



PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

Number of children 0-12 yrs (2005 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0	43,700
1	35,500
2	36,700
3	35,800
4	37,900
5	38,800
6	37,200
7	38,600
8	39,900
9	41,000
10	44,700
11	42,400
12	40,100
Total	512,200

Number of children 0-12 years (2005 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0-2	115,900
3-5	112,500
6-12	283,800
Total	512,200

Children 0-12 yrs with mothers in the paid labour force (2005 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0	24,100
1	18,500
2	21,900
3	20,800
4	21,000
5	21,000
6	22,500
7	26,000
8	25,500
9	27,300
10	29,400
11	28,400
12	27,800
Total	314,100

Number of children 0-12 years with mothers in the paid labour force (2005 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0-2	64,500
3-5	62,800
6-12	186,800
Total	314,100

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

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

Children 0-14 yrs with disabilities (2001)

Age	Number of children with disabilities	Rate of children with disabilities (%)
0-4	3,240	1.8
5-9	8,980	4.5
10-14	10,770	5.1
Total	22,980	3.9

Note: Total may not add up due to rounding.

Number of children by marital status of families (2001)

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

Number of children by mother tongue (2001)

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

Number of children in families living below the LICO (2004)

Age	Number	Percent (%)
0-2	15,390	14.2
3-5	19,330	17.5
6-17	71,540	13.9
Total	106,260	14.5

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2005 rounded estimate)

Age of youngest child	Number of mothers	Participation rate (%)
0-2	63,200	62.5
3-5	42,800	68.7
6-15	151,700	81.0

FAMILY-RELATED LEAVE

Maternity leave

Fifteen weeks

Parental leave

Thirty-seven weeks may be taken by one parent or shared between two parents but the total combined leave cannot exceed 37 weeks. The legislation stipulates that there is no requirement to grant parental leave to more than one parent at a time if both parents of a child work for the same employer.

Adoption leave

Thirty-seven weeks. May be taken by one parent or shared between two parents but the total combined leave cannot exceed 37 weeks.

Births and EI maternity and parental claims (2005)

Number of births	41,989
Birth rate per 1,000 population	12.6
Number of initial maternity claims allowed	20,920
Average length of maternity claim	14.6 weeks
Number of parental claims	22,370
Average length of parental claim	22.1
Number of adoptive parent claims	190
Average length of adoptive claim	27.8 weeks

Note: Maternity, parental and adoption leaves are determined by provincial and territorial legislation. The federal government pays for up to 15 weeks for maternity leave and 35 weeks for parental and adoptive leave for eligible parents at 55% of earned income to a maximum of \$423/week. See FEDERAL ECEC PROGRAMS for more information.

KINDERGARTEN

Note: In Alberta, the term “kindergarten” refers to the year before grade 1. The term Early Childhood Services is used in Alberta to refer to programs under the authority of Alberta Education serving children from 2.5 years to and including the kindergarten year.

LEGISLATION

Government of Alberta. Legislative Assembly. *School Act*. 2000. Early Childhood Services Policy (ECS) 1.13
Early Childhood Services Regulation 31/2002
Private Schools Regulation 190/2000
Private School Policy 3.6.1

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

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR KINDERGARTEN

Kindergarten contact
John Gunraj
Team Leader
Private Operators, Governance Branch
Alberta Education
8th Floor – 44 Capital Boulevard
10044 – 108 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 5E6
Telephone: 780-427-6894
Facsimile: 780-427-5930
Email: John.Gunraj@gov.ab.ca
Website: <http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/>

KINDERGARTEN SERVICES

EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

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

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

AGE ELIGIBILITY

Five years old by February 28

2.5 years by September 1st if the child has a severe disability; 3.5 years by September 1st if child has a mild or moderate disability

CLASS SIZE

There is no provincial policy on class size.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Alberta Education has standards for the provision of early childhood special education (see RECENT DEVELOPMENTS). Compliance is monitored by Special Programs Branch. Extra supports are available; appropriate funding may be allocated to specialists.

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

ENROLMENT (2005/06)

Number of children enrolled in ECS (the year before Grade 1): 43,463

Number of children enrolled in ECS (two years before Grade 1): Data not available

Number of children enrolled in ECS (three years before Grade one): Data not available

The total includes children attending ECS programs offered by public, separate, francophone, charter, private school and private ECS operators. Since Alberta has a lower age eligibility than other provinces and territories, there are numerous four year old children who are in ECS in the year before Grade one.

KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS

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

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

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

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

Average salary (2005/06): Information not available

In 2004/05 there were 3,904 certificated teachers working in ECS programs. (Data for 2005/06 not available.)

CLASSROOM ASSISTANTS

Title: Teacher Assistants

Qualifications: There are no provincial qualification requirements.

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

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

CURRICULUM

There is a mandatory provincial Kindergarten Program Statement. It has defined child outcomes in specific areas (language arts, physical skills and well-being, etc.). A revised Kindergarten Program Statement was released in September 2005.

MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT

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

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

SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR KINDERGARTEN

Funding for all ECS programs, including kindergarten, is allocated according to a different funding schedule than the one used for grades 1–12. Funding is provided to approved ECS operators and school boards that offer ECS programs on a per child basis to deliver the program. ECS funding receives an annual increase of about 4%.

Private schools can provide ECS programs for which they receive the same grants as public schools and private ECS operators. At Grade one, though, the private school grant is about 60% that of public school as private schools are able to charge tuition for Grade one.

All ECS programs (private schools included) must provide 475 hours of basic program at no charge to parents. Parents can pay approximately \$50/year to offset non-instructional costs such as supplies, snacks and field trips and additional program hours.

If the program is provided at a child care centre, parents may be eligible for child care subsidy for the balance of the day. Full subsidy is given to eligible families with kindergarten children if they are in the child care component for more than 100 hours/month. The schedule of the “normal day” depends on the operator.

PUBLIC SPENDING ON KINDERGARTEN

Per capita spending (basic instruction grant per child in kindergarten, one year before grade one)

2005/06: \$2,544

Total spending on kindergarten

Information not available

RECENT INITIATIVES IN KINDERGARTEN

In 2004 Medicine Hat School District #76 became the first to offer full-day every day kindergarten district-wide.

After reviewing research and conducting extensive consultations with education stakeholders and experts, Alberta's Commission on Learning released its final report in 2003. The Commission called upon the government to expand kindergarten programs on a phased-in basis (recommendation 2), as well establish full-day kindergarten programs (recommendation 3). These recommendations were reviewed by the Alberta government and were rejected.

In September 2005, an updated Kindergarten Program Statement was released.

In 2006, Alberta Education released *Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education*. It outlines the standards for educational programming and services for children with special education needs (6 years and younger as of September 1). It applies to ECS special education in public and separate school boards, francophone regional authorities, private ECS operators and funded accredited private schools approved by Alberta Education to provide an ECS program, and charter schools that apply for ECS special education funding.

REGULATED CHILD CARE

LEGISLATION

Alberta. Legislative Assembly. *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act*. Chapter S-10, RSA 2000

Alberta. Legislative Assembly. *Alberta Child Care Regulation* 180/2000 (and amendments up to and including Alberta Regulation 146/2004)

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE

Leann Wagner

Manager, Child Development Branch

Alberta Children's Services

3rd Floor Sterling Place

9940 – 106th Street

Edmonton, AB T5K 2N2

Telephone: (780) 644-2506

Facsimile: (780) 427-1258

Email: Leann.Wagner@gov.ab.ca

Website: <http://www.child.gov.ab.ca/whatwedo/childcare>

CHILD CARE SERVICES

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

Unregulated family child care

Maximum number of children permitted is six including the caregiver's own children under 12 years

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

REGULATED CHILD CARE

Day care centres

Seven or more children under seven years of age who are not yet in grade one, in a group setting for more than three but less than 24 consecutive hours/day

Nursery schools

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

Out-of-school care programs

Programs for children age six to twelve years outside school hours. Out-of-school care is licensed by the province under the *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act*. Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) monitor out-of-school care facilities under the revised *Child Care Regulation* (2004). Municipal approvals are also required in the areas of building safety, fire and zoning, and health.

Approved family day homes

Care in a provider's home for up to six children under 11 years of age with a maximum of three children under three years old with no more than two children under two years old (including the provider's own children under 11 years). Providers are under contract with a for-profit or not-for-profit family day home agency. Agencies are not licensed but are contracted by the provincial government to administer and monitor approved family day care homes. There are no regulations although there are provincial standards.

Licensed drop-in centres

Programs for children under seven years of age are permitted to operate with lower staff/child ratios than day care centres. No child may attend for more than 40 hours/month.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Inclusive Child Care Program in Alberta provides for inclusion of children with special needs. Funding varies depending on the special needs of the child, the type of service required and the region. Funds are paid to contracted operators on behalf of eligible children. Additional training for staff working with children with special needs is not required in legislation; however, staff typically have an Early Childhood Education (ECE) credential. Children with special needs may receive Early Childhood Services (ECS) Program Unit Funding (PUF) and may receive care and education in a child care centre or a nursery school/preschool.

ABORIGINAL CHILD CARE

Child care centres on-reserve are not licensed. However, under an agreement between Alberta and the federal government, on-reserve child care centres are eligible for federal government funding equivalent to parent subsidies when provincial licensing standards are met and centres are approved.

As of March 31, 2006, there were 31 approved child care centres on-reserve with a capacity of 1,377 spaces.

SPACE STATISTICS (MARCH 31, 2006)

Number of regulated child care spaces

Centre-based

Day care spaces	
Infants	1,955
Toddlers	1,714
Preschoolers	21,340
Nursery schools	15,378
Out-of-school care	18,701
Drop-in day care	425
Total centre-based spaces	59,513

Enrolled approved family day home spaces 6,775

Total number of regulated/approved spaces 66,288

Figure 9: Number of regulated spaces in AB, 1992-2006



Note: School-age care became regulated for the first time in 2004. The dotted line represents total number of spaces with school-age spaces and the solid line represents total number of spaces without school-age spaces.

Children with special needs in regulated/approved child care (March 31, 2006)

Children receiving support in regulated child care programs 386

Children receiving provincial subsidies in regulated child care * (March 31, 2006)

11,932

*Alberta Children's Services does not provide subsidies for school-age care except for ECS-age children (5-6 years old and not yet in grade 1) who attend an out-of-school care program. Many municipalities receive Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) funding from the province that they direct towards the prevention needs of the municipality. They may choose to use a portion of these funds for school-age child care. Of the 227 municipalities, 45 redirect FCSS funding for out of school care and, of these, six provide direct subsidies. In other locations, out-of-school care programs are offered through the municipalities, but a grant is provided.

Number of centres and homes		
<i>Number of centres</i>		1,681
Full-day day care centres		510
Nursery schools		647
Out-of-school care programs		524
Number of family child care providers		2,694
Number of family child care agencies		91
Sponsorship of regulated centres		
<i>Day care centre</i>	Facilities	Spaces
Non-profit	182	8,691
For-profit	328	16,318
<i>Nursery schools</i>	Facilities	Spaces
Non-profit	486	11,051
For-profit	257	10,403
<i>Out-of-school care</i>	Facilities	Spaces
Non-profit	161	4,327
For-profit	267	8,103
Sponsorship of family day home agencies		
Non-profit		40
For profit		51
Openings and closings		
Information not available		

STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS

REGULATED CENTRES

Maximum centre size		80 spaces
Maximum staff: child ratios and group sizes		
<i>Daycare centres</i>		
Age	Ratio	Max. group size
Under 13 months	1:3	6
13 months or over, but under 19 months	1:4	8
19 months or over, but under 3 years	1:6	12
3 years or over, but under 4 ^{1/2} years	1:8	16
4 ^{1/2} years or over	1:10	20

<i>Drop-in centres</i>		
Age	Ratio	Max. group size
Under 19 months	1:5	10
19 months or over, but under 3 years	1:8	16
3 years or over, but under 5 years	1:12	24
5 years or over	1:15	30
<i>Out-of-school care centres</i>		
Age	Ratio	Max. group size
For children attending an ECS program	1:10	20
For children attending grades 1 to 6	1:15	30
<i>Nursery schools</i>		
Age	Ratio	Max. group size
Under 19 months	1:6	None
19 months or over, but under 3 years	1:10	None
3 years or over, but under 5 years	1:12	None
5 years or over	1:15	None

Staff qualification requirements

Alberta has three qualification levels:

Level Three requires completion of a two year ECE diploma from an Alberta public college or an equivalent level of training, or a four year Bachelor of Education degree with a major in ECE.

Level Two requires completion of a one year ECE certificate from an Alberta public college or an equivalent level of training, or a four year Bachelor of Elementary Education from a recognized post-secondary institution.

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

To be eligible to work in a child care centre in Alberta, all staff must apply for certification to the Day Care Staff Qualification Office. The Day Care Staff Qualification Office is also responsible for the delivery of the Level One orientation course, which is contracted out to public colleges, private vocational schools, individual instructors, and is taught in some high schools for credit. Funding is provided to the institutions to deliver the course at no cost to the participant.

The regulation requires that each licence holder for a day care centre must ensure that there is a full-time program director with a Level Three certificate on the staff of the centre at all times. Between the hours of 8:00 am and 4:30 pm, programs must ensure that at least one in every four staff holds at least a Level Two certificate and all others hold a Level One certificate.

In out-of-school care programs there is to be a full-time program director on staff at all times; there are no standards for staff qualifications in out-of-school centres.

Numbers of staff by certification levels (March 2006)*

Not certified but employed	372
Level 1	2,642
Level 2	729
Level 3	4,968

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

Parent involvement

Not specified in legislation.

Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

Alberta regional child care specialists conduct a minimum of quarterly licensing inspections. Child care specialists currently operate under a Human Service Worker classification and come from a variety of backgrounds, including family studies and early childhood education. If a centre is not in compliance with the regulations, a series of enforcement actions may occur depending upon the severity of the non-compliance including a formal written order directing the centre to comply within a specific time frame to the specified regulation, cancellation of the license, or refusal to renew the license. There is a formal appeal board set up by the minister to hear appeals if a license is cancelled or refused. The legislation allows the decision of the appeal panel to be appealed through the Court of Queen's Bench. Its decision is binding.

APPROVED FAMILY DAY HOMES

Regulation

There are no regulations for family day homes. Family day homes are approved under contract with family day care home agencies that approve and monitor providers according to provincial standards. Agencies contract with individual care providers.

Maximum capacity

Up to six children under 11 years (including the provider's own children under 11 years) with a maximum of three children under three years old and no more than two children under two years old.

Provider qualification requirements

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

Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

Agency staff (home visitors) visit family day homes monthly to ensure providers are operating according to provincial standards. Provincial staff monitor agencies and homes on a regular basis. The minimum ministry-wide requirement is four times per year.

FUNDING

CHILD CARE FEE SUBSIDY PROGRAM

Fee subsidies are paid directly to service providers on behalf of eligible parents. Subsidized children may be enrolled in not-for-profit or for-profit regulated child care centres and approved family day care homes. Provincial subsidies are not available in drop-in centres or for school-age care.

There is a two-step eligibility process. Parents must first demonstrate need for subsidized child care such as being employed or enrolled in a training program, or a parent's or child's special need. An income test is then applied.

There is no minimum user fee for subsidized parents but centres and family day home agencies may surcharge above the subsidy rates. There is no cap on the number of subsidies in any licensed program but parents must secure a space before applying for subsidy. Application for subsidy may be made either by mail, in person, or online.

Eligibility for fee subsidy (gross income, effective November 2005)

Child care centres	Turning point	Break-even point
1 parent, 1 infant	\$35,100	\$54,900
2 parents, 1 infant, 1 ps)	39,600	77,400

The turning point is the income level up to which full subsidy is available. Partial subsidy is available up to the break-even point, after which income subsidy ceases.

Note: Alberta now uses gross income to determine subsidy eligibility so these figures are not comparable to other provinces except Saskatchewan.

Maximum subsidy/child/month* (March 2006)

Infants in child care centres	\$575
Other ages in child care centres	500
Infants in family day care	475
Other ages in family child care	400

** Parents whose children are in child care during outside the regular hours of Monday to Friday 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. may qualify for an additional subsidy up to a maximum of \$100/month.*

PUBLIC FUNDING FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (2005/06)

One-time funding None

Recurring funding

Pre-Accreditation Funding Program

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

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

For a full description of the Child Care Accreditation program, see the HISTORY section.

Day care centres

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

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

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

	Pre-accredited centres	Accredited centres
Level 1	\$0.64/hr	\$0.96/hr
Level 2	1.21/hr	1.81/hr
Level 3	1.97/hr	2.96/hr

Note that these amounts increased in November 2005 and March 2007

Family day homes

Provider Support Funding Grants: Available to providers who have met (or are completing) training requirements required in provincial policy as outlined in the Family Day Home Manual (2006) and have provided direct child care to preschool children in a given calendar month. Funding is paid to the agencies for the providers at the following rates:

	Pre-accreditation agencies	Accredited agencies
Level 1	\$100/month	\$166/month
Level 2	\$110/mth + \$.57/hr	\$166/mth + \$.85/hr
Level 3	\$110/mth + \$1.33/hr	\$166/mth + \$2.00/hr

Family day home agency administration fee: A monthly administrative fee is paid to approved family day home agencies which contract with the Ministry to recruit, train and supervise individual family child care providers, collect fees, and pay providers. Both not-for-profit and for-profit programs are eligible for this funding program.

0-35 months

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

3-6 years

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

Funding for children with special needs

Funding is provided to assist in the inclusion of children with special needs. It may be used for specialized resource staff or for consultation and training services. Funding varies depending on the special needs of the child, the type of service required and the region; funds are paid to contracted operators on behalf of eligible children. Both for-profit and not-for-profit programs are eligible to apply for special needs funding.

Respite care

Respite funding provides funding for short-term child care placements in regulated child care to support identified families in need of support in their child rearing role. It also assists families of children with disabilities in need of relief care.

Nutrition program

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

Stay-at-Home Subsidy Program

This program offers up to \$1,200 per year for families whose child is attending a licensed nursery school or approved early childhood development program. It uses the same eligibility levels as the subsidy program.

PROVINCIAL ALLOCATIONS FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (2005/06)

Fee subsidies (Children under 6 years)	\$49,750,411
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One-time funding	None
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Recurring funding

Family day Home Agency Contracts	\$4,820,000
Inclusive Child Care	2,545,353
Stay At Home	10,475,000
Accreditation	4,879,550
Total regulated child care	\$72,470,314

Note: In the provincial Annual Report 2005-2006 the authorized budget for child care was identified as \$105,417,000

Federal Transfers 2005/06

Multilateral Framework Agreement	\$22,800,000
Early Learning and Child Care Agreement	\$70,400,000

Please see RECENT DEVELOPMENTS section for details on the 2005/06 ELCC allocation.

SALARIES

Information not available.

FEES

Average fee for approved or regulated child care \$573

Source: Provincial officials, based on reporting from operators – actual fees paid.

ADMINISTRATION

Between April 1999 and May 2003, child care services were administered through 18 Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs) which were responsible for service delivery (see HISTORY 1999). In May 2003, regions were amalgamated so that the number was reduced to 10. The province provides funding to each Authority which allocates funds for local services and is accountable to the Minister of Children's Services for the use of public funds.

Responsibility for setting standards, subsidy policy, strategic policy, services for children with special needs, and staff qualifications remains with the province. A provincial subsidy system remains although the regional authorities may enhance it if they wish. Department staff of the Ministry of Children's Services provide resources, support and programming advice to the CFSAs.

The work of the CFSAs is overseen by community-based boards appointed by the Minister. CFSAs oversee planning and development, and administration of children's services, including child care.

Staff in CFSAs including child care specialists (formerly licensing officers) and subsidy workers are hired by the authorities but remain provincial government employees.

MUNICIPAL OR OTHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT ROLE

The municipalities of Jasper and Beaumont operate the two remaining municipal centres in the province. Staff in the programs are municipal employees and salaries are two to three times the provincial average. These municipalities provide additional funding to cover operating costs.

HISTORY OF CHILD CARE AND OTHER ECEC SERVICES

1942 Alberta signed the *Dominion-Provincial Agreement* with the federal government but did not establish child care centres. The need for child care was refuted by an advisory committee.

1966 Community Day Nursery, the first centre to receive public funds, was opened in Edmonton. The Preventive Social Services Act delegated decision-making authority for child care to municipalities and introduced 80/20 cost-sharing arrangements with participating municipalities. Public and not-for-profit centres were able to receive subsidies for eligible low-income families.

1971 The Alberta Association for Young Children was established.

1978 The *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act* included the first legislated child care regulations and changed funding from supporting child care program grants to fee subsidies for low income families.

1980 The provincial government took over the municipal share of funding of subsidies and administration of care services for children up to six years. Operating allowances (operating grants to not-for-profit and for-profit child care centres) were introduced.

1981 Standards were established for family day homes.

A policy was developed and special funding authorized for an Integrated Day Care Service (integration of children with special needs into mainstream programs).

1990 Alberta's first staff qualification requirements were introduced. Focus on Children, a report of the Office of the Commission of Services for Children, called for more local control of children's services. An announcement was made that operating grants would be phased out within the year.

1992 Policy recommendations for child care centres were developed by the Parent Advisory Working Committee and some were adopted by the provincial government.

1994 A three year budget plan effectively suspended the continued implementation of 1990 funding reforms. The goal of the three year budget plan was to reduce provincial child care expenditure by \$14 million or 20% over three years.

A report by the Office of the Provincial Ombudsman identified inadequacies in the regulatory system in Alberta. It recommended improving procedures for complaint investigation, compliance management and investigating serious occurrences.

1995 The province created several positions for "eligibility review officers" to review child care subsidy claims and as a result, 20% of families lost their subsidy. As a result of both the loss of subsidized parents and operating grants, some centres closed, particularly in the commercial sector which saw a 13% reduction in spaces.

1998 Preschool grants were reduced from \$85/month/space to \$29/month/space and were entirely eliminated in April 1, 1999. Savings realized from the reduction and elimination of operating grants and some reinvestment from the National Child Benefit Reinvestment Strategy were used to raise both eligibility levels and rates for subsidy.

1998 The Alberta Children and Youth Initiative was a partnership of government ministries that works together on issues affecting children and youth. Its vision is "to ensure that Alberta's children and youth are well cared for, safe, successful at learning and healthy". Its key initiatives include combating Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, promoting children's mental health, and improving supports and resources for children, youth and their families.

1999 The Ministry of Children's Services was established. In 1999, the province turned responsibility for child care services over to 18 Child and Family Services Authorities (CFSAs). See Administration section for details.

2001/02 ECS Policy and Regulation have been revised. The new *Day Care Regulation* was enacted in 2000. The Day Care Regulation Review was initiated as a result of an Alberta Government initiative to "streamline, simplify requirements and reduce duplication". Completion of the review followed a two phase consultative process with day care operators and stakeholder groups. The regulation includes elimination of regulations already covered by other ministries.

Training for front line government licensing staff (Child Care Specialists) occurred in the use of the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised Edition (ECERS–R), Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS), and Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDCRS).

January 2001 The Children’s Services Ministry established the Day Care Review Working Committee consisting of child care stakeholders to analyze and propose solutions to the challenges facing child care delivery in Alberta.

2001/02 The Early Childhood Development Initiative allocation for Alberta was \$29.7 million. The funds have been distributed to the 18 Child and Family Service Authorities who develop their own plans with community groups. There are no specific province-wide strategies for the fund.

2002 Child Care Accreditation Program was introduced. Accreditation is a voluntary process by which early childhood programs demonstrate that they meet defined child care standards. Programs seeking accreditation complete a self-study process, receive an on-site visit and are reviewed by an independent body that grants or defers accreditation. Accreditation requirements exceed standards set out in the regulations. Alberta Children’s Services has contracted with the Alberta Child Care Network Association, in partnership with the Canadian Child Care Federation to deliver accreditation services.

Respite options for families in need were introduced to support identified at-risk families and families of children with disabilities in need of relief care. CFSA staff work with child care providers to make regulated child care spaces available in their program on a daily basis for this purpose.

Child care nutrition program was introduced to fund regulated child care programs to enhance the nutritional quality of meals and snacks served and to provide information about preschool nutrition to parents of children in child care.

2003

Kin Child Care Funding was introduced to provide funds to eligible parents to pay non-resident relatives of the child to care for their children.

2003/2004

The Pre-Accreditation Funding program was introduced to assist programs to work towards accreditation standing. Participation is voluntary.

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

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

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN CHILD CARE AND OTHER ECEC SERVICES

2005/06 Alberta received \$70.4 million through the Early Learning and Child Care Agreement in 2005/06 and \$66.0 million in 2006/07.

Alberta Children’s Services conducted a consultation to ask what was important to families regarding child care. Subsidy rates were increased and subsidy eligibility extended up to a household income of \$76,000 for parents attending care centres, approved family day homes, and those using the expanded Kin Child Care Funding Program.

The Stay-at-Home Subsidy Program was introduced. This program offers up to \$1,200 per year for families attending a licensed nursery school or approved early childhood development program and uses the same thresholds as the other subsidy programs.

The number of inclusive child care spaces was expanded and the program extended to all ten CFSA regions.

Wage Enhancement (or Staff Support) funding was increased, as well as funding to help programs complete the Alberta Child Care Accreditation Program. Professional Development funding was increased to assist child care professionals to pursue further training.

The Parent Information Line, a toll-free phone line providing information on early childhood and child care programs and services, was introduced. The Ministry is also improving training for early childhood development professionals on working with children with disabilities, new immigrant children and Aboriginal children. Funding was made available to Women's Shelters to enhance child care services.

■ KEY PROVINCIAL ECEC ORGANIZATIONS

Alberta Child Care Network Association

Contact: Sherrill Brown, Chairperson

Email: browns@macewan.ca

Early Childhood Professional Association of Alberta

Co-Chair Email: carolrob@telusplanet.net

Alberta Family Child Care Association

Contact: Susan Elson (403) 250-5795

E-mail: susan@davarchildcare.org

Public Interest Alberta

Contact: Bill Moore-Kilgannon

E-mail: pialta@telus.net

Website: <http://www.pialberta.org>

TEACHERS' ORGANIZATIONS AND ASSOCIATIONS

Alberta Teachers' Association

11010 – 142 St. NW

Edmonton, AB T5N 2R1

Telephone: 780-447-9400

Facsimile: 780-445-6481

Website: www.teachers.ab.ca

