



Central Okanagan Child Care Needs Assessment

Final Report
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Prepared by





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Last, and certainly not least, gratitude is extended to the parents who volunteered their expertise and perspective on child care, their needs and what it means to them. The needs assessment could have been completed without your contributions.



Executive Summary

Child care is part of many complex systems and solutions are challenging. The rapidly changing provincial landscape of the sector means that it is critical to establish a strong base of knowledge on which to build strategies for child care in the Central Okanagan. The Child Care Needs Assessment describes the landscape of child care and collects a broad base of information from both parents and child care owners/operators.

Examining what we can uncover about the current child care landscape can be instructive as we try to establish long-term solutions today that will have positive community impacts years from now.

The current licensed spaces provide care for 17.5% of the children in the Central Okanagan. More than half of the families surveyed indicated that they were on a waiting list for their current program. For every three full child care spaces there is one child on a waiting list. There is a combined total of 498 children on 24 waiting lists. A majority of child care owners/operators are able to offer a space to a family after 7-12 months. Over 60% of parents require full-time care for their children under Kindergarten-age and over 70% of parents require after-school care for their children Kindergarten-age or older.

Parents reported their top barrier to accessing their preferred child care option was cost. The average monthly program fees for children under age 36 months is \$1042 and for children age 3 years to 5 years is \$836. The average monthly fee for preschool is \$211. After school care average per month fee is \$337. 19% of parents reported that they access provincial child care subsidy.

83% of child care owners/operators indicate that they have had difficulty hiring qualified staff in the past year. The most stated reason that staff left their employ within the past year was to work in a field unrelated to child care. Owners/operators surveyed are looking to fill 36 staff positions. Wages for Early Childhood Educators is on average \$18.04/hour. For Early Childhood Educators with an Infant-Toddler specialization the average wage is \$19.23/hour. For those who work at a Managerial level the average wage is \$20.55/hour.

The Central Okanagan, has an extensive history of innovative collaboration throughout the early years sector and has an opportunity to utilize the information in the Child Care Needs Assessment to bring child care to the center of our community. The Central Okanagan Child Care Action Team will be able to use the information and suggested next steps to develop a Child Care Strategy and Plan with key partners and create actions to support the early learning and care sector over the coming years.



Introduction and Background

In February 2018 the Provincial government turned its attention to the swelling needs and demands of the child care sector and announced \$1 billion in new funding over 3 years to progress towards a high quality, universal child care system. This investment in child care includes a strategy to reduce parent fees, create 24,000 licensed spaces and develop the Early Childhood Educator workforce. This February a number of consultations, strategies, and initiatives have been rolled out throughout the province.


The Central Okanagan community has had a dedicated multi-sectoral stakeholder group convening about the needs, demands, and pressures on the child care sector for many years. It has taken many roles and spearheaded many activities and has evolved throughout its tenure. Over the past year there has been new energy breathed into the group, now known as the Central Okanagan Child Care Action Team (COCCAT). The group has convened several sub-committees to focus in on the particular interests of owner/operators and parents. In addition, with the increasing opportunities arising from the provincial government, COCCAT developed a Needs Assessment Sub-Committee tasked with establishing a strong base of knowledge reflecting “the state of child care” that would be broad, objective, and representative. As well, the results of the needs assessment would provide recommendations of strategic actions for COCCAT to reduce the identified child care needs and pursue opportunities provided by the provincial government child care strategies.

Design and Methodology

Members of the COCCAT Needs Assessment Subcommittee defined the objective of the needs assessment will to be “To determine the accessibility, affordability, and demand for child care and the capacity to meet the demand for child care in the Central Okanagan.”

To address the objective outlined the needs assessment employed a mixed-method design using quantitative and qualitative data based on several data collection methods and lines of evidence (Appendix 1 provides additional details).

Data was collected from child care owners/operators as well as parents in the community through a publically-available online survey. Surveys were developed with input from the Needs Assessment Subcommittee and tested by owners/operators and parents. Surveys were available to be completed from June 29th, 2018 to August 24th, 2018 (8 weeks). Invitations to complete the surveys were sent out through COCCAT networks (ie.e-newsletters) and survey links were distributed throughout social media channels where both the child care community and parents frequent.



In order to provide additional qualitative data and to triangulate information gathered through the online surveys, eight key informant interviews with individuals who hold a range of roles in and around the child care sector in the Central Okanagan took place in June and August 2018.

Cultural Considerations

A key priority early in the process of developing the needs assessment was meaningful engagement of the Aboriginal Early Years table members. However, Aboriginal organizations were in the process of developing applications for additional Aboriginal child care programs. The additional demand of the application process along with maintaining their important culturally-rich and family- and child-focused programs resulted in limited capacity among the members to engage in the broad child care needs assessment work.

Aboriginal families prefer to access services from Aboriginal providers. This is due to a number of factors not the least of which includes having programs that reflect their culture and language. Aboriginal child care programs have unique opportunities, needs and challenges that are not well-captured in this report. For example, while the broad community has challenges in finding trained staff, Aboriginal child care programs face a more acute challenge in finding trained staff who are culturally competent and have specialized Aboriginal knowledge.

It is recommended that COCCAT approach Aboriginal child care providers with the intention of learning more about their models of staff support, innovative training supports, and unique partnerships to expand the breadth of COCCAT knowledge of the state of child care in the Central Okanagan.



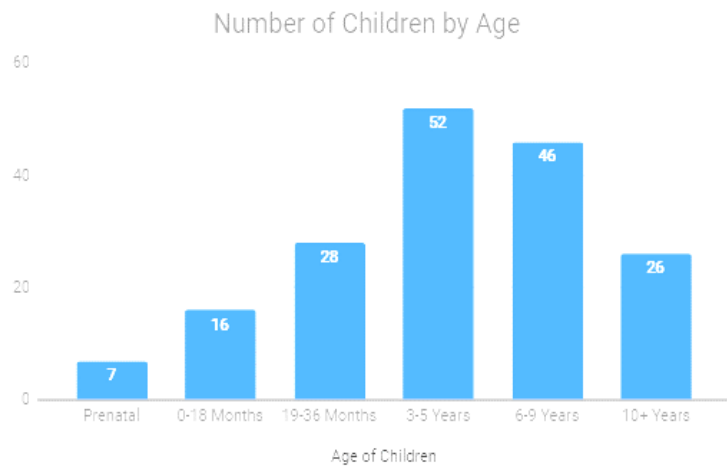
Survey Respondents

Child Care Owners/Operators

33 Child Care Operators/Owners from 187 active child care facilities completed the survey. Some owners/operators are responsible for more than one facility, while others had a single facility that they owned/operated. The respondents are responsible for 1408 licensed spaces of the 4843 total spaces in the Central Okanagan (29% of the child care spaces)

Parents

100 parents broadly representing every community in the Central Okanagan, from Peachland through Westbank First Nation, West Kelowna and Kelowna (including all Rutland, Mission, Glenmore) to Lake Country. Parents provided child care information for 175 children from prenatal to over age 10. Of the 175 children, the majority (41%) were school age. An additional 30% were age 3-5 years, 25% were newborn to age 3 years, while 4% were prenatal.



Demand for Child Care

There are 27,590 children age 0-14 in the Central Okanagan. According to Interior Health, in June 2018 active licensed facilities in the Central Okanagan provide 4843 child care spaces. The community has seen an increase of 773 spaces over the past 5 years. With 4843 spaces, this amounts to 17.5% of all children having access to a licensed space.

In the Central Okanagan, approximately 52% (7,805) of two-parent families with children are dual-earner couples. Additionally there is 5,110 lone-parent families in the Central Okanagan. A total of 12,915 families potentially require non-parental care due to employment or school.

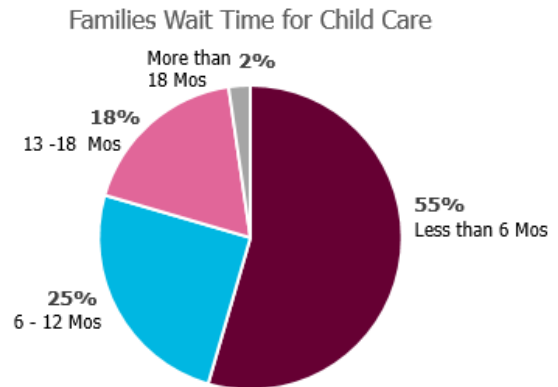
“Trying to find suitable, safe and affordable childcare options was excruciatingly difficult and I am afraid to have another baby due to the cost and availability.”



Waiting Lists

56% of parents indicated that they were on a waiting list for their child’s current program. Parents placed their child’s name on 1-8 waiting lists. Most commonly parents placed their name on 1 waiting list and on average 2 waiting lists.

A majority of parents indicate that they waited less than 6 months for a space in their current program. Some parents indicated that they waited more than 18 months for their current program. Longer waitlists were indicated for infant-toddler programs more than other programs.



81% of owners/operators reported that they currently have a waitlist. The total amount of children reported on the waitlists was 498 children. For every three child care spaces there is one child waiting for a space. Most Owners/Operators indicate that it takes them 7-12 months to be able to offer a space to a child/family on a waitlist.

*“I had to be on a waitlist for a year.
Then having one child in care was no guarantee for a second spot.”
“Wait lists are very long.
I would suggest getting on a waitlist as soon as you know you are pregnant.”*

Future Demand

The child and youth population of the Central Okanagan is expected to remain fairly stagnant at approximately 18.5% of the overall population for the next 20 years. However, based on overall population growth of 1.34% we can expect an additional 3,300 children and youth (newborn to age 19) in the next 5 years in the Central Okanagan.

24% of child care owners/operators indicate that they have plans to increase the number of child care spaces that they operate in next 2 years. These child care owners/operators report they will be looking to provide more than an additional 180 spaces.

Opportunities that would allow the child care owners to add the spaces centered around physical space (affordable lease, suitable space, larger space, approval from leaser), government capital grants, and the ability to hire additional qualified staff.



“Staffing is a huge issue. There are not enough qualified people.”

When asked to rank their challenges to increasing space the most challenging aspect indicated was finding qualified staff, followed by the physical space needed for expansion, and capital funding. Owners/operators indicated that showing the need for increased spaces and working with regulations and licensing and accessing operating funding are the least concerning aspects of increasing spaces.

The Needs of Families

Of parents with children not yet in Kindergarten, 61% indicate that they require 5-day/week full-day care. 23% require full day care for 1-4 days/week and 13% need part-day care (less than 4 hours). 3% of parents require occasional care as needed.

Of parents with children of school age, 42% indicate that they need 5-day/week of after-school care. An additional 30% of parents indicate that they need 5-day/week of before and after-school care. 13% indicate they require 1-4 days of either after school or before and after school care. 15% indicate they need occasional care due to irregular/rotating schedule.

“Both our workplaces have a Monday to Friday 8:00 am to 4:00 pm schedule. It is very hard to find before school care. We are stuck, and survive by piecing it together daily, and by generally being late to work most mornings. This is unsustainable for our family and work places.”

There is no licensed child care that operates during the evening or over the weekend in the community.

15% of parents indicate that their current child care arrangement is temporary until their preferred arrangement becomes available.

One third of parents indicate they would change at least one of their child's care arrangement if a preferred option became available at a price they could afford. Those who indicated they face barriers to their preferred child care arrangement, the top barrier was cost, followed by hours of operation, availability of full-time care, and location.



Parents were asked to rank the importance of a variety of aspects of a child care program. Items that were considered “Very important” or “Quite important” by the majority of parents were the quality of the outdoor play space and the quality of the indoor play space, followed closely by the reputation of the program, the hours of operation, and the program being licensed, and the program philosophy. Aspects that were “Somewhat important” or “Not at all important” to the majority of parents were: near home, near child’s school, respects my language/culture, near work, accepts children with special needs.

“Working parents have very little choice but to accept what they can find.”

Affordability of Child Care

The top barrier parents indicated to accessing their preferred child care option was cost.

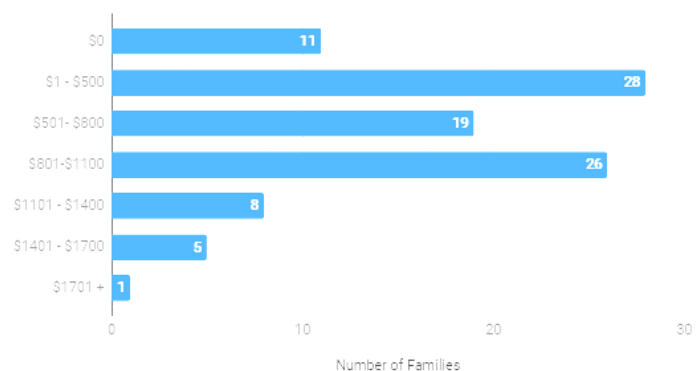
The 2018 Living Wage estimated the monthly child care cost for 2 parents and 2 children at \$1268/month, which amounts to \$15,216.00 annually. Child care cost makes up 21% of the total household expenses.


Of those surveyed 40% of parents indicated that they pay less than \$500/month for child care. 46% of parents pay from \$500-\$1100/month. 14% pay more than \$1100/month.

From the child care owners/operators who completed the survey, the average current monthly program fees for children under age 36 months was \$1042. The average current monthly program fees for children age 3 years to 5 years was \$836. The average monthly fee for preschool is \$211. After school care average per month fee is \$337.

The range for full-time infant-toddler program fees were from \$700 to \$1350. The infant-toddler program rates differed significantly based on the kind of licensed space. Licensed Family Child Care average rate is \$805/month, Multi-Age Child Care average rate is \$932 and Group Child Care average rate is \$1181. At age 3-5 the program rates between the kind of licensed space is no longer significant.

Amount Parents Pay for Child Care





“Childcare needs to be more affordable, paying 1500\$/month is killing us financially and we are getting a “good deal”. This is absolutely ludicrous.”

Program fees do not necessarily reflect the cost for parents, due to parents potentially accessing the Affordable Child Care Benefit (previously known as Child Care Subsidy) as well as the programs receiving support through the newly launched provincial Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative.

In May 2018 the Government of BC instituted a new Affordable Child Care Benefit to replace the child care subsidy program. The Affordable Child Care Benefit is based on a families annual income; those that earn up to \$111,000 may qualify for funding. In addition, families are eligible for a larger amount than what was provided with the subsidy program. The program begins roll-out with families who have children in licensed infant-toddler care and 3-5 year old care in 2019. Families are only able to access the Affordable Child Care Benefit through an online application process. It is suggested that the online application can be a barrier to access.

Owners/operators reported having more than 200 families who access the Affordable Child Care Benefit at their programs. 19% of the parents surveyed indicated that they access the Affordable Child Care Benefit. An additional 3% of parents indicated that they are in the process of applying.

***“I’m temporarily unemployed and looking for work. I can’t pull my child from childcare (we’d lose our spot and it’s impossible to get back in).
How am I supposed to afford \$1100 monthly childcare bill while I try to return to the work force?”***

In addition, the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (instituted in May 2018) provides approved child care owners/operators a grant for each registered and attending child in their program to offset a reduction in the fees parents are paying. As of August 2018, 87 programs have opted-in to the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (which makes up approximately 47% of the total licensed programs in the Central Okanagan)



Capacity to Meet Demand

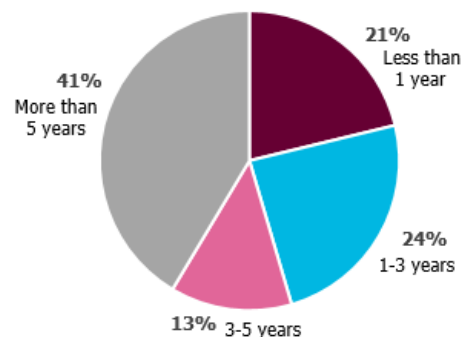
Staffing

12 owners/operators currently have unfilled child care spaces in their programs, the most attributable reason for the opening identified was lack of qualified staff, followed by the space being part-time, a few also stated changes due to summer and no applications for children in the age range. 40 spaces are unfilled due to lack of qualified staff.

83% of owners/operators indicate that they had difficulty hiring trained staff in the past year. 17 owners/operators are currently seeking to fill an additional 36 staff positions. In addition, there is a demand for casual staff.

The most stated reason that staff left their employ within the past year was to work in a field unrelated to child care. The owners/operators that participated in the survey employ 238 individuals. Of those staff, a majority (41%) have more than 5 years of experience, 13% have 3-5 years of experience, 24% have 1-3 years of experience, and 21% have less than a year of experience in child care.


Experience of Child Care Staff



"Turnover of child care workers seems high. I question if they are being paid adequately for the work they are doing. I wonder if a living wage should be supported by the government for the individuals raising our children and future leaders."

Wages

Of those owners/operators who have staff, the average wage for a staff whose highest training is Responsible Adult is \$15.53/hour. For those with an Early Childhood Education diploma the average wage is \$18.04/hour (median is \$18.00/hour). For those Early Childhood Educators with an Infant-Toddler specialization the average wage is \$19.23/hour. For those who work at a Managerial level the average wage is \$20.55/hour. Nearly all employers offered some additional benefits provided to staff, often including extended medical and dental benefits, and some providing paid vacation, funding for professional development, and RRSP matching/pension.



When ranking a variety of aspects of the program the most concerning aspect for the majority of the owners/operators were recruiting qualified staff, and paying adequate wages, followed by building/premises costs, and then keeping staff and managing personal stress.

“We are going to struggle when minimum wages catches up to the starting wage of ECEs. Who is going to go to college, spend thousands of dollars to make less than they would at a fast food restaurant? Especially with the pressure, stress and burnout of this field.”

Training and Mentorship

The need for qualified staff will continue to increase as additional spaces are created. The BC Government is investing funds into Early Childhood Education training programs as well as New ECE Bursary Program and ECE Workforce Development Fund to reduce the financial burden on those wishing to pursue their ECE training. However, respondents indicate that there is little consistency in the training that students receive from different institutions.

Individuals are able to get their formal education through several local institutions as well as through online training. A majority of owners/operators who recruit staff prefer graduates from the Okanagan College program due to the quality of the education provided. Conversations emphasized the critical aspect of hands-on and practical skills and questioned the efficacy of online offerings in providing these. Many suggested that ongoing professional development standards need to be raised (currently at 40 hours over 5 years) for the sector and opportunities for high quality training need to be provided in the Central Okanagan.

A large emphasis for future opportunities centered around mentorship models to support positive habits and skill development for new graduates.

Professionalism and Collaboration

A theme that arose through the process was the need to raise the value and respect of those who are nurturing the community’s youngest children. There is a clear desire among the child care sector to come together and belong to something bigger. Community-based networking opportunities to develop relationships, discuss challenges and have round-table discussions about solutions could provide support toward professionalism and continuity within the sector.

“Increase wages, subsidize education costs, appreciate the importance of the ECE field, and support our ability to provide more spaces to meet the need of our community.”



Suggested Next Steps

- Create a Central Okanagan Child Care Strategy and Plan. Include clear goals, objectives, actions and measurable targets that seek to have real and positive impacts on our child care sector
- Develop strong relationships with the municipalities and regional district. Encourage their application of the Community Child Care Planning Program (funding through Union of British Columbia Municipalities) and their participation on the Child Care Action Team and development of the Child Care Strategy and Plan
- Develop an inventory of existing and potentially available public or private space that could be used for childcare, and a schedule of projected public facility construction in the next ten years that could include child care space
- Begin a communication and outreach campaign drawing the attention of families to the Affordable Child Care Benefit – what it is and how to qualify and apply for support
- Convene local stakeholders to support the work-force strategy being developed at the provincial level
- Research successful apprenticeship and mentorship models and convene a stakeholder group interested in piloting the models to increase quality child care practices among new graduates
- Provide opportunities for child care owners/operators to safely explore topics of interest including the changes being implemented provincially, child care practices, opportunities to increase spaces, and mentorship
- Identify revenue streams and funding to support the continuation of the work of the Child Care Action Team, including the development and implementation of the Child Care Strategy and Plan
- Ensure and sustain a strong and effective local Child Care Action Team made up of multi-sectoral decision-makers. The Child Care Action Team should regularly reflect and gather feedback from families, providers, and other key stakeholders throughout the community in order to refine actions. Finally, the Child Care Action Team should provide ongoing expertise, and enthusiasm to the vision and its realization.



Appendix 1

Child Care Needs Assessment Matrix

Needs Assessment Focus	Indicators	Data Sources
Accessibility		
Are the number of spaces available adequate?	# child care spaces/type (current) # child care spaces/type (5 years ago) # child care spaces coming (in next year)	Interior Health, Owners/Operators Survey, BC Child Care Site
To what extent does the current child care landscape meet the needs of families?	# of families indicating need for different hours of operation # of families indicating location as a barrier Ranking of factors families consider important when choosing child care	Parent Survey
Affordability		
To what degree is child care affordable?	Child Care program rate Child care cost compared to average family income # of families accessing subsidy # of opt-ins for child care fee reduction initiative	Child Care Resource and Referral, Owners/Operators survey, Parent survey, Stats Canada, BC Child Care Site
Demand		
What is the current demand for child care spaces?	# of children Employment rate (dual-income families if available) # of programs with a waitlist # of children on a waitlist # of children on waitlist/number of total spaces # of waitlists a child is on Length of time a child is on a waitlist	Stats Canada, Central Okanagan Public Schools, Interior Health, Owners/Operators survey, Parent survey
What is the projected future demand for child care spaces?	Projected birth rate Projected school enrollment	Interior Health, Central Okanagan Public Schools
Capacity		
Are there adequate trained staff to meet the demand?	# of spaces not filled due to lack of trained staff Reason for staff leaving # of staff needed	Owner/Operators Survey
What are the challenges to providing child care?	wages/benefits of staff Preferred training institution Ranking of concerns	Child Care Resource and Referral, Owners/Operators Survey



Resources

Central Okanagan Public Schools; Early Learning

<http://www.sd23.bc.ca/ProgramsServices/earlylearning/Pages/default.aspx>

City of North Vancouver; Child Care Needs Analysis <https://tricitiesecd.ca/about/latest-news/tri-cities-child-care-needs-assessment/>

City of Richmond; Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy

<https://www.richmond.ca/plandev/socialplan/childcare/needs.htm>

Coalition of Child Care Advocates of BC; <https://www.10aday.ca/>

Community Action Toward Children's Health Coalition; Coping...or meeting the Challenge: Choices for Child Care in the Central Okanagan to 2011. (December 2006)

Early Childhood Educators of BC; Phase 1 BC Childcare Sector Labour Market Partnerships Project Webinar, June 7, 2018

Friendly, M.; Assessing community need for child care: Resource material for conducting community needs assessments

<http://www.childcarecanada.org/publications/other-publications/94/04/assessing-community-need-child-care-resource-material-conducti>

Friendly, M., Larsen, E., Feltham, L., Grady, B., Forer, B. & Jones, M.; Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2016 <http://www.childcarecanada.org/documents/research-policy-practice/18/05/early-childhood-education-and-care-canada-2016-0>

Government of British Columbia, ChildCare BC <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/caring-for-young-children>

Government of British Columbia, Investing in our Early Childhood Educators: Early Learning and Care Recruitment and Retention Strategy https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/family-and-social-supports/child-care/6337_earlycareandlearningrecruitment_andretentionstrategy_report_web.pdf?WT.cg_n=HootSuite



Interior Health Authority; Child Care Facilities

<https://www.interiorhealth.ca/YourEnvironment/ChildCareFacilities/Pages/default.aspx>

Kelowna Child Care Society/Child Care Resource and Referral; <http://kelownachildcare.ca/>

Statistics Canada; Central Okanagan 2016 Census Profile <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CD&Code1=5935&Geo2=PR&Code2=59&Data=Count&SearchText=Central%20Okanagan&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=5935&TABID=1>

Tri Cities Early Childhood Development Committee; Child Care Needs Assessment

<https://tricitiesecd.ca/about/latest-news/tri-cities-child-care-needs-assessment/>

Union of BC Municipalities; Community Child Care Planning Program

<https://www.ubcm.ca/assets/Funding~Programs/LGPS/Childcare/childcare-2019-planning-program-guide.pdf>