

20 March 2020



To all families, service users and students enrolled in Mothercraft programs:

Many thanks to all of you for your understanding and cooperation during this difficult week as Mothercraft developed and implemented its service disruption plan. I hope you and your families are safe, healthy and maintaining normal routines as much as possible as you deal with the impact of this unprecedented situation on your community, workplace and individual circumstance.

I am writing to provide an update on Mothercraft programs and services and, most importantly, to let you know what is happening with our staff. We've received many queries expressing concern and support for our team - thanks so much to those of you who've reached out!

As you know by now, all of Mothercraft's physical sites closed on Wednesday. They will remain closed until at least April 5th. As new information and direction is provided by governments and public health authorities we will let you know what it means for Mothercraft. At this point, and as much as possible, services are continuing through online and telecommunication platforms – some of our programs were able to make the shift earlier this week quickly and with virtually no interruption. Others will be implementing online/phone-based supports early next week – our staff have been working on those plans over the last few days and families can expect to hear something from program managers about those plans very soon. A few of our essential services will continue to be provided with a limited number of service users with whom we have already been in contact. And while so much has changed over the course of the last week, the one thing that has not wavered is our staff's dedication to families, service users and students as well as the provision of the highest quality services.

The coordinated efforts of our volunteer Board of Directors, senior staff, management team and front-line staff has been truly extraordinary. Please know that we remain committed to assisting all of our service users and students throughout this difficult period. Everyone is doing their very best to respond to your queries as quickly as possible and to communicate our plans so please don't hesitate to reach out if you have questions.

As for the status of our staff, everyone remains employed. There is no plan to lay off any of our dedicated staff during this period; all salaries and benefits are continued. We have also developed a plan to offer financial support to our casual staff – individuals who don't have set hours but whom we rely upon when regular staff are sick or on vacation. They are being hit hardest during this closure period but we're doing our best to be responsive. Deep thanks to all the individuals who reached out to ask what they could do to assist with the financial burden the current situation has placed on our organization which, as you may know, operates as a not-for-profit charity. So kind and generous of you. Mothercraft has reserves set aside for unexpected emergencies and will use those funds until we hear more from various orders of government about the financial aid packages announced thus far and what assistance will be made to businesses like ours.

 Head Office EarlyON Child and Family Centre	 Mothercraft College Community Data Group	 Early Intervention Breaking the Cycle Parent Infant Program	 Toronto Eaton Centre Centre for Early Development	 Brookfield Place Centre for Early Development	 CITYKIDS	 Magic Castle
Robertson House Centre for Early Development 32 Heath Street West Toronto, ON. M4V 1T3 Tel: 416.920.3515 Fax: 416.920.5983	646 St. Clair Ave. West Toronto, ON. M6C 1A9 Tel: 416.483.0511 Fax: 416.483.0119	860 Richmond St. West Suite 100 Toronto, ON. M6J 1C9 Tel: 416.364.7373 Fax: 416.364.8008	14 Trinity Square Toronto, ON. M5G 1B1 Tel: 416.340.9651 Fax: 416.340.7407	10 Front Street West (Mail: 161 Bay St) Toronto, ON. M5J 2S1 Tel: 416.367.1758 Fax: 416.367.3839	32 Heath Street West Toronto, ON. M4V 1T3 Tel: 416.920.6543 Fax: 416.920.1543	Princess Margaret Hospital 610 University Ave Toronto, ON. M5G 2M9 Tel: 416.946.4501 ext. 5157

Here are some of the reminders/resources we've shared with our staff recently that may be helpful to all of you:

- Make sure you carve time out of your day to eat properly, move around (including getting outside for fresh air while practicing social distancing) and get enough sleep. Not always easy to do, but really important so you stay healthy.
- Limit how much you watch/listen to the news and be careful about how much exposure children have to the news. It's important to stay informed but too much information can be overwhelming. Also, make sure you are getting your information from a reputable source. There is a lot of misinformation out there.
- Reach out if you need support or help. If you have an Employee Assistance Program through your workplace (as we do at Mothercraft for our staff), consider using their services. They can provide counselling and referral support on a wide range of issues/concerns. If you are feeling overwhelmed or are in crisis, the Gerstein Centre's phone lines remain open at 416-929-5200.
- If you have questions about COVID-19 or are concerned you or a family member may be experiencing symptoms, there are several ways to get more information about what to do:
 - Access Ontario's new self-assessment tool at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-self-assessment>
 - Call Toronto Public Health at 416-338-7600 to speak to someone (be prepared to wait – these lines are very busy) or visit their website <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/>
 - Call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0007 or visit their website at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/get-medical-advice-telehealth-ontario>

As always, please feel free to contact your program/centre manager for additional information or if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Michele Lupa
Executive Director