

Dufferin County childcare centres preparing for full reopening in September

Written By PAULA BROWN

With the summer coming to an end and the date of opening fully approaching quickly, Dufferin County childcare centres are taking this time to prepare and learn for what's to come in September.

In early July, Dufferin County announced the timelines for reopening childcare centres across the county. Eight have been set to do so this month. An increase in the number of children in a classroom from 10 to 15 plus staff was also announced at the time.

Hyland Centre Child Care in Shelburne is one of the childcare providers that is opening in August and spoke with the Free Press about the centre's reopening and plan for September.

"We started with less children to kind of give us a test run, giving us the opportunity to work out all the fine details and what it's like to work in our new normal," said Supervisor Kristin Murdoch. "That will prepare us for when we reopen with, hopefully, more children in September."

Safety measures have been a large part of the discussion with schools and childcare centres reopening fully in September. The Ontario government on Aug. 7 announced they will be providing \$230 million in funding for childcare centres province-wide. The funding is to help with increased costs for cleaning, infection control, PPE, and physical distancing.

Hyland Centre and The Sunflower School in Orangeville both say they are doing screening before entering the building and that parents are not allowed access.

"We are spending a great quantity of our day cleaning and disinfecting all materials that are being touched and all high touch points," said Murdoch.

Sarah Sayffi, Director at The Sunflower School Towline location told the Free Press that childcare centres have been told they can return to normal in September, but still have no clear guidelines from the Ontario government.

"They say the childcare can go back to normal, but they haven't released what the guidelines are yet, so we don't even know what back to normal means," said Sayffi. "The provincial government should be releasing guidelines for childcare and they haven't."

Confusion and concerns toward social bubbles also linger. Returning to full sizes Sayffi says that the idea of bubbles will have to go with children moving from school groups, buses, childcare, and families.

"They're going to have to completely eliminate the bubble," said Sayffi. "There's no way you can just stay in one."

Dufferin County childcare centres will be fully open in September.