



Alberta

■ OVERVIEW

In Alberta, early learning and child care (ELCC) includes kindergarten (part of Early Childhood Services), centre-based child care, school-age centres, family child care (termed family day homes), and group family child care.

Alberta Education is responsible for kindergarten and other Early Childhood Services (ECS) programs, including prekindergarten. Most kindergarten is part-day or full school-day on alternate days and is not compulsory. Prekindergarten is targeted to children who require additional or specialized support prior to entering kindergarten.

Responsibility for child care moved from the Ministry of Children and Family Services to the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Trades in February 2024. Licensed child care includes full-day centres, part-day preschools, family child care¹ and before-and after-school programs (termed out-of-school care).

Centre-based child care is delivered by for-profit and non-profit operators, with a small number of publicly operated spaces. Seventy-five percent of full-day spaces are for-profit.

Family child care is agency-based. Licensed agencies may be non-profit or for-profit; 63% of agencies were for-profit in 2023. Group family child care homes¹ are individually licensed.

Alberta provides affordability grants to centres and family day home agencies to reduce parent fees for children younger than school-age. These grants were increased in 2024, with the goal of reaching a province-wide fee of \$15/day (average) in 2024 – 2025.

Parent fee subsidies for low- and moderate-income eligible parents may be used in any licensed program.

Alberta provides [wage top-up funding](#) for certified early childhood educators for eligible hours of work, up to 181 hours per month. Alberta does not have a wage grid.

¹ As of February 1, 2021, Alberta no longer licenses new group family child care programs. Existing group family child care programs were granted open-ended licences and allowed to operate indefinitely under the former Child Care Licensing Act and Child Care Licensing Regulation.

Alberta signed the Canada-Alberta Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (Multilateral Framework Agreement) on December 15, 2017. This agreement allocated nearly \$137 million over three years; it was extended on June 4, 2020 with an additional \$45.4 million allocated to the 2020 – 2021 fiscal year, and renewed on July 23, 2021 with a further \$235 million over four years.

The Canada-Alberta Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreement was signed by Alberta on November 14, 2021. Through this agreement, the federal government will provide nearly \$3.8 billion over five years. The Canada-wide agreement does not replace but runs parallel to the Multilateral Framework Agreement.

Net growth in full-day centre spaces for children 0 – 5 years since CWELCC			
	<i>2021</i>	<i>2023</i>	<i>Increase (decrease) 2021 – 2023</i>
For-profit	49,132	56,400	+7,268
Non-profit and public	15,578	19,300	+3,722
Total full-day spaces	64,710	75,700	+10,990
Percentage of full-day spaces that were for-profit	76%	75%	-1.4%
Percentage of growth of full-day spaces that was for-profit			66%

Family child care spaces (2021, 2023)		
	<i>2021</i>	<i>2023</i>
Family child care spaces (enrolment of children not yet in school)	7,825	11,500
Group family child care spaces (enrolment of children not yet in school)	117	180
Total family child care and group family child care	7,942	11,680

■ PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

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.

Number of children 0 – 12 years (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2023)</i>
0	40,100
1	48,000
2	49,400
3	46,700
4	51,200
5	53,600
6	57,400
7	60,800
8	57,800
9	58,400
10	59,300
11	53,000
12	61,100
Total	696,600

Number of children 0 – 12 years (aggregated) (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2023)</i>
0 – 2	137,500
3 – 5	151,500
6 – 12	407,800
Total	696,600

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2023)</i>
0	23,500
1	30,000
2	30,900
3	29,000
4	33,900
5	36,300
6	35,900
7	42,400
8	39,600
9	40,700
10	41,200
11	38,700
12	42,100
Total	464,200

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (aggregated) (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children (2023)</i>
0 – 2	84,400
3 – 5	99,200
6 – 12	280,600
Total	464,200

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

<i>Age</i>	<i>First Nations</i>	<i>Métis</i>	<i>Inuk (Inuit)</i>	<i>Multiple</i>	<i>Other</i>
0 – 4	13,015	8,965	200	515	280
5 – 9	14,765	10,750	360	475	290
10 – 14	16,070	11,530	355	550	330
Total	43,850	31,245	915	1,540	900

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2023 rounded estimate)

<i>Age of youngest child</i>	<i>Number of mothers</i>	<i>Participation rate (%)</i>
0 – 3	100,200	72.6
4 – 5	45,600	83.4
0 – 5	145,800	75.7
6 – 12	150,000	84.0

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

<i>Age</i>	<i>Living with two parents</i>	<i>Living with one parent</i>	<i>Lone mother</i>	<i>Lone father</i>
0 – 4	214,625	29,860	24,255	5,605
5 – 9	224,815	47,405	37,080	10,325
10 – 14	214,955	58,230	45,085	13,145

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	204,570	1,410	33,780	10,305
5 – 9	238,550	1,575	26,585	11,915
10 – 14	241,570	1,575	24,595	12,600
Total	684,685	4,565	84,965	34,805

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

<i>Two-parent families</i>	<i>Male lone parent</i>	<i>Female lone parent</i>
\$105,000	\$58,400	\$47,600

KINDERGARTEN

Kindergarten enrolment (2023)

<i>Enrolment in public schools</i>	
Kindergarten for 5-year-olds	33,970
Prekindergarten	5,017
<i>Enrolment in independent/private schools</i>	
Kindergarten for 5-year-olds	3,920
Prekindergarten	1,089
<i>Enrolment in privately operated ECS programs</i>	
Kindergarten for 5-year-olds	2,208
Prekindergarten	6,068
Total kindergarten enrolment	52,272

FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT CHILD CARE

First Nations child care on reserves

Prior to 2017, Alberta did not regulate on-reserve child care programs.

As of March 31, 2023, there were five licensed centres on First Nations reserves in Alberta, including five full-day programs, one part-day program, and two before- and after-school programs.

Licensed spaces on reserve

Full-day	164
Part-day (0 – 5 years)	16
Before- and after-school	16

Total licensed spaces 196

The number of unlicensed child care centres on reserve is not available.

There were no licensed family day home agencies on reserve.

Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve (AHSOR) programs may be licensed by invitation. There were 49 AHSOR programs in Alberta in March 2023.

Indigenous child care other than on reserves

On March 31, 2023 there were 27 licensed child care centres in Alberta that were Indigenous-led or focused and not located on a reserve, including 12 full-day programs, 15 part-day programs, and three before- and after-school programs.

Licensed spaces not on reserve

Full-day	487
Part-day (0 – 5 years)	336
Before- and after-school	48

Total licensed spaces 871

There were 16 licensed Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (ASHUNC) programs operating 363 spaces for preschool-age children and four unlicensed ASHUNC programs in Alberta.

CHILD CARE SPACE STATISTICS

Number of regulated spaces (March 31, 2023)

Full-day centre spaces

Infants (<12 months)	2,800
Infants (12 months – <19 months)	9,200
Toddlers (19 months – <3 years)	20,900
Preschool-age (3 years – <4 years)	17,600
Preschool-age (4 years +)	25,300

Total full-day centre spaces (children 0 – 5 years) 75,800

Part-day centre spaces

Preschool-age (19 months – <3 years)	1,300
Preschool-age (3 years – <4.5 years)	14,400

Other centre spaces

Innovative child care (no age grouping)	510
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Total centre spaces (children 0 – 5 years) 92,010

Before- and after-school care centre spaces (licensed or regulated)

Children in kindergarten and Grades 1 – 6	55,600
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Total centre spaces (children 0 – 12 years) 147,610

Regulated family child care (enrolment)	
<i>Family day homes</i>	
Full-day (children not yet in school)	11,500
Part-day (children attending school)	2,700
<i>Group family child care (more than one provider)</i>	
Full-day (children not yet in school)	180
Part-day (children attending school)	10
Total approved family child care spaces (enrolment)	14,390

TOTAL REGULATED SPACES (centre spaces and family child care enrolment)	162,000
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Number of child care centres and family child care homes (March 31, 2023)

Centre-based child care	
Total number of centres	2,300
Centre-based programs	
Number of centres providing a full-day program	1,400
Number of centres providing a part-day (preschool/nursery school) program	630
Number of centres providing a part-day program for children attending school (approximately 4.5 – 12 years)	1,300
Number of centres providing infant care (<19 months)	1,000
Number of centres providing toddler care (19 months – <3 years)	1,400
Number of centres providing preschool-age care (3 – 4.5 years)	1,400
Number of centres providing non-standard hours care (non-standard hours as defined by the province)	70
Number of centres in publicly delivered and funded schools (K – 12)	<i>Not available</i>

Regulated family child care	
Number of individually approved family day homes (active)	2,500
Number of licensed group family child care homes	15
Total number of family child care homes	2,515

Number of family child care agencies	76
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Participation in CWELCC	
Number of child care centres	2,300
Number of child care agencies and group family child care homes	91

Note: Provision for children older than 0 – 5 years in school-age centres is not eligible for CWELCC funding.

Municipal delivery

Number of municipalities or municipal entities operating child care centres (i.e. are the licence holder)	4
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Note: In 2021, the municipalities of Drayton Valley, Beaumont, Jasper, and the Municipal District of Opportunity operated child care centres. More recent information is not available.

Auspice

Full- and part-day programs by auspice (2023)	
	<i>Number of centres</i>
For-profit	1,300
Non-profit and public	1,000

Centre spaces by auspice				
	<i>Full-day</i>	<i>Part-day¹</i>	<i>BASC²</i>	<i>Total</i>
For-profit	56,400	5,900	33,100	95,400
Non-profit and public	19,300	9,900	22,500	51,700

¹ Preschool.

² Before- and after-school care (children 4 – 12 years).

Note: Numbers in this table have been rounded and may not equal the sum of centre spaces by age groups.

Family child care agencies by auspice	
For-profit	48
Non-profit	28

Fee subsidies

Number of children receiving fee subsidies (March 31, 2023)	
Full subsidy	48,300
Partial subsidy	25,900
Total children receiving fee subsidies	74,200

Disability support

Special needs/disability support (March 31, 2023)

Children in licensed child care receiving special needs/disability support funding *Not available*

CHILD CARE ENROLMENT STATISTICS

Number of children enrolled in regulated centre-based programs (March 31, 2023)

Full-day centres	
Infants (<12 months)	1,100
Infants (12 months – <19 months)	6,200
Toddlers (19 months – <3 years)	21,500
Preschool-age (3 years – <4 years)	17,500
Preschool-age (4 years +)	21,500
Part-day centres	
Preschool-age (19 months – <3 years)	960
Preschool-age (3 years – <4.5 years)	18,500
Other	
Innovative child care (no age grouping)	<i>Not available</i>
Total centre enrolment (children 0 – 5 years)	87,260

Before- and after-school care (licensed or regulated)	
Children in kindergarten	8,400
Children in Grades 1 – 6	31,300

Total number of children in kindergarten and Grades 1 – 6 enrolled in before- and after-school care **39,700**

TOTAL CENTRE ENROLMENT (children 0 – 12 years) **126,960**

PARENT FEES

Alberta does not have set fees or regulated parent fees. Alberta provides a set dollar amount reduction to the existing market fees and has set limits to fee increases.

Set fee reductions to the market fees: infants \$635/month; toddlers \$510/month; preschool-age \$450/month.

Full-time median monthly fees for centres and family child care homes in Alberta (2021, 2023)

	Full-time median monthly fee (2021)	Full-time median monthly fee (2023)
Calgary		
Infant	\$1,400	\$780
Toddler	\$1,295	\$838
Preschool-age	\$1,150	\$810
Edmonton		
Infant	\$1,205	\$555
Toddler	\$1,063	\$567
Preschool-age	\$1,025	\$535
Lethbridge		
Infant	\$900	\$498
Toddler	\$970	\$520
Preschool-age	\$865	\$550

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

Sources: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2023). *Measuring Matters: Assessing Canada's progress toward \$10-a-day child care for all*. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

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

■ WORKFORCE

Alberta provides [wage top-up funding](#) for certified early childhood educators for eligible hours of work, up to 181 hours per month. Alberta does not have a wage grid.

■ FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (Fiscal year 2022 – 2023)

The funding figures in each category represent provincial spending, which may include both provincial funds and federal funds transferred under bilateral agreements, Canada-wide ELCC agreements, or other federal programs used for early learning and child care.

Fee subsidies	
<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Day care centres	\$158,003,497
Family day homes	\$22,924,153
Out-of-school care	\$47,855,060
Extended hours	\$772,600
Preschool	\$6,904,382
Total fee subsidies	\$236,459,692

Note: These are fee subsidies in licensed, regulated, or approved child care. The subsidies are associated with an individual child and family. There are provincial eligibility criteria. Fee subsidies are sent to service providers, not to parents.

Operational funding	
<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Infant care incentive	\$15,601,240
Family Day Home Agency Funding	\$7,752,370
Affordability grant	\$488,190,843
Wage top-ups	\$168,967,869
Inclusion	\$7,508,103
Admin	\$29,429,831
Total operational funding	\$717,450,257

Note: Operational funding includes regularly paid public funding that contributes to the ongoing operation of the child care service. It may include: operating grants or formula-based funding, family child care agency operating funds, wage grants/enhancement, special needs funding and other grants/funding that is paid on a recurring basis.

One-time funding – capital (major and minor)	
<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Capital Investment	\$8,761,905
One-time funding – other	
<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Space Creation	\$12,612,335
Total one-time funding	\$21,374,240

Note: One-time funding is paid occasionally or just once to a child care service, and is not part of the regular operating budget. It may include: major capital, minor capital, start-up, and equipment or repair funding, if they are one-time, not recurring.

TOTAL SPENDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (fee subsidies, operational funding, and one-time funding)	\$975,284,188
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Other ELCC funding

<i>Program</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Professional development	\$4,172,525
Release time funding	\$4,544,362
Curriculum	\$206,571
Total other funding	\$8,923,458

Federal transfers to Alberta

<i>Federal transfer</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework – Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements	\$60,157,066
Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care	\$613,034,000

Note: The federal transfers above represent the funds allocated to Alberta for fiscal year 2022 – 2023. These funds may be slightly different from those included in the original agreements as they are updated in line with population estimates on an annual basis. They do not represent funds carried over from the previous fiscal year or carried into the next fiscal year.

Source: Early Learning and Child Care Secretariat, Employment and Social Development Canada (2024).
