

April 21, 2005

Province seeks public input on child care programs

Feedback will be used in shaping provincial programs under the national child care initiative

Edmonton... Alberta families have an opportunity to provide direct input into the future direction of Alberta's early childhood development and child care programs through a new online consultation. The province will use the input to develop future policy and programs, and guide possible future investments under the proposed national child care initiative.

"Alberta's negotiations with the federal government on a national child care program have gone well from our perspective, and we're ready to go forward once we have finalized key details relating to an agreement," said Children's Services Minister Heather Forsyth. "To be prepared, we want to hear what's important to families in terms of caring for children, whether parents choose to go to work, go to school or stay at home. We're also interested in knowing what's working well now and what improvements are needed in the future."

Research shows that a child's early experiences have a powerful, lasting effect on their future success. The Alberta government is committed to helping children and families get the best possible start in life by supporting families and communities with comprehensive programs that ensure parents have choice and flexibility in their child care decisions. Currently, Alberta invests in a range of programs and services to meet the needs of families, including: child care subsidies, programs to support family care, accreditation of child care programs, Parent Link Centres, and Family and Community Support Services.

Albertans are encouraged to participate in the consultation at www.child.gov.ab.ca, or by calling 310-4455 toll-free in Alberta. The consultation will be available until May 12, 2005.

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Media enquiries may be directed to:

Jody Korchinski
Communications
Alberta Children's Services
(780) 427-4801
Cell: 780-719-1552

To call toll free within Alberta dial 310-0000.

Background

Alberta invests in a range of child care programs and services, including:

Child Care Subsidy

The Child Care Subsidy program helps eligible low-income Alberta families pay child care costs. This subsidy gives eligible low-income families a choice of accessible and affordable child care services and promotes family independence and supports the family's goal for financial self-sufficiency, through work and training opportunities.

Kin Child Care

The Kin Child Care Funding Program provides eligible low-income families \$240 per month per child to pay relatives to care for their children. This program provides families with flexible alternatives for child care where there are limited options; for example, in rural locations, or during non-traditional work hours. To be eligible, parents must be working, seeking work, attending post secondary education, have a special need, or have a child with a special need. The relative caregiver must not reside in the child's family home.

Child Care Accreditation

The Alberta Child Care Accreditation Program promotes standards of quality and strengthens best practices in child care programs across Alberta. When a child care program applies to become accredited, it is committing to providing a level of excellence in child care that exceeds the licensing and program requirements already set out by government for licensed child care. The accreditation program will support families by identifying child care facilities that exceed licensing standards. It will also help the child care sector by addressing the issues of staff recruitment and retention.

Parent Link Centres

Parent Link Centres provide parents and families with the help they need to make sure their children arrive at school ready to learn and give parents the support they need to help their children develop and fulfill their potential. Each centre is designed to meet the needs of its local communities. While programming can differ from community to community, each centre is equipped to offer four important core services: parent education, early childhood development and care, family support and information and referrals. All centres comply with province-wide operation and programming standards to ensure that all parents have access to similar types of services.

Family and Community Support Services

Family and Community Support Services (FCSS) is an 80/20 funding partnership between the province, municipalities and Metis Settlements. Under FCSS, communities design and deliver social programs that are preventive in nature to promote and enhance well-being among individuals, families, and communities. The programs depend on community resources, often involving volunteers in management and delivery.

Inclusive Child Care Program

The Inclusive Child Care Program provides support to children with special needs whose parents are either working and/or in school. Supports include funding for approved child care settings (day care centres, approved family day homes and nursery schools) which demonstrates developmentally appropriate

programming. The extra support ensures effective inclusion for all children. Inclusive Child Care Programs are flexible to meet the individual developmental needs of all children. Supports may include professional development of child care staff, consultation on child care programming or inclusion, resource and referral information and/or funding for additional staff.

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Online Child Care Consultation

This consultation is available online at www.child.gov.ab.ca or by calling 310-4455.

Tell us your priorities

To help the Alberta government make decisions about possible investments in early childhood development and care, what do you think the priorities should be?

- Increasing child care subsidies for low-income Albertans.
- Expanding access to programs that fund relatives who provide child care for low-income family members.
- Providing more information about the programs and services available in your community.
- Introducing additional tax credits for parents.
- Improving access to child care programs for children with special needs.
- Providing funding to improve quality in childcare services.
- Increasing wages for child care professionals.
- Providing training bursaries to child care professionals.
- Improving access to early intervention opportunities for children at-risk.
- Increasing programs that provide parents with information and resources about parenting.
- Other, explain _____

Tell us about your ideas

(If this space is insufficient, please attach a separate piece of paper.)

Tell us about yourself

My responses represent the views of a:

- Parent/grandparent/caregiver

- Child care operator
- Child care worker
- Private babysitter
- Community organization
- Advocacy and/or professional association
- Other

I am responding on behalf of my organization

Occupation/Organization: _____

Please fax your completed survey to:

- **780-415-4804**

or mail it to:

Alberta Children's Services, Service Support,
9940 - 106 Street, 11th Floor Sterling Place
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2N2

The collection of information on this survey is authorized under section 8(1) of the *Government Organization Act* and is managed in compliance with and subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*. Your input is being requested in an anonymous format to avoid the collection of your personal information. We will use your input to plan for future investments to support Alberta's children. If you have any questions about the collection of information on this survey, please contact 780-427-3992.

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Send us your comments or questions

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