

Nova Scotia



OVERVIEW

Responsibility for regulated child care was transferred to the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Early Years Branch) in 2013.

Child care is delivered in non-profit and for-profit child care centres. There is no publicly operated child care. Family care homes provide care for children from birth to school-age in homes that are monitored by regulated Family Home Day Care Agencies.

Nova Scotia has had full school-day kindergarten (termed Grade Primary) for all five-year-olds for a number of years. A minimum of four hours/day is required for Grade Primary to Grade 2, which is considered to be full time. Attendance in Grade Primary is compulsory.

In 2017, Nova Scotia began introducing Pre-Primary, a play-based early learning program for all four-year-olds at no charge to parents as part of the education system, with a four year phase in. The programs are provided in classes of up to 24 children with three early childhood educators. In September 2017, 52 Pre-Primary programs were available in 45 public schools.

A review of the regulated child care sector, which was begun in 2015, led to the June 2016 release of a child care plan and a commitment to 27 actions designed to strengthen child care. The report, [Affordable, Quality Child Care: A Great Place to Grow](#), included actions focused on five key priority areas: affordability, quality, support/development of the workforce, accessibility, and structure/governance of the system.

In March 2017, amendments were made to the child care regulations. These changes include an additional qualification option of a competency-based assessment process to recognize staff with relevant post-secondary training to work in regulated child care, an increase to family day care ratios, and new regulations regarding supervision of children. As well, daily per diem subsidy rates were increased and a minimum wage floor for child care staff based on level of training was implemented.

In January 2018, Nova Scotia entered into an agreement with the Government of Canada to receive funds in the amount of \$35 million over a period of three years, to be spent under the terms set out in the [Canada-Nova Scotia Early Learning and Child Care Agreement](#).

PROVINCIAL CONTEXT

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

Number of children 0-12 (2016 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0	7,800
1	7,900
2	8,000
3	8,000
4	8,700
5	9,000
6	9,000
7	8,900
8	9,800
9	8,700
10	9,000
11	8,300
12	9,800
Total	112,800

Number of children 0-12 years (aggregated) (2016 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0-2	23,700
3-5	25,700
6-12	63,500
Total	112,800

Number of children 0-12 years with employed mothers (2016 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0	4,500
1	5,000
2	5,000
3	5,500
4	5,600
5	6,100
6	6,600
7	6,300
8	6,800
9	6,000
10	6,400
11	5,800
12	7,100
Total	76,700

Number of children 0-12 with employed mothers (aggregated) (2016 rounded estimate)

Age	Number of children
0-2	14,500
3-5	17,200
6-12	45,000
Total	76,700

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

Age	First Nations	Métis	Inuk (Inuit)	Multiple	Other
0-4	2,155	1,365	55	45	35
5-9	2,435	1,475	75	70	15
10-14	2,195	1,435	85	60	35
Total	6,785	4,275	210	170	85

Workforce participation of mothers by age of youngest child (2016 rounded estimate)

Age of youngest child	Number of mothers	Participation rate (%)
0-2	15,000	72.8
3-5	12,700	83.6
6-15	34,800	84.7

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

Age	Living with two parents	Living with one parent	Lone mother	Lone father
0-4	31,685	9,745	8,545	1,200
5-9	32,830	12,290	10,345	1,940
10-14	32,235	12,650	10,435	2,220

Language spoken most often at home (2016)

Age of child	English	French	Non-official	Multiple
0-4	39,155	535	1,490	790
5-9	43,245	645	1,305	765
10-14	43,465	580	1,075	655
Total	125,855	1,770	3,875	3,215

Median after-tax income among families with children aged 0-5 years (2015) (\$)

Two parent families	Lone parent families	Male lone-parent families	Female lone-parent families
75,731	27,477	30,464	27,236

FAMILY LEAVES AND BENEFITS

Maternity leave

Seventeen weeks.

Parental leave

Parents are entitled to a total of 52 weeks which must be taken within 12 months of the child's birth or adoption. Thirty-five weeks are available for birth mothers who have taken pregnancy/maternity leave.

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.

EI is a contributory program; both employees and employers contribute. Under EI, 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. Until December 3, 2017, there was only one option for parental leave benefits: 35 weeks of paid leave taken over a 12 month period, paid at 55% of average weekly insurable earnings, up to \$543/week (2017) for either eligible parent, including adoptive parents. This option is now known as the Standard Parental Benefit and will continue to be offered.

However, as of December 3, 2017, the federal government amended the Employment Insurance benefits offering an additional option for the parental leave portion, referred to as the Extended Parental Benefit. The new option allows 61 weeks of parental leave benefits, that can be taken over an 18 month period, paid at 33% of average weekly earnings up to \$326/week (2017) for either eligible parent including adoptive parents.

Although the federal parental benefit provisions have changed, new parents cannot be paid for the Extended option until provinces/territories make changes to their own leave provisions. Leave provisions under the Canada Labour Code have already changed.

Note: For further details about the EI federal benefit, Quebec benefit and leave provisions, and provincial/territorial provisions for job-protected leave, see the FAMILY LEAVES AND BENEFITS section of this publication. Provincial/territorial provisions are up-to-date in this document up to December 31 2017.

KINDERGARTEN

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR GRADE PRIMARY

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Brunswick Place
2021 Brunswick Street
P.O. Box 578
Halifax, NS, B3J 2S9
Telephone: (902) 424-5168

[Website](#)

LEGISLATION

Nova Scotia. Legislative Assembly. *Education Act and Regulation*, 1995-96, c. 1, s. 1. (Amended 2015).

Nova Scotia. Legislative Assembly. *Pre-Primary Education Act* 2005, c. 44, s. 1. Proclaimed March 24, 2006.

AGE ELIGIBILITY

Five-years-old on or before December 31.

COMPULSORY

Grade Primary (kindergarten) is delivered in public and private schools and is compulsory. However, parents of children turning five on or before December 31 can delay their child's participation by one year.

The new Pre-Primary program is not compulsory.

HOURS

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

Pre-Primary is also a full school-day program.

KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT

Full day every day Primary enrolment (2016/17) 8,555

CLASS SIZE

Classes for Grades Primary to 2 are capped at 20 students, with flexibility. Creating combined classes or multi-age groupings are appropriate to meet this cap.

Flexibility is defined as not more than two additional students per class.

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS

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

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

Pre-Primary teachers are not required to have a teaching certificate; they are required to be early childhood educators.

CURRICULUM

[Learning outcomes framework Grades Primary – 6](#)

SPENDING ON KINDERGARTEN (GRADE PRIMARY)

Not available

K-12 per pupil spending (2014-2015) \$13,179

OTHER EARLY YEARS PROGRAMS

Pre-Primary

Beginning in September 2017, 52 Pre-Primary programs were available in 45 public schools, the first in a four-year province-wide roll out of Pre-Primary for all four-year-olds. The Pre-Primary Program is a child-centered, play-based program for children the year before they start school; it is staffed by early childhood educators. This opportunity will help them transition into the school system and provide experiences that give children the best start to succeed in school and life.

Attendance in the Pre-Primary program is not compulsory. It is a full school-day program and does not operate on school holidays or other days on which school does not operate.

Pre-Primary is administered by the Early Years Branch in the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Early Years Centres

Early Years Centres (EYCs) are situated within public schools and function as access points to existing children's services. Each EYC must offer, at a minimum, three core components: family supports, which may include health services and early identification/intervention; regulated child care; and an early learning program for four-year-olds. The centres are based on partnerships between the school system and the Margaret and Wallace McCain Family Foundation, which provided start-up and evaluation support. The EYCs are intended to support an integrated model of programs and services at both the community and government levels.

With the introduction of universal Pre-Primary, these early learning programs for four-year-olds transitioned into Pre-Primary programs as of September 2017.

SchoolsPlus

This program operates in all eight school boards and offers integrated family resource and child care programming, as well as youth health centres. A total of 213 schools across the province participate.

Other school-based early learning programs

Currently, there are a number of school-based early learning programs for four-year-olds across the province provided by school boards or in partnership with community and advisory boards. The majority of these programs are in schools that are part of the Le Conseil scolaire Acadien provincial (CSAP) school board that offer a full day play-based program focused on language and culture acquisition. There are also several Afrocentric-focused early learning programs.

REGULATED CHILD CARE

PROVINCIAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHILD CARE

Department of Education and Early Childhood
Development
Early Years Branch
Brunswick Place, 2021 Brunswick Street
P.O. Box 578
Halifax, NS, B3J 2S9
Phone: (902) 424-5168
[Website](#)

LEGISLATION

Day Care Act R.S.N.S. 1989, c. 120 O.I.C. 2010-456
(December 20, 2010, effective April 1, 2011)
Day Care Regulations made under Section 15 of the *Day Care Act*.
N.S. Reg. 193/2010 as amended to O.I.C. 2017-57 (March 14, 2017), N.S. Reg. 36/2017

CHILD CARE SERVICES

UNREGULATED CHILD CARE

Unregulated family child care

As of March 2017, regulations stipulate that an unlicensed provider can care for six or fewer children of mixed ages including the provider's own children. In the case that the children in care are school-age (five years old as of December 31 and attending school), a care provider can have up to nine children, including her own.

Before and after school programs

School board-operated before-and-after school programs are not required to be licensed. These programs are offered for children in Grade Primary through Grade 6.

Family resource programs

Family Resource Programs provide community-based programs and services intended to support the healthy development and well-being of children and youth by strengthening and empowering families and communities. Programs and services delivered to children and their families focus on parent education and learning, family support, youth development and early learning and literacy.

There are 31 Family Resource Centres in the province, 23 of which are funded by the Department of Community Services.

REGULATED CHILD CARE

Child care centres

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

Family home day care

Licensed agencies approve, manage and monitor private child care homes.

As of March 2017, an approved child care provider can care for up to seven children of mixed ages including the provider's own children; or nine school-age children including the provider's own school-age children; or three infants, including the provider's own children. If care is provided for four to seven children, no more than three may be under three years of age, and of those three children no more than two children may be infants.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The *Nova Scotia Early Learning Curriculum Framework* has been developed and piloted in 41 regulated child care centres and two Early Years Centres across Nova Scotia, with a focus on children from birth to eight-years-old. The document is intended to inform educators' expectations of children, describe the contexts in which learning and development occur, while engaging educators in critical thinking and reflective practice.

Note: As of December 31 2017, the Nova Scotia Early Learning Curriculum Framework had not yet been released.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The Supported Child Care Grant (SCCG) provides funding to licensed, full day, part day and school-age child care facilities to create and/or sustain inclusive child care programs for all children.

The SCCG funding model is calculated as a percentage of the licensed capacity. The funding provided by this grant is to be used for wages for additional staff, approved professional development and approved education or resource materials directly related to the delivery of an inclusive program.

INDIGENOUS CHILD CARE

In Nova Scotia, each Indigenous community on-reserve operates individually, outside the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development mandate. The Nova Scotia Tripartite Education Working Committee (Mi'kmaq, Nova Scotia and Canada) is undertaking research in 2017 to analyze the range of models in place across Nova Scotia to identify and address the gaps and overlaps in early childhood education in Indigenous communities in an effort to find a way to move to an integrated early years system that is part of the education system.

SPACE STATISTICS

Number of regulated child care spaces			
<i>Centre-based</i>			
Age group	Full day	Part day	Total
Infants (0-17 months)	863	-	863
Toddler (18-35 months)	3,913	-	3,913
Preschool (36 months-5 years)	6,560	1,867	8,427
School-age (6-12 years)	-	4,297	4,297
<i>Total centre-based spaces</i>	11,336	6,164	17,500
<i>Total family child care spaces</i>			1,645
Total number of regulated spaces			19,145
Children with special needs in regulated child care			
Number of centres receiving the Supported Child Care Grant (SCCG)			
			226
Number of children with special needs (as reported by centres in receipt of SCCG)			
			883
Children receiving fee subsidies			
(monthly average as of March 31, 2016)			5,000
Number of child care programs			
<i>Centre-based</i>			
Full day 0-school-age			296
Part day 0-school-age			67
<i>School-based child care centres</i>			
(Included in centre-based)			
For preschool-age children (full and part day)			40
For school-age children			20
With both preschool and school-aged children			9

Family child care

Family child care agencies	15
Family child care homes	235

Sponsorship of regulated full and part day centre-based spaces

Non-profit	7,816
For-profit	9,684

Parent fees

Nova Scotia does not set parent fees.

Median fees for child care in Nova Scotia (daily)

	Centres full day fees	Family child care
Infant	\$40.00	\$21.00-\$40.00
Toddler	\$34.68	
Preschool	\$34.00	
School-age (5-12 years)	\$15.00	\$10.00-\$25.00

Note: Median fees are based on data collected through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's internal Early Childhood Development Services (ECDS) information system.

Note: Children are cared for in mixed age groupings in family home child care. Fees do not vary by age, with the exception of school-age.

In 2016, a national survey of child care fees in Canada's large cities included Halifax:

Median monthly infant fee	\$902
Median monthly toddler fee	\$820
Median monthly preschooler fee	\$803

Note: These represent media fees in centre-based and home child care.

STANDARDS AND REGULATION

REGULATED CENTRES

Maximum facility size:	not specified
Maximum room size:	not specified

Maximum staff/child ratios and group sizes:

Age	Staff:child ratios	Max. group size
0-17 months	1:4	10
18-35 months	1:6	18
36 months-5 years (full day)	1:8	24
30 months-5 years (part day)	1:12	24
5-12 years (and attending school)	1:15	30

Centre staff qualification requirements

There are five levels of classification for child care staff, under the *Day Care Act and Regulations*. Every facility must ensure that at least 2/3 of the staff required to meet ratio are classified as Level 1 or higher, as set out in the *Day Care Act and Regulations* 37(7), while 1/3 can be untrained or Entry Level.

Classification Levels

Entry Level: Completion of orientation for staff working in licensed child care facilities.

Level 1: Completion of orientation for child care staff as well as completion of post-secondary course work in the following three subject areas: child development, behaviour guidance and curriculum and programming for young children. These staff must also complete two guided workplace experiences, consisting of work experience in a licensed child care facility, advised by a supervisor from a training institute, and supported by an early childhood contact staff in the workplace.

Level 2: Completion of an approved college program in early childhood education.

Level 3: Completion of a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or completion of Level 2 requirements and a bachelor's degree.

School-age approval: Completion of orientation training and a post-secondary credential that qualifies a person to plan and deliver developmentally appropriate programming for school-age children.

A facility Director or Acting Director of a child care program licensed for all ages must hold a Level 2 or 3 classification. The Director or Acting Director licensed for school-age children must hold a Level 2 or 3 classification, or school-age approval.

Entry Level staff who do not hold a Level 1, 2 or 3 classification working directly with children must have completed the orientation for staff working in licensed child care facilities or post-secondary courses comparable to the orientation training.

The orientation for staff working in licensed child care facilities is a series of informational modules and activities. The delivery of the orientation is administered by Nova Scotia Community College. Online sessions are available in both French and English.

As of March 2017, an additional qualification option of a competency-based assessment process has been introduced to recognize professionals with relevant post-secondary training to work in regulated child care. The Competency-Based Assessment Program is a self-directed assessment process designed for eligible child care centre employees with a related credential and experience to demonstrate and document knowledge and competencies leading to a Level 2 classification.

In a licensed child care program for school-age children, at least 2/3 of staff must have the above requirements or school-age training approval (completion of orientation training and a post-secondary credential that qualifies a person to plan and deliver developmentally appropriate programming for school-age children).

REGULATED FAMILY CHILD CARE

Model of organization

Approved family child care in the provider's home is managed and monitored by a licensed Family Home Day Care Agency (FHDC).

Maximum capacity

As of March 2017, individuals who provide approved family home day care may care for a maximum of seven children up to the age of 12, including their own children. Furthermore, they must not have any other children in their care, subject to the following restrictions: If a care provider is caring for four to seven children of mixed ages, no more than three children may be under three years of age and of those three children no more than two children may be infants.

Persons who provide approved home day care for school-age children may only care only for a maximum of nine school-age children at a time including their own children and must not have any other children in their care.

Persons who provide approved family home day care for infants may only care for a maximum of three infants at a time, including their own infant(s), and must not have any other children in their care.

Licensing, monitoring and enforcement

Family home day care agencies are licensed under the authority of the *Day Care Act and Regulations* to approve, manage and monitor care providers in their homes.

A family home day care agency must hire a family home day care consultant to provide services and support to family home day care providers. The consultant must have a two year diploma in early childhood education from a recognised training program approved by the director; at least two years experience working in an early learning and child care program; and current first aid and infant cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training from a recognised program approved by the director.

The FHDC agencies and the care providers must follow the *Day Care Act* and Regulations. The homes are visited by the agency at least every 30 days.

Family child care provider qualification requirements

The care provider is required to have Family Home Day Care Training - Level 1 of the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF) Family Home Day Care Training. Providers must be at least 18 years old, be screened through the Child Abuse Register, complete vulnerable sector check by the RCMP or local police and have completed a first aid course including infant CPR.

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

FUNDING

CHILD CARE SERVICES ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

Subsidies are available for eligible families through the Child Care Subsidy Program. Funding may be granted via the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to all licensed centres, both full day and part day and regulated family child care agencies. Both non-profit and for-profit facilities can apply for grants and/or funding.

TYPES OF FUNDING

Fee subsidies

Nova Scotia’s Child Care Subsidy Program is intended to assist eligible families with the cost of licensed child care facilities or regulated family day care. Subsidies are provided directly to the child care facility or family home day care agency on behalf of the parent. The subsidy is portable and moves with the child.

Subsidies are available for all families that meet the required income, financial and social criteria. Subsidy per diem rates (table below) do not cover full fees. A family eligible for a subsidy is required to pay any centre fees that are above the approved government subsidy per diem rate.

Fee subsidy rates (per diem) (2015-16)

Age group	Per diem rate
Infants	\$22.00
Toddlers	\$20.00
Preschool	\$19.00
School-age	\$17.70

Subsidy per diem rates were last revised and put into effect July 1, 2016.

Fee subsidy rates (per diem) (2016-17)

Age group	Per diem rate
Infants	\$29.00
Toddlers	\$24.00
Preschool	\$23.00
School-age	\$17.70

One-time funding

Family Home Day Care Start Up Grant

If a new agency is approved for funding, they will receive a Family Home Day Care Start up Grant to offset expenses directly related to the start-up costs for the agency.

The Start Up Grant will provide a one-time fixed amount to be used by the agency to pay for advertising, equipment, and legal fees incurred to set up the agency.

Recurring funding

Early Childhood Enhancement Grants (ECEG)

The ECEG is intended to enhance the salary and benefits of early childhood staff working directly with children in licensed child care centre facilities, offer opportunities for professional development for early childhood educators and support general operating costs. All licensed child care facilities (full time/part time, for-profit/non-profit) are eligible to apply for the ECEG.

The ECEG Terms and Conditions require that:

- A minimum of 80% must be allocated for wages and benefits to early childhood staff working directly with children
- A maximum of 15% can be spent on operational costs, with supporting documentation
- A minimum of 5% must be spent on professional growth for educators

Wage Support Funding for ECEs (WSF)

As of October 1, 2016, child care centres that receive the Early Childhood Enhancement Grant (ECEG) are required to pay ECEs based on a wage floor that rises with their level of training. The floor is: \$15/hr for Level 1 classification; \$17/hr for Level 2 classification & School-age approval; and \$19/hr for Level 3 Classification.

To assist centres in meeting the wage floor, the province has provided wage support funding to fill the gap between the actual hourly wage provided by centres and the wage floor required by government.

Supported Child Care Grant (SCCG)

The SCCG is not attached to a specific child but provides funding to licensed, full, part day and school-age child care facilities to create or sustain inclusive child care programs. Funding provided through the Supported Child Care Grant can be used for wages for additional staff, approved professional development and training directly related to the delivery of an inclusive program, and approved educational and resource materials directly related to the delivery of an inclusive program.

Family Home Day Care Operating Grant

The Family Home Day Care Operating Grant is an annual grant intended to support the agency in meeting the costs of salary and benefits to agency staff, transportation, education, program material, and fixed costs. Fixed costs include rent and utilities, insurance, phone, equipment, advertising and administration costs.

PROVINCIAL ALLOCATIONS FOR REGULATED CHILD CARE (2015-2016)

Fee subsidies	\$16,941,101
----------------------	--------------

One-time funding	None
-------------------------	------

Recurring funding

Early Childhood Enhancement Grant (ECEG)	\$19,022,119
Child Development Centre Grant	\$260,000
Family home day care	\$1,409,939
Supported Child Care	\$5,258,742
Total recurring funding	\$25,950,801

Total regulated child care	\$42,891,901
-----------------------------------	--------------

Other funding

Early Childhood Education Training Initiative	\$807,714
Early Childhood Education Assistance Program (ECEAP)	\$264,207
Continuing Education	\$234,297
Early Years Centres	\$949,876
Nova Scotia Child Care Association	\$39,237
