

Reconciling interests of children and economies during the COVID-19 pandemic: Learning from families in Brandon, Manitoba ^[1]

Author: Lawrence, B., Underwood, K. & Douglas, P.

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Excerpted from introduction

There is a long-standing tension in the fight for universal childcare between arguments that it is necessary as an economic strategy and that it is essential as a strategy to support child development (Prentice, 2009). In the time of a pandemic, the values of a society are laid bare. This policy brief examines the communications from Manitoba's Department of Families as an example of how childcare and other early childhood education, care, and intervention services are understood. These directives are analysed using data from the Inclusive Early Childhood Service System (IECSS) project, a longitudinal study of families' experiences of early childhood that has been underway since 2014 in several communities across Canada. Since 2018, we have been interviewing families who have young children accessing disability services in Brandon, Manitoba, in southwestern Manitoba. Using existing interview data, we offer strategic recommendations from the perspective of families as services are reinstated following closures due to the pandemic. With a view to maximize inclusion as restrictions lift, and economies begin to re-open, this policy brief examines how early childhood inclusion is impacted in a time of crisis and makes recommendations that may be possible as services reorganize.

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