. insurance, children’s records and attendance).

Licensed operators are also required to comply with all other applicable provincial and federal legislation, such as the Safe Drinking Water Act, Smoke-Free Ontario Act and Highway Traffic Act. They must also obtain municipal approvals to demonstrate compliance with local by-laws that apply (e.g. zoning, building, fire, public health).

Does the Ministry recognize skills and experiences of staff in other child and youth related fields?

Yes. A ministry director may approve non-Early Childhood Educators as qualified program staff, if they are deemed to have equivalent experience and expertise. For example, this could include teachers, social workers, or child and youth workers who have experience working with the age group served by the licensed program. However, program staff requirements and ratios must be adhered to at all times.
How do I become licensed?

Applicants seeking a child care licence must enrol in the web-based Child Care Licensing System (CCLS) to submit an application. CCLS can be accessed through the Early Years Portal. Click on the “Continue” link to begin the enrolment process. The CCLS Registration Guide for New Applicants provides step-by-step instructions on how to register with One-key and complete your CCLS registration.

A Ministry of Education program advisor will be assigned to your application once the application is submitted and your fee has been processed. Your program advisor will review the application and contact you to discuss the next steps in your application process.

How long does it take to get licensed?

It may take between 6 to 12 months to open a new child care centre, depending on a number of factors, including:

- the extent of any required renovations,
- the purchasing of equipment,
- furnishings and play materials,
- the hiring of a qualified supervisor,
- the recruitment of staff,
- the development of policies, and
- obtaining all required approvals.

Please begin your application process as soon as possible to reduce delays.

What are the potential penalties if a day camp that requires a child care licence doesn’t follow the rules?

The new child care legislation includes authority for a range of enforcement tools to support a progressive approach to compliance, including:

- compliance orders
- protection orders
- administrative penalties
- restraining orders; and
- prosecution.
Failure to comply with these requirements could result in an administrative penalty of a minimum of $2,000 per child over the maximum number of children permitted under the Act. Failure to come into compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements during the application process could result in a program not being issued a licence.

In addition to financial penalties, the ministry will publish on their website when a child care provider has been issued a compliance order, administrative penalty, protection order, and/or is convicted under the new child care legislation.

A person convicted of an offence under the new child care legislation is liable for a fine of not more than $250,000, imprisonment for a term of not more than one year, or both. A person convicted under the CCEYA will be prohibited from providing child care and operating premises where child care is provided.

**How do I report a complaint about unlicensed child care, or if I suspect someone is breaking the law?**

To report a complaint about unlicensed child care, including a day camp that may be caring for children under the age of 4 without the authority of a child care licence, please provide the name of the provider or program, the address and a description of your concern to:

Telephone: 1-844-516-6263
Email: information.met@ontario.ca

For more information on making a complaint about licensed or unlicensed care, including how the ministry uses personal information, please visit the following website:

https://www.ontario.ca/page/make-child-care-complaint
Where can I find more information?

If you have general questions about child care licensing in Ontario, you can call the Licensed Child Care Helpdesk at 1-877-510-5333.

Your program advisor will be your key contact for questions specific to licensing your program. He or she can help you understand the application process and licensing requirements.

You can also visit the Child Care Licensing Portal to find additional online resources to support you through the licensing process.

Additional resources also include:

- **Child Care Centre Licensing Manual** – available as a downloadable PDF. What Providers and Parents Need to Know – document that answers some key questions about the new rules that came into effect with the CCEYA.
- **The Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014** – The new Act which replaces the Day Nurseries Act as the legislation governing the provision of child care and early years programs and services in Ontario.
- **The General Regulation** under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 – addresses matters such as licensing standards, administrative penalty amounts, and exemptions from licensing.
- **The Funding, Cost Sharing and Financial Assistance Regulation** under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 – sets out requirements for service system managers and funding parameters including cost-sharing provisions.