

Child care in Ontario

Key facts

In April 2010, the Ontario government announced the transfer of responsibility for child care from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to the Ministry of Education, to create an integrated system and support transitions for children and families.

The government is taking a phased approach.

- Child care policy and program responsibilities were transferred in May 2010.
- Funding and contract management for Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) were transferred on January 1, 2011.
- Funding and contract management for First Nations child care were transferred on April 1, 2011.
- Child care licensing and enforcement remains the responsibility of the Ministry of Children and Youth Services at this time.

Overview of child care in Ontario

- There are two options for regulated child care in Ontario:
 - centre-based licensed child care
 - home-based child care associated with a licensed private-home daycare agency
- The operation of licensed child care programs is carried out by non-profit or for-profit providers and municipalities.
- As of March 2011, there are:
 - 4,796 licensed child care centres
 - 135 licensed private-home day care agencies
 - 264,201 spaces in licensed child care centres
 - 18,122 children enrolled in home-based care associated with licensed private-home daycare agencies

How child care works in Ontario

- The Ontario government is responsible for funding, licensing and developing policy to support the provision of licensed child care.
- The province provides funding to CMSMs/DSSABs and First Nations for child care fee subsidies, wage subsidies, special needs resourcing and administration.
- 47 CMSMs and DSSABs are responsible for planning and managing child care services at the local level, within provincial legislation, regulations, standards and guidelines.
- 57 First Nations are responsible for managing the delivery of child care services in their communities within provincial legislation, regulations, standards and guidelines.

Child care funding

- Since 2003, the provincial commitment to child care funding has risen from \$532.4 million to \$869 million, an increase of 63 per cent.
- The government is aware that the implementation of full-day kindergarten will impact Ontario's child care sector and has introduced transition funding, growing to \$51 million annually at full implementation.
- In addition, the government will invest \$12 million over five years to help non-profit child care centres make retrofits and renovations to serve younger children.

Child care legislation

- The *Day Nurseries Act* (DNA) is the legislation that governs licensed child care in Ontario. The DNA sets out requirements to protect the health, safety and well-being of children in care.
- The Ministry of Children and Youth Services inspects licensed child care programs at least once a year. Inspections are carried out to:
 - assess compliance with the DNA
 - investigate complaints, issue licences and renew licences
 - monitor operators who are having difficulty meeting licensing standards
- In Ontario, caregivers can look after up to five unrelated children under the age of 10 without needing a licence (commonly referred to as informal child care). Informal caregivers are not monitored by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. However, regional staff will investigate complaints from the public about a person who may be providing care to more than five unrelated children without a licence.

Key links

- The regulation that governs the operation of licensed child care programs under the *Day Nurseries Act* is available at:
www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90d02_e.htm
- The *Day Nurseries Act for Child Care Supervisors of Ontario* website is designed to support supervisors in Ontario's licensed child care centres by helping them to better understand provincial licensing requirements. The website also includes a package for prospective operators, which outlines licensing requirements for a new child care centre. The website is available at: www.childcarelearning.on.ca
- In May 2011, the Ministry of Education added new features to Ontario's Licensed Child Care Website: www.ontario.ca/licensedchildcare. The website now provides additional information about licensed child care centres and private-home day care agencies, including their most recent inspection findings.
- Early Learning Framework: *Early Learning for Every Child Today: A Framework for Ontario Early Childhood Settings* (ELECT) provides a guide for program development in child care and early learning settings. It can be accessed at:
www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/early_learning_for_every_child_today.aspx
- The College of Early Childhood Educators is a professional self-regulatory body for early childhood educators formed to protect the public interest and focus on quality and standards in early childhood care and education settings. www.collegeofece.on.ca

More information

Visit www.ontario.ca/childcare for more information about child care in Ontario.