

Nova Scotia



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Nova Scotia



■ OVERVIEW

In Nova Scotia, early learning and child care includes junior kindergarten (Pre-Primary) kindergarten (Grade Primary), regulated child care centres and family child care.

Grade Primary is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Full-day Grade Primary is available to all five-year-olds. Nova Scotia introduced Pre-Primary, kindergarten for four-year-olds beginning in 2017; it became available in all public elementary schools in 2020. The Nova Scotia Before and After Program (NSBAP)—a fee-based program—is delivered on-site by approved child care, municipal recreation, or recognized non-profit recreation providers. The programs are primarily for four- and five-year-olds in kindergarten and are not licensed.

Responsibility for regulated child care was transferred to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Early Years Branch) in 2013. Child care centres and family child care for children aged 0 – 12 are licensed under the [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#) and regulated under the [Early Learning and Child Care Regulations](#).

There are Indigenous-operated child care programs on several First Nations reserves; these are not licensed by Nova Scotia. There is one licensed Indigenous-led centre not on a reserve in Nova Scotia.

Licensed programs are delivered by non-profit and for-profit individuals and organizations, with for-profit programs having a slight majority. There is no publicly operated child care in Nova Scotia.

In 2021, fees are set by service providers. In 2022, a wage grid, as per the Canada-Wide agreement, was introduced in Nova Scotia, first taking effect in November 2022.

Eligible families may receive fee subsidies at non-profit or for-profit centres, family child care and part or full-day programs. They may be used in Nova Scotia Before and After Program, which is not licensed.

Nova Scotia signed the Canada-Nova Scotia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (Multilateral Framework Agreement) on January 10, 2018. This agreement provided \$35.4 million over three years; it was extended on December 11, 2020 with an additional \$11.6 million for the 2020 – 2021 fiscal year, and renewed on July 7, 2021 to provide \$58.3 million over four years.

The Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement was signed by Nova Scotia on July 13, 2021. Through this agreement, the federal government will provide nearly \$605 million over five years to:

- reduce fees to an average of \$10/day by 2025 – 2026;
- implement placement strategies to utilize existing spaces;
- create 1,500 spaces by December 2022;
- expand the Quality Matters assessment initiative to include family child care, wrap-around, and school-based ELCC programs;
- implement a provincial wage grid for early childhood educators; and
- provide new means of upgrading credentials, and recognizing existing credentials.

The Canada-wide agreement does not replace but runs parallel to the Multilateral Framework Agreement.

In May 2022, Nova Scotia announced the creation of its Child Care Transformation Table, a collection of 21 parents, early childhood educators, child care centre and family day home operators, advocates, and academics. The Table’s purpose is to offer guidance to the province as it works through its CWELCC action plan.

■ PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

Please note that some of the following figures are rounded, while totals are based on exact figures and may therefore not equal the sum of the rounded figures shown here.

Number of children 0 – 12 (2021 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children (2021)
0	6,500
1	7,600
2	7,100
3	7,800
4	10,800
5	8,100
6	10,000
7	8,800
8	9,300
9	9,900
10	9,300
11	9,800
12	10,400
Total	115,500

Number of children 0 – 12 years (aggregated) (2021 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children (2021)
0 – 2	21,200
3 – 5	26,700
6 – 12	67,500
Total	115,500

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (2021 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children (2021)
0	4,000
1	5,500
2	5,100
3	6,000
4	7,700
5	5,000
6	6,500
7	6,100
8	6,600
9	6,700
10	7,300
11	6,300
12	7,800
Total	80,600

Number of children 0 – 12 with employed mothers (aggregated) (2021 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children (2021)
0 – 2	14,600
3 – 5	18,700
6 – 12	47,300
Total	80,600

Number of children 0 – 14 identifying with an Indigenous group (2021)

Age	First Nations	Métis	Inuk (Inuit)	Multiple	Other
0 – 4	2,020	875	85	75	60
5 – 9	2,385	1,125	85	70	100
10 – 14	2,445	1,365	110	80	60
Total	6,850	3,365	280	225	220

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2021 rounded estimate)

Age of youngest child	Number of mothers	Participation rate (%)
0 – 3	17,600	78.9
4 – 5	8,600	81.1
0 – 5	26,200	79.6
6 – 12	27,400	87.3

Living arrangements by age of child by number of parents (2021)

Age	Living with two parents	Living with one parent	Lone mother	Lone father
0 – 4	31,010	8,710	7,520	1,185
5 – 9	33,900	12,330	10,150	2,175
10 – 14	33,870	14,305	11,500	2,805

Languages spoken most often at home (2021)

<i>Age</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>French</i>	<i>Non-official</i>	<i>Multiple</i>
0 – 4	36,885	415	2,065	965
5 – 9	43,475	510	1,990	1,085
10 – 14	45,980	525	1,795	965
Total	126,340	1,445	5,840	3,010

Median after-tax income among families with children aged 0 – 5 (2020)

<i>Two-parent families</i>	<i>Male lone-parent</i>	<i>Female lone-parent</i>
\$91,000	\$44,400	\$42,800

PARENTAL LEAVE AND BENEFITS

Maternity and parental leave provisions in Canada outside Quebec are divided between federal and provincial/territorial governments. The federal government pays benefits under the Employment Insurance program (EI); provincial/territorial provisions for job-protected leave are established in each jurisdiction's employment standards legislation. EI is a contributory program; both employees and employers contribute.

LEAVE PROVISIONS**Maternity leave (Pregnancy leave)**

16 weeks.

There is no minimum length of employment tied to eligibility. All pregnant employees are eligible.

Parental leave

61 weeks for birth or adoption.

There is no minimum length of employment tied to eligibility.

Parents can receive their weeks of benefits at the same time or one after another. If an employee is taking pregnancy and parental leave, they must do so consecutively.

PARENTAL LEAVE BENEFITS**Benefit options in 2022**

Employment Insurance (EI) covers 15 weeks of maternity leave for eligible employed birth mothers up to 12 weeks prior to the expected date of birth and up to 17 weeks following the date of birth.

Two options for parental leave benefits

(parents must choose one)

Until December 3, 2017, there was one option for parental leave benefits: 35 weeks of paid leave taken over 12 months, paid at 55% of average weekly insurable earnings (up to \$638/week in 2022). This option is now known as the Standard Parental Benefit.

As of December 3, 2017, EI benefits include an additional option, the Extended Parental Benefit. This pays 61 weeks of parental leave benefits taken over 18 months and paid at 33% of average weekly earnings (up to \$383/week in 2022).

As of March 17, 2019, the Parental Sharing Benefit also became available to non-birth/second parents. Under this additional benefit, five weeks of Standard Benefits is available if parents share Standard Parental Benefits (40 weeks total) or an additional eight weeks of Extended Benefits is available when parents share Extended Parental Benefits (69 weeks total).

Parents' access to taking paid parental leave requires that provinces/territories' leave provisions must match federal benefits.

Note: For further details about the EI federal benefit, Quebec benefit and leave provisions, and provincial/territorial provisions for job-protected leave, see the PARENTAL LEAVE AND BENEFITS in the front section of this publication.

■ KINDERGARTEN

In Nova Scotia, kindergarten (termed Grade Primary) is the responsibility of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

In 2018, Nova Scotia replaced elected school board members in English language school boards with one appointed advisory council. Schools are divided into seven English language regional centres. There is one francophone school board (Conseil scolaire acadien provincial), made up of elected school trustees.

Full-school day Grade Primary is available to all five-year-olds.

Nova Scotia introduced kindergarten for all four-year-olds (Pre-Primary) in selected schools in 2017. In September 2020, Pre-Primary became available in all public elementary schools.

The full-school day for both Pre-Primary and Grade Primary is a minimum of four instructional hours.

Mi'kmaq bands operate kindergarten programs in elementary schools on reserve, which are funded by Indigenous Services Canada.

Nova Scotia regulates but does not fund denominational or other private schools.

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR KINDERGARTEN

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Brunswick Place

2021 Brunswick Street

P.O. Box 578, B3J 2S9

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Telephone: (902) 424-5168

Website: <https://beta.novascotia.ca/government/education-and-early-childhood-development>

Pre-Primary: <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/pre-primary>

LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

Nova Scotia. Legislative Assembly. *Education Act*. – SNS1995-96, C- 1, s.1. Amended 2018, C- 3, s.36.

KINDERGARTEN FOR FIVE-YEAR-OLDS (GRADE PRIMARY)

DEFINITION

Kindergarten in Nova Scotia is known as Grade Primary.

It is offered in public and private schools as a full-school day program.

ELIGIBILITY

To attend Grade Primary, children must be five years old by December 31 of the school year.

ENROLMENT

Enrolment in Grade Primary is compulsory.

Parents of children turning five years old on or before December 31 may delay their child's participation by one year.

ENTITLEMENT

All eligible children have a legislated entitlement to Grade Primary.

INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS PER DAY/ TYPICAL LENGTH OF THE SCHOOL DAY

A minimum of four instructional hours/day is required for Grade Primary to Grade 2; this is considered to be a full-school day.

CLASS SIZE

Classes for Grade Primary are capped at 20 students, with flexibility. Creating combined classes or multi-age groupings are allowed to meet this cap. Flexibility is defined as not more than two additional students per class.

CURRICULUM OR CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Nova Scotia – Learning Outcomes Framework (Grades Primary – 6)

The use of the Nova Scotia elementary curriculum is mandated for use in all Grade Primary settings. The details of the Grade Primary curriculum by subject grade can be found [here](#).

GENERAL TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATION

Public school teachers who teach Grade Primary must have a valid teaching certificate. An Initial Teacher's Certificate requires an undergraduate education, including three years of approved undergraduate content studies, two years of an approved program of professional studies including a practicum, and receipt of an approved bachelor's degree from a recognized university.

Early childhood education training is not required for Grade Primary teachers.

KINDERGARTEN FOR FOUR-YEAR-OLDS (PRE-PRIMARY)

DEFINITION

Pre-Primary is a voluntary, free, play-based early learning program for children in Nova Scotia.

ELIGIBILITY

To attend Pre-Primary, children must be at least four years old by December 31 of the school year.

Children must live within the catchment area of a school where they attend the Pre-Primary program. Out of catchment requests may be considered by the school region on a case by case basis.

COMPULSORY

Participation in Pre-Primary is voluntary and not a prerequisite to enter Grade Primary.

ENTITLEMENT

Pre-Primary is not a legislated entitlement. However, it is available in all 243 school communities with elementary schools, and all four-year-olds have access.

INSTRUCTIONAL HOURS PER DAY/ TYPICAL LENGTH OF THE SCHOOL DAY

Pre-Primary operates the same hours as the primary school day, which is a minimum of four instructional hours a day.

Families are responsible for arranging before- and after-care, and any related costs.

Some schools provide the [Nova Scotia Before and After Program \(NSBAP\)](#). See unlicensed child care section.

CLASS SIZE

Pre-Primary classrooms are staffed by two early childhood educators for 20 children or three staff for a maximum of 24 children.

CURRICULUM OR CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The Pre-Primary program uses [Capable, confident, and curious: Nova Scotia's early learning curriculum framework](#) rather than the curriculum for Grade Primary to grade 6. This framework is mandated for use in all Pre-Primary programs.

GENERAL TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS AND CERTIFICATION

Pre-Primary programs are staffed by early childhood educators. A diploma or degree in early childhood education is required.

TOTAL ENROLMENT (SCHOOL YEAR 2020 – 2021)

Grade Primary	8,123
Pre-Primary	6,910
Total enrolment	15,033

FINANCIAL (SCHOOL YEAR 2020 – 2021)

Spending on Grade Primary (total)	<i>Not available</i>
Spending on Pre-Primary (per child)	<i>Not available</i>
Spending on Pre-Primary (total)	\$ 58.4M

RECENT OR ANTICIPATED DEVELOPMENTS

The [Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement](#) signed in July 2021 states that Nova Scotia will develop a “free early learning program” for three-year-olds; the goal is that 2,000 children will be enrolled by the 2023 school year. This program will be located in public schools across the province, with priority access for families who identify as equity-seeking (First Nations/Indigenous, African Nova Scotians, children with disabilities, newcomers, 2SLGBTQ+) and children from vulnerable families (low income, racialized). The program will use Nova Scotia’s early learning framework and be staffed by early childhood educators.

CHILD CARE

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE

Early Years Branch

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

PO Box 578, B3J 2S9

2021 Brunswick Street

Halifax, Nova Scotia

Phone: (902) 424-5168

Website: <https://beta.novascotia.ca/government/education-and-early-childhood-development>

LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

Nova Scotia. House of Assembly. [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#). – RSNS1989, C-120, s. 1. Amended 2018, C-33. Effective October 27, 2020.

Nova Scotia. House of Assembly. [Early Learning and Child Care Regulations](#). – RSNS1989, C-120. Amended O.I.C. 2010-456, N.S. Reg. 193/2010 to O.I.C. 2020-296 N.S. Reg.165/2020. Effective October 27, 2020.

CHILD CARE SERVICES

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

An unlicensed provider can care for six children of mixed ages or eight school-aged children including any children of the person providing the care.

Before- and after-school programs delivered in schools by approved child care, municipal recreation, or recognized non-profit recreation providers are not required to be licensed.

Note: Additional exemptions to the requirement to be licensed can be found in the [Early Learning and Child Care Regulations](#).

REGULATED CHILD CARE

Child care centres

Child care centres provide care in a group setting for less than 24 hours/day for seven or more children from 0–12 years of age. This includes full-day and part-day child care centres and programs for school-age children.

Family home child care

Family home child care provides care in the care provider's home.

Individual family home child care providers are not licensed but approved and monitored by a family home child care agency licensed under the authority of the *Early Learning and Child Care Act* and Regulations.

An approved family home child care provider may care for up to seven children of mixed ages including the provider's own children; or nine school-age children including the provider's own school-age children, or three infants, including the provider's own children. If care is provided for four to seven children, no more than three may be under three years of age, and of those three children no more than two children may be infants.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Capable, confident, and curious: Nova Scotia's early learning curriculum framework is a guide for early childhood educators with a focus on children from birth to eight years old and their families in early learning and child care settings.

Licensed child care centres receiving provincial funding are expected to use it as the overall guiding framework for programming in their centre but it is not tied to licensing requirements under the Nova Scotia *Early Learning and Child Care Act*. All centres have access to professional development on the framework.

Pre-Primary programs also use this curriculum framework.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In Nova Scotia, the definition of special needs has evolved over time as a more holistic approach has emerged. A child with special needs is not defined simply by the presence of a developmental or physical disability but includes many factors such as the child's lived experiences and developmental competencies in the areas of social, physical, cognitive, health and well-being. Inclusive environments must include, respond to, and respect all children and the diversity they bring to a setting. This means the early education environment and all staff must make every effort to include and care for all children, recognizing and respecting their diversity (for example, ability, culture, language, gender, race, etc.).

A diagnosis is not required for admission to a child care service that provides inclusion.

All current provincially funded programs have access to Inclusion Support Funding.

Programs are not required to accept children with special needs.

The [Inclusion Support Grant \(ISG\)](#) is intended to support an inclusive program and is not associated with a specific child. Funding is based on a per diem for the number of operating days, at 10% of the centre capacity. ISG funding must be used to embed inclusion in the early learning and child care environment.

Funding may be used to provide additional staff, training and professional development for regular staff, consultation by specialists and assistive devices and equipment. There are no specific ratios or group size requirements to include a child with special needs, and no specific or additional qualifications for staff in programs that enrol children with special needs.

Newly constructed or renovated facilities are not required to be fully accessible/barrier free.

Nova Scotia began implementing the [Pyramid Model](#) (a framework of evidence-based practices for promoting young children’s healthy social and emotional development) in 2018 at selected regulated child care centres across the province. In 2019 – 2021, the province expanded the implementation of the Pyramid Model into select Pre-Primary programs across the province. In April 2021, the Pyramid Model program transitioned from a pilot to a program, and is now housed with Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services.

FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT CHILD CARE

FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS AND INUIT CHILD CARE ON RESERVES AND ON INUIT LANDS

Child care in each Nova Scotia First Nations community on reserve operates individually, outside the mandate of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Neither full-day child care centres nor Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve (AHSOR) are licensed. There are 12 unlicensed child care centres and, according to the federal government, 13 AHSOR programs on reserve.

Some funding may be available for eligible parents from the Mi’kmaq Employment/Training Secretariat, through contribution agreements with Service Canada.

INDIGENOUS CHILD CARE OTHER THAN ON RESERVE

There is one licensed Indigenous-focused and led child care centre operated by the Mi’kmaq Native Friendship Centre.

Number of licensed spaces other than on reserve	
Infants	6
Preschool-age	20
Total licensed spaces	26

Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) programs are not licensed by the province. There are six unlicensed AHSUNC programs in Nova Scotia.

OTHER INDIGENOUS-SPECIFIC RESOURCES/ INITIATIVES

Mi’kmaq Kina’matneway (MK), the educational authority for 12 of the 13 First Nations Communities in Nova Scotia, administers post-secondary for the education and professional development of early childhood educators and collaborates with universities and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) to provide customized programs. The collaboration has resulted in the successful development of the ECE diploma program for cohorts of Mi’kmaq educators delivered in Mi’kmaq communities. The program uses a Mi’kmaq curriculum developed specifically through this initiative.

A cohort of Mi’kmaq ECEs is in the Nova Scotia Community College’s accelerated program in 2022 part-time online to enable them to work. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is working with MK and NSCC to develop a Mi’kmaq ECE diploma program to be launched in September 2023. It will be fully funded for 30 individuals new to the sector.



SPACE STATISTICS

NUMBER OF REGULATED SPACES (March 31, 2021)

Centre spaces

Full-day centres

Infants (0 – < 18 months)	1,052
Toddlers (18 – < 36 months)	4,457
Preschool-age (36 months – 5 years)	5,575

Part-day centres

30 months – 5 years (not in school)	875
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TOTAL CENTRE SPACES (0 – 5 years) 11,959

Before- and after-school care (licensed, regulated, approved or authorized)

Total number of spaces in before and after school care for children in Pre-Primary,

Primary and grades 1 – 6	3,589
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Note: These figures do not include the NS-BAP program for 4 and 5 year-olds, which are not licensed but have specified requirements.

TOTAL CENTRE SPACES (0 – 12 years) 15,548

Regulated family child care (enrolment)

Full-day (children not attending school)	765
Part-day (children attending school)	425
Total approved family child care spaces (enrolment)	1,190

TOTAL REGULATED SPACES (centre spaces and family child care enrolment) 16,738

Number of child care centres (2021)

Total number of centres	304
Number of centres providing a full-day program	271
Number of centres providing a part-day (nursery or preschool) program	44
Number of centres providing a part-day program for children attending school (approx 4 – 12 years)	132
Number of centres providing infant care (0 – < 18 months)	99
Number of centres providing toddler care (18 – < 36 months)	222
Number of centres providing preschool-age care (36 months – 5 years)	229
Number of centres providing non-standard hours care	3
Number of centres in publicly delivered and funded schools	51

Note: For a definition of non-standard hours care in Nova Scotia, see [Non-standard work and child care in Canada \(pg. 89\)](#).

Number of approved family child care homes

Number of family child care homes (active)	168
Number of family child care agencies	14

Nova Scotia Before and After program (NS-BAP)

Total NS-BAP spaces	672
Number of NS-BAP programs	28

Municipal delivery

Number of municipalities or municipal entities operating child care centres (i.e. are the licence holder)	0
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Programs by auspice (2021)

Centres	Number of centres/agencies
For-profit	168
Non-profit	165
Publicly operated ¹	0

Family child care agencies

For-profit	5
Non-profit	9

Centre spaces by auspice

	Full-day spaces	Part-day spaces ²	BASC spaces ³	Total spaces
For-profit	6,373	222	1,948	8,543
Non-profit	4,711	653	1,641	7,005
Publicly operated ¹	–	–	–	–

1 Municipality/municipal entity, school authority, other government agency or Indigenous governance organization

2 Nursery school and preschool

3 Before- and after-school care spaces (4 – 12 years)

Note: For a profile of child care auspice in Nova Scotia, see [Risky Business](#).

FEE SUBSIDIES

Children receiving subsidies in licensed, regulated, or approved child care (March 31, 2021)

Full subsidy	3,790
Partial subsidy	1,390

TOTAL CHILDREN RECEIVING FEE SUBSIDIES 5,180

SPECIAL NEEDS/DISABILITY SUPPORT FUNDING

Children in licensed, regulated, or approved child care being supported by special needs/disability support funding (March 31, 2021) *Not applicable*

Number of centres receiving the Inclusion Support Grant 267

For a list of all licensed programs and services in Nova Scotia, see this [directory](#).

ENROLMENT STATISTICS

Number of children enrolled in regulated centres (March 31, 2021)

Centre enrolment

Full-day centres

Infants (0 – < 18 months) 834
 Toddlers (18 – < 36 months) 3,535
 Preschool-age (36 months – 5 years) 4,362

Part-day centres

30 months – 5 years (not in school) 475

TOTAL CENTRE ENROLMENT (0 – 5 years) 9,205

Before- and after-school care (licensed, regulated, approved or authorized)

Total number of children in Pre-Primary, primary, and Grades 1 – 6 enrolled in before- and after-school care 3,072

Note: These figures do not include the Nova Scotia Before and After program. Total enrolment in NSBAP was 661 children in March 2021.

TOTAL CENTRE ENROLMENT (0 – 12 years) 12,277

PARENT FEES

Nova Scotia does not set parent fees; operators set their own fees.

On January 14, 2022, Nova Scotia announced an early initial decrease of parent fees of 25%, on average, retroactive to January 1, 2022, under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement. Parents continued to pay their current rate until April 1, then chose to receive either a cheque from their centre reflecting the reduction from January to March or a credit. Parents then began paying the reduced rate going forward in centres that have opted in to the funding program.

A second average 25% fee reduction was announced in November 2022.

Fee reduction effective January 2022

Age group/ care type	Average daily child care fees pre-reduction	25% daily child care fee reduction	Average daily child care fee post-reduction
Infant	\$42.00	\$10.50	\$31.50
Toddler	\$36.00	\$9.00	\$27.00
Preschool-age (part-day)	\$15.00	\$3.75	\$11.25
Preschool-age (part-day)	\$35.00	\$8.75	\$26.25
School-age (full-day)	\$27.00	\$6.75	\$20.25
School-age (before- and after-school)	\$20.00	\$5.00	\$15.00
School-age (after-school only)	\$16.00	\$4.00	\$12.00
School-age (before-school only)	\$12.00	\$3.00	\$9.00

Nova Scotia Before and After Program (NS-BAP)

Before- and after-school	\$17.00	\$4.25	\$12.75
After-school only	\$13.00	\$3.25	\$9.75
Before-school only	\$6.00	\$1.50	\$4.50

Median monthly fees in Nova Scotia: Annual Fee Survey

In 2021, a national survey of child care fees in Canada's large cities included Halifax:

Median monthly fees for full-time child care

Infant	Toddler	Preschooler
\$996	\$897	\$880

Source: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2022). *Game Changer: Will provinces and territories meet the new federal child care fee targets? Canadian child care fees 2021*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

Note: These median monthly figures include fees from centre-based child care and home child care.

WORKFORCE

EARLY CHILDHOOD CERTIFICATION

Nova Scotia currently has a provincial classification system for early childhood staff. It is not a regulated system.

Classification Services of the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for the regulation of individuals who work in regulated child care programs, family child care agencies, and Pre-Primary programs.

There are currently five levels of certification, each with minimum requirements.

Entry level

- Orientation for Staff Working in Licensed Child Care Facilities; or
- Post-secondary courses in early childhood education equivalent to the Orientation.

Level 1

- Orientation for Staff Working in Licensed Child Care Facilities.
- Post-secondary course work in three subject areas: child development, behavior guidance, and curriculum and programming for young children.
- Two guided workplace experiences in a licensed child care facility, advised by a supervisor from a training institute, and supported by an early childhood contact staff in the workplace.

Level 2

- Two-year college diploma program in ECE; or
- [Early Childhood Education Recognition of Prior Learning \(RPL\) Program](#) (delivered through the Association of Early Childhood Educators Nova Scotia)

Level 3

- Bachelor's degree in ECE; or
- Level 2 requirements and a bachelor's degree in any discipline.

School-age approval

- Orientation for Staff Working in Licensed Child Care Facilities; and
- Either a bachelor's degree in early (childhood) elementary education or a post-secondary credential that qualifies a person to plan and deliver developmentally appropriate programming for school-age children.

Note: Orientation for Staff Working in Licensed Child Care Facilities is a series of 16 free online informational modules and activities for child care staff working directly with children who do not meet the regulated training requirements. The orientation modules are hosted by BaseCorp Learning Systems

To maintain the certification, at least 30 hours of professional development is required every three years. Records of continuing professional development are submitted to Classification Services. An extension may be requested with a plan to complete the required number of hours.

For more information, see [A Guide to Classification and Professional Development for Early Childhood Educators](#) or visit the [Classification for Child Care Staff](#) website.

Nova Scotia has announced that a regulated ECE certification process will be introduced by 2023. The new process will define competencies and scope of practice for ECEs and introduce new certification categories for ECE assistants and advanced practitioners in early childhood education. For more information, visit the [Early Childhood Educator Certification](#) website.

STAFF WAGES

Provincial wage data

Information on average wages is not available from the Nova Scotia government.

Provincial wage floor (2021)

In 2021, licensed child care centres opting to receive the Quality Investment Grant (QIG) and Program Support Funding (PSF) were required to follow the minimum wage floor established in 2017 by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. All staff who work directly with children as required for ratio were included in this wage floor.

Minimum wage floor established by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2021)

<i>Certification level</i>	<i>Wage floor (minimum)</i>
Level 1	\$15/hour
Level 2	\$17/hour
Level 3	\$19/hour
School-age approval	\$17/hour

Provincial wage grid (2022)

Development and implementation of a new compensation framework for staff in regulated child care was funded through the [Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement](#).

The ECE wage scale came into effect November 1, 2022, retroactive to July 4, 2022.

Early Childhood Educators Level 1, 2 and 3, employed by provincially funded licensed child care centres and family child care agencies were included in the new wage scale. All ECEs included in the wage scale received a lump sum retroactive payment for the period July 4, 2022 to October 21, 2022.

The wage scale was modified, effective April 1, 2023.

ECE wage scale effective November 1, 2022 (retroactive to July 4, 2022)

Position and Level	Years of experience				
	< 1	1, 2	2, 3	3, 4	4, 5+
ECE – Level 1	\$22.92	\$23.61	\$24.31	\$25.04	\$25.79
ECE – Level 2/School-age	\$24.98	\$25.73	\$26.50	\$27.29	\$28.11
ECE – Level 3	\$26.01	\$26.79	\$27.59	\$28.42	\$29.27

New ECE wage scale effective April 1, 2023

Position and Level	Years of experience				
	< 1	1, 2	2, 3	3, 4	4, 5+
Director Level 1	\$23.61	\$24.31	\$25.04	\$25.79	\$26.56
Director Level 2/School-age	\$25.73	\$26.50	\$27.30	\$28.11	\$28.95
Director Level 3	\$26.79	\$27.59	\$28.42	\$29.27	\$30.15

For information about additional positions and levels, see [Nova Scotia's ECE compensation framework](#).

Family child care providers classified as ECEs Level 1, 2 or 3, who are working with a family child care agency will be eligible for additional compensation. However, since they are self employed, and not employees of the agency, work is underway to determine how these funds will flow to providers.

Median annual employment income (\$) and median hourly wage range (\$) for Early Childhood Educators and Assistants working in day care services full-time, full-year

Median annual employment income	\$36,000
Median hourly employment income	\$17.31 – 19.78

Note: Calculated using 2,080 hours/year (40 hours/week) and 1,820 hours/year (35 hours/week).

Source: Canadian Census (2021). Special run by Statistics Canada.

Note: These data include Early Childhood Educators and Assistants, as defined in NOC 4214 and “working in the day care services industry in centre-based environments with children aged 0 – 12 years”, as defined in NAICS 6244. Included are individuals who worked full-time (30+ hours/week) and full-year (48+ weeks/year), did not work at home, and were not self-employed. Included are supervisors but not managers. Employment income refers to income from all jobs if the Early Childhood Educator or Assistant holds a second job providing a wage, salary or commissions.

Note: See Table 18 in this report for comparable data from other provinces/territories and Canada average.

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

REGULATED CHILD CARE CENTRES

Child care centres are licensed under the [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#) and the [Early Learning and Child Care Regulations](#).

A number of amendments to the regulations came into effect in 2020.

Maximum centre size: Not specified

Maximum room size: Not specified



Staff:child ratio and maximum group size		
<i>Age group</i>	<i>Staff:child ratios</i>	<i>Maximum group size</i>
0 – 17 months	1:4	10
18 – 35 months	1:6	18
30 months – 5 years (mixed group)	1:7	24
36 months – 5 years (full-day)	1:8	24
30 months – 5 years (part-day)	1:12	24
School-age only (before- and after-school)	1:15	30
School-age and fewer than eight Pre-Primary children (before- and after-school)	1:15	30
School-age and eight or more Pre-Primary children (before- and after-school)	1:12	30
Pre-Primary children only (before- and after-school)	1:12	30

Note: The 30 months – 5 years mixed age group was added following the 2020 amendments to the Early Learning and Child Care Regulations.

Staffing requirements for centres

Early childhood requirements for staffing a centre

In Nova Scotia, staff qualification requirements are specified at a centre, rather than a room or group, level.

In a regulated full-day or part-day child care centre, two-thirds of staff working directly with children must hold at least Level 1 classification.

In a regulated school-age centre, two-thirds of staff must hold at least Level 1 classification or school-age training approval.

The remaining one-third of staff must meet the Entry Level qualification.

In a centre with only two staff working directly with children, one staff member must have at least Level 1 or school-age training approval.

Exemptions to early childhood qualification requirements for centre staff

Staff may be exempt from qualification requirements if the licensee has proven they are unable to hire staff with required qualifications and if the licensee has hired staff who are working toward completing required qualifications; these staff are considered temporary. The licensee must present a temporary plan that includes a timeline for the staff to complete the qualifications.

Between April 1, 2021 and May 5, 2022, 21 temporary staffing plans were issued.

Conditional approval may be granted for one year for staff to complete the Orientation for Staff Working in Licensed Child Care Facilities (applies only to staff hired before August 31, 2018); six months (for staff hired after September 1, 2018); or six months to complete the Orientation course for conditional school-age approval.

Early childhood qualifications for on-site centre supervisors

All centre-based programs must be administered by a centre director who is present at all times to supervise and manage the daily operations of the program.

A centre director must have at least Level 2 classification or school-age approval. A centre director who began working as a director before May 1, 2012 must have at least Level 1 classification.

Other requirements

Centre staff must be at least 16 years of age to be included in the staff: child ratio.

Each centre director and staff member who works directly with children must have a child abuse register check, a vulnerable sector check, and a first aid certificate that includes infant CPR.

In 2019, a project to recognize prior learning of eligible employees with related experience in early childhood education was piloted. It tested whether employees who demonstrated they had acquired the skills, knowledge, and judgment as someone with a two-year early childhood education diploma should be recognized as eligible for a Level 2 Classification. This is still in place.

Licensing, monitoring, and enforcement of regulated child care centres

Most types of licences must comply with the new regulations with the exception of licences for a part-day program for children younger than 30 months old. These are issued under the former regulations, which remains valid, and may be renewed under those same conditions.

A licence is usually valid for one year.

Regulations regarding inspection

A facility, an agency, and a family child care home must be inspected at least annually in keeping with the regulations and established policies and procedures.

Licensing officers require an undergraduate degree (Arts, Education, Social Work or Early Childhood Education), plus five years experience in an early learning and child care setting or a work environment with a focus on policy and regulations. Other equivalent combinations of related training requirements and experience are considered.

REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE

In Nova Scotia, regulated family child care is called family child care homes. Family child care homes are regulated under the [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#) and the [Early Learning and Child Care Regulations](#).

Family child care must be provided in the provider's personal residence.

Model of organization

Family child care in Nova Scotia operates under an agency model. The agency, not the family child care providers, are licensed by the Department.

The agencies approve, manage, and monitor family child care in providers' homes.

The duties of an agency include:

- ensuring each family child care provider operates in accordance with the legislation;
- regularly assessing providers and homes; and
- ensuring that its family home consultant makes regular home visits.

There are currently 14 family child care agencies across 11 Nova Scotia counties. A list and information of the agencies can be found in the online [Directory of Licensed Child Care Facilities](#).

Maximum capacity

A provider may care for a maximum of seven children at a time, including her/his own.

If a provider is caring for four to seven children, no more than three may be under three years of age. Of those three, no more than two children may be infants.

A provider caring for school-age children only may care for a maximum of nine school-age children at a time, including their own children.

A provider may care for a maximum of three infants at a time, including her/his own infants. If caring for a maximum of three infants, there may be no other children in her/his care.

Family child care provider requirements

Providers must complete a family child care training course (Level 1 of the Canadian Child Care Federation's (CCCCF) Family Home Day Care Training of approximately 40 hours) no later than one year after being approved. Providers must also complete five hours of professional development workshops annually.

Providers must be at least 18 years old, and have a child abuse register check, a vulnerable sector check, and a first aid certificate that includes infant CPR.

Any person who is 13 years old or older who lives in a family child care home and has contact with children or the records of children must complete a child abuse register check. Any person who is 18 years old or older who lives in a family child care home and who has, or will have, contact with children or the records of children must complete a vulnerable sector check.

Licensing, monitoring, and enforcement of regulated family child care

Family home child care consultants conduct home visits to provide services and support in accordance with their duties. Before a regulation change in 2020, home visits were required every 30 days; there is no specified frequency in the new regulation.

Family home consultants must have at least:

- Level 2 child care certification; and
- two years' experience working in a child care program.

The duties of a family home consultant include: assisting parents and providers in matching parents' needs with services; providing administrative support and record-keeping; organizing parent committee meetings; providing a lending library and regular play groups; coordinating the delivery of professional development courses for providers and agency staff; and organizing transportation for providers and children to attend agency functions.

■ FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE

CHILD CARE SERVICES' ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING

Before the agreement with the federal government in 2021, funding was granted via the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to all existing regulated centres, both full-day and part-day and regulated family child care agencies. Both non-profit and for-profit programs could apply for grants and/or funding and provide subsidized child care.

As of the end of 2022, centres both non-profit and for-profit that have signed onto the 2022 – 2023 Quality Investment Grant Funding Agreement will be funded to compensate for fee reduction.

Under the Canada-Nova Scotia Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement, Nova Scotia will prioritize expansion of spaces in the not-for-profit sector.

TYPES OF FUNDING

FEE SUBSIDIES

Eligibility criteria

As of July 2019, Nova Scotia no longer requires families to meet any social criteria to be eligible for subsidy.

Financial eligibility

Financial eligibility is based on net total household income, minus allowable deductions, plus the number of dependent children. In addition, to be eligible for fee subsidy a family may not have more than \$50,000 in savings or liquid assets.

Financial eligibility for fee subsidy (February 1, 2021)

Maximum subsidy	Partial subsidy	No longer qualify for subsidy
Up to \$35,000	\$35,000 – \$70,000	\$70,000+

Note: Gross total family income minus allowable deductions plus number of dependent children

Service providers' eligibility to deliver subsidized child care

Regulated non-profit and for-profit child care programs and family child care agencies are eligible to provide subsidized child care including [Nova Scotia Before and After Programs](#) (BAP), which are not licensed but may receive subsidized children.

Fee subsidies can be used in both full-day and part-day programs.

Surcharges above the fee subsidy

Fees in Nova Scotia are not set or capped, and a subsidy may not cover a child's full fee. A family eligible for a subsidy is responsible for paying the difference in fee above the approved government subsidy per diem rate.

Subsidy rates

The subsidy rate is the maximum amount paid by the provincial government to the service on behalf of a fully subsidized parent to cover all or part of the parent fee.

Maximum daily subsidy rates (2021)

Infant	\$29.00
Toddler	\$24.00
Preschool-age	\$23.00
School-age	\$17.70

Entitlement to a fee subsidy

All eligible families are able to access a fee subsidy. There is no waiting list for a fee subsidy.

Other programs subsidizing the individual family or child

Individuals accessing Income Assistance and Employment Support Service and demonstrate a need for child care are eligible for a maximum of [\\$400/month child care allowance](#) for regulated and non-regulated child care arrangements.

OPERATIONAL FUNDING

Quality Investment Grant (QIG) and Program Support Funding (PSF)

Before October 2022, the QIG and PSF were available to eligible licensed child care to supplement wages for staff, with a focus on those who work directly with children as required for ratio. The funding was to be used primarily to ensure that trained staff required to meet the staff:child ratios earned at least the wage floor established by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD).

Any remaining funding was to be used to support wages in any of the following areas:

- untrained/entry level staff who are required to meet the ratio;
- any additional trained staff not required to meet the ratio;
- substitute staff and summer students; and
- to implement a wage scale to recognize staff experience.

This was updated in October 2022. The QIG is now aimed at funding licensed child care centres in Nova Scotia to support fee reductions and compensation for early childhood educators, taking into account the Nova Scotia wage grid introduced in October 2022. See the information on the wage grid in this section and the [government guide](#) to the new QIG requirements and options.

Family Home Child Care Operating Grant

The Family Home Child Care Operating Grant is an annual grant to the agency to support the costs of salary and benefits to agency staff, transportation, education, program material, and fixed costs (rent and utilities, insurance, phone, equipment, advertising, and administration costs). The grant is based on an annual budget, which is set according to internal guidance for appropriate costs and distributed in quarterly installments.

Inclusion Support Grant (ISG)

The [Inclusion Support Grant](#) supports inclusion at the centre level, not for a specific individual child. Funding supports centres' acquisition of resources and additional staffing to support developmental, social, and physical inclusion for vulnerable, and/or low-income children who may require specialized supports, when necessary.

The amount of funding is primarily determined by a formula in proportion to program's licensed capacity and annual operating days.

Infant Quality Care Grant (formerly the Infant Incentive Grant)

As of March 31, 2021, the Infant Incentive Grant, intended to incentivize child care providers to increase infant spaces by providing \$4/space/day in centres and \$2 space/day in family child care homes transitioned to the Infant Quality Care Grant, along with additional professional development requirements. This grant provides funding for professional learning related to infant care to staff and family child care providers who care for infants.

ONE-TIME FUNDING

Family Home Child Care Start-Up Grant

The Family Home Child Care Start-Up Grant is available for approved agencies. Agencies receive a start-up grant of \$5,000 to offset expenses directly related to the start-up costs for the agency. It provides a one-time fixed amount to be used by the agency to pay for advertising, equipment, and legal fees incurred to set up the agency.

Space Conversion Grant

As of 2021, the Space Conversion grant provided 51 centres with one-time funding to convert existing space to support the changing child care needs of their communities.

OTHER ELCC FUNDING

Early Childhood Education Training Initiative

The Early Childhood Education Training Initiative (ECETI) supports early childhood education training institutions and associated programs to provide opportunities to extend services and training to the in-service sector. Funding is provided through a service agreement with each institution to provide professional development for ECEs. Professional development is focused on provincial priorities and on topics identified as community priorities.

Continuing Education

The [Continuing Education Program](#) is intended to enhance the ability of regulated centres, family home child care agencies and Pre-Primary programs to recruit and retain qualified staff. The program provides financial support to staff to continue their education and enhance their skills and qualifications by studying part-time towards their early childhood education diploma.

Eligible staff can apply for reimbursements of up to \$1,000 per year if working part-time, and up to \$5,000 per year if working full-time in the sector. The program supports approximately 200 staff annually.

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia

Before 2019, the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Nova Scotia (AECENS) was known as the Nova Scotia Child Care Association (NSCA). The AECENS is a membership-based professional association by and for all early childhood educators (ECEs) in the province.

The association receives funding from the provincial government to support the child care workforce in Nova Scotia.



PROVINCIAL FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (2020-2021)

FEE SUBSIDIES \$23,057,900

OPERATIONAL (PREVIOUSLY RECURRING) FUNDING

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Quality Investment Grant (QIG) and Program Support Funding (PSF)	\$24,696,000
Child Development Centre Grant	\$80,400
Family Home Child Care Operating Grant	\$2,036,000
Inclusion Support Grant (ISG)	\$6,568,000
Infant Incentive	\$1,016,000
Total operational funding	\$34,396,400

Note: The Child Development Centre Grant ended in 2020 – 2021.

ONE-TIME FUNDING

One-time funding – capital (major and minor)

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Family Home Day Care Start-Up Grant	\$5,000
Space Conversion Grant	<i>Not available</i>

One-time funding – other

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Early Childhood Education Training Initiative	\$839,900
Early Childhood Education Assistance Program	\$20,000
Continuing Education	\$422,400
Total one-time funding	\$1,287,300

TOTAL FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (fee subsidies, operational funding, one-time funding) **\$58,742,000**

OTHER ELCC FUNDING \$0

FEDERAL TRANSFERS TO PROVINCE

<i>Federal transfers</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework – Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements	\$11,620,738
Safe Restart Agreement (child care specific funding)	\$17,432,000

COVID-19 RELATED SUPPORTS

COVID-19 spending	<i>Not available</i>
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Note: This amount reflects the total COVID-19 related spending (additional) that supported licensed, regulated child care facilities and homes during the COVID-19 pandemic in the 2020 – 2021 fiscal year from federal and provincial funds.



OF INTEREST

FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRES

[Family resource centres](#) are non-profit organizations that provide community based programs and services intended to support the healthy development and wellbeing of children and youth. Programs and services delivered to children and their families focus on parent education and learning, family support, youth development and early learning and literacy.

There are 27 family resource centres in the province, 23 of which are provincially funded by the Department of Community Services.

PROVINCIAL ECEC ORGANIZATIONS AND ADVISORY GROUPS

[Association of Early Childhood Educators Nova Scotia](#)

[Child Care Now Nova Scotia](#)

MINISTER'S EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE ENGAGEMENT TABLE

The table brings together a broad and diverse group of individuals from across the province, to inform, engage on and support issues and initiatives related to the transformation of Nova Scotia's early learning and child care system. Members have committed to a one-year term, with the possibility for an extension. See [childcarenovascotia/engagement](#) for further details.