

Right to equitable access in early childhood ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS

The core principles of equitable access to services and non-discrimination also apply in the early years. These rights of young children in Canada are not fulfilled. Consider:

- In 2018, more than 770,000 children lived in “child care deserts” with inadequate spaces for children seeking care (more than three children for every space).
- In a 2019 Survey on Early Learning and Child Care Arrangements, 10% of parents reported they did not access child care because “costs are too high.”
- Only 52% of children in some form of non-parental care were enrolled in a childcare program, a low number compared to other developed countries.

The 2017 Multilateral Early Learning Child Care Framework Agreement is a step forward, but it fails to fulfill Canada’s obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Equitable Access Recommendations to Canada

Article 18.3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) requires that “States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child-care services and facilities for which they are eligible.”

After the 3rd/4th review, Canada was asked to “provide an equity impact analysis of current expenditures on early childhood policies and programs, including all child benefits and transfers, with a focus on children with higher vulnerability in the early years.” Other recommendations also highlighted equitable access to services as an issue in Canada.

Instead of an equity analysis, the 5th/6th Report reports that “many provinces amplified emphasis on early childhood programs through increased funding to assist families with the cost of childcare” and lists a few specific provincial improvements.

Early Childhood Learning and Care in Canada (ECLC) remains an inconsistent patchwork of policies and programs. While the 2017 ECLC Framework Agreement starts with a set of principles, it does not recognize children’s rights and has no mechanisms to ensure equitable treatment, outcome-based accountability, or regular, transparent reporting. General Comment 7: Implementing child rights in early childhood explains the duty of states to provide:

“a legislative framework for the provision of quality, adequately resourced services, and for ensuring that standards are tailored to the circumstances of particular groups and individuals and to the developmental priorities of particular age groups, from infancy through to transition into school.”

Region: Canada ^[3]

Tags: children's rights ^[4]

equity ^[5]

access ^[6]

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