

Medicine Hat & District

CHILD CARE ASSOCIATION



WHY CHOOSE LICENSED EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE?

Children start learning at birth and continue to develop and learn at a significant pace throughout their early years. Learning in their early years lays a foundation for all future learning and affects children's health, development, and well-being throughout their lives. The Medicine Hat & District Child Care Association (MHDCCA) advocates for the use of licensed early learning and child care.

The Alberta government has created a guide, *Choosing Child Care in Alberta* that parents may find helpful. This guide takes parents through finding and choosing child care, from defining different types of care, contacting providers, and a checklist of questions to ask.

Many families with parents in the labour force use an unregulated arrangement, either a family member, a private day home or a nanny. This means parents have sole responsibility for assessing the quality of the child care and for managing the relationship with the care provider.

REASONS TO CHOOSE CHILD CARE THAT IS REGULATED:

1. Oversight:

Alberta Children's Services does not oversee private day homes unless a complaint is made. The only rule is that private day homes can have 6 children in their home, not including their own. There are no requirements for education, ongoing professional learning, criminal record checks, reference checks, first aid certification, health and safety standards, ages of children served, etc. There is no ongoing monitoring by anyone other than the parent.

While we recognize that some private day homes can provide a decent service for families, the MHDCCA recommends to families that licensed arrangements be their first choice. Recent tragedies that have taken place within private day homes, including the recent Woolfsmith case, show that there is a need for more oversight, rather than less.

Licensed facility-based programs include child care centres, preschools and out of school cares. Alberta's licensed child care programs must meet the requirements laid out in the Early Learning and Child Care Licensing Act and Regulations. Alberta Children's Services regularly inspects regulated programs.

Licensed family day homes offer parents the option of choosing child care that is provided in a home setting. A licensed family day home agency monitors them to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of children using the government's Family Day Home Standards. Agencies are required to monitor at least 6 times a year. Children's Services is responsible to monitor the agencies' compliance as well.

Licensed facility-based programs are required to post their inspection reports in a visible location, and licensed day home agencies are required to provide parents with information on an educator's compliance history. The Alberta government has an online Child Care Look-up tool, which provides the location, age group served, program capacity, and recent inspection results of all regulated child care services.



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2. Health and safety standards:

Licensed child care programs and family day homes must adhere to health and safety standards. These include sanitization, food safety, fire codes and regulation, emergency procedures and much more.

3. High-quality early learning and child care is essential:

High-quality early learning and child care is much more than custodial supervision that keeps children safe and fed. It is engaging, creative, age-appropriate, learning-through-play-based, developmentally-focused programming.

Qualified early childhood educators deliver high-quality early learning and child care. The interactions between early childhood educators and children highly factors into the overall quality of the program itself. In regulated settings, there are minimum standards set for the number and certification level of the early childhood educators.

Early childhood educators continue their professional learning through workshops, conferences, and post-secondary education. They may connect with their peers informally, through communities of practice, child care associations, or professional organizations that support and advocate for early childhood educators.

4. Support from the program or agency:

Licensed child care programs and day home agencies provide support to their early childhood educators in various ways. This includes leadership and supervision, ensuring their education and certification meets the standards, sharing information on, offering, or funding professional development, and creating opportunities for networking. Programs and agencies have libraries of toys, equipment, art supplies, and other resources for educators to use in their planning and work with young children.

Directors offer support for parents as well. If an educator is sick, the director will help figure out a back-up care plan. They can also link parents to community resources. Directors negotiate arrangements between the educator and the parents, including contracts, fees, and concerns. Parents can access subsidies from the government if they are using licensed child care programs.

Directors are a welcoming ear and an educated, experienced voice to which educators and families can turn. Directors themselves may receive support from local child care associations, professional organizations, coalitions, and other directors. They may rely on these sources of assistance for sharing information, professional development opportunities, ways to incorporate regulations, ideas for programming, etc.

Please check out our website at www.mhdcca.com

This website hosts a list of our members, including ages of children served and hours of operation and information on questions to ask when interviewing programs.

The information here has been provided from a variety of sources.

We encourage parents to visit these websites for more information:

Government of Alberta Child Care

Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta

Canadian Child Care Federation

Finding Quality Child Care Canada



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