

Children's Services Policy: Short Term Specialized Support Funding

Policy Details	Policy Index Number and Dates
Policy Name: Short Term Specialized Support Funding	Index Number:
Approved By: Director Children's Services	Effective Date: September 11, 2026
Document Applies to: Licensed Child Care Centres and IRSM Staff	Reviewed: August 24, 2026
Authority: Niagara Region	Latest Revision: August 24, 2026

Purpose

To outline the funding parameters and eligibility requirements for the Short-Term Specialized Support Funding (STSSF) program funded by Niagara Region and available to eligible Licensed Child Care Centres within the Regional Municipality of Niagara.

All educators are required to review this policy and complete the applicable acknowledgement documentation confirming that they have read, understood, and are aware of the requirements outlined in the policy.

Policy

Short-Term Specialized Support Funding (STSSF) provides time limited funding to eligible Licensed Child Care Centres for the wages of a non-ratio child care program educator(s) to increase program capacity and support inclusive practices in alignment with the Inclusion Resource Service Model (IRSM).

Definitions

Inclusion Resource Services Model (IRSM): A collaborative framework that helps licensed child care programs, create responsive, inclusive environments where all children can thrive. Through consultation, coaching, and collaborative support to educators and programs, the IRSM establishes shared roles, expectations, and accountability for equitable, high-quality service delivery across Niagara.

Inclusion Quality Coordinator (IQC): A professional who supports children, families, and educators through coaching, resources, planning, and coordination of additional supports. IQC services in Niagara are provided through Bethesda Community Services and Niagara Children's Centre.

Community Pedagogical Advisor (CPA): Professionals who support educators, supervisors, and IQCs through resources, professional learning, and guidance on Ontario's early learning pedagogy.

Non-ratio child care program educator(s): A non-ratio educator hired for a limited time to enhance capacity within a program and support the overall classroom environment by assisting in-ratio educators and the IQC with the implementation of IRSM strategies.

Coordinated Inclusion Plan (CIP): An individual plan developed collaboratively with input from families, educators and relevant professionals to support a child's meaningful participation, belonging, and success in early years and child care settings. Led by the IQC, the CIP identifies what matters most to the family and turns those priorities into clear, measurable actions for classroom educators.

Contents

Eligibility

To be eligible:

The Licensed Child Care Centre must:

- Be in the Regional Municipality of Niagara.
- Be licensed under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.
- Hold a Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Child Care Services Agreement with The Regional Municipality of Niagara or exclusively serve children 6 to 12 years of age in before- and after-school programs.

The child must:

- Be enrolled in a licensed child care centre or licensed before- and after-school program and be between 0 and 13 years of age.
- Be receiving Tier 2 or Tier 3 support through the ISRM and have a Coordinated Inclusion Plan, developed by the IQC in collaboration with the educators and family.
- Be actively supported by an IQC who maintains an active caseload with the child and is available to visit the program at least weekly to support educators by modelling strategies and ensuring the goals of the CIP are being implemented.
- Be enrolled in the program for a minimum of 20 days prior to a request for STSSF being made (unless otherwise approved).

The classroom must:

- Have identified the need for additional classroom support through consultation with the CPA and the IQC.
- Consistently implement Tier 1 inclusive practices and strategies.
- Demonstrate that all reasonable internal and external support, resources, and strategies have been exhausted.
- Demonstrate that existing in-ratio educators do not have the capacity, training, and/or skills to adequately support the inclusion and participation of children identified as requiring Tier 2 or Tier 3 supports without additional classroom support.

Funding Considerations

If the child whose needs are prompted the funding request is:

Aged 0–5 Years

(including children turning 6 between January 1 and June 30)

Centres must first review their CWELCC cost-based funding allocation before applying for STSSF funding.

- Where CWELCC cost-based funding is available and possible to be used for additional staffing costs, centres must use those funds to pay the wages of a non-ratio educator before applying for STSSF funding through the Niagara Region website.
- If the centre's CWELCC cost-based funding allocation is insufficient to cover the required additional staffing costs, the centre may apply for STSSF funding through the Niagara Region website.

- Before approving STSSF funding, Niagara Region will complete an internal verification process to confirm that the centre's CWELCC cost-based funding is insufficient to support the required additional staffing and that STSSF funding is necessary to address the identified staffing needs.
- If reconciliation subsequently identifies that CWELCC cost-based funding was available and could have been used for the additional staffing costs, but was not used, Niagara Region may recover all or a portion of the STSSF provided.

Aged 6–12 Years

- Centres may submit an STSSF application via the Niagara Region website.

Procedure

Application Process

Where a Licensed Child Care Centre meets both:

- The eligibility requirements; and
- The funding considerations,

the Supervisor, in partnership with the IQC, will complete the STSSF application form through the Niagara Region website to request wage funding for a non-ratio educator. The IQC will support completion of the application, complete the IQC section, and formally endorse the request prior to submission. The CPA should be aware that an application is being submitted and that the request will be forwarded to them for review. Where possible, applications should be submitted at least ten (10) business days prior to the requested funding start date.

Application Review

The CPA will review the funding request, in consultation with other IRSM team members (e.g., the IQC and Program Manager Community Pedagogy and Quality), as appropriate. If approved, the CPA will email the approval documentation to the Supervisor and IQC within ten (10) business days of receiving the application. The approval documentation will outline the approved number of hours per day and days per week of funding.

Along with the approval documentation a policy acknowledgement form will be sent for all educators to sign, acknowledging that they have read, understood, and are aware of the requirements outlined in the policy. This form is to be returned to your CPA within ten (10) business days of receiving your letter of approval.

Funding Period and Renewals

STSSF approvals will be issued for a period of fourteen (14) weeks.

If a licensed child care centre determines that continued support may be required beyond the initial fourteen-week approval period, a renewal planning discussion must occur around week eleven (11) of the current approval period. This discussion should include the Supervisor, IQC, and CPA and can happen via email or virtually. The purpose of the renewal planning discussion is to determine whether continued STSSF support is required and to review how the approved hours of support may be reduced during any renewal period.

Where it is determined that continued support is required, the Supervisor must complete and submit the STSSF Renewal Application Form no later than ten (10) business days prior to the expiry of the current approval period. Renewal applications must be endorsed by the IQC prior to submission for approval and emailed to csreferrals@niagararegion.ca, with the CPA copied on the email. Renewal applications may be approved for an additional period of fourteen (14) weeks.

If the renewal is approved, the CPA will provide written confirmation of the approved support hours to the child care centre Supervisor and IQC within ten (10) business days of receiving the renewal application.

Payment

Funded hours of support are based on the child's actual attended hours and days only. Payment will be based on child attendance. Support will not be paid when the child is absent or if the child attended but no support was available.

The Child Care Centre is responsible for sending an invoice with a record of the child's attendance no later than the 15th day of the following month. The invoice must be sent to Program Manager Community Pedagogy and Quality via csreferrals@niagararegion.ca to be processed for compensation.

Appeal Process

- The Supervisor and /or IQC will email csreferrals@niagararegion.ca that they and/or the parent wish to appeal the funding decision to reduce or terminate funding for STSSF.
- Within five (5) business days of receiving the email, a case conference will be held with the parents, Supervisor, IQC, CPA, Program Manager Community Pedagogy and Quality (as applicable) and any other agencies providing support to the child, as deemed necessary, to discuss the situation.
- Alternate support will be discussed during the case conference to determine all
- other possible funding that may be accessed or other support options within the child care operation.
- Should no alternatives be available, the appeal will be forwarded to the Manager Child Services Community Strategies to determine if ongoing STSSF is approved.

Table of Revisions

Revision Number	Date	Description	Updated By
1	08-24-26	Implemented	Director, Children's Services