

Northwest Territories



OVERVIEW

Early learning and child care, Junior Kindergarten (JK) and Kindergarten (K) in the Northwest Territories fall under the Government of the Northwest Territories' Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Early learning and child care programs are regulated under the *Northwest Territories (NWT) Child Day Care Act* and the NWT Child Day Care Standards Regulations. JK and K are regulated under the *NWT Education Act*.

Territorial implementation of JK began in the 2017-2018 school year. [Prior to 2017-2018](#), JK was piloted in some small communities. Education Authorities can choose to offer JK as a full day or part day program; most are full day. Kindergarten for five year olds is offered full day. Families also have the option of sending their child to the JK and K programs for the full day, half day, or not at all.

The Early Childhood Program provides ongoing licensing, monitoring, support, and financial subsidies for licensed early learning and child care programs as well as professional development and learning opportunities for staff working in licensed programs. All licensed centre based day care facilities, including out of school programs, full and part time day care centres and preschools are run by non-profit organizations. Since the territorial introduction of JK, Education Authorities no longer offer user pay licensed preschool programming for four year olds.

Regulated family child care homes are termed licensed family home day care facilities. Licensed family home day care facilities are licensed individually.

The NT does not have a stand alone child care subsidy program. Parents must qualify for the territorial [Income Assistance Program \(IA\)](#) under the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, which provides financial assistance towards the cost of child care for its clients. In order to qualify, applicants must meet all other eligibility requirements of the IA program.

In 2015, ECE completed a [review](#) of the administrative and funding processes of the Early Childhood Program (ECP), as identified in the Right from the Start Framework and Action Plan for early childhood development in the NT.

Effective October 1, 2016, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment revised the ECP funding model. Changes to the ECP funding model included:

- Revising ECP operating funding model, increased rates and reduction from 10 areas to two zones;
- Consolidating licensing and funding applications into a single application form and added the possibility of a multi year funding agreement;
- Eliminating Start-up funding and Minor Health and Safety funding;
- Increased funding for programs operating within government buildings from 50% to 75%.

In March 2018, the [Canada-Northwest Territories Early Learning and Child Care Agreement](#) was signed by the territorial and federal governments. The bilateral agreement provides almost \$7.5 million over three years for the NT to expand existing initiatives designed to contribute to quality improvement and increase accessibility of early learning and child care in the NT.

Enhancing the accessibility, affordability and inclusivity of child care is an ongoing and continuous focus for the NT government. In addition to the continued implementation of the *Right from the Start Early Childhood Framework* and *2017-2020 Right from the Start Early Childhood Development Action Plan*, the Mandate of the 18th Legislative Assembly included a commitment to improve the accessibility, affordability and inclusivity of child care in the NT to allow all children, aged 0 – 5, to experience an enriching, quality learning environment by:

- supporting the creation of new child care spaces and programs in all communities;
- ensuring the sustainability of existing early childhood development programs;
- creating an action plan for a phased-in approach to making child care more accessible and affordable.

Part of this work included the development of the 2019 *Supporting Access to Child Care Supplementary Action Plan* which outlined current work and includes additional actions to support a phased in approach to making child care more accessible and affordable for families in the NT.

TERRITORIAL 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 years (aggregated) (2019 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0 – 2	1,600
3 – 5	2,100
6 – 12	4,300
Total	8,000

Number of children 0 – 12 with employed mothers (aggregated) (2019 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0 – 2	1,000
3 – 5	1,400
6 – 12	2,900
Total	5,300

Number of children 0 – 14 identifying with an Indigenous group (2016)

Age	First Nations	Métis	Inuk (Inuit)	Multiple	Other
0 – 4	1,095	260	400	35	0
5 – 9	1,120	235	405	10	0
10 – 14	1,125	230	370	20	10
Total	3,335	725	1180	60	0

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2019 rounded estimate)

Not available

Living arrangements of age of child by age by number of parents (2016)

Age	Living with two parents	Living with one parent	Lone mother	Lone father
0 - 4	2,420	605	490	115
5 - 9	2,180	700	550	150
10 -14	1,905	660	505	230

Languages spoken most often at home (2016)

Age	English	French	Non-official	Multiple
0 - 4	2,875	65	115	60
5 - 9	2,770	45	125	65
10 -14	2,460	45	145	75
Total	8,105	160	385	195

PARENTAL LEAVE AND BENEFITS**Maternity leave**

17 weeks. Pregnant employees must be employed by an employer for six consecutive months to be eligible for maternity leave.

Parental leave

61 weeks. Two parent families, including adoptive parents, are also able to access an additional 8 weeks of unpaid leave for the second parent.

Adoption leave

61 weeks, plus an additional 8 weeks if leave is shared.

Benefits

Maternity and parental leave provisions in Canada outside Quebec, are divided between federal and provincial/territorial governments. Benefits are paid by the federal government under the Employment Insurance program (EI), while provincial/territorial provisions for job protected leave are established in each jurisdiction's employment standards legislation. The federal benefit covers 15 weeks of maternity leave for eligible employees who are birth mothers, up to 12 weeks prior to the expected date of birth, and up to 17 weeks following the date of birth.

There are two federal benefit options for parental leave: the Standard Parental Benefit and the Extended Parental Benefit. The Standard Parental Benefit covers 35 weeks of paid leave taken over a 12 month period, paid at 55% of average weekly insurable earnings, up to \$573/week (2020) for either eligible parent, including adoptive parents. The Extended Parental Benefit allows 61 weeks of parental leave benefits taken over an 18 month period paid at 33% of average weekly earnings up to \$344/week (2020) for either eligible parent including adoptive parents.

The Parental Sharing Benefit is available to non-birth (second) parents. It covers an additional five weeks of benefits if both parents have shared the Standard benefit option (40 weeks total) or an additional eight weeks of benefits under the Extended option if both parents have shared the Extended Benefit option (69 weeks total). It is paid at either the Standard or the Extended rate.

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

KINDERGARTEN

TERRITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR KINDERGARTEN

Department of Education, Culture and Employment
Early Childhood and School Services
PO Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2L9
Telephone: (867)920-3491
Website: <http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca>

LEGISLATION

Northwest Territories. Legislative Assembly. [Education Act](#), R.S.N.W.T. 1995, c. 28.

The legislation applies to public schools. In force July 1, 1996.

AGE ELIGIBILITY

Four years old by December 31 for Junior Kindergarten.
Five years old by December 31 for Kindergarten.

KINDERGARTEN ENROLMENT

(September 30, 2018)

Junior Kindergarten: 552 students

Kindergarten: 595 students

COMPULSORY

Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten are not compulsory however, access is a legislated entitlement for all children.

HOURS

Education authorities can choose to offer either a full day or a part day program or both. A majority of the JK/K programming offered is full day. Education authorities are required to offer a minimum of 485 instructional hours for JK/K programming.

CLASS SIZE

There is no class size limit. Class sizes and configurations vary across the territory and are determined at the discretion of the education authority and local school principal.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

A Bachelor of Education or a two year diploma in early childhood from an accredited institution is required to teach Junior Kindergarten. Junior Kindergarten teachers are required to be certified by the Registrar.

A Bachelor of Education is required to teach Kindergarten. There are no ECE requirements.

CURRICULUM

[NWT Junior Kindergarten/Kindergarten Curriculum](#)

SPENDING ON KINDERGARTEN

\$17,819 (per full time equivalent JK and K student)

Estimated total spending: \$19,654,000

Source: Calculated by Territorial officials based on Education Authority Contributions (2018-2019 Actuals) pg. 42, 2020-21 GNWT Main Estimates

REGULATED CHILD CARE

TERRITORIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE

Department of Education, Culture and Employment
Government of the Northwest Territories
Early Childhood and School Services
Lahm Ridge Tower, 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 1320
Yellowknife, NT, X1A 2L9
Telephone: (867) 767-9354
Website: <https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/early-childhood-development>

LEGISLATION

Northwest Territories. Legislative Assembly. Northwest Territories [Child Day Care Act](#) 1988 (2012).

Northwest Territories. Legislative Assembly. Northwest Territories [Child Day Care Act Child Day Care Standards](#) Regulations 2013 (2014).

CHILD CARE SERVICES

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

Unregulated family child care

Maximum number of children permitted: Four including the caregiver's own children up to 12 years.

REGULATED CHILD CARE

Centre day care facility

Group care, instruction and supervision provided in a place other than a private residence.

Preschool day care

Part time day care provided for a child two years of age or older not enrolled for the full day in a school operated under the *Education Act*.

Family day home facility

A child day care facility where day care is provided within the private residence of the operator. It may include up to eight children under 12 years including the caregiver's own children with the following restrictions: Maximum of six children years and under, maximum of three children three years and under, maximum of two children under two years and under.

Out of school day care

Day care provided following completion of the daily school program for a child who is in regular attendance at a school operated under the *Education Act*.

The Early Learning Framework: Nurturing capable people from birth to school entry (2019) is in draft form.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

All licensed early learning and child care programs in the NT are inclusive and welcome all children. The *NWT Child Daycare Standards and Regulations* state that a centre day care facility must modify the daily program to ensure that any child is able to participate and also obtain any specialized equipment required for the child to participate.

Licensed child care providers are supported with higher operating grants for children with special needs through the ECP Operating Subsidy. Documentation from a health care professional must be provided.

The Healthy Children Initiative (HCI) funding program is being reprofiled to the Supporting Child Inclusion and Participation (SCIP) fund following a review of HCI that identified issues with how the original funds were being used. The transition of HCI to SCIP will focus funding on supports for children who are vulnerable, at risk and/or who have specific developmental needs. There is a five year transition plan to reprofile funds from HCI to SCIP to allow programs to adjust to renewed program criteria on supports for children with specific developmental needs. Funding for SCIP will be available in 2019-2020.

Child care providers and community members may apply for SCIP funding which has two funding streams to support existing programs:

Participation funding (funding to support child access and inclusion in programming); this funding can be used for training and consultation for staff, creating a more inclusive environment, or providing one-to-one or one-to-multiple staffing supports.

Community funding (family and tot, parent education); this funding can be used to support access and quality early learning experiences for children from birth to school entry.

INDIGENOUS CHILD CARE

The Northwest Territories is composed of Dene, Métis and Inuvialuit (Inuit) communities. The majority of community based programs are equally available to all children.

Aboriginal Head Start (AHSUNC) programs are the only programs specifically targeted for Indigenous children and their families; however, they may include non Indigenous children if capacity allows. There are eight AHS programs in the NT.

SPACE STATISTICS

Number of regulated child care spaces (2019)

<i>Centre based programs</i>	
Infants (0 – 2 years)	172
Preschool-age (2 – 5 years)	607
After school (6 – 12 years)	677
Total centre based spaces (0 – 12 years old)	1,456
<i>Family child care</i>	
Infants (0 – 2 years)	102
Preschool-age (2 – 5 years)	204
After school (6 – 12 years)	102
<i>Total family child spaces</i>	<i>408</i>
Total number of regulated child care spaces	1,864

Children with special needs in regulated care (2019) NA

Participation funding (funding to support child access and inclusion in programming); this funding can be used for training and consultation for staff, creating a more inclusive environment, or providing one-to-one or one-to-multiple staffing supports.

Community funding (family and tot, parent education); this funding can be used to support access and quality early learning experiences for children from birth to school entry.

Children receiving fee subsidies (2019) NA

Note: The NT does not provide stand alone child care user subsidies. However, the income assistance (IA) program provides financial assistance towards the cost of child care for clients. In order to qualify, applicants must meet all the eligibility requirements of the IA.

Number of child care programs (2019)

<i>Centre based programs</i>	
Full day centres	18
Part day nursery schools/ preschools	17
Stand alone school-age centres	27
Total centre based programs	62
<i>School based child care centres (included in centre based)</i>	
For preschool-age children	21
For school-age children	13
<i>Family child care</i>	
Individually licensed family child care providers	51

Sponsorship of part and full time regulated centre based spaces (2019)

All centres are non-profit and family day homes are also considered to be non-profit.

PARENT FEES

Monthly parent fees for full time centre based child care vary from free of charge up to approximately \$1,380 for an infant and free of charge up to approximately \$1,170 for a preschooler in 2018-2019.

In regulated family day homes, it is estimated that the average monthly parent fee was \$1,000 for an infant and \$900 for a preschooler in 2018-2019.

In 2019, a national survey of child care fees in Canada's large cities included Yellowknife:

<i>Median monthly fees</i>		
Infant	Toddler	Preschooler
\$1,093	\$990	\$890

Source: Macdonald, D., & Friendly, M. (2020). In Progress: Child care fees in Canada 2019. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

REGULATED CENTRES

Maximum centre size: Not specified

Staff:child ratios and group sizes

<i>Age</i>	<i>Staff:child ratios</i>	<i>Max. group sizes</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 years	1:10	30

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

Centre staff requirements

Primary staff must be at least 19 years of age and have a certificate in first aid and infant/child cardiopulmonary resuscitation. All staff must provide a criminal record check, including a vulnerable sector search prepared by the RCMP.

Primary staff must have successfully completed a post secondary program (minimum of a one year certificate) in child development satisfactory to the director or demonstrate to the satisfaction of the director an understanding of developmentally appropriate practices in respect of children and the ability to apply that understanding to the child care program.

STAFF WAGES

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

Median annual employment income \$42,862

Median hourly employment income \$20.61 - 23.55/hr
(calculated using 2080 hrs/year (40 hrs week)
and 1280 hrs/year (35 hrs/week)

Source: Canadian Census, 2016

Note: These data include Early Childhood Educators and Assistants, as defined in NOC 4214, working in the day care services industry in centre based environments with children aged 0 – 12 years, as defined in NAICS 6244. Included as 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.

REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE

Model of organization

Individually licensed

Maximum capacity

Maximum of eight children under 12 years (including the provider's own children). No more than six of the eight children may be under six years of age, maximum of three children three years and under, and no more than two children may be under two years.

Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

Family child care homes are visited at least once a year by staff from the Early Childhood Program and a representative from each of the Department of Health and Social Services (HSS) Environmental Health Officer and the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs' (MACA) Office of the Fire Marshall. Licenses are issued in conjunction with annual inspections.

Family child care provider requirements

A provider must be a minimum of 19 years of age and have a certificate in first aid and infant/child cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. The operator and all adults living in the home must provide a criminal record check, including a vulnerable sector search prepared by the RCMP.

The provider must undertake training in relation to child development and care on an annual basis through appropriate courses, seminars or workshops and retain documentation respecting attendance at such training.

FUNDING

CHILD CARE SERVICES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Non-profit licensed early childhood centres and family day homes including part time, infant, out-of-school and special needs spaces are eligible for all types of public funding.

TYPES OF FUNDING

Early Childhood Program operating subsidy, health and safety funding, new child care spaces funding as well as additional grants and proposal based funding.

Fee subsidies

The NT does not provide a stand alone child care subsidy. The Income Assistance (IA) program offers financial support to IA applicants to assist them with their child care expenses so they can participate in the labour force or pursue education and training opportunities in the NT.

Eligibility for fee subsidy

In order to be eligible for the IA fee support, applicants must:

- be enrolled in the Income Assistance program;
- have a need greater than their income;
- require care for children under the age of 13 because both parents are participating in the labour force or attending school or training;
- provide monthly invoices from the child care provider.

Which service providers are eligible to deliver subsidized child care?

Fee subsidies can be used in licensed and unlicensed child care.

Subsidy rates

The subsidy rate is the maximum amount paid by the territorial government to the service to cover all or part of the parent fee.

Income Assistance Program daily rates

Age	Licensed (\$)	Unlicensed (\$)
Infant (0 – 1 years)	\$42	\$33
Children (2 – 12 years)	\$39	\$28
Preschool/pre-kindergarten with extended care (3 – 4 years)	\$39	NA
Part time (0 – 5 years)	\$26	\$13
After school (5 – 12 years)	\$15	\$8

Operating (previously Recurring) Funding

Early Childhood Program (ECP) Funding

Available to non-profit licensed early learning and child care programs and family day homes.

Funding is provided to programs based on Zone location, determined based on road access. Funding ranges from \$14.17 or \$19.81/per occupied preschool space/day, depending on the location of the program plus an additional \$5.50 or \$7.70/per occupied space/day in centre based programs. For infants/children with special needs, operational funding is \$35.75 or \$49.66/per occupied space/day, depending on the location of the program.

Out of school spaces receive \$4.72 or \$5.01/per occupied space/day, depending on the location of the program plus an additional \$4.25 or \$5.95/per occupied space/day or \$12.00-\$16.80 when children are attending for the full day in centre based programs.

Programs that operate part time receive half the full day rate.

Family day homes and licensed early childhood centres receive the same rates of operating funding with the exception of the additional federal funding, which is only provided to centre based programs.

The additional federal enhancements further support centres through a more significant rate provided to preschool and out of school programs, including a full day rate for out of school programs.

The Early Childhood Staff Grant

The purpose of the Early Childhood Staff Grant is to increase the earnings of staff in licensed early childhood centres and to offer an incentive to attract new professionals to the early childhood workforce. It is paid directly to the staff person.

Employees eligible for this grant must:

- Be a permanent employee of a licensed early childhood centre;
- Provide care, assistance and supervision of children as part of their usual job duties or provide onsite supervision of the daily operation of the program.

The following table outlines the grant amounts for eligible employees based on the amount of hours worked per quarter and the level of early childhood post secondary education (PSE) completed:

Grant amounts for eligible employees based on the amount of hours worked

	100-234 hrs/worked quarter (8-18 hours/wk)	235-351 hrs/worked quarter (18.5-27 hrs/wk)	354-468 hrs/worked quarter (27.5-36 hours/wk)	469 + hrs/worked quarter (37 + hrs/wk)
No early childhood PSE	\$600	\$900	\$1,200	\$1,500
Early childhood certificate	\$800	\$1,200	\$1,600	\$2,000
Early childhood diploma	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$2,500
Early childhood degree	\$1,200	\$1,800	\$2,400	\$3,000

Note: For example, if an employee who has not completed a post secondary early childhood program worked 35 hours/week during April–June, she/he will qualify for a grant of \$1,200 for the 1st quarter grant payment.

TERRITORIAL ALLOCATIONS FOR REGULATED
CHILD CARE (2018-2019)

Fee subsidies

*Information not available – funded by Income Assistance (IA)
program*

Operational (previously Recurring) funding

Operational contributions	\$2,265,829
Rent and mortgage contributions	\$105,805
Minor health and safety renovations	\$133,279
Healthy Children Initiative	\$1,641,042
Small Community Initiative	\$289,000
Total operational funding	\$4,434,955

One time funding

Start up contribution	\$52,321
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Total territorial allocation on regulated child care

\$4,487,276

*Note: Federal funding of \$2,452,801 through the Canada –
Northwest Territories Early Learning and Child Care Agreement
for 2018-2019 is not included in the territorial allocations.*

TOTAL ALLOCATION **\$6,940,077**

*Total territorial allocation for regulated child care +
\$2,452,801 federal funding through the Canada-Northwest
Territories Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (2018-
2019)*
