

Toronto's Child Care System

Toronto is home to 268,575 children aged 0 to nine living in 181,805 families. The majority of children live in two parent families, while 20 per cent live in single parent families. These families rely on a range of services to meet the early learning and care needs of their children.

In Toronto, programs and services are offered and funded by a wide range of community agencies and organizations, including the federal, provincial and municipal governments.

Child care services

Toronto Children's Services is responsible for managing a system of services that includes:

- Licensed child care
- Fee subsidy management
- Supporting children with special needs in licensed child care
- Supporting Aboriginal and Francophone families to access licensed child care
- Family support programs
- After-School Recreation Care (ARC)
- Summer Day Programs

Children's Services also collaborates with other City divisions, school boards, Toronto Public Health, Toronto Public Library and community organizations to meet the changing needs of children and families.

Licensed child care

Licensed child care is vital to families, both as a support to employment or schooling, and as an early learning experience for children. Licensed child care is offered at 946 child care centres and 21 home child care agencies providing over 56,500 spaces, but still accommodates only 21 per cent of Toronto's children aged 0 to nine years.

Children in Toronto		
Age	Number of children	Cumulative number of children
Under 1 year	28,275	28,275
1 year	27,410	55,685
2 years	26,915	82,600
3 years	26,345	108,945
4 years	26,035	134,980
5 years	26,110	161,090
6 years	26,780	187,870
7 years	26,010	213,880
8 years	27,145	241,025
9 years	27,550	268,575

Statistics Canada 2006 Census

Licensed spaces in child care centres ~ March 2010							
Type	# of centres	%	infant spaces	toddler spaces	preschool spaces	school age spaces	total spaces
Municipal	57	6%	346	525	1,535	525	2,931
Non-profit	655	69%	1,405	3,491	18,123	12,900	35,919
Commercial	234	25%	872	2,303	9,027	2,151	14,353
Total	946	100%	2,623	6,319	28,685	15,576	53,203

Sixty-nine percent of child care programs are operated by non-profit organizations, 25 per cent are operated by commercial operators and 6 per cent are municipally operated. Approximately 70 per cent of child care operators have a service contract with the City and receive some government funding in the form of fee and/or wage subsidies. Detailed information about licensed child care can be found in the Children's Services Fact Sheet (Appendix C).

Fee subsidy management

Low income is a significant barrier for families who need access to licensed child care. Each child care program is responsible for setting their public fee. The cost of care varies across age groups and between programs.

The table to the right shows the wide range of public fees charged by child care centres located in Toronto. While the majority of fees fall within

these ranges, there are some centres that charge higher or lower fees. Even at the low range, many Toronto families must rely on fee subsidy to help with all or part of the cost of child care.

Based on current funding levels, 24,000 full time child care fee subsidies are available. Only 28 per cent of families with the lowest incomes can access a childcare fee subsidy. There are over 15,800 children on the wait list.

Due to the limited number of fee subsidies, Toronto City Council approved an equitable distribution whereby each City ward receives a share of the 24,000 full time fee subsidies based on the proportion of children in the ward who are living below the low-income cut-off (LICO). Please refer to table on page 14.

Fee subsidy is allocated to the child and not to a specific child care program. Families who are approved for a child care fee subsidy can choose to place their child in any one of the 652 centres or with one of the 10 home child care agencies that have a service contract with the City.

2010 Daily Public Fee			
Age group	low range	mid range	high range
infant	\$54.00	\$70.00	\$89.00
toddler	\$43.50	\$56.00	\$79.00
preschool	\$32.50	\$40.00	\$59.00
school age	\$18.00	\$28.00	\$44.00

Ward Distribution of Child Care Subsidy Spaces

Children 0-9 years: Ward 1-23						Children 0-9 years: Ward 24-44					
Ward	Children living in the ward	Ward's share of Toronto's children	Children living below LICO	% of children in ward living below LICO	Ward's share of Toronto's LICO children	Ward	Children living in the ward	Ward's share of Toronto's children	Children living below LICO	% of children in ward living below LICO	Ward's share of Toronto's LICO children
1	8,995	3.4%	3,230	35.9%	3.7%	24	4,045	1.5%	1,060	26.2%	1.2%
2	7,130	2.7%	2,890	40.5%	3.3%	25	5,280	2.0%	595	11.3%	0.7%
3	5,005	1.9%	1,200	24.0%	1.4%	26	8,940	3.3%	3,970	44.4%	4.6%
4	5,160	1.9%	1,365	26.5%	1.6%	27	3,665	1.4%	980	26.7%	1.1%
5	5,830	2.2%	975	16.7%	1.1%	28	5,800	2.2%	3,470	59.8%	4.0%
6	5,090	1.9%	1,325	26.0%	1.5%	29	4,640	1.7%	1,035	22.3%	1.2%
7	6,910	2.6%	2,890	41.8%	3.3%	30	5,190	1.9%	1,585	30.5%	1.8%
8	7,095	2.7%	3,535	49.8%	4.1%	31	6,265	2.3%	2,180	34.8%	2.5%
9	5,305	2.0%	1,835	34.6%	2.1%	32	6,420	2.4%	1,145	17.8%	1.3%
10	6,265	2.3%	1,825	29.1%	2.1%	33	5,855	2.2%	1,845	31.5%	2.1%
11	7,575	2.8%	3,035	40.1%	3.5%	34	6,560	2.5%	2,455	37.4%	2.8%
12	7,080	2.7%	3,040	42.9%	3.5%	35	7,390	2.8%	3,525	47.7%	4.1%
13	5,330	2.0%	965	18.1%	1.1%	36	5,915	2.2%	2,090	35.3%	2.4%
14	5,245	2.0%	1,780	33.9%	2.1%	37	7,575	2.8%	3,135	41.4%	3.6%
15	7,045	2.6%	2,355	33.4%	2.7%	38	7,770	2.9%	3,045	39.2%	3.5%
16	6,585	2.5%	500	7.6%	0.6%	39	5,215	2.0%	1,885	36.1%	2.2%
17	5,210	2.0%	1,515	29.1%	1.7%	40	6,895	2.6%	2,630	38.1%	3.0%
18	4,330	1.6%	1,585	36.6%	1.8%	41	6,425	2.4%	1,990	31.0%	2.3%
19	3,445	1.3%	830	24.1%	1.0%	42	10,595	4.0%	3,040	28.7%	3.5%
20	3,370	1.3%	1,000	29.7%	1.2%	43	7,320	2.7%	3,335	45.6%	3.9%
21	4,550	1.7%	795	17.5%	0.9%	44	6,140	2.3%	1,095	17.8%	1.3%
22	4,540	1.7%	550	12.1%	0.6%	Total	267,075	100%	86,590	32.4%	100%
23	6,040	2.3%	1,460	24.2%	1.7%						

Statistics Canada 2006 Census 20% sample data - persons in private households (1,500 less children than total population count)

Supporting children with special needs in licensed child care

Toronto Children's Services, in collaboration with 22 community agencies, provides enhanced services so children with extra support needs are included in licensed child care programs. The City's "Every Child Belongs" philosophy allows families to place their child in any one of Toronto's licensed child care programs and receive the supports and resources to assist both the family and the child care program.

Every licensed child care program and home child care agency has an assigned special needs resource professional who is available to provide support and resources to the child care program so that every child can take part in the program. Services include individual consultation for children with identified special needs and program consultation to enhance organizational capacity, staff training and support. In addition to specialized professionals, child care centres can also access funding to hire additional staff to address short term needs.

Families may enrol their child in a specialized nursery school where services tend to be more intensive and may include occupational therapy and physiotherapy. Specialized consultation is also available in home child care.

Supporting Aboriginal and Francophone communities

The Aboriginal and Francophone communities in Toronto are recognized as unique. While children in these communities make up a small percentage of the total child population, they are dispersed across the city making access to culturally appropriate child care services difficult. Children's Services supports the early learning and care needs of Aboriginal and Francophone families through the provision of fee subsidies to families looking for culturally-specific child care programs. In addition, the Aboriginal Advisory Group and Regional French Language Network for Best Start ensure that the needs of the Aboriginal and Francophone communities are taken into account when planning new child care facilities.

There are currently three Aboriginal child care programs and four Aboriginal Head Start Programs serving 155 children in Toronto. A new Aboriginal centre, scheduled to open in 2011 will serve an additional 56 children. A report produced in collaboration with the Aboriginal Advisory Group for Best Start profiles the Aboriginal community and is available on the Toronto Best Start Network website at www.toronto.ca/children/bs_network_b.htm.

There are 17 programs dedicated to the Francophone community currently serving 1,056 children. All but one Francophone elementary school has a child care centre located in it. A report produced in collaboration with the French Language Network profiles the Francophone community and is available on the Toronto Best Start Network website at www.toronto.ca/children/bs_network_b.htm.

Family support programs

Family support programs are neighbourhood meeting places that offer an environment for children to play, learn and make new friends while providing opportunities for parents and caregivers to meet and develop social networks.

These programs provide a range of services and resources that help strengthen parenting skills, support parent education and foster healthy child development. The services vary from program to program and may include: parent/child drop-in, moms and tots programs, playgroups, toy, equipment and book lending, information and referrals to other resources, parent workshops, family literacy/numeracy, parent/caregiver relief and child care registries.

Most programs are offered free of charge although some may encourage a voluntary donation. Hours of operation vary but most programs are open a few mornings or afternoons each week and some programs are open in the evenings and on weekends.

There are over 170 family support programs serving Toronto families and children. The programs are operated and funded by various levels of government as well as by community organizations and include Ontario Early Years Centres, Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Family Resource Programs, and Community Action Programs for Children (CAPC).

After-School Recreation Care

After-School Recreation Care programs are unlicensed programs operated by Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation for children aged six to 12 years. There are 28 sites in Toronto with 810 children enrolled. The programs operate Monday to Friday from school dismissal to 6 pm from September to June. Children participate in a variety of activities such as outdoor play, games, drama, sports and arts and crafts. There is a nominal fee for the program and eligible families may receive fee assistance through Parks, Forestry and Recreation's Welcome Policy.

Summer day programs

Summer day programs are unlicensed programs that operate full day during the summer and are generally offered to school-age children from high-need areas. The City, in partnership with other agencies, provides some funding to operate these programs.

Funding of child care services

Toronto Children's Services manages its service contracts in accordance with provincial legislation and policy including the *Day Nurseries Act* and the Provincial Child Care Service Management Guidelines. City policies approved by Toronto Council, including the Service Plan for Child Care 2005–2009, Operating Criteria for Child Care Programs, and Operating Budget Guidelines guide public expenditures on child care. The approved policies are designed to ensure that high quality, financially viable services are delivered equitably throughout Toronto in a way that maximizes the use of public funds. As the Service System Manager, the City is responsible for the stability and quality of care in the overall child care system and cannot ensure the ongoing viability of individual child care programs.

In April 2010, Toronto City Council is being asked to approve \$378.7 million within the Children's Services 2010 operating budget to manage its child care system. The funding responsibility is shared between the Province, the City and child care users.

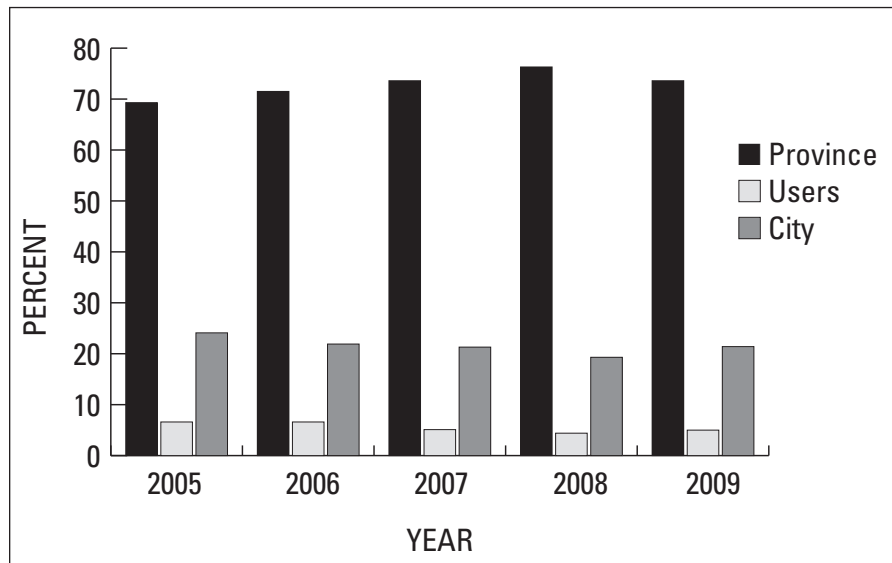
The Province of Ontario funds services and costs up to a predetermined ceiling as follows:

- 80 per cent of the net cost of the following "prescribed services":
 - regular child care fee subsidies
 - Ontario Works (OW) child care
 - family resource programs
 - special needs resourcing
 - wage subsidy
 - Health and Safety expenditures
- 100 per cent of net costs for programs covered under the Best Start Strategy
- 50 per cent of approved administrative costs, not including Ontario Works administration

See Appendix D.

Child Care Service	2005	2009
	\$ Millions	\$ Millions
Licensed Child Care		
Regular Subsidies	193.2	249.3
Ontario Works (OW)	15.9	22.3
OW - Learning Earning and Parenting (LEAP)	0.4	0.4
	209.5	272.0
Special Needs	7.4	10.4
Family Resource		
Cost Shared	2.1	2.4
Non-cost shared	0.9	0.8
	3.0	3.2
Other Programs		
Summer Day Programs	0.3	0.3
York Before & After School	0.3	0.3
After School Recreation & Care (ARC)	-	1.3
First Duty Pilot Project	1.0	-
	1.6	1.9
Support to Children System		
Wage Subsidies	37.5	44.0
Pay Equity	4.4	4.3
Rents and other grants	6.3	6.5
Minor Capital	2.0	2.5
	50.2	57.3
System Management	19.0	20.7
Total Child Care Budget Excludes expansion	290.7	365.5

Funding Sources



The City of Toronto funds services and costs as follows:

- 20 per cent of the net cost of “prescribed services”
- 50 per cent of approved administrative costs
- 100 per cent of any costs not approved through a negotiated service contract or costs above the approved ceiling even if eligible for cost sharing, including:
 - school occupancy costs
 - solid waste management fees
 - summer day programs
 - child care capital reserve fund
 - minor capital expenditures in child care centres
 - York Before and After school program
 - child care grants for occupancy and operating costs
 - additional family resource programs
 - additional child care spaces.
- 49 per cent of After-School Recreation Care programs using Social Services Reserve funds with 36 per cent of the cost from the Provincial Ministry of Health Promotion and 15 per cent from user fees.

User fees fund approximately four per cent of the overall cost of the child care system and in 2009 accounted for approximately \$18.2 million in revenue. User fees are subtracted from the total eligible expenditures to determine the net amount to be cost-shared between the Province and the City.