

Child care policy and the experiences of employed Albertan families with pre-school children: Final report ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Full report in pdf ^[2]

Description:

There is a significant disconnect between the number of preschool children in Alberta requiring non-parental childcare, and the number of regulated child care spaces available. The high labour force participation among Albertan mothers with young children is not matched by a corresponding rate of regulated child care spaces. In 2008, there was a regulated child care space for fewer than one in five children aged 0-5 in Alberta, yet across the country, 54% of children are in some form of non-parental child care. The gap between the number of children requiring non-parental child care and the number of regulated child care spaces available suggests that the majority of employed parents with young children are dependent upon non-regulated child care. This raises an important question: Who is caring for these children? The purpose of this study was to answer this question through conducting research that asked parents in Alberta what kinds of care arrangements they were using for their pre-school children.

Significance: This is an issue of concern to family policy makers for two important and closely related reasons. First, access to quality child care is a factor that is particularly important to employed parents' successful work-family integration. Lack of child care options are a source of considerable family stress and may have a significant negative impact on healthy family and child functioning. Yet, there is much that we still do not understand about the experiences and challenges families face finding quality care environments for their young children. Second, little is known about the short and long-term impact of non-regulated child care on the wellbeing of children. Given the recognition of the vital importance of the first five years on children's health and development as well as their future life successes, it is of great interest to policy makers to ensure that optimal care and learning environments are provided to young children. Yet the kind of care being received by the majority of young Alberta children who require non-parental care but do not have access to regulated child care spaces, and its impact on families, remains unknown.

Region: Alberta ^[3]

Tags: affordability ^[4]

accessibility ^[5]

mother's labour force participation ^[6]

work/life balance ^[7]

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