

A FINAL WORD

The investment you make in ensuring your child has the best possible care will pay off for you and your child in so many ways. It's been proven over and over that real quality in early learning and child care has a dramatic effect on the ability of our children to learn, to socialize, to grow, and to have the best possible chance at learning and adapting as they move into the educational system – and into adolescence and adulthood.

Take the time to look carefully at options. Don't hesitate to ask questions, to get involved in your child's program, and to insist on the best possible care. It's worth it!

Reference: *National Statement on Quality Early Learning and Child Care* © Canadian Child Care Federation 2007



QUALITY CARE CHECKLIST

Here are some things you should look for when choosing an early learning or child care program:

DOES THE PROGRAM:

- Promote each child's physical and psychological health and safety? Does it support their best possible physical, emotional, social, communication, imaginary, ethical and creative development?
- Offer a variety of activities?
- Limit the use of television and videos?
- Integrate cultural traditions?
- Provide healthy meals and snacks?
- Encourage children to participate in basic life skills like washing hands, hanging up their own clothing, and doing up zippers?
- Respect your values and goals for your child?

DOES THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT OFFER:

- An outdoor play area close by?
- A diaper change area close to a sink for hand washing?
- Areas that are soft and cozy as well as areas that invite messy play?
- Both active play and quiet play areas?
- Freedom from obstructions and hazardous materials?

DOES THE CHILD CARE PRACTITIONER (OR STAFF):

- 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?

QUALITY EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE – A PARENT'S GUIDE



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CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DESERVE QUALITY EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE!

Many families in Canada today report that finding quality early learning and child care is a daunting task. They want the best possible care for their children, but a serious lack of affordable, quality spaces makes finding this a real challenge. Often families aren't even sure what to look for in quality services.

In Canada, quality early learning and child care is provided through a variety of settings including child care centres, family child care homes, preschools, nursery schools, Aboriginal Head Start, family resource centres and other services with group programs for young children.

In this brochure, the Canadian Child Care Federation hopes to share with you our definition, or statement, of the kind of quality services our children deserve, and how early learning and child care contribute to healthy children, healthy families, and healthy communities. This statement is based on current Canadian research and on the expertise of a diverse group of leaders working in early learning and child care across Canada.

WHAT DOES QUALITY EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE MEAN?

It means that *children* feel accepted, understood, supported and respected, enjoy positive relationships with the other children, and enjoy activities that are interesting, engaging and satisfying.

It means that *families* feel confident that the program their child is in promotes his or her optimal well-being and development in ways that respect the culture, traditions, values and goals of the family and the community.

It also means that *programs* should be affordable, conveniently located, and should operate for hours that meet the needs of families and the community.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO ENSURE QUALITY EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE?

There are a number of key elements that must work together, relating to programs, people, and organization. These include:

EXCELLENCE IN THE PEOPLE WHO WORK IN THIS FIELD:

- Early learning and child care practitioners who have the knowledge, skills and abilities to do their job well and to work in positive ways with people and organizations;
- Support for the early learning and child care workforce, ensuring appropriate remuneration levels, benefits, and working conditions and striving to be sure that providers are seen as a respected group of professionals;

EXCELLENCE IN THE SETTINGS WHERE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE TAKE PLACE:

- Physical and learning environments that are healthy, safe, warm, and nurturing, giving children the confidence to learn and grow, explore and experience their surroundings;
- Excellent learning programs that promote positive interactions among children and the growth of communication, problem-solving, self-esteem, and creativity;
- Partnerships with families, honouring their role as the child's primary caregiver, and involving them in choices relating to their children's care;

EXCELLENCE IN PROGRAMS:

- Program leadership that inspires people to strive for the provision of high-quality early learning and child care, involving families and communities in the process of determining programs that meet their needs.

- Excellent administrative practices, ensuring that programs are run in a stable, reliable way, focused on meeting the needs of children, their families and their communities;
- Support for the rights of children as outlined in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and reaffirmed in its 2002 document *A World Fit for Children*, and;
- An effective infrastructure developed from a national vision of how to ensure families have access to quality early learning and child care that is supported by long-term policies and programs.



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