



Northwest Territories

Overview	363	CHILD CARE FUNDING	381
Territorial context	364	Eligibility for CWELCC funding	381
KINDERGARTEN POLICY, PROGRAMS, AND DATA	366	Child care services' eligibility for funding	381
Kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds	366	Types of funding	381
Curriculum framework	367	Funding for regulated child care (fiscal year 2023 – 2024)	386
Enrolment	367		
CHILD CARE POLICY AND PROGRAMS	368		
Administration	368		
Curriculum framework	368		
Children with disabilities	369		
First Nations, Métis, and Inuit child care	369		
Parent fees	370		
Workforce	371		
Standards and regulations	374		
Of interest	376		
CHILD CARE DATA	378		
Regulated child care space statistics	378		
Regulated child care enrolment statistics	380		

Northwest Territories

OVERVIEW

In the Northwest Territories, the Department of Education, Culture, and Employment is responsible for regulated child care centres, family child care, kindergarten, and before- and after-school child care.

Licensed centre-based care includes full-day centres and before- and after-school programs. There are some part-day programs in the Northwest Territories, but they are not categorized separately from full-day programs.

Centre-based child care is provided by non-profit and public operators, including municipalities, Indigenous governing bodies, and school authorities. There is no for-profit child care.

Family child care homes are individually licensed.

The Northwest Territories offers part or full school-day junior kindergarten for all four-year-olds and full school-day kindergarten for all five-year-olds. Kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds is not compulsory.

Since January 2022, the Northwest Territories has been reducing fees for licensed early learning and child care (ELCC). On February 22, 2024, the Northwest Territories government announced that average fees of \$10/day would be achieved by April 1, 2024, when fees were reduced by an average of 74% in licensed facilities for children up to age five. The Income Assistance Program offers financial support to assist with child care expenses for children enrolled in an ELCC facility.

The Northwest Territories has a wage grid specifying territorial minimum pay rates.

The Northwest Territories signed the Canada-Northwest Territories Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) Agreement on December 14, 2021. It allocated \$51.1 million over five years to the territory.

In March 2025, the Northwest Territories accepted the federal offer to extend its bilateral agreement until 2031.

Net growth in full-day centre spaces for children 0 – 5 years (2021 – 2025)

	2021	2025	Increase (decrease) 2021 – 2025
Non-profit and public	763	822	+59
For-profit	0	0	0
Total full-day spaces	763	822	+59
Percentage of full-day spaces that were for-profit	0%	0%	0%
Percentage of growth of full-day spaces that was for-profit	-	-	0%

■ TERRITORIAL CONTEXT

Some of the following figures are rounded; however, the totals are based on exact figures. Therefore, totals may not equal the sum of the rounded figures.

Number of children 0 – 12 years (aggregated) (2024 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children</i>
0 – 2	1,200
3 – 5	1,500
6 – 12	4,100
Total	6,900

Number of children 0 – 12 years with employed mothers (aggregated) (2024 rounded estimate)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Number of children</i>
0 – 2	800
3 – 5	1,000
6 – 12	2,900
Total	4,800

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	920	220	410	60	15
5 – 9	985	205	370	55	15
10 – 14	1,035	195	390	40	20
Total	2,940	620	1,170	155	50

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2024 rounded estimate)

Not available

Living arrangements by age of child (2021)

<i>Age</i>	<i>Living with two parents</i>	<i>Living with one parent</i>		<i>Total</i>
		<i>Lone mother</i>	<i>Lone father</i>	
0 – 4	2,160	450	150	600
5 – 9	2,005	555	175	735
10 – 14	1,885	625	185	810

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	2,545	65	135	75
5 – 9	2,580	55	115	70
10 – 14	2,585	35	120	85
Total	7,715	155	370	225

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>
\$140,000	\$56,000	\$52,000

KINDERGARTEN POLICY, PROGRAMS, AND DATA

KINDERGARTEN FOR FOUR- AND FIVE-YEAR-OLDS

Territorial responsibility

Department of Education, Culture, and Employment

Phone: 844-698-5655

Email: earlylearning@gov.nt.ca

Website: ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/junior-kindergartenkindergarten

Legislation

NWT. Legislative Assembly. [Education Act](#). RSNWT1995, C-28.

Provision

Kindergarten provision

Definition	Full school-day program for all five-year-olds.
Eligibility	Five years old by December 31.
Compulsory schooling	Not compulsory.
Entitlement	All eligible children have access.
Instructional hours per day	Part- or full-day, at the discretion of the local District Education Authority (maximum six hours).
Class size	No set class sizes.

Junior kindergarten provision

Definition	Part- or full-day program for all four-year-olds.
Eligibility	Four years old by December 31.
Compulsory schooling	Not compulsory.
Entitlement	All eligible children have access.
Instructional hours per day	Part- or full-day, at the discretion of the local District Education Authority (maximum six hours).
Class size	No set class sizes.

Teacher qualifications and certification

To be a qualified kindergarten teacher in the Northwest Territories requires a Bachelor of Education. Teachers must apply to the Registrar for a teaching certificate prior to employment. The Registrar may issue an Interim Standard Teaching Certificate to an individual who has successfully completed a teacher training program at an approved institution. During the term of the interim certificate, the individual must then complete the courses required by the Teacher Qualification Service towards a Bachelor of Education and two academic years of teaching in a classroom. A Standard Teaching Certificate may then be issued and must be renewed every four years. Kindergarten teachers are not required to have an early childhood qualification.

To be a qualified junior kindergarten teacher in the Northwest Territories requires a Bachelor of Education or a two-year diploma in early childhood from an accredited educational institution approved by the Registrar. The Registrar may issue an Interim Junior Kindergarten Teaching Certificate

to individuals who have completed a two-year program in early childhood education. During the term of the interim certificate, the individual must complete two academic years of teaching in a classroom, after which time the Registrar may issue a Junior Kindergarten Specialty Teaching Certificate. The teaching certificate must be renewed every four years.

■ CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

[*NWT Junior Kindergarten/Kindergarten Curriculum*](#) (2017) is a mandatory curriculum framework for four- and five-year-old kindergarten in all schools in the Northwest Territories.

[*Programme d'études de la prématernelle et de la maternelle des TNO*](#) (2017) is the same curriculum in French.

The curriculum will be undergoing renewal. The renewal process will entail aligning the current curriculum with the newly adapted Grades 1 – 9 curricula. The Northwest Territories Indigenous Languages and Education Handbook and the Dene Kede and Inuuqatigiit curricula will remain the foundational documents to support Indigenous ways of being, knowing, doing, understanding, and becoming. An educators' working group will be established to provide feedback to be shared with partners including Indigenous governments and the NWT Teachers' Association, then the curriculum will then be implemented across the territory.

■ ENROLMENT

Kindergarten enrolment (2024 – 2025 school year)

Enrolment in public schools

Kindergarten for 5-year-olds	518
Kindergarten for 4-year-olds	443
Total kindergarten enrolment	961

CHILD CARE POLICY AND PROGRAMS

■ ADMINISTRATION

Territorial responsibility

Department of Education, Culture, and Employment

Early Learning and Child Care Division

Phone: 867-767-9354

Email: earlylearning@gov.nt.ca

Website: ece.gov.nt.ca/en/elcc

Legislation

NWT. Legislative Assembly. [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#). RSNWT 1988, c. C-5.

NWT. Legislative Assembly. [Early Learning and Child Care Regulations](#). R-098-2024.

Effective May 1, 2023, the *Child Day Care Act* was amended and renamed the *Early Learning and Child Care Act*. At the same time, the Child Day Care Standards Regulations were amended, renamed the Early Learning and Child Care Standards Regulations, and came into force.

On November 15, 2024, these regulations were repealed and replaced by the Early Learning and Child Care Regulations.

Service descriptions

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

There are no health, safety, or training requirements or provision for public oversight in unregulated child care. There may be attention by public officials or Department of Education, Culture, and Employment staff on a complaint basis.

A license is not required when care is provided to fewer than five children regardless of age or fewer than two children under two years of age. See the [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#) for more information.

REGULATED CHILD CARE

In the Northwest Territories, regulated child care types can be classified as:

- Full-time early learning and child care (more than five consecutive hours per day);
- Part-time early learning and child care (not more than five consecutive hours per day); and
- Out-Of-School early learning and child care.

Child care centre

A child care centre (termed a centre-based facility) provides group child care in a place other than a private residence.

School-age child care

School-age child care (termed Out-Of-School early learning and child care) refers to child care provided to a school-age child outside regular school hours.

Family child care

Family child care homes (termed a home-based facility) are early learning and child care facilities located in the private residence of an operator. The operator may care for up to eight children under 12 years, including their own children.

■ CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Until 2025, a draft child care curriculum framework was being piloted. In June 2025, the [Early Learning Framework: First edition](#) was released. It is a voluntary framework, adapted from the *British Columbia Early Learning Framework* and aligned with the vision and plans set out in the [2030 Early Learning and Child Care Strategy](#). Acknowledging that the Indigenous Peoples are the first peoples of the Northwest Territories, the framework highlights the importance

of respectfully learning about Indigenous perspectives, history, culture, and languages.

A second edition of the *Early Learning Framework* will be created and released, taking into account feedback acquired from engagement with the sector and community partners. The *Early Learning Framework* will align with the *NWT Junior Kindergarten/Kindergarten Curriculum* to support a smoother transition into the school system.

■ CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Terminology and approach

The Northwest Territories has not developed a territorial definition for children with disabilities.

All types of regulated child care facilities are eligible to receive inclusion funding.

Disability funding in the Northwest Territories may be specific to the individual child or targeted to multiple children.

There are no specific qualifications or requirements for staff who work with children with disabilities.

In February 2025, the territory published the [Government Response to the Review of Inclusive Education Practices in Early Learning and Child Care Settings in the Northwest Territories](#) and began implementing a renewed approach to inclusion, removing barriers, and enhancing supports.

Programs supporting inclusion in ELCC

The [Supporting Child Inclusion and Participation](#) (SCIP) funding program supports community-based ELCC programming, professional learning, and staffing supports (one-to-one or one-to-multiple) to support children's participation in licensed early learning facilities.

The SCIP program provides funding to hire staff to support children who otherwise could not

safely attend programs, provide staff training, and purchase resources to support children's participation. It also provides funding to create or enhance community unlicensed play-based early learning opportunities, such as Family and Tot programs.

In the Northwest Territories, there is no child care service solely or primarily for children with disabilities.

Access to inclusive ELCC

Licensed facilities are required to accept children with disabilities and modify their programming to support inclusion to the extent possible.

The SCIP program does not require diagnosis or documentation to provide funding, but documentation from a health professional is required for a child to be funded through the Early Childhood Program subsidy.

Newly constructed or renovated facilities are required to meet the accessibility standards in the [National Building Code](#).

In the Northwest Territories, there may be delays for receiving inclusion funding due to budget constraints. There is an open call for applications for some of the SCIP funding, but it is usually oversubscribed.

See [Inclusive Learning](#) for more details about the Northwest Territories' inclusion supports.

■ FIRST NATIONS, MÉTIS, AND INUIT CHILD CARE

In the Northwest Territories, approximately 50% of the total population identified as First Nations, Métis, or Inuit in the last census (2021). In 30 of the 33 Northwest Territories communities (all communities except Yellowknife, Norman Wells, and Hay River), the majority of residents are Indigenous.

Indigenous Peoples in the Northwest Territories include First Nations, Inuvialuit (Inuit), and Métis communities.

There are two reserves in the Northwest Territories. In addition, there are other traditional territories in which Indigenous governing bodies have formal agreements with the Government of the Northwest Territories and the Government of Canada, or are in the process of negotiating agreements.

The Northwest Territories government funds all licensed ELCC facilities, including those owned and operated by Indigenous governments and organizations.

The territory licenses Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve (AHSOR) programs. There is one AHSOR program providing 10 spaces on the K'at'l'odeeche First Nation Reserve operated by the District Education Authority.

There are also eight Aboriginal Head Start in Urban and Northern Communities (AHSUNC) programs in the Northwest Territories. Six are licensed ELCC facilities, and two are unlicensed family-centred programs for caregivers attending with children.

All licensed spaces are included in the overall territorial space statistics.

Indigenous-specific resources/initiatives

The federal ELCC agreements support provision of post-secondary early childhood education programs based in the territory, including an in-person certificate and diploma program at Aurora College in Yellowknife, and a distance-based certificate and diploma program. The distance program allows those living in small communities to better access post-secondary education.

■ PARENT FEES

In January 2022, the Northwest Territories introduced the [Child Care Fee Reduction \(CCFR\)](#), intended to reduce the cost of child care by an average of 50% for children up to age five in licensed facilities that are part of CWELCC. On April 1, 2023, the Northwest Territories increased funding to reduce fees by an average of 60% in licensed facilities for children up to age five. On February 22, 2024, the Northwest Territories government announced that [average fees of \\$10/day](#) would be achieved by April 1, 2024, when fees were reduced by an average of 74% in licensed facilities for children up to age five.

The fee reduction is a set amount. Annual fee increases are limited to a specified amount depending on the current fees charged.

Monthly fee reduction amounts (2023 – 2026)

Age group	2023 – 2024	2024 – 2026
Infant (0 – 23 months)	\$666	\$760
Preschool-age (2 – 5 years)	\$640	\$750
Out-Of-School (3 – 5 years)	\$175	\$175

The actual reduction in the amount families can expect to pay for child care fees will depend on the current fee the family is paying and the age of the child.

A breakdown of average fees by age group in 2025 is not available.

Additional fees

Operators are permitted to charge waitlist fees and to request and collect [optional donations](#) for food, transportation, extended hours, field trips, specialized classes, membership fees, and other services and programs.

The children of parents who do not voluntarily donate should not have a reduction in the quality of care, services, programs, or experiences. For example, if a provider offers a food program through a voluntary membership donation, children whose families do not voluntarily donate must still receive the same food as children whose families contribute.

There is no limit to the amount of money that can be raised through voluntary donations. Operators may be required to report the types and amounts of donations.

Parent fee subsidies

The Northwest Territories does not have a stand-alone child care subsidy program. The [Income Assistance Program](#), though not specific to child care, offers financial support to assist with child care expenses for children enrolled in an ELCC facility. Applicants may also be eligible for support for school-break camps and occasional babysitting.

Income Assistance Program child care allowance rates

Care Type	Daily Rate (2025)
Full-time child care	\$50
After-school child care	\$15

WORKFORCE

Child care centre staff wages

TERRITORIAL WAGE DATA

Current average wage data are not available.

WAGE ENHANCEMENT

Until September 30, 2022, the Northwest Territories provided the Early Childhood Staff Grant, which was paid directly to educators based on hours worked and level of post-secondary education. In 2022, this grant was replaced by the Retention Incentive to streamline staff wage enhancement for early childhood educators.

Between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2024, licensed child care centres received Retention Incentive funding for legislatively required staff (as per staff:child ratios) working directly with children. This funding was provided to operators of licensed centre-based facilities, who were responsible for distributing it to eligible educators.

On April 1, 2024, [Dedicated Wage Funding](#) was introduced to support wages and employer costs for early childhood educators working in licensed centre-based facilities. The funding amount is determined by the number of full-time equivalent employees required, based on the staff:child ratio outlined in Section 75 of the Early Learning and Child Care Regulations.

TERRITORIAL WAGE GRID FOR CENTRE STAFF

On November 14, 2024, the Northwest Territories [implemented a wage grid](#) with minimum rates of hourly pay for employees in licensed centre-based facilities. This approach uses four geographical zones to reflect cost-of-living differences across the

territory. Minimum rates of pay are determined by position, years of experience, and post-secondary education levels. The territory provides funding to licensed child care centres at the identified rate for each educator in an allocated position based on their identified minimum rate of pay. The program applies to employees working in centre-based

facilities in administrator, ELCC assistant, ELCC educator, and supervisor roles. It does not apply to other support staff positions, such as bookkeepers, cooks, and custodians or to home-based ELCC facility operators.

Minimum rates of pay per hour for centre staff by geographical zone, including the geographical zone allowance (2025)

Zone A: Behchokǫ, Dettah, Enterprise, Fort Liard, Fort Smith, Hay River, Kátł'odeeche, Ndilǫ, and Yellowknife

Hourly step increment rate by years of experience

<i>Position</i>	<i>Step 1: <1 year</i>	<i>Step 2: 1 – 4 years</i>	<i>Step 3: 4 – 7 years</i>	<i>Step 4 7 – 10 years</i>	<i>Step 5: 10+ years</i>
Administrator	\$37.50	\$39.00	\$40.25	\$41.50	\$43.00
ELCC assistant	\$34.20	\$35.25	\$36.25	\$37.25	\$37.50
ELCC educator	\$35.50	\$37.00	\$38.25	\$39.50	\$41.50
Supervisor	\$36.50	\$38.00	\$39.25	\$40.25	\$42.00

Zone B: Fort Providence, Fort Resolution, Fort Simpson, Inuvik, Jean Marie River, Kakisa, and Whatì

Hourly step increment rate by years of experience

<i>Position</i>	<i>Step 1: <1 year</i>	<i>Step 2: 1 – 4 years</i>	<i>Step 3: 4 – 7 years</i>	<i>Step 4 7 – 10 years</i>	<i>Step 5: 10+ years</i>
Administrator	\$38.50	\$40.00	\$41.25	\$42.50	\$44.00
ELCC assistant	\$35.20	\$36.25	\$37.25	\$38.25	\$38.50
ELCC educator	\$36.50	\$38.00	\$39.25	\$40.50	\$42.00
Supervisor	\$37.50	\$39.00	\$40.25	\$41.50	\$43.00

Zone C: Aklavik, Fort McPherson, Gamèti, Łutselk'e, Nahanni Butte, Norman Wells, Tsiigehtchic, Tuktoyaktuk, Wekweètì, and Wrigley

Hourly step increment rate by years of experience

<i>Position</i>	<i>Step 1: <1 year</i>	<i>Step 2: 1 – 4 years</i>	<i>Step 3: 4 – 7 years</i>	<i>Step 4 7 – 10 years</i>	<i>Step 5: 10+ years</i>
Administrator	\$40.75	\$42.25	\$43.50	\$44.75	\$46.25
ELCC assistant	\$37.45	\$38.50	\$39.50	\$40.50	\$40.75
ELCC educator	\$38.75	\$40.25	\$41.50	\$42.75	\$44.25
Supervisor	\$39.75	\$41.25	\$42.50	\$43.75	\$45.25

Zone D: Colville Lake, Délı̄nę, K'asho Got'ine, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, Smbaa K'e, Tulita, and Ulukhaktok

Hourly step increment rate by years of experience

<i>Position</i>	<i>Step 1: <1 year</i>	<i>Step 2: 1 – 4 years</i>	<i>Step 3: 4 – 7 years</i>	<i>Step 4 7 – 10 years</i>	<i>Step 5: 10+ years</i>
Administrator	\$43.25	\$44.75	\$46.00	\$47.25	\$48.75
ELCC assistant	\$39.95	\$41.00	\$42.00	\$43.00	\$43.25
ELCC educator	\$41.25	\$42.75	\$44.00	\$45.25	\$46.75
Supervisor	\$42.25	\$43.75	\$45.00	\$46.25	\$47.74

Staff benefits

The Northwest Territories does not have territory-wide benefits for the child care workforce.

Other workforce measures

NORTHERN EXPERIENCE BONUS FOR CENTRE-BASED EMPLOYEES

Since 2024, staff persons have received an additional annual [Northern Experience Bonus](#) if they have worked in a licensed ELCC facility in a northern environment for at least five years. A northern environment is any prescribed or intermediate zone defined by the Canada Revenue Agency. This bonus is part of the staff person's wage as per the wage grid and is administered as part of the wage grid.

INDIGENOUS STAFF PERSON BONUS FOR CENTRE-BASED EMPLOYEES

Since 2024, Indigenous employees may receive an additional [Indigenous Staff Person Bonus](#). Any Indigenous person, as defined in Section 1 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act*, who works as an ELCC staff person in a licensed centre-based facility with more than one year of experience in a licensed ELCC facility is eligible. This bonus is part of the staff person's wage as per the wage grid and is administered as part of the wage grid.

Early childhood certification

On November 14, 2024, the Northwest Territories implemented a certification process, termed the [Early Learning and Child Care Recognition of Qualifications](#).

Staff working with children in licensed centre-based facilities are required to be certified.

certificates are valid for a period of four months from the date of issue.

ECE CERTIFICATION LEVELS

Certificates for Levels A, 1, 2, 3, and 4 are valid for three years from the date of issue. Provisional

ELCC staff person qualification requirements (2024)

<i>Level</i>	<i>Requirements</i>
Level 4	Four-year bachelor's degree from an approved institution that covers educational material primarily dealing with early childhood.
Level 3	Two-year diploma program from an approved institution that covers educational material primarily dealing with early childhood.
Level 2	One-year certificate in early childhood development from an approved institution.
Level 1	Early Childhood Essentials course and minimum one year of experience in a licensed ELCC facility. OR Combination of extensive relevant professional learning and experience in a licensed ELCC facility as determined by the Director of Early Learning and Child Care.
Level A	Unrecognized experience or education.
Provisional	All employees working with children in centre-based facilities on or before November 14, 2024, were given a temporary provisional certification valid for four months. New employees hired after November 14, 2024, must contact elcc_educator_certification@gov.nt.ca to be issued a provisional certification. Educators must apply for and become certified before the end of the four-month period.

Note: See subsection 1(1) of the Student Financial Assistance Regulations for more information about qualification requirements.

■ STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

Child care centres and family child care homes must adhere to standards and regulations regarding staffing requirements, grouping of children, and licensing. Some additional key elements of child care standards and regulations, such as physical environments and food provision, are covered in the comparative tables in this publication, while others may be found in the [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#) and [Early Learning and Child Care Regulations](#).

Regulated child care centres

Licensed centre-based facilities are regulated under the [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#) and [Early Learning and Child Care Regulations](#). The Act was most recently amended in 2023. The current regulations came into force in November 2024.

STAFF:CHILD RATIO AND GROUP SIZE

The Northwest Territories does not specify a maximum number of children permitted in a child care centre.

Staff:child ratio and maximum group size (2025)

	<i>Age group</i>	<i>Staff:child ratio</i>	<i>Maximum group size</i>
<i>Separate age groups</i>	0 – 12 months	1:3	6
	13 – 24 months	1:4	8
	25 – 35 months	1:6	12
	3 years	1:8	16
	4 years	1:9	18
	5 – 11 years	1:10	30
<i>Mixed age groups</i>	0 – 24 months	1:4	8
	25 months – 5 years (child not enrolled in full-day school)	1:8	16
	25 months – 5 years (child enrolled in full-day school)	1:10	30
	5 – 11 years	1:10	30

Note: Only ELCC staff persons (educators and assistants) count toward the ratios.

Note: The maximum group size does not apply when children are having meals, taking naps, or participating in special activities.

STAFFING REQUIREMENTS FOR CENTRES

Qualification requirements for staffing a centre

In the Northwest Territories, staff qualification requirements are specified at the centre level.

In centre-based facilities, staff persons include ELCC educators and assistants. An ELCC educator has primary responsibility for the provision of care, instruction, and supervision of children, and has a valid or provisional recognition of qualifications at Level 1 – 4. An ELCC assistant provides support in the daily operations of the facility and has a valid or provisional recognition of qualifications at Level A or 1 – 4. ELCC educators and assistants are both considered primary staff people, along with facility operators, administrators, and supervisors.

In a centre-based facility, at least one ELCC educator must be present and working at all times. For every ELCC assistant working, at least one ELCC educator must also be working.

When more than six children are present at the facility, at least two ELCC staff members must be on duty. One of these individuals must have no responsibilities other than care of the children.

Qualification requirements for on-site centre administrators/supervisors

The Northwest Territories does not have specific regulated requirements for centre-based facility administrators or supervisors.

Other requirements

ELCC educators must be at least 19 years of age, and ELCC assistants must be at least 16 years of age.

All ELCC educators and ELCC assistants must have first aid and CPR certification.

Before starting at a centre, all staff, volunteers, and substitutes are required to submit a criminal record check with a vulnerable sector search. All staff and substitutes must also submit an up-to-

date immunization record and tuberculosis screening test.

Criminal record checks with vulnerable sector checks must be updated every two years.

LICENSING AND MONITORING OF REGULATED CHILD CARE CENTRES

An ELCC facility licence is valid for up to one year. A facility must be inspected annually for licence renewal. Inspections are conducted by the Regional Early Childhood Consultant, Fire Inspector, and Environmental Health Officer. A licensed facility can be inspected at times other than the annual licence renewal inspection.

Regulated family child care

Regulated family child care homes (termed home-based facilities) are regulated under the [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#) and [Early Learning and Child Care Regulations](#).

Family child care must be located in the private residence of the operator.

MODEL OF ORGANIZATION

Regulated home-based facilities are individually licensed.

MAXIMUM CAPACITY

A family child care provider may care for a maximum of eight children under 12 years old, including the operator's own children. Additionally, no more than six of the children may be under six years old, and no more than two children may be younger than two years.

FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDER REQUIREMENTS

Family child care providers who have not completed post-secondary education with a focus on early childhood development must complete the Early Childhood Essentials course.

They must also undertake annual professional learning in child development and care through courses, seminars, or workshops. There is no specified number of hours required.

Home-based facility providers must be at least 19 years of age and have first aid and CPR certification. The provider, as well as any other adults residing in the home, must have a criminal record check with a vulnerable sector search, updated every two years.

LICENSING AND MONITORING OF REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

Home-based facility licences are valid for up to one year. A home-based facility must be inspected annually for licence renewal. Inspections are conducted by the Regional Early Childhood Consultant, Fire Inspector, and Environmental Health Officer. A home-based facility can be inspected at times other than the annual licence renewal inspection.

■ OF INTEREST

Municipal role

In the Northwest Territories, municipalities do not have a mandated role in child care governance, funding, or administration. Three municipalities operate child care centres: Sachs Harbour and Tsiigehtchic each operate one centre, and the Town of Fort Smith operates two.

Family resource program

HEALTHY FAMILY PROGRAM

The [Healthy Family Program](#) (HFP) is a family resource program managed and funded by the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority. It is a universal and free program open to anyone who has young children (prenatal to age six) and is interested in learning and sharing



about children and caregiving. The HFP offers family support services that focus on parent-child attachment, as well as parenting skills and childhood development (prenatal to age four). They connect families to resources in the community and provide one-on-one support based on what families want and need. The HFP has been renewed so that services are more inclusive, preventive, and centred around culture.

CHILD CARE DATA

■ REGULATED CHILD CARE SPACE STATISTICS

Number of spaces (2024, 2025)

	2024	2025
Full-day centre spaces		
Infant (<2 years)	202	206
Preschool-age (2 – 5 years, not yet in kindergarten or school)	608	616
Total full-day centre spaces (children 0 – 5 years)	810	822
Part-day centre spaces	2024	2025
Children not yet in kindergarten or school	<i>Not applicable</i>	<i>Not applicable</i>
<i>Note: All centres for children not yet in school are licensed as full-day; some may offer a part-day program.</i>		
Before- and after-school care centre spaces (licensed or regulated)	2024	2025
Children in kindergarten and Grades 1 – 6	798	815
Total centre spaces (children 0 – 12 years)	1,608	1,637
Family child care licensed capacity	2024	2025
Full-day (children not yet in kindergarten or school)	246	270
Part-day (children attending kindergarten or school)	82	90
Total family child care spaces	328	360
TOTAL REGULATED SPACES (centre spaces and family child care licensed capacity)	1,936	1,997

Number of child care centres and family child care homes (2024)

Centre-based child care	
Total number of centres	49
<i>Note: This figure may not be comparable to ECEC in Canada 2023.</i>	
Total number of licences	65

Centre-based programs

Centres providing a full-day program	35
Centres providing a before- and after-school program for children attending kindergarten or school (approximately 4 – 12 years)	40
Centres providing infant care (<2 years)	22
Centres providing preschool-age care (2 – 5 years)	34
Centres providing a Francophone child care program	7
Centres in publicly delivered and funded schools (K – Grade 12)	26

Regulated family child care

Individually licensed family child care homes (active)	41
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Participation in CWELCC

Centres providing a full-day program	35
Centres providing a before- and after-school program for children attending kindergarten or school (approximately 4 – 12 years)	40

Total number of child care centres receiving CWELCC funding 49

Total number of licensed family child care homes receiving CWELCC funding 41

Auspice (2024)

Centres by auspice

<i>Auspice</i>	<i>Number of centres</i>
For-profit	0
Non-profit	30
Public	35

Note: This table reflects a breakdown of the number of licences, not centres.

Centre spaces by auspice

<i>Auspice</i>	<i>Full-day¹</i>	<i>BASC²</i>	<i>Total</i>
For-profit	0	0	0
Non-profit and public	810	798	1,608

¹ Children 0 – 5 years, not yet in school.

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

Auspice (2025)

Centre spaces by auspice

<i>Auspice</i>	<i>Full-day¹</i>	<i>BASC²</i>	<i>Total</i>
For-profit	0	0	0
Non-profit and public	822	815	1,637

¹ Children 0 – 5 years, not yet in school.

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

Publicly operated child care (2024)

Publicly operated child care

<i>Entity type</i>	<i>Licence holders</i>	<i>Centres</i>	<i>Full-day spaces</i>	<i>BASC spaces¹</i>	<i>Total spaces</i>
Municipality	3	4	48	46	94
School authority	4	13	10	185	195
Indigenous governing body	10	18	350	64	414
Total	17	35	408	295	703

Note: The hamlets of Sachs Harbour and Tsiigehtchic each operate one centre, and the Town of Fort Smith operates two centres. The school authorities operating child care centres are the Yellowknife Public Denominational District Education Authority, the Commission Scolaire Francophone – Territoires du Nord-Ouest, and the Hay River Reserve District Education Authority.

¹ Before- and after-school care (children 4 – 12 years).

Fee subsidies (2024)

Number of children receiving fee subsidies

Subsidies through the Income Assistance Program	3
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Disability support (2024)

Number of children receiving disability support

Children in licensed child care receiving disability support funding	Not available
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REGULATED CHILD CARE ENROLMENT STATISTICS

The Northwest Territories does not currently report on enrolment.

CHILD CARE FUNDING

The types of funding available for child care services in the Northwest Territories include operational funding, one-time funding, fee subsidies, and other ELCC funding programs. See [Early Learning and Child Care](#) for more information.

■ ELIGIBILITY FOR CWELCC FUNDING

The CWELCC plan provides federal funds to provinces and territories for early learning and child care operational and one-time funding and fee subsidies for licensed child care for children aged 0 – 5. Funded new child care expansion is to be public and non-profit unless otherwise specified in the jurisdiction's agreement. Provinces and territories contribute their own funds and design their own policies and provision within this framework.

In the Northwest Territories, the following are eligible for operational funding under CWELCC;

- Licensed full-day centres;
- Licensed part-day centres (preschools/nursery schools);
- Licensed before- and after-school centres that enrol children under age six; and
- Licensed family child care.

The Northwest Territories has no for-profit centres and does not fund them. New for-profit centres are not eligible for operational funding.

In the Northwest Territories, the following are eligible for capital funding under CWELCC:

- Licensed full-day centres;
- Licensed part-day centres (preschools/nursery schools);

- Licensed before- and after-school centres that enrol children under age six; and
- Licensed family child care.

New for-profit centres are not eligible for capital funding.

■ CHILD CARE SERVICES' ELIGIBILITY FOR FUNDING

Funding is available to all licensed non-profit child care centres and licensed home-based providers. For-profit centres are not eligible for government funding and support. There are no for-profit centres in the Northwest Territories.

■ TYPES OF FUNDING

Operational funding

The Northwest Territories introduced a [new funding model](#) on April 1, 2024. For centre-based programs, this funding model combines previous funding into two new types of operational funding: Dedicated Funding and Flexible Funding. Replacing the previous attendance-based funding model, the new model is based on enrolment (licensed spaces) to provide operators with stable and predictable funding that provides more flexibility when they may be closed or when a child is absent.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM OPERATING SUBSIDY

The Early Childhood Program Operating Subsidy funding stream ended on March 31, 2024. It was an attendance-based quarterly contribution through which licensed centres and home-based facilities received a fixed daily rate per attending child.

Facilities located at government-owned buildings were funded at 75% of the daily rate. All licensed ELCC facilities were eligible for this funding.

Full-time daily rates per child for the Early Childhood Program Operating Subsidy (ended March 31, 2024)

	<i>Zone A</i>	<i>Zone B</i>
Infant/child with disability	\$33.75/child	\$49.66/child
Preschool-age	\$14.17/child	\$19.81/child
Out-Of-School	\$4.72/child	\$5.01/child

Note: Part-time spaces were funded at half the full-time rate.

Note: The 2017 – 2021 Canada-Northwest Territories Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreement and action plan offered enhanced Early Childhood Program Operating Subsidy funding for licensed centre-based programs with preschool and Out-Of-School spaces.

EARLY CHILDHOOD STAFF GRANT

Until September 30, 2022, the Northwest Territories provided the Early Childhood Staff Grant, which was paid directly to educators based on hours worked and level of post-secondary education. In 2022, this grant was replaced by the Retention Incentive to streamline staff wage enhancement for early childhood educators.

RETENTION INCENTIVE

The Retention Incentive ended on March 31, 2024. Implemented in October 2022, Retention Incentive funding was a two-year transitional step to address recruitment and retention challenges until a wage grid was implemented in the 2024 – 2025 fiscal year. Because of the Retention Incentive, early childhood educators working in licensed centre-based facilities no longer needed to apply to receive wage top-ups, as this funding was provided directly from the employer. The Retention Incentive was retroactive to April 1, 2022.

PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY GRANT

The Program Sustainability Grant was introduced in 2021 – 2022 and ended March 31, 2024. It provided additional operating funding to licensed facilities that offered free child care for families (including those operated by Indigenous governments) to help offset their underlying cost base. Licensed facilities that charged child care fees were ineligible.

CHILD CARE FEE REDUCTION

In April 2024, the Child Care Fee Reduction (CCFR) funding for licensed centre-based programs was integrated into the new operational funding model. It provides funding to eligible child care programs to reduce child care fees charged to families. Funding amounts vary based on the type of child care spaces offered and the ages of the enrolled children. Home-based facilities receive the CCFR directly to reduce fees and receive monthly administration funding based on the number of registered children.

DEDICATED FUNDING

Dedicated Funding was introduced in April 2024 as part of the new operational funding model. Funding is allocated to support the wages of early childhood educators working in licensed centre-based facilities, along with employer-related costs (additional 11.4%). Licensed centre-based facilities automatically qualify for this funding and do not need to apply for it; however, they are required to submit quarterly and annual reporting to continue receiving it.

Funding is determined based on the required number of ELCC staff according to the necessary staff:child ratio. For every three funded ELCC staff persons, one additional ELCC staff person is funded. An operator is also eligible to receive additional funding for one supervisor’s wages for every six ELCC staff persons who are necessary for

the staff:child ratios. When the combined number of ELCC staff persons needed for the staff:child ratios and the number of supervisors exceeds eight, operators are authorized to receive funding for an administrator's wages. Additional regulations apply to these calculations when the number of ELCC staff for staff:child ratios are fewer than four or fewer than six. Facilities that consistently experience low attendance may receive 50% of the total funding, with evaluations conducted on a case-by-case basis as needed.

Two bonuses are provided for centre-based employees as part of the Dedicated Funding stream: the Indigenous Educators Bonus and the Northern Experience Bonus. Eligible employees can receive both bonuses.

THE INDIGENOUS EDUCATORS BONUS

The [Indigenous Educators Bonus](#) provides additional funding to Indigenous employees working in licensed centre-based facilities who have more than one year of experience in licensed centre-based ELCC facilities. Any Indigenous person, as defined by the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Implementation Act*, with the required experience in child care facilities is eligible. Eligible employees can receive up to \$2,500 per year, which is prorated based on the hours worked, with a maximum of 1,950 hours. If employees work more than this threshold, they will receive the full amount. Employees who qualify for the Indigenous Educators Bonus can also receive the Northern Experience Bonus.

THE NORTHERN EXPERIENCE BONUS

The [Northern Experience Bonus](#) is an additional annual bonus for employees who have worked for at least five years in a licensed ELCC facility in a northern environment. A northern environment is any prescribed or intermediate zone defined by

the Canada Revenue Agency; any licensed facility in the three territories or the northern parts of the provinces would be eligible. Employees are eligible for funding up to \$1,000 per year after working for five years, and up to \$2,000 per year after working for 10 years. The bonus is prorated according to the number of hours worked, with a maximum of 1,950 hours. Those working over 1,950 hours will receive the full bonus amount, while those working fewer hours will have their bonus adjusted accordingly. Employees who qualify to receive the Indigenous Educators Bonus can also receive the Northern Experience Bonus.

FLEXIBLE FUNDING

[Flexible Funding](#) was introduced in April 2024 as part of the new operational funding model. It provides eligible licensed centre-based facilities with flexibility on how funding is spent by allowing tailored financial decisions for expenses like rent, utilities, and wages. This funding supplements other revenue sources based on the number of licensed spaces. Facilities licensed for only Out-Of-School spaces receive 50% of the funding. Those with consistently low attendance may receive 50% of the funding, assessed on a case-by-case basis as needed.

HOME-BASED OPERATING FUNDING

[Home-based Operating Funding](#) provides eligible licensed home-based facilities with funding for day-to-day operating costs, such as groceries, toys, car seats, cribs, and cleaning supplies. Licensed home-based facilities offering Out-Of-School care for children aged 3 years 8 months to 11 years receive funding based on the number of enrolled school-age children.

FIVE-YEAR RETENTION FUNDING FOR HOME-BASED FACILITIES

The [Five-year Retention Funding](#) program is designed for licensed home-based facility operators that have been in continuous operation for five

years or more. To qualify as continuously operated, the program operators must have maintained their home-based facility licence for at least five years, including during leaves such as maternity or parental leave and during times spent studying early learning and child care. Eligible home-based facility operators will receive \$2,500 per year starting on their five-year anniversary of continuous operation. For instance, a home-based facility licensed in January 2020 began receiving this funding in January 2025 and will continue to receive it annually until it closes.

SUPPORTING CHILD INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

The [Supporting Child Inclusion and Participation](#) (SCIP) program funds eligible organizations to create community play-based early childhood programs for families. It provides supports for children with developmental needs who require enhanced or individual assistance to safely and fully participate in early learning. There are two types of SCIP funding: Early Years Community Program Funding and Early Learning and Child Care Inclusion Funding. See the Northwest Territories’ [“Children with disabilities”](#) section for more information.

One-time funding

EARLY CHILDHOOD INFRASTRUCTURE FUND

The [Early Childhood Infrastructure Fund](#) provides funding for projects that preserve or expand existing infrastructure of licensed centre-based child care spaces or create new licensed centre-based child care spaces. To be eligible for funding, a centre must be a non-profit organization or operated by an Indigenous government. Funding priority is given to communities with limited or non-existent child care programming. Available funding of \$5.9 million was allocated for 2024 –

2025. The amount applicants receive is determined based on each proposal and available funding.

NEW CHILD CARE SPACES FUND

The [New Child Care Spaces Fund](#) was established in 2017 as part of the 2017 – 2021 Canada-Northwest Territories Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreement to replace the former Start-up Subsidy. This application-based funding assists with the creation of new licensed early learning and child care spaces by providing funding for the purchase of equipment and supplies. This funding cannot be used toward staffing or lease payments. It is also available to licensed facilities that wish to re-profile spaces based on community needs. Licensed home-based facilities are eligible to receive a flat amount based on the zone they are in, whereas centre-based facilities receive a fixed amount per type of licensed space.

New Child Care Spaces Fund payment per full-day centre space (2025)

	Zone A	Zone B
Infant/child with disability	\$2,500	\$4,200
Preschool-age	\$1,700	\$2,800
Out-Of-School	\$500	\$1,000

Flat rate payment

Home-based facility	\$3,000	\$4,500
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Note: Zone A is Behchok̄, Dettah, Enterprise, Fort Liard, Fort Providence, Fort Resolution, Fort Simpson, Fort Smith, Hay River, Jean Marie River, Kakisa, Kát’odeeche First Nation, Ndilo, Wrigley, and Yellowknife.

Note: Zone B is Aklavik, Colville Lake, Délyng, Fort Good Hope, Fort McPherson, Gamèti, Inuvik, Łutselk’e, Nahanni Butte, Norman Wells, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, Samba K’e, Tsiigehtchic, Tuktoyaktuk, Tulita, Ulukhaktok, Wekweèti, and Whatì.

Note: Part-time spaces are funded at half the full-time rate. Programs located in government-owned buildings, including schools, are funded at 75% of the full-time rate.

HEALTH AND SAFETY FUNDING

The Health and Safety Funding program supports licensed child care programs with costs associated with repairs and maintenance required by annual health and fire safety inspections. [Home-based facilities](#) are eligible for one-time funding of up to \$10,000 during their start-up phase, while licensed [centre-based facilities](#) may receive up to \$10,000 per year, if necessary, to address deficiencies identified during a fire or environmental health inspection. This funding consists of two components: a maximum of \$5,000 can be used towards improvements required by environmental health inspections, and another \$5,000 maximum can be used towards improvements required by fire safety inspections.

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM ENHANCEMENT GRANTS

The Provider Enhancement Grant, the Early Childhood Cultural Resource Grant, and the Technology Grant were available through the Canada-Northwest Territories Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreement between April 1, 2021, and March 31, 2024.

The Provider Enhancement Grant provided one-time funding to licensed centre-based facilities and home-based facilities. It assisted licensed facilities with purchasing or replacing equipment, such as high chairs, car seats, playground equipment, furniture, and other learning materials.

The Early Childhood Cultural Resource Grant provided licensed centre-based ELCC facilities with funding to purchase culturally relevant materials and resources.

The Technology Grant was provided as a one-time grant to licensed centre-based facilities for the purchase of equipment, such as computers and printers, to support daily operations and participate in online learning opportunities. New

licensed centre-based programs and/or programs that did not previously receive the Technology Grant were eligible for the funding in 2021 – 2022.

Fee subsidies

The Northwest Territories does not have a stand-alone child care subsidy program. The [Income Assistance Program](#), though not specific to child care, offers financial support to assist with child care expenses for children enrolled in an ELCC facility. Applicants may also be eligible for support for school-break camps and occasional babysitting.

Other ELCC funding

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIP

[Early Learning and Child Care Scholarship](#) funding supports both full-time and part-time post-secondary students enrolled in diploma or degree programs in early childhood development. Up to \$500 per course is available for part-time students, with a maximum of \$2,500 per school year, and \$5,000 per school year is available for full-time students. To be eligible, applicants must be residents of the Northwest Territories and enrolled in accredited institutions, either in-person or online. Preference may be given to first-year students, those who have not previously received the scholarship, individuals from smaller Northwest Territories communities, and those planning to return to the Northwest Territories after graduation to work in early childhood development. Part-time applicants currently employed in licensed child care programs are also considered.

■ FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (FISCAL YEAR 2023 – 2024)

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

Operational funding

Program	Amount
Early Childhood Program (ECP) Operating Subsidy	\$4,792,609
Child Care Fee Reduction	\$4,786,319
Program Sustainability Grant	\$399,364
Supporting Child Inclusion and Participation Additional Staff (One-to-one or one-to-multiple staff to child support)	\$957,910
Supporting Child Inclusion and Participation (Quality Enhancement Funding)	\$122,605
Total operational funding	\$11,058,807

Note: The Supporting Child Inclusion and Participation program was reorganized and renamed in April 2025.

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, disability funding, and other grants/funding paid on a recurring basis.

One-time funding – capital (major and minor)

Program	Amount
Early Childhood Infrastructure Fund	\$646,360
New Child Care Spaces Fund	\$95,641

One-time funding – other

Program	Amount
Retention Incentive Grant	\$2,239,399
Health and Safety Funding	\$66,370
Program Quality Enhancement	\$11,000
Total one-time funding	\$3,058,770

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, one-time equipment, or repair funding.

Fee subsidies

Program	Amount
Income Assistance Program	Not available

Note: The Northwest Territories does not have a stand-alone child care subsidy program. The Income Assistance Program, though not specific to child care, offers financial support to assist with child care expenses for children enrolled in an ELCC facility.

TOTAL SPENDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (operational funding, one-time funding, and fee subsidies)	\$14,117,577
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Other ELCC funding

Program	Amount
Early Learning and Child Care Scholarship	\$130,000
Post-secondary Learning Opportunity	\$1,616,933
Professional Development and Training (Salaries and Operational Expenditure)	\$600,569
Supporting Child Inclusion and Participation (Community Initiatives)	\$271,610
Supporting Child Inclusion and Participation (Small Community Sustainability)	\$57,230
Total other ELCC funding	\$2,676,342

Note: The Supporting Child Inclusion and Participation program was reorganized and renamed in April 2025.

Federal transfers to the Northwest Territories

<i>Federal transfer</i>	<i>Amount</i>
Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework – Early Learning and Child Care Bilateral Agreements	\$2,605,471
Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care	\$9,722,813
Early Learning and Child Care Infrastructure Fund	\$2,295,426

Note: The federal transfers above represent the funds allocated to the Northwest Territories for fiscal year 2023 – 2024. These funds may be slightly different from those included in the original agreements, as they are updated annually in line with population estimates. 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 (2025).
