

British Columbia



OVERVIEW

Responsibility for British Columbia’s early childhood education and care is split among three ministries. Kindergarten, StrongStart BC and the Ready, Set Learn initiative are under the Ministry of Education. Child care policy and programs are the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD), while child care licensing is under the aegis of the Ministry of Health with monitoring carried out through local health authorities.

British Columbia (BC) introduced full-day kindergarten for five year olds in 2010. All public schools are now required to provide the program. Kindergarten is provided in both public and independent schools, both of which are publicly funded.

A variety of kinds of regulated child care programs for children 0-12 years old are provided including programs outside regular school hours for school-aged children. More than half of BC’s full-day centre-based programs are operated on a for-profit basis; there are no publicly-delivered child care programs.

Regulated family child care in BC for up to seven 0 -12 year olds is provided by individually licensed family child care providers. Family child care providers caring for a maximum of two children or a sibling group are called “license not required” (LNR). Local Child Care Resource and Referral Offices offer a voluntary registration process of LNR providers, in which case they are termed “registered license not required” (RLNR) providers.

PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

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

Age	Number of children
0	41,000
1	41,400
2	44,800
3	40,600
4	43,400
5	50,400
6	44,400
7	45,200
8	38,100
9	41,100
10	46,000
11	47,300
12	46,600
Total	570,200

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

Age	Number of children
0-2	127,200
3-5	134,400
6-12	308,700
Total	570,200

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

Age	Number of children
0	25,000
1	24,600
2	28,000
3	24,300
4	26,500
5	32,200
6	29,000
7	27,600
8	25,700
9	26,600
10	30,600
11	32,400
12	31,300
Total	363,800

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

Age	Number of children
0-2	77,600
3-5	83,000
6-12	203,200
Total	363,800

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

Age	First Nations	Metis	Inuit	Multiple	Other	Total
0-4	14,390	4,920	95	295	135	19,835
5-9	13,830	5,040	135	265	155	19,420
10-14	14,710	6,005	260	310	140	21,425
Total	42,930	15,975	485	865	430	60,675

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

Age of youngest child	Number of mothers	Participation rate (%)
0-2	80,200	69.8
3-5	62,800	76.2
6-15	176,800	79.5

FAMILY-RELATED LEAVE**Maternity leave**

Seventeen weeks. An additional six weeks is available to the birth mother if she is unable to return to work for health reasons related to the birth or pregnancy.

Parental leave

Thirty-five weeks for birth mothers who have taken maternity leave; must be taken immediately following maternity leave. Thirty-seven weeks for other parent. An additional five weeks is available if the child has a condition requiring additional parental care. Thirty-seven weeks if birth mother has not taken maternity leave. Parental leave must be taken within 52 weeks of the child's birth.

Adoption leave

Thirty-seven weeks. An additional five weeks is available if the child has a condition requiring additional parental care.

Family-related leave

Five days per year.

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

Ministry of Education
PO Box 9158 STN Prov Govt
4th floor, 620 Superior Street
Victoria, BC, V8W 9H1
Telephone: (250) 516-4589
Website: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/education>

LEGISLATION

School Act [R.S.B.C 1996] c.412.
Independent School Act [R.S.B.C. 1996] c. 216.

AGE ELIGIBILITY

Five years old on or before December 31.

COMPULSORY

Attendance is not compulsory.

HOURS

Full school-day.

CLASS SIZE

A provincial class size limit is specified in the *School Act* which sets the maximum average aggregate size for kindergarten at 19 students. No class can exceed 22 students.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

Kindergarten teachers must have teacher certification which requires a B.Ed. or Bachelor's degree plus post-degree teacher training.

There are no ECE requirements.

CURRICULUM

[British Columbia Kindergarten Curriculum](#)

SPENDING ON KINDERGARTEN

2013-14 operating funding allocated based on kindergarten enrolment

Public schools	\$302,920,920
Independent schools	24,379,254
Total kindergarten funding	\$327,300,174
K-12 per-pupil spending	\$11,418

STRONGSTART BC

StrongStart BC is another early childhood program under the Ministry of Education. Participation in StrongStart requires that children be accompanied by a parent or other caregiver. It is operated by most school boards for children younger than five years.

REGULATED CHILD CARE

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE

Ministry of Children and Family Development
Child Care Programs and Services
PO Box 9953, STN Prov. Govt.
Victoria, BC, V8W 9R3
Telephone in Greater Victoria: (250) 356-6501
Elsewhere in BC call toll-free: (888) 338-6622
Website: <http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/>
Ministry of Health
Community Care Facility Licensing
PO Box 9638 Stn Prov Govt
Victoria BC
Telephone: (250) 952-1847
Website : <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/topic.page?id=83785931C8854381849E4208B4EBBAFB>

LEGISLATION

Community Care and Assisted Living Act, S.B.C. 2002, Chapter 75; Child Care Licensing Regulation 332/2007.

Child Care Subsidy Act, R.S.B.C. 1996, Chapter 26; Child Care Subsidy Regulation 74/97.

Child Care BC Act, S.B.C. 2001. Chapter 4.

CHILD CARE SERVICES

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

Unregulated family child care

Maximum number of children permitted: Two children or one sibling group of any age, not including children related to the caregiver. This category is referred to in BC as “license not required” (LNR).

A registered license-not-required (RLNR) provider is one who is registered with a Child Care Resource and Referral program and must meet specific registration requirements established by the Ministry of Children and Family Development. RLNR child care is not included in the Child Care Licensing Regulation (It is not licensed).

REGULATED CHILD CARE

Group child care (under 36 months)

Centre-based care for no more than 13 hours/day for no more than 12 children from birth to 36 months.

Group child care (30 months to school-age)

Centre-based child care for no more than 13 hours/day for no more than 25 children.

Group child care (school-age)

Centre-based child care outside school hours including during school vacations for children attending school for no more than 13 hours/day for no more than 24 children (if kindergarten or Grade 1 children are present) and no more than 30 children (if all children are in Grade 2 or higher).

Preschool (30 months to school-age)

Centre-based programs for preschool-age children for no more than four hours/day per child for no more than 20 children.

Family child care

Child care in a private home for no more than seven children, aged birth to 12 years, including the provider’s own children under the age of 12. The care provider must reside in the same location as care is provided. There are further restrictions of number of children by age group – see section on family child care below.

Occasional child care

Occasional or short-term child care for children who are at least 18 months old for no more than 40 hours in a calendar month to each child. Maximum of 16 children if a child under three years of age is present and a maximum of 20 children if all children are three years of age or older.

Multi-age child care

Centre-based child care by an early childhood educator to groups of eight children of various ages. No more than three children may be under 36 months, and no more than one child may be younger than 12 months.

In-home multi-age child care

Child care by an early childhood educator to no more than eight children in the educator’s personal residence. The care provider must reside in the same location as care is provided. No more than three children may be under 36 months, and no more than one child may be younger than 12 months.

Child-minding

Care offered to immigrant families who are attending programs in respect of English as a Second Language, settlement or labour market integration under a government funding contract; 24 children based on age calculation (child younger than 12 months counts as 2.5 children).

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The [Early Learning Framework \(ELF\)](#) is a document developed by the British Columbia’s Ministry of Education. It applies to all learning environments from StrongStart BC programs to child care settings, preschools and other early childhood development or child health programs.

ELF training is not a mandatory requirement for child care staff; however, MCFD encourages early years professionals providing care for children between the ages of

0-6 years to complete the publicly available, online training module on the Early Learning Framework.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Supported Child Development (SCD) program assists families and child care providers to fully include children needing extra support in both regulated and unregulated child care settings. The program serves children from birth to 12 years old, with services for youth 13 – 19 years old available in some communities. Services include individualised planning, training, information and resources, referrals to other specialised services and when required, extra staffing supports.

In 2014/2015, more than 50 community agencies provided SCD Consultant Services for families and extra support staff for children in child care settings.

In addition, there are 19 Aboriginal SCD programs providing a full range of services with another five Aboriginal SCD programs embedded within SCD agencies. Additionally, there were approximately 20 Aboriginal SCD initiatives providing a partial array of services, often in partnership with SCD programs

Participation is voluntary and SCD services are provided at no charge to parents; however, parents are responsible for child care fees. Additionally, the Ministry of Children and Family Development provides a special needs supplement of up to \$150 per month to assist families whose child has a designated special need who are eligible for the child care subsidy program with the costs of child care.

ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE

On-reserve child care services are licensed and funded by the province through the same programs available to other (non-Aboriginal) facilities, parents, and providers.

A number of post-secondary educational institutions deliver ECE training with an Aboriginal focus. In addition, the provincial government provides funding to the British Columbia Aboriginal Child Care Society to provide training and workshops, resource and referral services to Aboriginal child care providers.

In 2013/14, the number of licensed, funded child care facilities located on-reserve was 223(198 organizations) and the number of licensed, funded child care spaces was 6,109. (These are included in the overall count of child care spaces for British Columbia).

Note: Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) data is as of February 3, 2015.

SPACE STATISTICS (2014)

Number of regulated child care spaces

Note: The table below shows the number of licensed group child care spaces that received Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) in 2013/14. Information on the number of child care spaces that do not receive CCOF is not available and is therefore not included in the totals; however, the majority of licensed child care providers in the province receive this operating funding.

<i>Centre-based</i>			
Age Group	Full-day	Part-day	Total
Group child care (under 3 years)	8,674	-	8,674
Group child care (30 months-school-age)	27,260	-	27,260
Preschool	-	21,118	21,118
School-age (including kindergarten)	-	32,267	32,267
Emergency care	-	-	-
Special needs	-	-	-
Group multi-age child care	2,570	-	2,570
Total centre-based spaces	38,504	53,385	91,889
<i>Total family child care spaces</i>			14,830
Total regulated child care spaces			106,719

Children with special needs in regulated child care 10,800

Note: This represents children receiving special needs support through the Supported Child Development (SCD) program in both regulated and unregulated child care. The number of children receiving SCD services in regulated child care only is not available.

Children receiving fee subsidies in regulated child care

Note: This table reports monthly averages for 2013/14. Age group is based on children's actual age.

Note: some four year olds may be in Group Child Care (School-Age programs, and some five year olds may attend Group Child Care 30months – School-Age programs.

Note: Figures provided are averages, and will therefore not sum to the total.

<i>Age group</i>	<i>Total monthly average</i>	
Under three years (monthly average)	3,597	
Three - four years (monthly average)	7,726	
School-age (includes kindergarten children – 5 year olds) (monthly average)	5,132	
Total children subsidized	16,362	
Number of child care programs		
<i>Centre-based</i>		
Full day (0-3 years; 3-5 years)	1,451	
Part-day nursery schools/preschools (30 months – school entry)	1,077	
After-school programs	1,145	
Other (emergency, specialized)	N/A	
Multi-age	273	
Total centre-based programs	2,963	
<i>School-based child care centres</i>		
For children younger than school-age	514	
Family child care	537	
Number of (CCOF) funded and licensed family child care providers	2,071	
<i>Note: Facility types cannot be summed to get the total number of centre-based programs as facilities may offer more than one care type and be double counted.</i>		
Sponsorship of regulated spaces		
<i>Non-profit</i>		
<i>Age group</i>	<i>Full-day</i>	<i>Part-day</i>
Group child care (under 36 months)	4,072	-
Group child care (30-months-school-age)	12,349	-
Preschool	-	12,142
School-age	-	19,546
Emergency care	-	-
Special needs	-	-
Group multi-age child care	690	-
Total centre-based non-profit spaces (by full- and part-day)	17,111	31,688
Total centre-based non-profit spaces	48,799	
<i>For-profit</i>		
<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Full-day</i>	<i>Part-day</i>
Group child care (under 36 months)	4,602	-
Group child care		

(30 months-school-age)	14,911	-
Preschool	-	8,976
School-age	-	12,721
Emergency Care	-	-
Special needs	-	-
Group multi-age child care	1,880	-
Total centre-based for-profit spaces (by full- and part-day)	21,393	21,697
Total centre-based for-profit spaces	43,090	
Parent fees		
Fees are not set by the province. Parent fees are established by individual child care providers, and vary depending on the type of care, age of child, and community.		
In 2013/14, the Child Care Provider Profile Survey reported the following median monthly fees for licensed, funded group child care facilities in BC:		
<i>Age group</i>	<i>Median monthly centre fee</i>	
Infant	\$965	
Toddler	900	
30 months to five Years	720	
Preschool (3 days)	166	
Preschool (5 days)	304	
Out-of school (kindergarten)	385	
Out of school (grade 1+)	300	
<i>Source: The 2013/2014 Child Care Provider Survey conducted by the provincial government.</i>		
In 2012, a national survey of child care centres and staff found median monthly fees of:		
<i>Age group</i>	<i>Median monthly fee</i>	
Infant	\$1,047	
Toddler	907	
Preschool	761	
In 2014, a national survey of large cities included the following Alberta cities:		
<i>City</i>	<i>Median monthly preschooler fee</i>	
Vancouver	\$1,110	
Burnaby	931.70	
Surrey	940.70	
<i>Note: See Table 3 in this document for age breakdowns.</i>		

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

LICENSED CENTRES

Maximum centre size:	not specified	
Maximum room size:	not specified	
Maximum staff/child ratios and group sizes		
Age	Staff: child ratios	Max. group sizes
Under 36 months	1:4	12
30 months- school entry	1:8	25
Preschool	1:10	20
Kindergarten- Grade 1	1:12	24
Above Grade 1	1:15	30
Multi-age	1:8	8

Centre staff qualification requirements

All staff must be “of good character”. If there are concerns regarding the practice of a licensed Early Childhood Educator, Special Needs Educator, Infant/Toddler Educator or Assistant, the Director of the Early Childhood Educator Registry has the authority to investigate and take action on a certificate, including the placing of terms and conditions, suspension or cancellation. In all cases, Early Childhood Educators or Assistants are entitled to a hearing and appeal process.

Early Childhood Educators

There are four categories of certification for an Early Childhood Educator:

- *Early Childhood Educator*: Successful completion of a basic early childhood education training program that is a minimum of 902 hours of instruction and includes training in the areas of: child growth and development; program development, curriculum planning and foundations; family, community resources and communications; health, safety and nutrition; and practicum. This training is to be completed at an approved training institution. In addition, a written reference from an educator and completion of 500 hours of supervised work experience is also required.
- *One year Early Childhood Educator certificate*: As above. However there is no requirement to submit a reference or complete 500 hours of work experience. This certificate is only valid for one year and may only be renewed once.

- *Infant and Toddler Educator*: Must qualify for an early childhood educator certificate and have successfully completed a specialized post-basic program that includes 250 hours of instruction in the areas of: advanced child growth and development; working with infants and toddlers; working with families; administration; advanced health, safety and nutrition; and a 200-hour infant/toddler practicum. This training is to be completed at a training institution approved to offer the post-basic program.
- *Special needs Early Childhood Educator*: Requires completion of the basic early childhood education program that includes 250 hours of instruction in the areas of: advanced child growth and development; working with children with special needs; working with families; administration; advanced health safety and nutrition; and a 200-hour special needs practicum. This training is to be completed at a training institution approved to offer the post-basic program.

Assistant Early Childhood Educators

This category requires successful completion of one course of a basic early childhood education training program from an approved training institution in one of the following three areas: child growth and development, child guidance or health, safety and nutrition.

Responsible Adult

These staff must be at least 19 years of age, able to provide care and mature guidance to children, have completed a course or a combination of courses of at least 20 hours duration in child development, guidance, health and safety, or nutrition and have relevant work experience.

Program staffing requirements (combination of educational/training qualifications and ratios)

- *Group child care, under 36 months*: Each group of four or fewer children requires one infant and toddler educator. Each group of five to eight children requires one infant and toddler educator and one early childhood educator. Each group of nine to 12 children requires one infant and toddler educator, one early childhood educator and one assistant.
- *Group child care, 30 months to school-age*: Each group of eight or fewer children requires one early childhood educator. Each group of nine to 16 children requires one early childhood educator and one assistant. Each group of 17 to 25 children requires one early childhood educator and two assistants.

- *Preschool, 30 months to school-age*: Each group of 10 or fewer children requires one early childhood educator. Each group of 11 to 20 children requires one early childhood educator and one assistant (some exceptions apply where there is an approved parent education program). Parent education programs are approved by the local Medical Health Officer and may incorporate workshops or courses that a parent would be required to complete prior to working with the children, in areas such as guidance and discipline, health safety nutrition, programming and development.
- *Group child care (school-age)*: If a child in kindergarten or Grade 1 is present, each group of 10 or fewer children requires one responsible adult, and each group of 11-20 children requires two responsible adults. If no children in kindergarten or Grade 1 are present, each group of 15 or fewer children requires one responsible adult and each group of 16-25 children requires two responsible adults.
- *Family child care*: If any child younger than 12 months old is present, a responsible adult may care for seven or fewer children in a personal residence, having no more than three children younger than 48 months old and, of those three, no more than one child younger than 12 months. If no child younger than 12 months old is present, a responsible adult may care for seven or fewer children in a personal residence, having no more than four children younger than 48 months old, and of those four, no more than two children younger than 24 months old.
- *Occasional child care*: If any child younger than 36 months old is present, each group of four or fewer children requires one responsible adult. Each group of 5-8 requires two responsible adults. Each group of 9-12 requires three responsible adults. Each group of 13-16 requires four responsible adults. If no child younger than 36 months old is present, each group of eight or fewer requires one responsible adult. Each group of 9-16 requires two responsible adults. Each group of 17-20 requires three responsible adults.
- *Multi-age care*: Each group of eight children requires one early childhood educator. No more than three children in each group may be younger than 36 months old and no more than one child may be younger than 12 months old.
- *In-home multi-age care*: An early childhood educator (the licensee) may care for no more than eight children

in his or her personal residence, and no more than three of those children may be younger than 36 months old. No more than one child may be younger than 12 months old.

- *Child-minding*: A group of up to 24 children, with each child younger than 12 months counted as 2.5 children, each child younger than 36 months but 12 months or older counted as 2 children, and each child 36 months or older counted as one child. A group of eight or fewer children requires one responsible adult, 9- 17 requires 2 responsible adults and 18 – 24 requires three responsible adults.

REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE

Model of organization

Individually licensed

Maximum capacity

If any child younger than 12 months old is present, a responsible adult caring for seven or fewer children in a personal residence can have no more than three children younger than 48 months old and, of those three, no more than one child younger than 12 months. If no child younger than 12 months old is present, a responsible adult caring for seven or fewer children in a personal residence can have no more than four children younger than 48 months old, and of those four, no more than two children younger than 24 months old.

Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

All facilities have at least one comprehensive licensing inspection conducted by their local health authority every 12-18 months. An initial inspection by the local fire authority may be required when a new licensed family child care facility opens.

Family child care provider qualification requirements

Providers need not be certified early childhood educators unless they are operating an In-Home Multi-Age Care program. Providers must be at least 19 years of age, be of good character and have a valid first-aid certificate, be able to provide care and mature guidance to children, and have completed a course or combination of courses of at least 20 hours in child development, guidance, health and safety or nutrition and have relevant work experience.

A criminal records check must be completed for any person over the age of 12 who will be ordinarily present at the facility.

FUNDING

CHILD CARE SERVICES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Fee subsidies are available to families in all licensed child care (a family child care home, group child care centre or preschool) and in some unregulated arrangements—registered licence-not-required, licence-not-required and in the child’s own home.

Non-profits and for-profits are treated the same way vis-à-vis operating funding. As well, both non-profits and for-profits are eligible for child care major capital funding (different maximum thresholds are in place based on the type of care). Only licensed non-profit child care facilities are eligible for child care minor capital funding.

TYPES OF FUNDING

Fee subsidies

Subsidies are available to all eligible families; amounts are based on income, family size, age of children and type of care. Subsidy rates may not cover full fees, so subsidized parents may be charged above the maximum subsidy rates. The government may pay these surcharges on behalf of the parent if child care is arranged or recommended by staff delegated under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* after staff have offered support services and agreements to the child and family, referred the child and family to a community agency or investigated the child’s need of protection under section 16(2) of the *Act*, or the child care is recommended under the *Child, Family and Community Service Act* for a parent participating in a Young Parent Program.

One time funding

Child Care Minor Capital Funding

Available to help licensed group non-profit child care providers with programs maintain quality services for families in their communities (i.e., emergency repair, replacement and relocation). Child care facilities may receive up to \$2,000 per facility. Available to non-profit societies in good standing with the BC Corporate Registry, local governments, public institutions, bands/tribal councils and First Nations are eligible to receive funding. Occasional child care, child minding, residential care and family child care licensees are not eligible to receive Child Care Minor Capital Funding.

Child Care Major Capital Funding

Supports costs associated with the creation of new licensed child care spaces excluding occasional child care, child minding and residential care. The province opened the first application intake period for the Child Care Major Capital Funding Program in May 2014. Under this program, child care facilities could apply to receive up to a 90% provincial contribution for the creation of licensed child care spaces located on school grounds and up to a 75% provincial contribution for all other projects. Non-profit organizations could receive up to a maximum of \$500,000 and for-profit organizations with a maximum of \$250,000.

Recurring funding

Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF)

Assists eligible licensed group and family child care providers with the cost of providing child care. Amounts are based on enrolment, number of hours per day care is required and the age of the type of child care. Daily rates are set by the government.

Supported Child Development Fund (SCDP)

Available in both regulated and unregulated child care. Assists and covers consultation, training and extra staffing required to support children with extra support needs attend child care. Some communities have targeted some of the funds towards improving access for Aboriginal families.

Regulated child care funding

Operating funding is available for eligible licensed group and family child care, with the exception of occasional child care and child minding; funding amounts are based on enrolment. Capital funding is available to eligible licensed group child care providers.

PROVINCIAL ALLOCATIONS FOR REGULATED
CHILD CARE

Fee subsidies	\$91,004,000
One time funding	
Minor capital	\$390,000
Recurring funding	
Child Care Operating Fund (CCOF)	\$77,254,000
Supported Child Development Program (SCDP)	58,785,000
Total regulated child care	\$227,433,000
Other funding	
Child Care Resource and Referral	\$9,740,000
Child care fee subsidies in unregulated child care	33,659,000
<i>Note: Spending on fee subsidies in regulated child care includes subsidies for children attending licensed and licence-not-required (i.e., unregulated) child care facilities.</i>	

