

# Alberta

## PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

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### Number of children 0-12 yrs (2001 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0-2	112,300
3-5	121,000
6-12	288,500
Total 0-12	521,900

*Note: Total may not add up due to rounding.*

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### Children 0-12 yrs with mothers in the paid labour force (2001 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0-2	62,200
3-5	72,700
6-12	205,700
Total 0-12	340,500

*Note: Total may not add up due to rounding.*

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### Children 0-14 yrs identifying with an Aboriginal group (1996)

Age	North American Indian	Métis	Inuit
0-4	15,355	5,770	260
5-9	15,205	5,415	260
10-14	13,285	4,955	210

*Note: These 1996 data are the latest currently available.*

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### Children 0-14 yrs with disabilities (2001)

Age	Number of children with disabilities	Rate of children with disabilities (%)
0-4	3,240	1.8
5-9	8,980	4.5
10-14	10,770	5.1
Total 0-14 yrs	22,980	3.9

*Note: Total may not add up due to rounding.*

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### Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2001 rounded estimate)

Age of youngest child	No. of mothers	Participation rate (%)
0-2	56,000	59.5
3-5	47,000	71.4
6-15	147,000	83.5

## **FAMILY-RELATED LEAVE**

### **Maternity leave**

15 weeks.

### **Parental leave**

37 weeks may be taken by one parent or shared between two parents but the total combined leave cannot exceed 37 weeks. The legislation stipulates that there is no requirement to grant parental leave to more than one parent at a time if both parents of a child work for the same employer.

### **Adoption leave**

37 weeks. May be taken by one parent or shared between two parents but the total combined leave cannot exceed 37 weeks.

### **Births and EI maternity claims**

Number of births (2000): 37,006

Number of initial maternity claims allowed (2000-2001): 17,850

*Note: Provincial leaves are unpaid. The federal government pays for some portions under Employment Insurance. See federal ecec programs for more information.*

## **KINDERGARTEN**

### **LEGISLATION**

Government of Alberta. Legislative Assembly. *School Act*. 2000. Early Childhood Services Policy (ECS) 1.13

Early Childhood Services Regulation 31/2002

### **PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR KINDERGARTEN**

Alberta Learning.

Alberta is one of three provinces (and the territories) that continues to fund and deliver denominational education. Both "public" and Catholic school boards are publicly funded.

### **KINDERGARTEN SERVICES**

#### **EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES**

Early Childhood Services (ECS) is under the authority of Alberta Learning. ECS may be offered by public schools, private schools, private ECS operators (non-profit society or for-profit company under Section 9 of Company's Act).

Funding is provided to approved ECS operators on a per diem basis (\$2,120/child) to deliver the program. The program must offer 475 instructional hours. Parents pay approximately \$50/year to offset non-instructional costs such as supplies, snacks and field trips and additional program hours. If the program is provided at a child care centre, parents may be eligible for child care subsidy for the balance of the day. Full subsidy is given to eligible families with kindergarten children if they are in the child care component for more than 100 hours. The schedule of the "normal day" depends on the operator.

ECS is not compulsory and is an entitlement. 98% of five year olds are in kindergarten.

## **AGE ELIGIBILITY**

Five years old by February 28.

2 1/2 years if the child has a severe disability; 3 1/2 if child has a mild or moderate disability

## **CLASS SIZE**

There is no policy on class size.

There is no provincial policy on teaching assistants. They are hired based on the budget at the discretion of the operator.

## **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

Integration to the fullest extent possible is recommended by Alberta Learning's Inclusion Policy. Extra supports are available; appropriate funding may be allocated to specialists.

Approximately 4,100 children in ECS have severe disabilities; approximately 14% have mild/moderate disabilities.

## **KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT (2001)**

Five year olds	26,191
Four year olds	14,757
Three year olds	1,329
Two year olds	250
Total	42,527

## **TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS**

A valid Alberta Teaching Certificate (B.Ed.) is required. There are no specific early childhood requirements for ECS teachers.

## **CURRICULUM**

There is a mandatory provincial Kindergarten Program Statement. It has defined child outcomes in specific areas (language arts, physical skills and well-being, etc.).

## **SPENDING ON KINDERGARTEN (2001)**

### **Average expenditure per ECS student**

\$2,184 (basic instruction funding).

### **Total spending on kindergarten**

Information not available.

## **SPECIAL FEATURES**

There is no ESL or inner-city policy.

# REGULATED CHILD CARE

## LEGISLATION

Alberta. Legislative Assembly. *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act*. Chapter S-10, RSA 2000

Alberta. Legislative Assembly. *Alberta Day Care Regulation* 180/2000

## PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE

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## CHILD CARE SERVICES

### UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

#### **Unregulated family child care**

Maximum number of children permitted: 6

A maximum of three children may be under the age of two years. Figure includes the caregiver's own children under 12 years.

#### **Out-of-school child care programs**

Programs for children 6-12 years outside school hours. Out-of-school care is licensed by the province under the *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act* (building, health, fire and zoning as well as assurance that the care is "appropriate"). There are, however, no provincial child care standards. Several of the 227 municipalities in Alberta have set standards for school-age care and receive umbrella funding from the province that they may choose to use for school-age subsidies. In other locations, there is no regulated school-age care or subsidy available. In many municipalities, staff from the regional Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) work with centres to ensure that care is adequate.

### REGULATED CHILD CARE

#### **Day care centres**

Seven or more children under seven years of age who are not yet in grade one, in a group setting for more than three but less than 24 consecutive hours/day.

#### **Nursery schools**

Part-time programs (maximum three hours/day) for seven or more children aged three to six years.

#### **Approved family day homes**

Care in a provider's home for up to six children under 11 years of age with a maximum of three children under three years old, with no more than two children under two years old (including the provider's own children under 11 years). Providers are under contract with a for-profit or non-profit family day home agency. Agencies are not licensed but are contracted by the provincial government to administer and monitor approved family day care homes.

### **Licensed drop-in centres**

Programs for children under seven years of age that are permitted to operate with lower staff/child ratios than day care centres. No child may attend for more than 40 hours/month.

## **CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

The Inclusive Child Care Program in Alberta provides for inclusion of children with special needs. Funding varies depending on the special needs of the child, the type of service required and the region. Funds are paid to contracted operators on behalf of eligible children. Additional training for staff working with children with special needs is not required in legislation.

The program may be administered differently in different regions. In 2001, six of the 18 Child and Family Service Authorities provided funding for inclusive child care.

## **ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE**

Child care centres on-reserve are not licensed. However, under an agreement between Alberta and the federal government, on-reserve child care centres are eligible for federal government funding equivalent to parent subsidies if provincial licensing standards are met (see Table 2 for more information).

As of December 2001, there were 22 approved child care centres on-reserve with a capacity of 1,069 spaces.

## **SPACE STATISTICS**

### **Number of regulated child care spaces (2001)**

(includes full-time, part-time and drop-in centres)

#### *Centre-based*

Infants (0-18 mos)	3,996
Preschoolers	
– Full-day child care	23,391
– Part-day nursery schools	13,624
Family child care	6,682

*There are approximately 2,000 family child care providers and 90 family child care agencies.*

Total regulated spaces	47,693
School-age child care	15,890

*See description on previous page.*

**Children with special needs in regulated child care (2001)** 400

**Children receiving subsidies (2001)** 10,490

**Subsidized children as a proportion of total regulated spaces (2001)** 22%

### **Sponsorship of full-time regulated centre spaces (2001)**

Non-profit	18,080
For-profit	22,931

## STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

### REGULATED CENTRES

**Maximum centre size** 80 spaces

#### **Maximum staff:child ratios and group sizes**

##### *Child care centres*

Age	Ratio	Max. group size
0-12 mos	1:3	6
13-18 mos	1:4	8
19-35 mos	1:6	12
3-5 yrs	1:8	16
5-6 yrs	1:10	20

##### *Drop-in centres*

Age	Ratio	Max. group size
0-12 mos	1:5	10
13-18 mos	1:5	10
19-35 mos	1:8	16
3-5 yrs	1:12	24
5-6 yrs	1:15	30

##### *Nursery schools*

Age	Ratio
3-5 yrs	1:12

*Note: There are no maximum group sizes for nursery schools.*

#### **Staff qualification requirements**

Alberta has three qualification levels:

- Level three requires completion of a two year ECE diploma from an Alberta public college or an equivalent level of training, or a four year bachelor of Education degree with a major in ECE.
- Level two requires completion of a one year ECE certificate from an Alberta public college or an equivalent level of training, or a four year Bachelor of Elementary Education from a recognized post-secondary institution.
- Level one requires completion of the government's orientation course or equivalent course work equivalent of at least 50 hours related to ECE.

Centre directors are required to have level three certification or exemption. One in four staff in each centre is required to have level two certification. All other staff are required to have a level one certification.

Certification is the process used by Alberta Children's Services to review training and determine eligibility for one of the three levels of certification. To be eligible to work in a child care centre in Alberta, all staff must apply for certification to the Day Care Staff Qualification Office. The Day Care Staff Qualification Office is also responsible for the delivery of the level one orientation course, which is contracted out to public colleges, private vocational schools, individual instructors, and is taught in some high schools for credit. Funding is provided to the institutions to deliver the course at no cost to the participant.

#### **Parent involvement**

Not specified

#### **Licensing, monitoring and enforcement**

Quarterly licensing inspections are conducted by regional child care specialists. Child care specialists currently operate under a Human Service Worker classification and come from a variety of backgrounds, including family studies and early childhood education.

If a centre is in noncompliance with the regulations, a series of actions may occur, beginning with a formal written order directing the centre to comply within a specific time frame, up to cancellation of the license, or refusal to renew the license. There is a formal appeal board set up by the minister to hear appeals if a license is cancelled or refused. The legislation allows the decision of the appeal panel to be appealed through the Court of Queen's Bench. Its decision is binding.

## REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE (APPROVED FAMILY DAY HOMES)

### Regulation

Family day homes are not licensed. The government enters into contracts with family day care home agencies to approve and monitor providers according to provincial standards. Agencies contract with individual care providers.

### Maximum capacity

Up to six children under 11 years (including the provider's own children under 11 years) with a maximum of three children under three years old and no more than two children under two years old.

### Provider qualification requirements

No training requirements.

### Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

Agency staff visit family day homes to ensure providers are operating according to provincial standards. Provincial staff monitor agencies and homes on a regular basis. The minimum ministry-wide requirement is four times per year.

## FUNDING

### CHILD CARE FEE SUBSIDY PROGRAM

Fee assistance is paid directly to service providers on behalf of eligible parents. Children receiving subsidies may enrol in non-profit or for-profit licensed child care centres and approved family day care homes. Subsidies are not available in drop-in centres or nursery schools.

There is a two-step eligibility process. Parents must first demonstrate need for subsidized child care such as being employed or enrolled in a training program, or a parent's or child's special need. An income test is then applied.

There is no minimum user fee for subsidized parents but centres and family day home agencies may surcharge above the subsidy rates. There is no cap on the number of subsidies in any licensed program but parents must secure a space before applying for subsidy. Application for subsidy may be made either by mail or in person.

Provincial child care subsidies may not be used for unregulated care.

### Eligibility for fee subsidy (net income, 2001)

	Turning point	Break-even point	Break-even point
		Centre-based care	Family child care
1 parent, 1 child	\$20,520	\$31,680	\$27,480
2 parents, 2 children	24,120	44,520	38,280

*The turning point is the income level up to which full subsidy is available. Partial subsidy is available up to the break-even point at which income subsidy ceases.*

**Maximum subsidy/child/month (2001)**

Infants in child care centres	\$475
Other ages in child care centres	380
Children in family day care	300

**PUBLIC FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (2001)****One-time funding**

None

Child and Family Service Authorities may choose to use funds from related children's programs for child care if funds permit. This has resulted in some one-time grants made for minor capital and other one-time expenses.

Child care programs are encouraged to go to the business community for additional funding. Many non-profit centres get dollars from the lottery fund of Alberta Gaming (ministry of gambling) for one-time expenses.

**Recurring funding***Family day home agency administration fee*

A monthly administrative fee is paid to approved family day home agencies, which contract with the Ministry to recruit, train and supervise individual family child care providers, collect fees, and pay providers. Both non-profit and for-profit programs are eligible for this funding program.

## 0-35 months

- First 10 children enrolled	\$95
- Each of next 10 children enrolled	\$63

## 3-6 years

- First 10 children enrolled	\$65
- Each of next 10 children enrolled	\$50

*Special needs funding*

Funding is provided to assist in the inclusion of children with special needs. Funding may be used for specialized resource staff or for consultation and training services. Funding varies depending on the special needs of the child, the type of service required and the region. Funds are paid to contracted operators on behalf of eligible children.

The program may be administered differently in different regions. There is no upper limit of funding to an individual program.

Both non-profit and for-profit programs are eligible to apply for special needs funding.

**PROVINCIAL ALLOCATIONS FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (2001)**

**Fee subsidies** \$49,800,000

**One-time funding** None

**Recurring funding**

Family day home agency admin. fee	5,600,000
Inclusive Child Care Funding	2,100,000
Total	\$57,500,000

**Other funding**

Funding from Human Resources and Employment for families on social assistance in the Supports for Independence Program for the parent portion of fees for regulated and unregulated care \$800,000

## SALARIES

### **Mean gross hourly wage for centre-based child care staff (full- and part-time staff combined) (1998)**

Assistant teachers	\$7.90
Teachers	8.36
Teacher-directors	9.90
Administrative directors	12.73

*Source: You Bet I Care! More recent information not available.*

### **Family child care**

Information not available.

## FEES

### **Average fee for centre-based child care (2001)**

\$522.84

*Source: Information provided by Alberta Children's Services from the Child Care Information System.*

### **Average daily fee in family child care**

Information not available.

## ADMINISTRATION

Since April 1999, child care services have been administered through 18 Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) which are responsible for service delivery. The province provides funding to each authority which allocates funds for local services and is accountable to the Minister of Children's Services for the use of public funds.

Responsibility for setting standards, subsidy policy, strategic policy, services for children with special needs, and staff qualifications remain with the province. A provincial subsidy system remains although the regional authorities may enhance it if they wish. Staff of the Ministry of Children's Services also provide resources, support and programming advice to the CFSAs.

The work of the CFSAs is overseen by community-based boards appointed by government. Each authority operates under a province-wide set of standards, and has flexibility in service delivery. CFSAs oversee planning and development, and administration of children's services, including child care.

Child care specialists (formerly licensing officers) and subsidy workers are hired by the authorities but remain provincial government employees.

## MUNICIPAL OR OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

The provincial government allocates block funds to 277 municipalities for preventive social service needs through the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program. Each municipal FCSS program allocates these resources.

Out-of-school care is the responsibility of municipal authorities. Some municipal FCSS programs have chosen to allocate their block funds to provide out-of-school care programming and subsidies. Eighteen of 277 municipalities provide some funding to child care. This may include subsidies for school-age programs and some limited funding for low income families to cover part of the parent fee not covered by provincial subsidy.

The municipalities of Jasper and Beaumont operate the two remaining municipal centres in the province. Staff in the programs are municipal employees and salaries are 2-3 times the provincial average. The municipalities provide additional funding to offset the operating costs.

## CHILD CARE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

There is no provincial plan for the development of child care.

## HISTORY OF CHILD CARE AND OTHER ECEC SERVICES

1942 Alberta signed the *Dominion-Provincial Agreement* with the federal government but did not establish child care centres. The need for child care was refuted by an advisory committee.

1966 Community Day Nursery, the first centre to receive public funds, was opened in Edmonton. *The Preventive Social Services Act* delegated decision-making authority for child care to municipalities and introduced 80/20 cost-sharing arrangements with participating municipalities. Public and non-profit centres were able to receive subsidies for eligible low-income families.

1971 The Alberta Association for Young Children was established.

1978 *The Social Care Facilities Licensing Act* included the first legislated child care regulations and changed funding from supporting child care program grants to fee subsidies for low income families.

1980 The provincial government took over the municipal share of funding of subsidies and administration of care services for children up to six years. Operating allowances (operating grants to non-profit and for-profit child care centres) were introduced.

1981 Standards were established for family day homes.

A policy was developed and special funding authorized for an Integrated Day Care Service (integration of children with special needs into mainstream programs).

1990 Alberta's first staff qualification requirements were introduced. *Focus on Children*, a report of the Office of the Commission of Services for Children, calls for more local control of children's services. An announcement was made that operating grants would be phased out within the year.

1992 Policy recommendations for child care centres were developed by the Parent Advisory Working Committee and some were adopted by the provincial government.

1994 A three year budget plan effectively suspended the continued implementation of 1990 funding reforms. The goal of the three year budget plan was to reduce provincial child care expenditure by \$14 million or 20% over three years.

A report by the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman identified inadequacies in the regulatory system in Alberta. It recommended improving procedures for complaint investigation, compliance management and investigating serious occurrences.

1995 The province created several positions for "eligibility review officers" to review child care subsidy claims and as a result, 20% of families lost their subsidy. As a result of both the loss of subsidized parents and operating grants, some centres closed, particularly in the commercial sector which saw a 13% reduction in spaces.

1998 Preschool grants were reduced from \$85/month/ space to \$29/month/space and were entirely eliminated in April 1, 1999. Savings realized from the reduction and elimination of operating grants and some reinvestment from the National Child Benefit Reinvestment Strategy were used to raise both eligibility levels and rates for subsidy.

1999 The Ministry of Children's Services was established. In 1999, the province turned responsibility for child care services over to 18 Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs). See administration for details.

## **RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CHILD CARE AND OTHER ECEC SERVICES**

1998 The Alberta Children and Youth Initiative is a partnership of government ministries that work together on issues affecting children and youth. Its vision is to ensure that Alberta's children and youth are well cared for, safe, successful at learning and healthy. Its key initiatives include combating Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, promoting children's mental health, and improving supports and resources for children, youth and their families.

1998 A national study of wages, working conditions and quality, *You Bet I Care!*, found that — based on a sample of full-time centres for children 0-6 years and regulated family child care — Alberta scored 5.1 on the ECERS-R (preschool rooms), 5.1 on the ITERS (infant rooms), and 4.2 on the FDCRS (family child care). (See Table 25 for elaboration.)

2001-2002 ECS Policy and Regulation have been revised. The new Day Care Regulation was enacted in 2000. The Day Care Regulation Review was initiated as a result of an Alberta Government initiative to "streamline, simplify requirements and reduce duplication". Completion of the review followed a two phase consultative process with day care operators and stakeholder groups. The regulation includes elimination of regulations already covered by other ministries, revising outdated stipulations and alignment with the community delivery system of Child and Family Services Authorities.

Training for front line government licensing staff (Child Care Specialists) has occurred in the use of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale—Revised Edition (ECERS—R), Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS), and Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDCRS).

According to Ministry officials, challenges in child care include staff turnover and low wages of child care workers.

In January 2001, the Children's Services Ministry established the Day Care Review Working Committee consisting of child care stakeholders to analyze and propose solutions to the challenges facing child care delivery in Alberta.

Alberta's 2001/2002 Early Childhood Development Initiative allocation for Alberta was \$29.7 million. The funds have been distributed to the 18 Child and Family Service Authorities who develop their own plans with community groups. There are no specific province-wide strategies for the fund.

## **KEY PROVINCIAL ECEC ORGANIZATIONS**

Alberta Association for Young Children  
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Edmonton, AB T6C 2N1  
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Facsimile: 403-465-1571

Early Childhood Professional Association of Alberta  
10277 - 118 Street  
P.O. Box 3631  
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Alberta Association for Family Day Home Services  
11411 – 54 Avenue  
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**TEACHERS' ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS**

Alberta Teachers' Association  
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