



OVERVIEW

Ontario has made a number of significant early childhood education and child care (ECEC) policy and program transitions. Following a phase-in period, the Early Years Division of the Ministry of Education has now assumed all responsibility for child care, full-day kindergarten and family support programs. New legislation and regulations are in a transitional phase.

Child care is delivered by a mixture of non-profit, for-profit and publicly-operated (municipal/regional entities, or CMSMS/DSSABs and First Nations) programs with non-profit services predominating. Regulated child care is provided in centres (including part-day nursery schools) and by providers in their own homes with oversight provided by licensed home child care agencies.

Kindergarten is delivered by public (non-denominational and publicly funded Catholic) schools and by privately funded independent schools.

Family support programs are delivered through approximately 145 lead agencies and local government entities, as well as by other entities.

Overall policy, licensing and supporting provision of child care are provincial government responsibilities. In addition, Ontario is the sole province/territory in which local government entities play a key role in child care including financing, local service management (coordination, administration and planning) and public delivery of child care services. Forty-seven local government entities (CMSMs and DSSABs) are designated child care and early years Service System Managers; local service planning is mandated. As well, the province provides funding to 74 First Nations and three transfer payment agencies in order to support child care and family support programs on-reserve.

Ontario is also the sole province that offers full-day kindergarten for all four year olds (junior kindergarten). As of September 2014, all four and five year olds attending publicly funded schools had access to a full-day kindergarten program. The provincial government requires that child care outside the instructional (kindergarten) day be offered on regular school days for four and five-year olds when there is “sufficient demand”, either as an “extended day” program delivered directly by the school board or as a “before and after school program” offered by licensed child care centres.

PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

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

Age	Number of children
0	141,200
1	144,300
2	150,500
3	139,900
4	151,200
5	140,800
6	147,800
7	149,700
8	140,600
9	146,700
10	133,800
11	138,600
12	153,800
Total	1,878,900

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

Age	Number of children
0-2	436,000
3-5	431,900
6-12	1,011,000
Total	1,878,900

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

Age	Number of children
0	87,800
1	84,100
2	94,000
3	84,600
4	93,300
5	86,500
6	96,400
7	93,600
8	92,600
9	98,700
10	89,500
11	93,200
12	106,600
Total	1,200,700

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

Age	Number of children
0-2	265,900
3-5	264,400
6-12	670,600
Total	1,200,700

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

Age	First Nations	Metis	Inuit	Multiple	Other	Total
0-4	17,575	5,390	365	355	525	24,210
5-9	17,475	5,190	530	315	525	23,980
10-14	18,850	5,995	310	195	650	26,000
Total	53,850	16,575	1,205	870	1,695	74,195

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

Age of youngest child	Number of mothers	Participation rate (%)
0-2	270,400	69.6
3-5	188,300	76.5
6-15	563,500	81.3

FAMILY-RELATED LEAVE**Maternity leave**

Seventeen weeks to the natural mother only.

Parental leave

Thirty-five weeks for birth mothers who took maternity leave; 37 weeks for other parent. Leaves may be taken by both parents consecutively.

Adoption leave

Thirty-seven 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

Ministry of Education
Early Years Division
24th Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON, M7A 1L2
Telephone: (416) 325-2929 or (800) 387-5514
Website: www.edu.gov.on.ca/kindergarten/

LEGISLATION

Ontario. Legislative Assembly. *Education Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.2

AGE ELIGIBILITY

Junior kindergarten: Four years old by December 31.
Senior kindergarten: Five years old by December 31.

COMPULSORY

Attendance is not compulsory. Most four and five year olds attend full-day junior and senior kindergarten.

HOURS

Full instructional school day.

CLASS SIZE

There is no cap on class size in kindergarten. The provincial class size average for full-day kindergarten has ranged between 24.5 and 25.5 over the first five years of implementation.

Full-day kindergarten classrooms are staffed by a certificated teacher and an early childhood educator who is registered with the provincial College of Early Childhood Educators (RECE) in the classroom. Classes of 15 students or fewer are not required to have an RECE. There may be only one class of 15 or fewer in any school with the exception of dual track French Immersion schools which may have one such class per language track.

TEACHER AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR QUALIFICATIONS

A teaching certificate from the Ontario College of Teachers is required (requires an undergraduate degree and two years of teacher education).

No special credential or early childhood training is required for kindergarten teachers although they are required to have specialization in primary/junior education.

Registered Early Childhood Educators are required to be currently registered with the provincial College of Early Childhood Educators.

Note: See Regulated child care section for more information about RECE classification.

CURRICULUM

[The full-day early learning kindergarten program](#)

SPENDING ON KINDERGARTEN

K-12 per pupil spending \$12,117

LICENSED CHILD CARE

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE

Ministry of Education
Early Years Division
24th Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, ON M7A 1L2
Telephone: (416) 325-2929 or (800) 387-5514
Website: www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/

LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

The new *Child Care and Early Years Act* (CCEYA), 2014 came into effect on August 31, 2015 replacing *The Day Nurseries Act* as the legislation governing the provision of child care in Ontario.

The government is phasing in child care regulation changes under the new legislation.

The new *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and its regulations can be found online at:

- *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*
<http://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/14c11>
- O. Reg. 137/2015: General
<http://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r15137>
- O. Reg. 138/2015: Funding, Cost Sharing and Financial Assistance
<http://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/r15138>

CHILD CARE SERVICES

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

Unlicensed home child care

Child care arrangements termed “unlicensed home child care” by the Ontario government are not publicly monitored or governed by regulations other than maximum numbers of children. There are no stipulations regarding where it is provided, so it may or may not be in a provider’s home or family residence.

Maximum number of children permitted

A maximum of five children under the age of 13 and no more than two children under the age of two are permitted to be cared for at any one time. This includes the caregiver’s own children under the age of six although the caregiver’s four and five year olds are excluded during the school year if the children are enrolled in full-day kindergarten, and the care meets the additional criteria set out under the Act and regulations. A transitional regulation is currently in place to exclude counting children in care aged 10 and up.

Extended day programs for four and five year olds in full-day kindergarten

Extended day programs operated by a school board are not required to be licensed.

Recreation programs for school-aged children

“Authorized recreational and skill building programs” for children six years or older are not required to be licensed.

REGULATED CHILD CARE (TERMED “LICENSED CHILD CARE”)

Child care centres

Group or centre-based programs operating less than 24 hours/day for five or more unrelated children under 13 years.

Note: The CCEYA defines “child” as a person who is younger than 13 years old. However, children with special needs who are already in the child care system or entered child care before August 30, 2017 will be eligible to receive funding and financial assistance until they reach 18 years of age, provided that they meet other eligibility criteria that are unrelated to age (see Ontario Regulation 138/15).

Child care centres include:

- Full-day centres
- Nursery schools (part-time)
- School-age before- and after-school programs for children aged four to 12 years operated by third party providers.

Licensed home child care

Licensed home child care was previously referred to as “private home day care” in provincial legislation. Individual home child care providers are not licensed by the Ministry of Education but are contracted by home child care agencies which are licensed.

Six children under 13 years are permitted in each home. Home providers may care for no more than two children under the age of two. Providers must include their own children under the age of six although the provider’s four and five year olds are excluded during the school year if the children are enrolled in full-day kindergarten and the care meets the additional criteria set out under the Act and regulations. A transition regulation is currently in place to exclude counting children in care aged 10 and up.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

ELECT (Early Learning for Every Child Today) is a key provincial document about learning and development.

[How Does Learning Happen?: Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years](#), issued in June 2015, is Ontario’s official pedagogical statement for licensed child care settings. Programs are required to be consistent with its approach. Regulations aligning with this document help the operator put it into place.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Ontario supports inclusion in child care and approved recreation programs through regulations and Special Needs Resourcing Funding; a few segregated centres are still in place.

As outlined in Ontario Regulation 137/15, section 52, child care operators are required to ensure that an up-to-date individualized support plan is in place for each child with special needs who receives child care. Licensees of a centre with children with special needs must accommodate the individualized support plan of each child and ensure that the program is appropriate for the ages and developmental level of children with special needs and is inclusive of all children.

Special Needs Resourcing provides staffing, equipment, supplies and services to support inclusion.

Resource teachers/consultants may work with several children in multiple locations and can also provide professional learning experiences to individuals working with children with special needs in licensed child care settings and approved recreation programs.

The level of service per child can vary, depending on the child's needs, the local service model, and available resources.

Resource teachers/consultants typically provide a wide range of services and supports for children with special needs and their families. These supports may include providing child care staff with program adaptation strategies and professional development, supporting the development of individualized support plans, developmental screens, providing referrals to community agencies, providing information and resources for parents and obtaining specialized equipment as required. At a minimum, it is recommended that resource teachers/consultants hold a diploma in Early Childhood Education, have additional training/experience/education related to working with children with special needs, hold a standard first aid including infant/child CPR certificate and obtain a vulnerable sector check.

ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE

Ontario funds and regulates on-reserve child care.

As of April 1, 2015, the province provided funding to 74 First Nations and three transfer payment agencies in

order to support child care and family support programs on-reserve. This funding is primarily targeted towards fee subsidies, Special Needs Resourcing, Ontario Works Child Care, health and safety and funding to facilitate child care transformation and capacity building in First Nations communities.

As of March 31, 2015, there were 56 licensed child care centres on reserve with a licensed capacity of 3,191. There were also two licensed home child care agencies with eight homes on-reserve.

Ontario cost-shares regular fee subsidies for licensed on-reserve child care programs on an 80/20 basis with First Nations. The province pays 100% of other child care expenses (wage subsidies, Special Needs Resourcing, transformation, etc.). First Nations manage the fee subsidy systems in their communities.

Ontario recovers the majority of expenditures on regular fee subsidies from the federal government under the 1965 *Memorandum of Agreement Respecting Welfare Programs for Indians*, an agreement with the federal government. Ontario does not recover funding associated with a number of on-reserve expenditures including, for example, Special Needs Resourcing or wage enhancement.

SPACE STATISTICS (2014)

Number of regulated child care spaces

<i>Centre-based</i>	
Age Group	Total (Full day centres and nursery schools)
Infants (0-18 months)	10,250
Toddlers (18-30 months)	34,772
Preschool (2.5 - 5 years)	102,133
Kindergarten-age (3 years and 8 months - 5 years)	52,168
School-age (6-12 years)	118,545
Total centre-based spaces	317,868
Family child care	16,142
Total number of regulated spaces	334,010

Note: Breakdowns of full-day and part-day centre-based child care are not available. Figures for nursery school (part-day) are not available.

Note: The figure for home child care represents the estimated enrolment. Thus, total number includes the licensed capacity of child care centres and enrolment in regulated home child care.

Children receiving services through Special Needs	
Resourcing in regulated child care	Not available
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Children receiving fee subsidies	137,645
(Date unavailable)	
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Number of regulated child care programs	
<i>Centre-based (full and part-day)</i>	
For preschool-age children	4,361
School-based child care centres: Total (all ages)	
(included in centre-based)	2,549
<i>Home child care</i>	
Number of home child care agencies	126
Number of home child care homes	5,765
<i>Note: The 4,361 centres “for pre-school age children” include centres that also serve school-age children.</i>	
<i>Note: The number for school-based child care centres includes 2,529 publicly-funded and 20 private (privately funded) schools.</i>	
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Sponsorship of regulated spaces	
<i>Full and part-time regulated centre-based spaces</i>	
Public (estimate by CRRU)	5,389
Non-profit	235,492
For-profit	76,987
<i>Regulated family child care (home child care)</i>	
	Agencies Homes
Non-profit	113 5,403
For-profit	13 362
<i>Note: Publicly operated child care can be delivered by 47 provincially-designated “delivery agents” termed CMSMs (Community Municipal Service Managers) and DSSABs (District Social Service Administration Boards).</i>	
<i>A figure for the number of publicly operated spaces was not available for 2014. The estimate was calculated based on 2012 data provided by the provincial government minus the number of known space losses and additions in publicly operated centres in the 2012-2014 period. The provincial government’s supplied number of non-profit spaces, which had included public spaces, was adjusted accordingly.</i>	
<i>Note: See Municipal role section below.</i>	
<i>Note: The figures for non-profit family child care include publicly operated home child care agencies and homes.</i>	

Parent fees	
There is no set parent fee.	
Ontario does not collect fee information. However, data from a 2012 national survey of child care centres and staff calculated median monthly fees by age group.	
<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Median monthly fee</i>
Infant	\$1,152/month
Toddler	925/month
Preschool	835/month
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In 2014, a national survey of large cities included a number of Ontario cities:	
<i>City</i>	<i>Median monthly preschooler fees</i>
Windsor	\$864.30
London	1,030.70
Kitchener	909.70
Hamilton	985.30
Brampton	1,098.30
Mississauga	1,104.70
Toronto	1,332.70
Ottawa	1,026.00
<i>Note: See Table 3 in this document for age breakdowns.</i>	

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

REGULATED CENTRES

Maximum centre size:	not specified	
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Maximum staff/child ratios and group sizes		
Age	Staff: child ratios	Max. group sizes
Under 18 mths	3:10	10
18 mths-30 mths	1:5	15
31 mths-5 years	1:8	16
44 mths-67 mths as of Aug 31	1:13	26
68 mths-12 years as of Aug 31	1:15	30
9 years or older	1:20	20

Centre staff qualification requirements

Centre supervisors must have a university degree or a two year diploma in early childhood education from an approved Ontario College of Applied Arts and Technology (OCAAT) or approved post-secondary program, at least two years experience providing licensed child care and be a member in good standing registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators (a Registered Early Childhood Educator or RECE).

One staff person with each group of children must have a degree or two year early childhood education diploma from an OCAAT or an approved post-secondary program and be a member in good standing registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario (an RECE).

The College of Early Childhood Educators (the College) is a self-regulatory body that has the statutory mandate to govern and regulate the profession of early childhood education in Ontario. The College was established in 2007 by the provincial government and has the primary responsibility to serve the public interest, including that of children and parents, by promoting and providing leadership for the profession of early childhood educators, developing and maintaining professional standards, establishing requirements for professional development, and investigating complaints from the public about the conduct, competency and fitness to practice of members and, if necessary, disciplining members. ECEs are a distinct professional group in Ontario. Individuals who wish to call themselves an “early childhood educator” or who hold an ECE diploma or equivalent and work within the defined scope of practice are required to register as a member of the College.

REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE

Licensed home child care agencies inspect, approve and contract with home child caregivers (who are not licensed) and are responsible for ensuring that provincial requirements for care are met.

Care in each location is provided to six children or fewer under 13 years of age on premises other than the home of the parent/guardian of the child.

All children in care with the provider must be counted and not exceed the limit of six at any one time. Further, there can be no more than two children under two years of age. The provider’s own children under the age of six must be included when determining the number of children in care, although the provider’s four and five year olds are excluded during the school year if the children are enrolled in full-day kindergarten and the care meets the additional criteria set out under the Act and regulations. A transition regulation is currently in place to exclude counting children in care aged 10 and up.

Model of organization

Agency model

Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

A licensed home child care agency home visitor is required for 25 homes and is required to conduct unannounced quarterly in-home monitoring visits to all providers. The agency is responsible for ensuring that provincial requirements for care are met.

As part of the province’s monitoring of agencies for licensing, provincial program advisors inspect a sample of homes to determine whether the agency is in compliance with the *Child Care and Early Years Act* and its regulations.

Family child care provider qualification requirements

No caregiver training qualifications are specified in provincial regulations.

Regulation requires caregivers to be older than 18 years. The caregiver and anyone else normally resident in the home child care environment or regularly on the premises when children are present are required to have a Criminal Reference Check.

Agency home visitors are required to be Registered Early Childhood Educators and have two years experience working with children younger than thirteen years unless otherwise approved by a director.

MUNICIPAL ROLE

In Ontario, local government entities play several key roles in child care. These include financing, local service management (coordination, administration and planning) and public delivery of child care services. Forty-seven local government entities (CMSMs and DSSABs) have been designated child care Local Service System Managers by the provincial government.

As part of a new child care funding formula and new policy framework, CMSMs and DSSABs now have increased discretion about how most child care funds are allocated between categories such as fee subsidies and operating funding.

The Ontario Child Care Service Management and Funding Guideline, available online, outlines the roles and responsibilities of the designated Service Managers.

In Ontario, the provision of child care is cost shared between the province and local service system managers. Municipalities are required to cost share requirement up to 20%. However, some contribute additional municipal funds in addition to the cost sharing requirements.

FUNDING

CHILD CARE SERVICES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

All child care services eligible for all funding unless otherwise specified.

TYPES OF FUNDING

Ontario provides child care funding to CMSMs/DSSABs using a funding formula based on publicly available data such as the Low Income Cut Off (LICO), Population of Ontario, Level of Education Attainment and knowledge of either Official Language.

Local Service Managers are responsible for determining how to spend their child care allocation within 16 expensed/program categories with a few limitations (e.g. a minimum of 4.1% of funding must be spent on Special Needs Resourcing). Local Service System Managers determine allocations to school-based licensed child care programs jointly with school boards.

Fee subsidies

Municipalities (CMSMs and DDSABs) are responsible for managing and administering fee subsidies. All regulated services can receive subsidized children unless the local Service System Manager stipulates otherwise.

Families are determined to be eligible for fee subsidies using a provincial income test that takes into account the family's total child care costs and family income; there is no upper income cut-off. Eligibility does not guarantee a subsidy; there are ordinarily long CMSM/DDSAB waiting lists for fee subsidies.

There are no set subsidy rates. Ontario permits subsidization up to the full cost of the space, as determined by the service. However, some municipalities may set maximum subsidy rates (below the full cost).

One time funding

School-based child care capital funding is provided to school boards to retrofit existing child care spaces previously serving four and five year olds (now in kindergarten full school-day) to serve children 0-3.8 years of age.

The policy also applies to school space not needed for educational purposes and where a school board and the municipality want to convert the space to child care for children 3.8 years and younger.

There are two categories:

- *Schools First Child Care Capital Retrofit Policy* supports non-profit operators in schools to retrofit (as well as for-profit operators that have existing agreements). School boards must develop local capital retrofit plans in partnership with municipal Service System Managers and plans must be approved by both the school boards and municipal manager for child care.
 - *The Capital Funding for New Construction of Child Care* policy provides \$120 million over three years to increase access to school-based child care for children ages 0 to 3.8 years. Similar to the Child Care Capital Retrofit plans, school boards must submit jointly approved (with municipal Service System Managers) project proposals to the ministry. This fund is to build net new spaces and create opportunities for relocation of community-based programs to schools.
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Recurring funding

Recurring funding in Ontario is primarily designated as Operating funding which replaced several categories including Wage Enhancement. It includes most funding for salaries and benefits as well as Special Needs Resourcing.

As well, Ontario introduced a new Wage Grant in 2015. Under this grant, which is administered by municipalities separately from Operating funding, all eligible child care staff/caregivers in regulated settings gained wage increases.

Qualifying child care workers in regulated settings gained \$1/hour in 2015 and an additional \$1/hour as of January 2016. Home child care providers in regulated settings gained an additional \$10/day increase January 2016, adding to the \$10/day increase in 2015.

PROVINCIAL ALLOCATIONS FOR REGULATED
CHILD CARE

Fee subsidies	\$473,000,000
One time funding	
Capital for communities	\$9,100,000
Capital for schools	51,300,000
Capital for replacement schools	10,400,000
French language schools	3,500,000
Recurring funding (actual expenditures)	
Operating funding	\$382,400,000
Special needs resourcing	97,500,000
Total	\$960,100,000
Other funding	\$7,100,000

Note: The reported expenditures are an estimate of the provincial portion of the CMSMs/DSSAB expenditures for the 2013/2014 fiscal year

Note: Effective Jan 1, 2011, there are no dedicated allocations for the previous Wage Subsidy, which is now included as part of CMSMs/DDSABs General Operating allocation.

Note: First Nations' Ontario Works funding is included in the fee subsidy category.