



Choosing

Child Care

**A Guide to Licensed and
Approved Child Care
in Alberta**

Alberta



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STARTING YOUR Search

Alberta Children's Services is pleased to provide parents with this booklet outlining a broad range of supports and resources to help you choose the child care program that will best meet your family's and child's needs.

This child care booklet offers tools to help you in your search for the most suitable child care for your family. The Telephone Interview Planner and Child Care Program Visit Checklist, located in the centre of this booklet, can be removed to assist you in your search.

As you begin this important journey with your child, remember – you know your family's needs better than anyone else.

Start your search early and be prepared to spend time researching your options. Make your final decision only when you feel confident and comfortable with your choice.



ASSESSING YOUR Needs

The first step is to take a realistic look at the unique needs of your family situation. It is important to remember that there is no “one size fits all” solution when it comes to choosing child care.

Child care varies between a day care centre (where care is provided in a larger group setting) and a family day home (where the number of children does not exceed six).

Before you begin your search for quality child care, spend a few minutes thinking about what matters most to your family. Identify your priorities in determining the choice of care for your child(ren). Which of

the following is a priority for your family?

- All of your children can be accommodated at the same centre or family day home.
- Program offers a small, family-size setting.
- Care outside of the normal working hours, sometimes without advance notice is available.
- Hours of operation match your family’s schedule.
- Care for infants is available.
- Location is easily accessible (distance, bus routes).
- Hot lunches are provided.
- Part-time or drop-in care options are available.
- Care is available for children with disabilities.
- Family involvement is encouraged.
- Program is accredited, or is working towards accreditation.
- Program fees are affordable.

Once you have identified your family’s child care priorities, you will be ready to search for and consider the various options in your community.

CONSIDERING Options

Licensed Child Care Programs

Alberta’s licensed child care programs must meet standards set out in the *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act* and the *Child Care Regulation*. These standards ensure the health, safety and developmental needs of children are being met in the following licensed facilities:

- day care centres;
- nursery schools;
- out-of-school care centres; and
- drop-in day care centres.

Alberta Children’s Services through Child and Family Services Authorities, across the province, is responsible for overseeing the delivery of child care programs. This responsibility includes the licensing and monitoring of regulated child care facilities, as well as contracting with local family day home agencies to screen, approve and monitor individual family day home providers, as required by provincial standards.

Copies of the *Social Care Facilities Licensing Act* and the *Child Care Regulation* can be found online at www.qp.gov.ab.ca or by calling (780) 427-4952, toll-free at 310-0000.

Child and Family Services Authorities also offer support for children with disabilities needing child care. To learn more about the available options, please contact your local Child and Family Services Authority.

Day Care Centres

Alberta’s licensed day care centres are responsible for the care, development and supervision of preschool children under the age of seven years.

The number of preschool children that can be cared for in a licensed day care centre varies depending on the request of the operator, and the size of the indoor and outdoor play space.



Subsidies are available to eligible parents for their preschool children through the Child Care Subsidy Program. (PLEASE REFER TO PAGE 9 FOR MORE INFORMATION)

Nursery Schools

Licensed nursery schools provide care and supervision for preschool children for three consecutive hours or less per day. These half-day programs provide developmentally appropriate social and learning experiences for young children and are typically used by families who do not require full-day care. Subsidies are available to eligible parents for their preschool children through the Child Care Subsidy Program. (PLEASE REFER TO PAGE 9 FOR MORE INFORMATION)

Out-of-School Care Centres

Licensed out-of-school care centres provide care for children before and after school, during the lunch hour or when schools are closed. Some out-of-school care programs are also licensed to provide care to children who are at least 4.5 years old, and are attending, or are also registered in an early childhood services (ECS) program.

Families with children in an ECS program attending an out-of-school care centre may be eligible for child care subsidy.

Drop-in Day Care Centres

Licensed drop-in day care centres provide care and supervision for preschool children who attend the program for a maximum of 40 hours in one month.

Approved Family Day Homes

The family day home program provides parents with formal child care services, in a home setting, where care is monitored to ensure the health, safety and well-being of preschool children, and where parents may be eligible for a child care subsidy.

Alberta Children's Services contracts family day home agencies to recruit and provide training, assist parents in choosing a home for their child(ren), and monitor individual family day homes to ensure the standards of care for this program are in place.

Family day home providers are chosen for their knowledge, skills, caring attitude and commitment to meeting high standards of child care.

Approved family day home providers may provide care for up to six children with no more than three under 3 years of age and no more than two under 2 years of age, including the provider's own children. Providers may also offer care before and after school as well as flexible hours of care.

Fees are set by the family day home agency. Child care subsidies are available to eligible parents through the Child Care Subsidy Program. (PLEASE REFER TO PAGE 9 FOR MORE INFORMATION)

LOCATING CHILD CARE Programs IN YOUR COMMUNITY

All of Alberta's child care programs set their own policies related to fees, notice required to withdraw a child, holiday closures, hours of operation, and options for part-time and drop-in care.

To start your search, make a list of child care programs operating in the area where you hope to place your child. If you have already made a decision regarding which type of program you wish to place your child in (approved family day home or licensed day care centre), you may wish to limit your search to only that option.

Lists of all licensed and approved programs are available from:

- your local Child and Family Services Authority;
- Alberta Children's Services online "Lookup" service at www.child.gov.ab.ca/whatwedo/childcare/; and
- the Parent Information Line 1-866-714-KIDS (5437).

However, a good way to begin your search is to ask family, friends and neighbours for referrals.





CONTACTING CHILD CARE Programs

Once you have decided on a few possible programs, you are encouraged to make your first contact by telephone.

Think of this call as your first interview. Plan your questions before you contact the child care program. Be sure to include questions that are of particular importance to your family.

The goal of your first contact is to determine which child care program

offers the services best suited to your family's child care needs. For example, if you have decided you are interested in a licensed day care centre for your 10-month old, you will need to find out if the facility has an infant program and whether it is currently accepting infants.

You can use the Telephone Interview Planner provided in the centre of this booklet as a pull-out resource to document the questions you wish to ask. Ask each child care program the same list of questions and record the answers. At the end of each telephone interview, decide if you would like to book an appointment to visit the child care program in person. When visiting the child care program, you may wish to use the Child Care Program Visit Checklist provided in the centre of this booklet as a pull-out resource.

CHOOSING Quality CARE

Look for indicators of quality care in the following three major areas when you visit the child care program:

- *caregiver/child relationships;*
- *daily child care program; and*
- *physical environment.*

Caregiver/Child Relationships

The first five years of a child's life are viewed as the first step in lifelong learning. A child's earliest experiences and interaction with adults and other children play a key role in the early years. Caring, qualified caregivers play an important role in promoting social, physical, emotional and cognitive development of young children.

During your visit to the child care program, watch the caregiver interact with the children and ask yourself the following questions:

Does the caregiver:

- Address children by name, including your child?
- Listen to children when they speak, and respond with interest and respect?
- Show flexibility in meeting the varied needs of all the children?
- Encourage problem-solving?
- Encourage independence?
- Offer choices to the children?
- Set reasonable limits for behaviour and respond to inappropriate behaviour in a fair and consistent manner?

Daily Child Care Program

Child care programs provide a developmentally appropriate environment for all of the children. While toys, equipment and supplies will be of interest to you, as you observe the program ask yourself the following.

Does the program:

- Offer a variety of activities?
- Limit the use of television and videotapes?
- Provide choices for children who do not require a nap?
- Include quiet as well as noisy time?
- Integrate cultural traditions?
- Involve children in preparing simple meals and snacks?
- Encourage children to participate in basic life skills e.g., washing hands, hanging up their own clothing, and doing up zippers?

Your observations in programs caring for infants should indicate that:

- infants are held and carried frequently;
- adults respond quickly to infants' cries;
- adults frequently talk with, sing to and read to infants; and
- adults adjust to infants' individual feeding and sleeping schedules.

Physical Environment

Child care standards require family day homes and licensed child care facilities to have adequate indoor and outdoor space that meets specific requirements for the safety of children of different ages. Many features of the physical environment will differ from one child care program to another.

As you observe the child care space ask yourself:

- Is there is an outdoor play area close by?
- Is the diaper change area close to a sink for handwashing?
- Are there areas that are soft and cozy as well as areas that invite messy play?
- Are there both active play and quiet play areas?
- Is the child care space free from obstructions and hazardous materials?
- Is the room/area easy to supervise?

Another indicator of quality care is Alberta's Child Care Accreditation Program.



Accredited family day home agencies and licensed day care centres provide a level of excellence in child care that exceeds provincial licensing requirements. These higher standards have been developed by members of the child care sector together with Alberta Children's Services. Accredited programs are monitored for adherence to these standards by an independent accreditation association, The Alberta Association for the Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services. This voluntary program is the only one of its kind in Canada.

Look for the accreditation logo in your child care program.

For more information on accreditation, or to view a list of all accredited child care programs, visit the Association's website at www.abccaccred.ca.

Child Care Funding Programs

You may qualify for a subsidy depending on your income, your reason for needing child care and the size of your family. An additional subsidy may be available for parents who work non-traditional hours and require extended hours of child care outside of regular hours. The following funding programs may assist you in paying for child care.

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY PROGRAM

Alberta's Child Care Subsidy Program provides financial support to assist low and middle-income families with the cost of the following preschool child care programs:

- approved family day home;
- licensed day care centre;
- licensed out-of-school care centre for children 4.5 to 6 years of age and attending an ECS program;
- licensed nursery school; and
- approved early childhood development program.

THE KIN CHILD CARE FUNDING PROGRAM

This program provides financial support to parents who choose to have a relative care for their children while they go to work or school. The relative must provide child care outside of the family home. This program may be of particular interest to families living in rural communities.

To find out if you qualify for one of these funding programs, contact your local Child and Family Services Authority office (see back page for a list of offices) or use the online estimator tool to receive a confidential subsidy estimate at www.childcaresubsidy.gov.ab.ca.



STAYING ACTIVELY Involved

Choosing a child care arrangement and enrolling your child is the start of an important new relationship.

your child. When you pick up or drop off your child, take a few minutes to talk with the caregiver. Ask about the day and make sure you share information with your child care provider that may be important to your child's care. Talk with your child about what he/she did during the day and participate in activities whenever you can.

You will be working in partnership with your child care provider, however you will always have the primary responsibility for your child's care.

Encourage open communication with the staff of your child care program and with



ADDRESSING Concerns

Staying actively involved and talking regularly with the child care provider caring for your child, may avert potential problems.

Do not ignore your concerns. There is nothing more important than making certain your child is safe, healthy and happy when you are away. Start by having a frank and honest conversation with the staff member who has primary responsibility for your child's care. Share your observations and ask questions. Agree on a plan of action to help improve the situation and set timelines. If the problem cannot be resolved, or if you no longer feel confident about the care your child is receiving, the best solution may be to change child care arrangements.

If your child is being cared for in an approved family day home or in a licensed child care setting and you believe that standards are not being met, take immediate action. Call your local Child and Family Services Authority. (PLEASE REFER TO PAGE 12 FOR CONTACT INFORMATION) Every complaint is taken seriously.

If you know or suspect that a child is being abused, you must report it – it is the law! You can make a report any time, day or night, by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-387-KIDS (5437).

Children adjust to change in different ways. Some will take a few days to adjust to a child care setting, while others may take a few weeks. You know your child better than anyone else. If, after a reasonable period of time, your child is still reluctant to leave home, or seems genuinely unhappy, there may be a problem.



List of Child and Family Service Authorities

PARENT Resources

If you have questions about child care programs in your community, or are looking for other types of parent support, the following community resources are available.

Child and Family Services Authority

The Child and Family Services Authority in your area is your primary resource for any questions related to licensed child care facilities, approved family day homes or child care subsidies. Look at the back of this booklet for a list of all the child and family services authority offices in the province.

Parent Link Centres

Parent Link Centres are located throughout Alberta. Every centre is designed to meet the needs of families living in each community and offers support for parents in four key areas:

- early childhood development and care;
- parent education;
- family support; and
- information and referral services.

Many centres offer evening and weekend hours of service. To find your nearest Parent Link Centre contact your local Child and Family Services Authority or check the online directory at www.parentlinkalberta.ca.

Region 1 - Southwest Alberta

343, 200 - 5 Avenue S
Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 4L1
PHONE: (403) 382-4275
FAX: (403) 381-5245

Region 2 - Southeast Alberta

Provincial Building
Box 23,
205, 346 - 3 Street SE
Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 0G7
PHONE: (403) 529-3100
FAX: (403) 528-5271

Region 3 - Calgary and Area

3 Floor, 300, 1240 Kensington Road NW
Calgary, Alberta T2N 3P7
PHONE: (403) 297-6100
FAX: (403) 355-4410

Region 4 - Central Alberta

3 Floor, Bishop's Place
4826 Ross Street
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 1X4
PHONE: (403) 340-5516
FAX: (403) 341-8654

Region 5 - East Central Alberta

4811 - 49 Avenue
Killam, Alberta T0B 2L0
PHONE: (780) 385-7160
FAX: (780) 385-7163

Region 6 - Edmonton and Area

7 Floor, 108 Street Building
9942-108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J5
PHONE: (780) 427-0444
FAX: (780) 422-5692

Region 7 - North Central Alberta

210 Provincial Building
5025 - 49 Avenue
St. Paul, Alberta T0A 3A4
PHONE: (780) 645-6370
FAX: (780) 645-6404

Region 8 - Northwest Alberta - has two offices

500 Nordic Court
10014 - 99 Street
Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 3N4
PHONE: (780) 538-5476
FAX: (780) 538-6256
and/or
Bag 900-17
2 Floor, 9715 - 100 Street
Peace River, Alberta T8S 1T4
PHONE: (780) 624-6261
FAX: (780) 624-7108

Region 9 - Northeast Alberta

4 Floor, Provincial Building
9915 Franklin Avenue
Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 2K4
PHONE: (780) 743-7236 (subsidy)
(780) 743-7235 (program support)
(780) 743-7449 (licensing)
FAX: (780) 743-7474

Region 10 - Métis Settlements

210, 10335 - 172 Street
Centurion Plaza
Edmonton, Alberta T5S 1K9
PHONE: (780) 427-0958
FAX: (780) 415-0177

CHOOSING
Child Care

