

Alberta announces \$3.6M to improve access to inclusive child care ^[1]

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Source: CTV News Calgary

Format: Article

Publication Date: 28 Apr 2022

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

The provincial government is spending \$3.6 million to help parents of children with special needs access inclusive child care in Alberta.

The money, announced on Thursday, is part of a bilateral agreement with the federal government that brings the total investment to \$7 million.

The funding will go to five regional partner agencies who will work with licensed child care operators to better support children with special needs, including:

Stepping Stones Child Care Society for the Northwest region;

Providence Child Development Society for the Northeast and Calgary regions;

Getting Ready for Inclusion Today (GRIT) for the Edmonton region and west half of North Central region;

Midwest Family Connections for the Central region and east half of North Central region; and

Key Connections Consulting for the South region.

Jessica Molina, assistant supervisor at Calgary's Little Worlds Learning Center, says the funding will ensure they have the resources needed to help children with special needs to reach full potential in an inclusive setting.

"It will also help ensure quality care is within reach for families across the province, allowing parents to get back to work while knowing their child is receiving the best care possible," Molina said.

"It is important every little one, including those without special needs, has exposure to friends with special needs or various language barriers"

The province also announced Thursday an additional \$2.7 million will be invested in Edmonton's GRIT program so they can continue teaching others their inclusive child care model.

"Prior to fully implementing the inclusive child care model, supports for programs caring for children with special needs were inconsistent across the province," said a news release. "In 2021, the new model was implemented through a pilot program, using funding from a bilateral agreement with the federal government."

The government says the pilot was successful, and this funding will expand the inclusive child care model province-wide to support more programs each year.

"The inclusive child care model will provide on-site training and supports for educators, which will increase the number of spaces and centres that can offer inclusive child care for children, whatever their needs may be," said a news release.

Barb Reid, executive director of GRIT Edmonton, says they hope to help contribute to a shift in how inclusive childcare will be delivered.

"GRIT Edmonton is about the tenacity of families raising children with disabilities and diverse needs. For the past 40 years, our programs have built on applying research and best practices to ensure each child's participation in the everyday places where children play and learn," Reid said.

In Alberta Budget the UCP allocated \$35.6 million to help children with special needs to participate in licensed child care programs. Of the funding, \$21 million is from the Canada-Alberta Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement and \$14.6 million is from the province.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

Tags: inclusion ^[4]

public investment ^[5]
inclusive child care ^[6]

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