



Exploring Licensed Early Learning and Child Care in Edmonton Day Homes

A Discussion Paper Summary



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Approved family day homes offer early learning and child care (ELCC) in a private residence to children under the age of 13 years with one day home educator. Each day home educator is contracted with and overseen by a licensed family day home agency. Some considerable variations exist in the accessibility, affordability, quality, flexibility, and inclusivity of day homes in Edmonton, both within and between agencies. The evolving situation of the COVID-19 pandemic and the numerous changes that occurred between March 2020 and October 2021 had effects on ELCC in Edmonton day homes.¹ These factors are important for Edmonton children and families, day home educators, agencies, and the ELCC sector.

How many day home programs and spaces are in Edmonton?

Collectively, the six Edmonton agencies are authorized to oversee 661 day home programs, of which 521 day home programs were in operation. This represents overall utilization of 79%, ranging from 58% to 94% utilization across agencies. Together, Edmonton agencies are licensed to oversee 2,400 spaces, of which approximately 2,125 spaces had children enrolled. This represents overall utilization of 89%, ranging from 47% to 96% utilization across agencies.

Who accesses day homes in Edmonton?

Approximately 90% of children enrolled in Edmonton day homes were 5-year-olds or younger and had not yet entered grade 1. An estimated 10% were school age children between the ages of 6 to 12 years old and in grades 1 to 6. Depending on the agency, between 70% and 96% of children enrolled were kindergarten age or younger. Almost three-quarters of children enrolled in Edmonton day homes attended care on a full time basis. Depending on the agency, between 70% and 87% of children attended care full time. Approximately 26% of children enrolled attended care on a part time, drop-in, before and after school, or respite basis.

How affordable are Edmonton day homes?

The fees for ELCC in Edmonton day homes may be unaffordable for some families. The monthly fee for full time ELCC in Edmonton day homes ranged from \$610 to \$1,060. This difference means that some families paid \$5,400 more annually than others. The monthly fee for part time ELCC in Edmonton day homes ranged from \$470 to \$690. This difference between the lower and higher fees amounted to \$2,640 annually. The daily fee for drop-in ELCC in Edmonton day homes ranged from \$47 to \$99. This variation means that some families paid \$52 more per day, or more than double, what some other families paid for similar hours of care.

What does quality look like in Edmonton day homes?

Early childhood educator certification is likely to reflect the extent to which day home educators are able to provide quality ELCC. An estimated 31% of Edmonton day home educators were certified as Level 1, 13% as Level 2, and 55% as Level 3. A small number of Edmonton day home educators (1%) had no

¹ In October 2021, agency directors and coordinators representing the six licensed family day home agencies in Edmonton participated in one-on-one telephone interviews about what their agencies and day homes were experiencing, as well as what they were hearing from families of children in their care. The information in this brief reflects what was reported during these interviews. For details, see "Exploring Licensed Early Learning and Child Care in Edmonton Day Homes: Interviews with Family Day Home Agencies" on the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care's website (<https://www.ecelec.ca/>).



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early childhood educator certification. A broad range of certification levels exist between and within Edmonton agencies. For example, two agencies had 3 in 5 day home educators with Level 3 certification and one had only 2 in 5 with Level 3 certification. One-quarter of day home educators at one agency had Level 1 certification and another almost half of their day home educators had only Level 1 certification.

Professional development, training, and networking opportunities allow agencies to offer their day home educators resources and support to enhance quality of ELCC in their day homes. All Edmonton agencies provided the minimum six required opportunities annually, but four agencies regularly provided a greater number of opportunities than this minimum.

A curriculum framework can guide quality of ELCC programming in day homes. All Edmonton agencies indicated that a curriculum framework is important, but no agency had a policy or standard that all their day home educators follow or implement one. Only two agencies required their day home educators to receive some form of training in a curriculum framework.

What do monitoring and ratios look like in Edmonton day homes?

Monitoring and oversight allows agencies to track safety and quality of ELCC in their day homes. All Edmonton agencies clearly met government guidelines and standards, but some went beyond the minimum requirements to provide increased levels of monitoring and oversight. Four agencies had a policy to conduct monthly home visits with all their day homes, doubling the minimum required annual number. Two agencies had a policy to routinely conduct the six required home visits per year. One agency had a policy to conduct quarterly safety checks in all their day homes, doubling the minimum required annual number. Five agencies had a policy to routinely conduct the two required safety checks per year.

A lower ratio of children to educator helps to ensure that day home educators are able to provide safe, quality ELCC. Based on the total day homes in operation and total day home enrollment in Edmonton, the overall average number of children in care per day home was 4.1 not including the educator's own children. However, approximately 110 (21%) day homes had more than 6 children including the educator's own children. In the case of one agency in particular, about half of their day homes had more than 6 children including the educator's own children.

How flexible are Edmonton day homes in terms of extended hours care?

The availability of extended hours care, or care between the hours of 6:00 pm to 6:00 am on weekdays or any hours on the weekend, was limited in Edmonton day homes. Only about 39 (8%) Edmonton day homes were offering extended hours care, including early morning, late evening, or weekend care.

How inclusive are Edmonton day homes for children with disabilities?

All Edmonton agencies had children with disabilities accessing ELCC in their day homes. However, no agency was able to provide a total number of children with disabilities enrolled in their day homes, in part because the children in care may be too young to have received formal diagnoses. Four Edmonton agencies provided respite care and two agencies did not.

Why is the state of early learning and child care in Edmonton day homes important?

Day homes and agencies play a vital role in providing licensed ELCC in Edmonton and Alberta. The accessibility, affordability, quality, flexibility, and inclusivity between and within agencies and day homes is an important factor to consider in implementation of the new federal-provincial child care agreement.

This brief is part of a series of documents created by the Edmonton Council for Early Learning and Care to address current topics in early learning and care that impact Edmonton and Alberta. Jennifer Fischer-Summers, MA, is a Research Assistant at the Community-University Partnership for the Study of Children, Youth, and Families at the University of Alberta. Correspondence can be sent to info@ecelc.ca.