



OVERVIEW

In Alberta, responsibility for early childhood education and care (ECEC) falls under two Ministries. Responsibility for Early Childhood Services (ECS) including kindergarten is under the Early Learning Branch of Alberta Education.

Alberta Human Services is responsible for licensed and approved ECEC. Regional Child and Family Services at the local level are responsible for licensing, monitoring and issuing enforcement actions for licensed child care programs.

Licensed ECEC includes day care programs for preschool-aged children (under seven), part-day preschool programs, and out-of-school programs for kindergarten and school-aged children.

Approved family day homes are another child care option available to parents in Alberta. Family child care in Alberta is delivered through a contracted agency model and referred to as approved family day homes. Licensed group family child care, which allows for more children provided a second provider is on the premises, is also available.

Regional Child and Family Services contract with agencies for the purpose of ensuring that children using an approved family day home service are healthy and safe. Contracted family day home (FDH) agencies and approved providers are required to operate according to Ministry standards. Under the legal authority of the *Child Care Licensing Act*, FDH standards describe roles, objectives, responsibilities and expectations for the Child and Family Services Region, FDH Agency and family day home provider.

Approximately half of Alberta's regulated (licensed and approved) programs are for-profit. The other half are non-profit, which includes a small number of municipally operated or supported programs.

PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

Number of children 0-12 years (2014 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0	50,600
1	45,600
2	49,500
3	52,900
4	51,800
5	57,900
6	52,800
7	45,300
8	49,000
9	47,200
10	45,600
11	43,400
12	45,900
Total	637,400

Number of children 0-12 years (aggregated) (2014 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0-2	145,700
3-5	162,600
6-12	329,200
Total	637,400

Number of children 0-12 years with employed mothers (2014 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0	26,000
1	24,800
2	25,500
3	29,800
4	30,400
5	34,100
6	30,500
7	26,600
8	28,300
9	31,200
10	27,900
11	28,300
12	31,500
Total	374,800

Number of children 0-12 years with employed mothers (aggregated) (2014 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0-2	76,300
3-5	94,300
6-12	204,300
Total	374,800

Children 0-14 years identifying with an Aboriginal group (2011)

Age	First Nations	Metis	Inuit	Multiple	Other	Total
0-4	14,525	8,410	190	235	305	23,655
5-9	12,655	7,805	155	230	305	21,155
10-14	12,175	8,935	160	175	315	21,760
Total	39,350	25,155	495	635	925	66,570

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2014 rounded estimate)

Age of youngest child	Number of mothers	Participation rate (%)
0-2	78,600	60.3
3-5	66,700	71.8
6-15	160,400	78.8

FAMILY-RELATED LEAVE**Maternity leave**

Fifteen weeks.

Parental leave

Thirty-seven weeks may be taken by one parent or shared between two parents but the total combined leave cannot exceed 37 weeks. The legislation stipulates that there is no requirement to grant parental leave to more than one parent at a time if both parents of a child work for the same employer.

Adoption leave

Thirty-seven weeks may be taken by one parent or shared between two parents but the total combined leave cannot exceed 37 weeks.

Note: Paid maternity and parental leave provisions are divided between federal and provincial/territorial governments. All leave provisions are set under employment standards legislation by provinces/territories. The federal government benefit for these leaves pays for up to 15 weeks of maternity leave and 35 weeks of parental leave/adoptive leave (either parent) for new parents eligible under Employment Insurance rules. In all jurisdictions except Quebec (which has its own approach), the benefit is paid at a rate of 55% of earned income to a maximum of \$524/week (2015).

KINDERGARTEN

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR KINDERGARTEN

Alberta Education
Education Supports Sector
8th Floor – 44 Capital Boulevard
10044-108 Street
Edmonton, AB, T5J 5E6
Telephone: (780) 427-4919
Website: www.education.gov.ab.ca

LEGISLATION

Government of Alberta. Legislative Assembly.
School Act. 2000.
Early Childhood Services Regulation 31/2002.
Private Schools Regulation 190/2000.

KINDERGARTEN SERVICES

In Alberta, the Ministry of Education is responsible for providing Early Childhood Services (ECS) under the *School Act*. These services are provided in a variety of early learning settings including kindergarten. They may sometimes include children with special needs starting as early as two and a half years of age.

Kindergarten refers specifically to the educational program for children the year prior to Grade one. It is not compulsory and is usually part-day (for a minimum of 475 hours/year).

Funding for ECS programs including kindergarten may be accessed by public, Catholic, charter and private schools, or approved private, non-profit ECS operators.

AGE ELIGIBILITY

Four years and six months of age on September 1.

COMPULSORY

Attendance is not compulsory but most five year olds attend (approximately 97% of eligible children).

HOURS

475 hours throughout the school year, usually part-day, daily.

CLASS SIZE

There is no kindergarten class size limit.

Alberta Education has begun providing funding to school jurisdictions to support the implementation of an initiative to support smaller class sizes in Grades K-3. In addition, the department has established class size guidelines and a requirement for school jurisdictions to report their class sizes in their annual results report.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Qualification requirements: Early Childhood Services teachers in Alberta must hold a valid Alberta teaching certificate based on a four year university degree including a basic teacher preparation program (B.Ed.), or a bachelor's degree supplemented with a teacher preparation program (two years post-degree for teacher course work and practicum.)

There is no specific requirement for early childhood training.

CURRICULUM

[Alberta Kindergarten Curriculum](#)

SPENDING ON KINDERGARTEN

Provincial estimate

Approximately \$300 million annually for roughly 60,000 children or \$5,000-6,000 per 475 hours of programming per child (without special needs). This does not include a pro-rated amount for capital expenditures as these costs are not annual and so difficult to assign a per child rate.

Funding on a per child basis is provided to all school authorities (including private non-profit operators) that offer ECS programs to deliver the program. Private ECS programs access the same public funding as public ECS programs although private schools for Grades 1–12 access less public funding than public schools.

K-12 per pupil spending \$13,497

REGULATED CHILD CARE

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE

Alberta Human Services
Early Childhood Development Branch
6th Floor Sterling Place
9940–106th Street
Edmonton, AB T5K 2N2
Telephone: (780) 422-1119
Website: <http://humanservices.alberta.ca/family-community/child-care.html>

LEGISLATION

Alberta. Legislative Assembly. *Child Care Licensing Act*.

Alberta. Legislative Assembly. *Child Care Licensing Regulation*, 143/2008.

There are no regulations for approved family day homes. The *Family Day Home Standards Manual* for Alberta provides information on requirements for approved family child care.

CHILD CARE SERVICES

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

Unlicensed family child care

In Alberta, the maximum number of children permitted in an unlicensed family child care setting is six under the age of 13 not including the caregiver's own children.

REGULATED CHILD CARE

Under Alberta's *Child Care Licensing Act*, there are six categories of regulated Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) programs:

Day care program

A child care program provided to seven or more infants, preschool and kindergarten children for four or more consecutive hours in each day the program is provided.

Preschool program

A child care program provided to preschool and kindergarten children for less than four hours per child in each day the program is provided.

Innovative program

A child care program approved by the director that is designed to meet the unique child care needs of the community in which it is provided.

Out-of-school care program

A child care program provided to kindergarten and school-aged children (under age 13) in any or all of the following periods: before and after school; during the lunch hour; when schools are closed.

Group family child care program

A child care program provided in the private residence of the licence holder to a maximum of 10 children, including infants, preschool, kindergarten and school-aged children. Group family child care programs must have two providers on record, and both must be on the premises when seven or more children are in attendance.

Approved family day home program (contracted, not licensed)

The *Child Care Licensing Act* allows a director to enter into an agreement to coordinate and monitor the provision of child care in a private residence of one or more child care providers. Section 25 of Alberta's *Child Care Licensing Act* defines the Family Day Home (FDH) Program, delivered under a contract model and referred to as approved family day homes.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

[Play, participation and possibilities: An early learning and child care curriculum framework for Alberta](#)

Alberta's curriculum framework supports an evidence-based practice approach with a holistic view of children and will build common language across diverse delivery settings around the importance of play in early learning, emergent program planning and responsive care. It is intended to guide practitioners in their intentional interactions with young children.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Inclusive Child Care Program provides supports for inclusion of children with special needs. Inclusive child care programs create flexibility to meet the individual needs of children with special needs or disabilities within these child care settings. Program delivery and funding

may vary depending on the special needs of the child, the type of service required and the regional Child and Family Services delivery model as regions respond to meet the unique needs of their community.

Funds are paid to licensed or contracted operators on behalf of eligible children. Additional training for staff working with children with special needs is not required in legislation; however, staff members typically have an early childhood education credential.

In 2013/2014, Alberta Human Services funded the Getting Ready for Inclusion (GRIT) demonstration project focused on promoting inclusive child care for children with special needs, ensuring child care practitioners have the skills, knowledge and confidence needed to ensure equitable access, supports and participation of all children within quality inclusive environments. The GRIT demonstration project resulted in positive outcomes for children with special needs including continued participation in the child care program and less intensive interventions for the child.

Under Alberta's Ministry of Education, school authorities may access funding to provide programming for children with additional learning needs from 2.5 to 5.5 years of age. This programming may be provided and supported in a licensed child care centre or preschool operated under the *Child Care Licensing Act* overseen by Human Services, in addition to school based ECS programs. Child care program operators who are also private Early Childhood Services (ECS) operators may access ECS funding for children with severe or mild/moderate disabilities/delay, and English as a Second Language funding through Alberta Education.

ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE

In Alberta, child care programs on-reserve are not required to meet provincial child care legislation requirements. On-reserve programs are eligible for federal government funding equivalent to fee subsidies when requested. Funding is available upon inspection by the province if documentation shows that provincial licensing requirements are met. This inspection process became effective January 1, 2012. The province will have information only on the on-reserve child care programs that make a request for an inspection.

Alberta has a process for recognizing early learning and child care education training programs in approved private vocational training institutions based on a theoretical understanding of all aspects of child development from both an academic and First Nations/Aboriginal knowledge base. Based on content and course hours, programs may be eligible for certification as a Child Development Worker or a Child Development Supervisor. Alberta also contracts with early childhood educators to deliver the entry level Child Care Orientation Course in First Nation communities leading to certification as a Child Development Assistant.

SPACE STATISTICS (2014)

Number of regulated child care spaces			
<i>Centre-based</i>			
Age group	Full-day	Part-day	Total
Infants (under 12 months)	1,473	-	1,473
Infants (13-19 months)	3,769	-	3,769
Toddlers (19 months to less than 3 years)	11,141	1,472	12,613
Preschool (3 years to 4.5 years)	13,227	14,986	28,213
Kindergarten (4.5 years and attending an approved ECS program part-time)	6,593	9,448	16,041
Out-of-school (Grades 1 to 6)	25,604	-	25,604
Innovative child care (no age grouping)	529	-	529
<i>Total centre-based spaces</i>	62,336	25,906	88,242
<i>Family child care (Licensed group family group child care and approved family day homes)</i>			11,296
Total number of regulated/approved spaces			99,538
Children with special needs in regulated/approved child care			
Funding is distributed by regional delivery offices to programs. The number of children served is not collected.			
Children receiving fee subsidies			24,987
Children receiving Kin Child Care subsidy funding (not counted in total)			3,049
<i>Note: This is for unregulated private arrangements with family members.</i>			

Number of child care programs	
<i>Centre-based</i>	
Day care centres	705
Innovative	22
Out-of-school care	821
Preschool (part day)	728
Total number of centre-based programs	2,276
Family child care	
Number of family day home agencies (contracted)	76
Number of individual family child care providers (approved agencies)	2,042
Group family child care programs (licensed)	3
Sponsorship of regulated centre-based spaces	
<i>Regulated centre-based program spaces</i>	
Non-profit and public	41,143
For-profit	47,099
<i>Family day home agencies</i>	
Non-profit	45
For-profit	31
<i>Note: Alberta reports sponsorship by program as it relates to the license holder.</i>	
Parent fees	
In Alberta, child care operators are responsible for setting their own fees based on the overall operating costs for their programs.	
Alberta collects data on average child care fees paid, which varies by program type and age of child. In March 2014, the average monthly fees provided by the provincial government were: licensed day care program \$823; approved family day home \$656; licensed out-of-school care \$436.	
In 2012, a national survey of child care centres and staff found median monthly fees of:	
<i>Age group</i>	<i>Median monthly centre fee</i>
Infant	\$900
Toddler	825
Preschool	790
In 2014, a national survey of child care fees in Canada's large cities included the following Alberta cities:	
<i>City</i>	<i>Median monthly preschooler fee</i>
Calgary	\$924
Edmonton	746
<i>Note: See Table 3 in this document for age breakdowns.</i>	

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

REGULATED CENTRES

Maximum centre size: Not specified

Maximum staff/child ratios and group sizes

Full day centre-based day care

Age	Staff:child ratios	Max. group sizes
Infants less than 12 months	1:3	6
Infants 12 months to less than 19 months	1:4	8
19 months to less than 3 years	1:6	12
3 years to less than 4.5 years	1:8	16
4.5 years and older	1:10	20
<i>Out-of-school care program</i>		
Kindergarten age children	1:10	20
Children attending Grade one and higher	1:15	30

Centre staff qualification requirements

Alberta has three training qualification levels:

Child Development Assistant (formerly Level 1) certificate: Completion of the Child Care Orientation Course (Alberta government sponsored course); OR completion of specific courses in Alberta high schools, OR completed a 45-hour (3 credit) college/university-level course related to child development; OR completed the Step Ahead Family Day Home Training or Family Child Care Training Program through an approved Alberta Family Day Home Agency registered with the Alberta Family Child Care Association.

Child Development Worker certificate (formerly Level 2): Completion of one year Early Learning and Child Care certificate program offered by an Alberta public college, or has completed an equivalent level of training. And completed at least one college/university-level English/French course (e.g. communication, composition). Note: ESL courses and English language proficiency exams/assessments are not valid to meet this requirement. OR successfully completed the Life Experience Equivalency Process (LEEP).

Child Development Supervisor certificate (formerly Level 3): Completion of two-year early learning and child care diploma program offered by an Alberta public college, OR has completed an equivalent level of training (refer to www.child.alberta.ca/certification for details) AND completed at least one college/university-level English/French course (e.g. communication, composition).

Note: ESL courses and English language proficiency exams/assessments are not valid to meet this requirement.

Certification

To be eligible to work in a child care centre in Alberta, all staff must apply for certification to the Child Care Staff Certification Office. The Certification Office is also responsible for contracting the delivery of the Level 1 Orientation Course, by online, distance and classroom delivery at no cost to the participant.

Out-of-province ECE credentials must meet the same requirements for Level One, Two and Three certification.

Educational equivalencies are listed on www.child.alberta.ca/certification. Course equivalencies include a total of 1,545 hours of ECE coursework with 800 hours of practicum for certification as a Child Development Supervisor or have completed at least 770 hours of ECE courses including 400 hours of practicum for certification as a Child Development Worker.

Staff requirements

Day care program requirements

- Program Supervisor must hold a Child Development Supervisor certificate. In the extended absence of the Program Supervisor, a person with certification as at least a Child Development Worker must be designated to assume the responsibilities of the Program Supervisor.
- At least one in every four primary staff working directly with children between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. must hold at least a Child Development Worker certificate.
- All other primary staff working directly with children at any time of day must hold at least a Child Development Assistant certificate. Regulation allows maximum six months for staff to obtain this; until then, the staff person must not have unsupervised access to children.

Out-of-school care program requirements

- Staff working directly with children at any time must hold at least a Child Development Assistant certificate. Regulation allows maximum six months for staff to obtain this; until then, the staff person must not have unsupervised access to children.

Preschool program requirements

- Staff working directly with children at any time must hold at least a Child Development Assistant certificate. Regulation allows maximum six months for staff to obtain this; until then, the staff person must not have unsupervised access to children.

REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE

A family day home agency, through an agreement with regional Child and Family Services authorities, coordinates and monitors provision of child care in a number of family day homes (in care providers' private residences) according to the Alberta Family Day Home Standards.

Model of organization

Agency model. Section 25 of Alberta's *Child Care Licensing Act* defines the Family Day Home Program (FDH) as a program under which the person with whom the director has entered into an agreement to coordinate and monitor the provision of child care in a private residence of one or more child care providers, and to not more than six children in each private residence. Child and Family Services Regions in Alberta contract with FDH agencies for the purpose of ensuring that children using the service are healthy and safe.

An agency is defined as an individual, partnership or corporation that contracts with a child and family services region to administer a family day home service. Agencies may be non-profit or for-profit.

Maximum capacity

Providers may accommodate a maximum of six children 0 to 12 years old including the provider's own children. A maximum of three children may be 36 months or younger and a maximum of two children may be 24 months or younger.

Group family child care is provided in the private residence of the licence holder and two providers can care for a maximum of 10 children, both providers must be on premises when more than seven children are present. Of the 10 children, not more than three may be under three years of age, and not more than two may be infants. A licence holder must ensure that where seven or more children are present at a program, whether on or off the program premises, two care providers are on duty.

Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

Agency staff, referred to as home visitors, visit family day homes at least six times per year to ensure operation according to the *Family Day Home Standards Manual for Alberta*. Provincial staff monitor agencies and homes on a regular basis. The minimum Ministry-wide monitoring requirement is once annually.

Through its contract with a Child and Family Services Region, the family day home agency is responsible for complying with the agency standards and monitoring compliance to the provider standards.

Group family child care is a licensed category in Alberta. These homes are individually licensed and subject to provincial licensing and enforcement requirements.

Family day home provider qualification requirements

Family day home providers must be 18 years of age, have a criminal records check, including a vulnerable sector search, and have completed a first aid course.

The *Family Day Home Manual* requires that direct care providers receive training in such areas as child development, child guidance and employing appropriate culturally sensitive strategies. Family day home agencies are required to develop appropriate training based on the needs of their providers and families.

In the group family child care program, the licence holder must be certified at minimum as a Child Development Assistant and ensure that each additional child care provider is certified at minimum as a Child Development Assistant (see certification table below).

FUNDING

Funding includes parent fee subsidies, infant care incentive funding for child care programs, wage top-up funding, benefit contribution grant to offset the mandatory employer contributions on wage top-ups; professional development grants and a staff attraction incentive allowance available to all licensed services.

CHILD CARE SERVICES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Alberta does not differentiate between non-profit and for-profit child care programs in terms of funding, providing all funding requirements are met.

TYPES OF FUNDING

Fee subsidies

Child care subsidy funding is available for parents using licensed and approved child care services - non-profit or for-profit licensed day care centres, licensed group family child care, approved family day homes, licensed out-of-school care centres, licensed preschools, and approved early childhood development programs.

Eligibility and amount of subsidy funding depends on the number of individuals in the household, a family's gross income, age of child attending child care and type of care. Subsidies are available to eligible low-income families who meet the required income test and who demonstrate the need for care (i.e., employment and/or schooling). Families must secure a space before applying for a subsidy.

Subsidy rates may not cover full fees; centres and family day home agencies are permitted to surcharge above the subsidy rates.

Alberta's child care subsidy program also includes the following options: *Extended-Hours Subsidy* (eligible parents who work or attend classes during evenings or weekends may access extended hours subsidy of up to an additional \$100 per month per child); *Stay-At-Home Parents Support* (eligible families who have one parent who stays at home or works, volunteers or attends school less than 20 hours per week may qualify for a subsidy of up to \$1,200 per year to help pay fees for each pre-school-aged child to who attends a licensed pre-school or an approved early childhood development program); and *Kin Child Care Funding* (funding for child care by a non-custodial relative of up to \$400 per month available to eligible low- and middle-income families with children under the age of seven and not yet attending grade 1, and up to \$200 for school-age children [Grades 1-6]).

One time funding

Professional Development Grant

Assists with tuition fees and required textbooks for certified staff to obtain higher levels of certification, and with the costs of attending approved conferences or workshops. Certified Child Development Assistants and Child Development Workers in both levels of accreditation are eligible for up to \$1,000/year.

Child Care Staff Attraction Incentive Allowance

Intended to reduce labour market pressures in child care by attracting new staff and experienced staff back to the profession. Certified Child Development Workers and Child Development Supervisors in both levels of accreditation are eligible for \$2,500 if they are a new staff and \$5,000 if they are a returning staff.

Recurring funding

Infant Care Incentive

Infant Care Incentive is paid to regulated child care programs: \$150 is paid per month for each child under 19 months of age who uses more than 8 hours of care in that month. Regulated programs were receiving payments for an average of just over 4,100 infants each month in 2013/14.

Accreditation funding for child care programs

Paid to eligible child care programs which are responsible to transfer funding to the staff in accordance with the Alberta Employment Standards and policies as set out in the Alberta's [Accreditation Funding for Child Care](#).

Types of Accreditation funding include: staff support funding, benefit contribution grant, professional development grant, and the Child Care Staff Attraction Incentive Allowance.

Staff support funding

Wage top-up funding for certified staff is paid to the child care program on behalf of staff members. Rates vary by type of child care program and level of staff certification. Overviews of funding rates by program are available at the link provided above. Rates for staff working in day care centres are provided below as an example:

Day care staff	Pre-accredited centres	Accredited centres
Child Development Assistant	\$1.44/hr	\$2.14/hr
Child Development Worker	\$2.70/hr	\$4.05/hr
Child Development Supervisor	\$4.42/hr	\$6.62/hr

Benefit Contribution Grant

Grant for programs to help offset costs of mandatory employer contributions needed to administer Staff Support Funding and the Child Care Staff Attraction Incentive Allowance. Grants support 16% of Staff Support Funding and 16% of Child Care Staff Attraction Incentive Allowance.

PROVINCIAL ALLOCATIONS FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE

One time funding

Oil Sands Initiative	\$2,016,631
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Fee subsidies

Day care centres	\$88,655,210
Group family day homes	100,785
Family day home	14,690,621
Out-of-school care	22,762,100

Recurring funding

Accreditation	\$86,429,000
Extended hours	184,980
Specialized child care (includes inclusive child care)	4,503,217
Family day home agency contracts	6,806,867
Infant care incentive	7,664,349

Total regulated child care	\$263,089,000
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Other funding

Stay-at-home parent support	\$1,167,400
Parent Link centres	16,705,330
Kin Child Care	9,811,710

Note: Kin Child Care funding is for eligible parents who use a non-custodial relative to care for their child. Kin Child Care is a private, non-regulated arrangement.
