

PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

Number of children 0-12 yrs (2003 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0	37,400
1	36,000
2	34,900
3	37,200
4	37,000
5	36,000
6	40,900
7	41,200
8	44,600
9	39,400
10	43,200
11	41,900
12	47,000
Total	516,700



Number of children 0-12 years (2003 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0-2	108,300
3-5	110,200
6-12	298,200
Total	516,700

Children 0-12 yrs with mothers in the paid labour force (2003 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0	18,100
1	17,500
2	18,900
3	20,700
4	21,700
5	20,400
6	23,400
7	27,100
8	29,700
9	26,200
10	30,200
11	28,500
12	32,900
Total	315,300

Number of children 0-12 years with mothers in the paid labour force (2003 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0-2	54,500
3-5	62,800
6-12	198,000
Total	315,300

Children 0-14 yrs identifying with an Aboriginal group (2001)

Age	North American					Total
	Indian	Metis	Inuit	Multiple	Other	
0-4	10,355	6,135	45	80	275	16,890
5-9	11,370	6,775	125	135	280	18,685
10-14	10,505	7,090	115	150	275	18,135
Total	32,230	20,000	285	365	830	53,710

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	22,980	3.9

Note: Total may not add up due to rounding.

Number of children by marital status of families (2001)

Age	Children in couple families	Children in lone parent families	(with lone mothers)	(with lone fathers)
0-4	158,655	24,845	21,325	3,520
5-9	171,110	34,415	28,935	5,475
10-14	178,590	40,090	32,465	7,625
Total	508,355	99,350	82,725	16,620

Number of children by mother tongue (2001)

Age	English	French	Non-official language
0-4	163,960	1,430	18,440
5-9	185,910	1,780	19,145
10-14	198,660	1,865	20,135
Total	548,530	5,075	57,720

Number of children in families living below the LICO (2002)

Age	Number	Percent (%)
0-2	18,200	15.2
3-5	19,800	18.8
6-12	40,000	13.9
0-12	78,000	15.2

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2003 rounded estimate)

Age of youngest child	Number of mothers	Participation rate (%)
0-2	51,700	59.1
3-5	44,500	71.4
6-15	155,500	83.6

FAMILY-RELATED LEAVE

Maternity leave

Fifteen weeks

Parental leave

Thirty-seven 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

Thirty-seven 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 and parental claims (2003)

Number of births	39,042
Birth rate per 1,000 population	12.4
Number of initial maternity claims allowed	20,410
Average length of maternity claims	14.5 weeks
Number of parental claims	21,400
Average length of parental claim	23.5
Number of adoptive parent claims	260
Average length of adoptive claim	26.2 weeks

Note: Maternity, parental and adoption leaves are determined by provincial and territorial legislation. The federal government pays for up to 15 weeks for maternity leave and 35 weeks for parental and adoptive leave for eligible parents at 55% of earned income to a maximum of \$413/week. 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

Private Schools Regulation 190/2000 (under revision)

Private School Policy 3.6.1

Alberta funds and delivers denominational education. Both “public” and Catholic school boards are publicly funded.

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR KINDERGARTEN

Kindergarten contact

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KINDERGARTEN SERVICES

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

Early Childhood Services (ECS) is under the authority of Alberta Education. ECS may be offered by public schools (including charter schools), private schools, or by private ECS operators, which must be a non-profit society, non-profit company or through special act of legislature (no ECS program is currently authorized this way).

ECS is not compulsory. Access is not legislated; however, 98% of five year olds are in kindergarten.

AGE ELIGIBILITY

Five years old by February 28

2.5 years if the child has a severe disability; 3.5 years if child has a mild or moderate disability

CLASS SIZE

There is no provincial policy on class size.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

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

Number of children with special needs in kindergarten: Information not available

ENROLMENT (2003/04)

Number of children enrolled in ECS (the year before Grade 1): 41,562

Number of children enrolled in ECS (two years before Grade 1): 1,704 (children with a mild or moderate disability)

Number of children enrolled in ECS (three years before Grade one): 287 (children with a severe disability)

The total includes children attending ECS programs offered by public, separate, francophone, charter, private school and private ECS operators. Since Alberta has a lower age eligibility than other provinces and territories, there are numerous four year old children who are in ECS in the year before Grade one. However, there may be some four year olds who are in the “mild to moderate disability” category and who are enrolled two years before Grade one.

KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

Qualification requirements: A valid Alberta Teaching Certificate (B.Ed.). Teacher certification requires a minimum of four years university study in a basic teaching program (B.Ed.), or a bachelor’s degree supplemented with a basic teacher program (two years post degree for teacher training and practicum). There are no specific early childhood requirements for ECS teachers.

All teachers must complete a professional development Growth Plan, as outlined in the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy.

Responsibility for certification: The Teacher Certification and Development Branch of Alberta Education for private school and private ECS operators offering kindergarten programs. The Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta (AISCA) has responsibility as designated signing authority for extending interim certificates and applications for permanent certification.

Representation: Alberta Teachers Association (ATA) represents teachers in the public school system.

Average salary (2003/04): Information not available

In 2003/04 there were 4,136 certificated teachers working in ECS programs.

CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS

Title: Teacher Assistants

Qualifications: There are no provincial qualification requirements.

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

Assistants help children with activities, prepare materials for lessons, provide one-to-one care to children with special needs, etc. All work is done under the supervision of an Alberta certified teacher.

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.).

MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

The principal or an administrator monitors ECS programs run by school boards. There is also a review of documentation (including authority and school information, hours of instruction, teacher information etc.), budget reports and audited financial statements for Alberta Education and an Annual Education Report.

Field services staff visit all new ECS programs run by private ECS operators plus visit a yearly sample and any that may have issues. Document reviews are also conducted.

SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR KINDERGARTEN

The province provides all education funding under a block grant system. Equal amounts come from general revenue sources and property taxes levied by the province. School boards may seek elector approval to levy tax on property to a maximum of 3% of their budget allocation.¹

Funding is provided to approved ECS operators on a per diem basis to deliver the program. The program must offer at least 475 instructional hours.

Private schools can provide ECS programs for which they receive same grants as public schools and private ECS operators. At Grade one, though, the private school grant is about 50% that of public school as private schools are able to charge tuition for Grade one. Everyone who operates ECS programs (private schools included) must provide 475 hours of basic program at no charge to parents.

¹ Source: Canadian School Board Association. *Education Governance in Canada: Trends and Implications*. Last updated 1999.

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/month. The schedule of the “normal day” depends on the operator.

PUBLIC SPENDING ON KINDERGARTEN (2003/04)

Per capita spending: \$2,272 (basic instruction grant per child in kindergarten, one year before grade one)

Total spending on kindergarten

Information not available

SPECIAL FEATURES

Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS I) provides funding to school authorities for specific local initiatives focused on improving student learning. For ECS programs, funding is a maximum of \$60 per registered child for an approved project. AIS I has been used for full-day ECS and pre-kindergarten.

RECENT INITIATIVES IN KINDERGARTEN 2002/04

In 2004 Medicine Hat School District #76 became the first to offer full-day every day kindergarten district-wide. All 12 elementary schools in the district offer “full-day every day” kindergarten; in addition, three schools also offer part-day kindergarten, providing parents with an option.

The motivation for the initiative was a new superintendent with an early childhood and special education background; as well, the direction from Alberta Education has been “early intervention.” Parents were surveyed in the spring of 2004 – 98% wanted full-day every day. Many parents have moved over to full-day every day, as the children wanted to stay for lunch and be with their friends.

The schedule is as close to the regular school day as possible, with early dismissal for professional development days. Seven new teachers were hired for the program, with a priority given to those with child development, early childhood and early literacy backgrounds. They meet monthly with the program director for in-service activities (and cover topics such as Reggio Emilio, the importance of play, etc.).

Included in the district are three full-day preschool programs in schools, operated on a reverse integration model for children with development delays who are eligible for additional education funding. Typically-developing community children also attend these programs. These programs are staffed by qualified teachers and assistants and are operated on about a 1:3 ratio.

The schools house a number of child care centres; the school district took over one centre after the municipality stopped operating it. Staff are on the school payroll but at a different grid than teacher assistants.

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: Six, including the caregiver's own children under 12 years

A maximum of three children may be under the age of two years.

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

Out-of-school care programs

Programs for children 6-12 years outside school hours. Out-of-school care was licensed by the province under the *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act*. Effective August 1, 2004, staff from Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) regulate out-of-school care facilities under the revised *Child Care Regulation*. Approvals are also required in the areas of building safety, fire and zoning, and health.

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; however, staff typically have an ECE credential. Children with special needs may receive ECS funding (see KINDERGARTEN section) and may receive care and education in a child care centre or a nursery school/preschool.

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 when provincial licensing standards are met and centres are approved. As of March 2004, there were 24 approved child care centres on-reserve with a capacity of 1,114 spaces.

SPACE STATISTICS (MARCH 2004)

Number of regulated child care spaces

Day care spaces*	26,574
Part-day nursery schools	14,831
Out-of-school care	*17,767
Total centre-based spaces	59,172
Family day home spaces**	6,554
Total regulated spaces***	65,726

* Includes children up to six and under seven years of age and not in Grade 1. Age breakdown not available.

** Enrolled spaces; total number of approved spaces not available.

*** Total includes regulated centre-based spaces and enrolled family day home spaces.

Children with special needs in regulated child care

Information not available

Children receiving provincial subsidies*

10,614

* Alberta Children's Services does not provide subsidies for school-age care. Many municipalities receive Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) funding from the province that they direct towards the prevention needs of the municipality. They may choose to use a portion of these funds for school-age child care. Five of the 227 municipalities provide subsidies to eligible parents. In other locations, out-of-school care programs are offered through the municipalities, but a grant is provided. Of the 227 municipalities, 42 redirect FCSS funding for out-of-school care and, of these, five provide direct subsidies.

Number of centres and homes	
Full-day day care centres	541
Part-day nursery schools/preschools	637
Stand-alone after-school programs	523
Number of family child care providers	1,741
Number of family child care agencies	88
Sponsorship of day care centres and nursery schools	
	Full day Part day Total
	Centres Spaces Centres Spaces Centres Spaces
Non-profit	182 8,773 454 10,070 636 18,843
For-profit	359 17,801 183 4,761 542 22,562
Sponsorship of family day home agencies	
Non-profit	45
For-profit	43
Openings and closings	
Information not available	

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

REGULATED CENTRES

Maximum centre size:	80 spaces	
Maximum staff:child ratios and group sizes		
<i>Child care centres</i>		
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
6-12 years	1:15	30
<i>Drop-in centres</i>		
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
<i>Nursery schools</i>		
Age	Ratio	
0-18 months	1:6	
19-35 month	1:10	
3-5 yrs	1:12	
5+ years	1:15	
<i>Note: There are no maximum group sizes for nursery schools.</i>		

Staff qualification requirements

Alberta has three qualification levels:

Level 3 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 2 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 1 requires completion of the government's orientation course or equivalent course work equivalent of at least 45 hours related to ECE.

Between the hours of 8:15 am and 4:30 pm, programs must have a director with a Level Three certificate or exemption. One in four staff in each centre is required to hold a Level Two certificate or exemption. All other staff are required to hold a Level One certificate or exemption.

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.

Numbers of staff by certification levels (March 2004)*

Level 1 (and exempt)	2,575
Level 2 (and exempt)	858
Level 3 (and exempt)	1,242

*This number does not include staff in school-age programs as there are no training requirements.

Parent involvement

Not specified

Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

Alberta regional child care specialists conduct a minimum of quarterly licensing inspections. 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 not in compliance with the regulations, a series of enforcement actions may occur depending upon the severity of the non-compliance, including a formal written order directing the centre to comply within a specific time frame to the specified regulation, 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 approved under contract with family day care home agencies that 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

Provincial Safety Standard #10 requires that direct care providers receive training in such areas as child development, child guidance and employing appropriate culturally sensitive strategies. Family day home agencies are required to develop appropriate training based on the needs of their providers and families.

Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

Agency staff (home visitors) 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 subsidies are paid directly to service providers on behalf of eligible parents. Children receiving subsidies may enrol in non-profit or for-profit regulated child care centres and approved family day care homes. Subsidies are not available in drop-in centres, nursery schools or for school-age care. However, some municipalities provide subsidies for school-age care.

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. All families with a valid reason for care and who qualify based on their income are eligible for the Alberta Child Care Subsidy Program.

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, in person, or online.

Eligibility for fee subsidy (net income, 2003/04)

	Child care centres		Family child care
	Turning point	Break-even point	Break-even point
1 parent, 1 child	\$28,080	\$36,600	\$34,680
2 parents, 2 children	31,680	49,320	45,480

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.

Note: In the 2001 version of this report, the subsidy eligibility levels for Alberta and BC were inadvertently switched.

Maximum subsidy/child/month (2003/04)

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
(2003/04)

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 for minor capital and other one-time expenses.

Recurring funding

Pre-Accreditation Funding Program

The intent of this funding is to help centres meet the requirements for accreditation, and to assist with increasing staff retention and reducing staff turnover rates. Participation is voluntary.

Pre-accreditation funding becomes ongoing accreditation funding if the centre becomes accredited. The pre-accreditation funding received by centres working towards accreditation will end at a time not yet determined.

For a full description of the Child Care Accreditation program, see RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

Day Care Centres

Beginning in 2003/04 there are two types of funding for licensed day care centres:

Quality Recognition/Improvement Funding Grants: Available to day care centres "to maintain/enhance quality programming". Up to \$1,200 per year based on compliance with licensing standards and licensed capacity.

Staff Support Funding Grants: Available to all paid, certified staff working in regulated day care centres which have applied, been approved, and are in good licensing standing. Funding is paid to the day care centre on behalf of staff members at the following rates:

Level 1	\$0.30/hr	\$600 per year
Level 2	0.41/hr	800 per year
Level 3	0.62/hr	1200 per year

Family Day Homes

Provider Support Funding Grants: Available to providers who have met (or are completing) training requirements to the Provincial Safety Standards and have provided direct child care to preschool children in a given calendar month. Funding is paid to the agencies for the providers at the rate of \$50 per month per child.

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

Each of first 10 children enrolled	\$95/month
Each of next 10 children enrolled	63/month

3-6 years

Each of first 10 children enrolled	65/month
Each of next 10 children enrolled	50/month

Funding for special needs

Funding is provided to assist in the inclusion of children with special needs and 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 is administered differently in different regions of Alberta. Both for-profit and non-profit programs are eligible to apply for special needs funding.

Respite care

Respite funding provides funding for short-term child care placements in regulated child care to support identified families in need of support in their child rearing role. It also assists families of children with disabilities in need of relief care. Child and Family Services Authority (CFSA) staff fund and work with child care providers to make a number of child care spaces available in their program on a daily basis. This program enables families to participate in counselling or treatment programs that they need, and benefits the children of these families through placement in a child care program.

Nutrition program

The Child Care Nutrition program assists CFSAs to fund regulated child care programs to enhance the nutritional quality of meals and snacks served to children in child care settings and to provide information about preschool nutritional needs to parents of children in child care.

PROVINCIAL ALLOCATIONS FOR REGULATED
CHILD CARE (2003/04)

Fee subsidies	\$41,000,000
One-time funding	None
Recurring funding	
Family day home agency admin. fee	\$4,900,000
Inclusive Child Care Funding	2,200,000
Pre-accreditation	*4,500,000
Respite funding	900,000
Nutrition program	100,000
Total	\$53,600,000

* Includes Quality Recognition/Improvement Funding Grants, Staff Support Funding Grants and Provider Support Funding Grants

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 (March 2004)

0–18 months	\$600/month
19–83 months	\$532/month

Source: *Management Information System, Alberta Children's Services.*

Average daily fee in family child care

Information not available

ADMINISTRATION

Between April 1999 and May 2003, child care services were administered through 18 Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) which were responsible for service delivery (see HISTORY 1999). In May 2003, regions were amalgamated so that the number was reduced to 10. The province provides funding to each Authority that 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 remains 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.

Staff in CFSAs, including 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 funds to municipalities and Metis settlements for preventive social service needs through the Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) program. Ninety-nine percent of the provincial population resides in communities receiving services provided by local FCSS programs. Funding for some preschool programs is currently available to municipalities and Metis settlements through the FCSS Program.

One of the key principles of the FCSS Program is local autonomy in priority setting and resource allocation. Each municipality or Metis settlement receiving FCSS funding determines how the dollars should be allocated to best meet the needs of their community. Out-of-school care is the responsibility of municipal authorities; 42 FCSS-funded municipalities allocate a portion of their FCSS funds to provide out-of-school care programs. Of these, five municipalities provide subsidies and the remainder provide grants.

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. These municipalities provide additional funding to reduce 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, called 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.

1998 The Alberta Children and Youth Initiative is a partnership of government ministries that works 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.

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 section for details.

2001/02 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.

Training for front line government licensing staff (Child Care Specialists) 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).

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.

2001/02 The 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.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CHILD CARE AND OTHER ECEC SERVICES

2002 *Child Care Accreditation Program* is a voluntary accreditation process by which early childhood programs demonstrate that they meet defined child care standards. Programs seeking accreditation complete a self-study process, receive an on-site visit and are reviewed by an independent body that grants or defers accreditation. Accreditation requirements will exceed current standards set out in the regulations.

Alberta Children's Services has contracted with the Alberta Child Care Network Association, in partnership with the Canadian Child Care Federation, to deliver accreditation services.

Respite options for families in need

Short term child care placements to support identified at-risk families and families of children with disabilities in need of relief care. CFSAs staff work with child care providers to make regulated child care spaces available in their program on a daily basis for this purpose.

Child care Nutrition Program

This program assists CFSAs to fund regulated child care programs to enhance the nutritional quality of meals and snacks served to children in child care settings and to provide information about preschool nutritional needs to parents of children in child care.

Kin Child Care Funding

The Kin Child Care funding program is based on recommendations from the Low Income Review proposing increased access to child care subsidy in rural areas, and for families who work non-traditional work hours. The Kin Child Care program provides subsidy to eligible parents to pay non-resident blood relatives to care for their children. A pilot project was initiated in one of the Child and Family Services Authorities in September 1, 2003, and six other CFSAs are currently delivering the program. \$600,000 was allocated to this program in the 2004/05 budget.

2003/04 The Pre-Accreditation Funding Program was introduced. The intent of this funding is to assist programs to work towards accreditation standing. Participation is voluntary.

Pre-Accreditation statistics (2003/04)

- More than 95% of eligible regulated day care centres are receiving Pre-Accreditation Funding
- 99% of approved family day home agencies are receiving Provider Support Funding
- An average of 4,000 day care staff receive Staff Support Funding
- Approximately 1,700 family day home providers are receiving Provider Support Funding

2004 Effective August 1, 2004, the *Day Care Regulation* was amended to include standards for out-of-school care facilities. The renamed *Child Care Regulation* outlines the minimum requirements that Out-of-School Care (OSC) operators must meet. Out-of-school care programs may now be licensed to provide care for children who are ages 4.5 years and older, and attending Early Childhood Services (ECS) Programs as defined in the *School Act*. Families of ECS children attending out-of-school care programs became eligible for provincial child care subsidy.

■ KEY PROVINCIAL ECEC ORGANIZATIONS

Alberta Child Care Network Association

Contact: Sherrill Brown, Chairperson

Email: browns@macewan.ca

Early Childhood Professional Association of Alberta

Co-Chair Email: carolrob@telusplanet.net

Alberta Family Child Care Association

Contact: Susan Elson (403) 250-5795

E-mail: susan@davarchildcare.org

TEACHERS' ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

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