

A young girl with dark hair in pigtails, wearing a light blue shirt, and a young boy with dark hair, wearing a dark blue shirt, are sitting at a wooden table. They are looking down at a large, colorful map of Alberta that is spread out on the table. The girl is pointing at a specific location on the map. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a window showing greenery outside. The image is decorated with a grid of colorful squares (blue, green, yellow, orange, pink, purple) in the top-left and bottom-right corners.

# ALBERTA CHILD CARE ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

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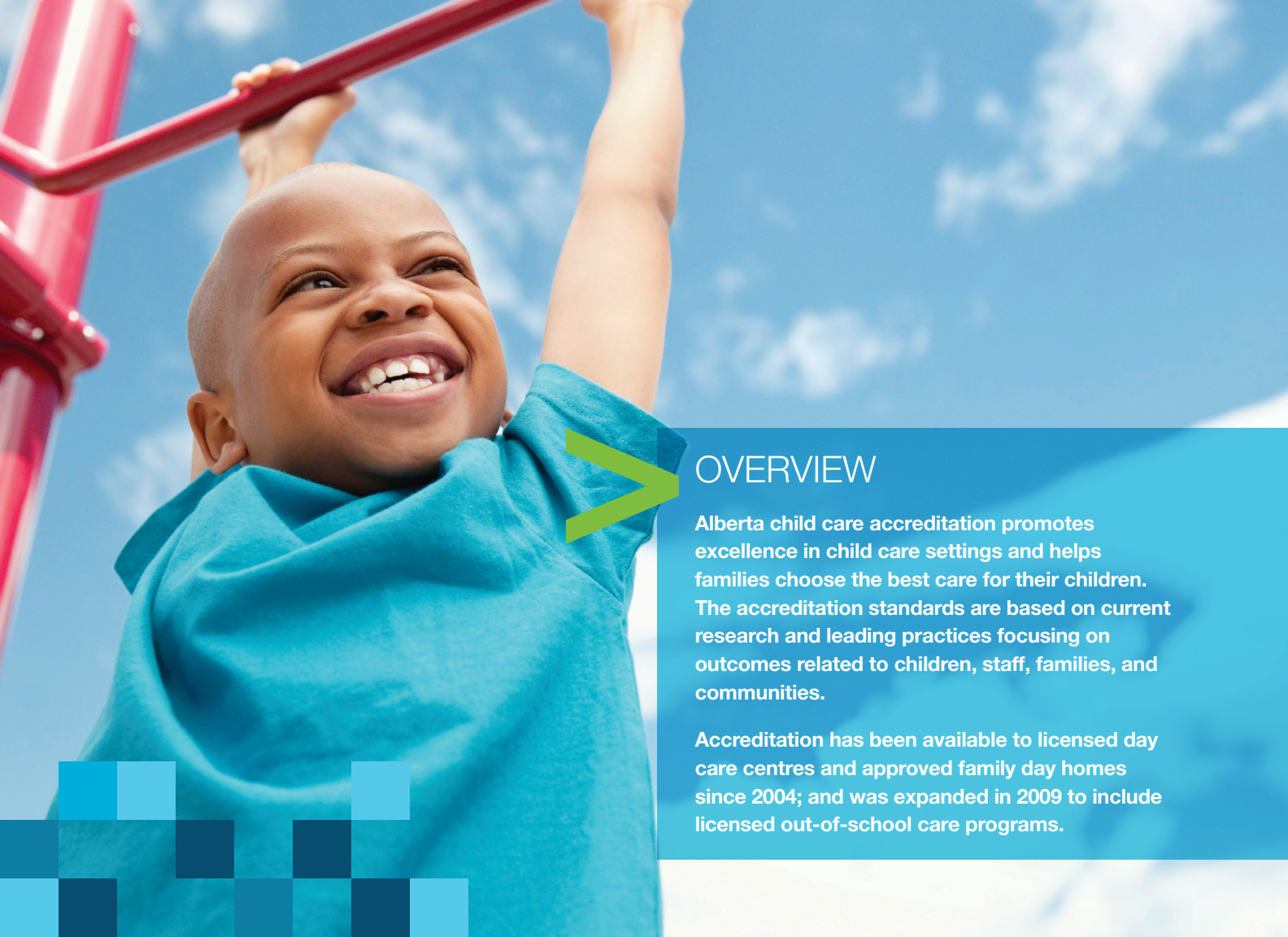
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## OVERVIEW

Alberta child care accreditation promotes excellence in child care settings and helps families choose the best care for their children. The accreditation standards are based on current research and leading practices focusing on outcomes related to children, staff, families, and communities.

Accreditation has been available to licensed day care centres and approved family day homes since 2004; and was expanded in 2009 to include licensed out-of-school care programs.



Child care accreditation in Alberta is a voluntary process through which licensed and approved child care programs (day care programs, out-of-school care programs and family day home agencies) can demonstrate that they meet the accreditation standards of excellence which are over and above the provincial licensing regulations and family day home standards. The accreditation standards of excellence were developed by Government of Alberta in consultation with child care operators, early childhood educators and professionals, child care organizations and key stakeholders. The standards reflect leading practices to provide high quality child care for families and children from birth to 12 years of age.

The accreditation process starts with a child care program undergoing a comprehensive self-evaluation of its services and policies including such activities as identifying areas for improvement, creating a quality enhancement plan and implementing developed strategies to achieve the standards of excellence. The self-evaluation process takes approximately 15 months to complete. Once the program is satisfied that it has met all the standards, gathered the supporting evidence and is ready for the formal evaluation, it requests the accrediting agency to conduct

an on-site assessment. During this assessment, the accrediting agency will collect and review program's evidence and complete observations to validate whether the program has met the accreditation standards. If successful, the program is awarded an accreditation certificate that is valid for three years.

Accredited programs are expected to maintain the accreditation standards over the three-year term as well as continuously develop and implement strategies guided by their quality enhancement plan. Accredited programs undergo an administrative review every year to maintain their accreditation status and a complete on-site evaluation every three years to renew the status. Accredited programs are also subject to unannounced site visits that may occur at any time throughout the programs' accreditation term.

There are six accreditation standards which are divided into four categories: i) outcomes for children; ii) outcomes for families; iii) outcomes for staff; and iv) outcomes for the community. Each of the six standards is comprised of numbered "criteria" (principles and guiding practices that make up the standard) which are further broken down into "indicators" that serve as observable measurements.



## I. OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN

Children enter the world full of potential and thrive in families, communities and child care programs that offer environments which are nurturing and respectful while providing opportunities for growth and exploration.



Quality care in the early years is critical for brain development and establishing neurological pathways that help develop children's ability to think and make sense of their world. High quality child care contributes to the physical, creative, cognitive, social, and emotional growth that is the foundation for children's health, well-being, development, and learning throughout their lifespan.

## > Standard 1:

### **Positive, supportive relationships and enriched physical and emotional environments foster children's well-being and development.**

Ensuring that children have access to enriched early learning environments in child care settings is essential. Thoughtfully planned, well-equipped, and inviting physical indoor and outdoor environments set the stage for children to have experiences that will promote growth and development. Through building respectful, responsive relationships with children, child care professionals create a positive emotional environment that contributes to children's optimal brain development and overall well-being.

### **1.1 Child care programs promote and nurture children's positive sense of self and belonging through supportive relationships and secure emotional attachments.**

#### **Indicators**

#### *Develop self-awareness and feelings of belonging*

- a. Engage with children in small-group and one-on-one interactions.
- b. Help children develop a sense of self by recognizing their unique qualities and backgrounds.
- c. Support children in exploration of their individual interests, strengths, and emerging skills.
- d. Provide opportunities for children to demonstrate their independence.

#### *Develop positive relationships to form secure emotional attachments*

- e. Acknowledge children who recognize the skills, accomplishments, and contributions of peers.

- f. Communicate warmth and acceptance through verbal and non-verbal reassuring behaviours.
- g. Respond to children's needs and cues in an appropriate, timely, caring, and consistent manner.

## **1.2 Child care professionals demonstrate respectful, positive interactions with children and guide them within a caring and nurturing environment.**

### **Indicators**

*Develop supportive and respectful interactions to foster feelings of trust and security*

- a. Talk to children at a developmental level they understand.
- b. Engage in active listening with children.
- c. Value each child's right to have their feelings and belongings respected.
- d. Model respectful interactions with other adults.

### *Implement positive guidance approaches*

- e. Guide children's behaviour using a continuum of developmentally and age appropriate strategies.
- f. Communicate age-appropriate behaviour expectations to children in a respectful manner.
- g. Use observation techniques to identify causes of challenging behaviours and modify the environment and supervision to promote positive behaviours.
- h. Support children in engaging in positive behaviours and expressing their feelings in socially acceptable ways.
- i. Guide children as they begin to develop problem-solving skills.

### 1.3 Child care programs incorporate well-designed physical indoor learning environments to foster the optimal development in children.

#### **Indicators**

- a. Arrange the indoor space in a way that meets the diverse developmental needs of the children.
- b. Design stimulating and interactive environments, ensuring the materials for play and learning contain a full range of diversity (e.g., ability, culture, ethnicity, family composition, gender).
- c. Ensure the learning environment promotes early literacy.
- d. Provide displays and focal points to enhance the space.
- e. Provide multiple sources of light appropriate to the activities and learning experiences.
- f. Bring elements from nature into the indoor space to facilitate sensory experiences.

### 1.4 Children's development is supported through outdoor environments with active play spaces and opportunities to experience and learn about the natural world.

#### **Indicators**

##### *Outdoor playground spaces*

- a. Organize and equip the outdoor play space to provide a variety of developmental experiences and physical activities for children in a safe environment.

##### *Exploring, appreciating, and learning about the natural world*

- b. Provide opportunities for children to explore and learn in natural settings.
- c. Encourage environmentally responsible practices to promote children's connections with the natural world.
- d. Provide opportunities for children to learn about how materials in nature are used in everyday life.

## > Standard 2:

**Program planning and practices support every child's optimal development in an inclusive early learning and care environment that incorporates the value and importance of play.**

Children develop higher levels of social competence, physical ability, language, emotional development, creative thinking and problem solving skills within inclusive child care environments. Diverse and developmentally appropriate experiences are critical to the early brain development in children. High quality child care programs provide children with stimulating learning materials, meaningful activities, creative play experiences and interactions that emerge from the children's interests to promote their learning and development. Quality child care programs thoughtfully plan the activities based on children's ideas and document the ongoing growth and development of children.

### 2.1 Child care programs incorporate inclusive approaches that respect children's diversity and value children's individual needs and backgrounds.

#### **Indicators**

*Inclusive approaches to foster all types of diversity*

- a. Incorporate experiences and cultural backgrounds of children in daily program planning.
- b. Ensure a variety of appropriate materials, equipment, and resources are available to meet the diverse needs and interests of children.
- c. Incorporate inclusive practices to involve all children in the program.



*Approaches for children with special needs*

- d. Provide supports to families and children with special needs.
- e. Provide training and supports to child care professionals working in inclusive environments and with children with special needs.
- f. Thoughtfully modify the environment to support children's success.

**2.2 Child care programs promote physical wellness in all children and incorporate physical literacy in everyday programming.**

**Indicators**

*Body and Movement*

- a. Promote physical activity and minimize the time that children are sedentary.
- b. Provide a variety of recreational resources to support physical activities appropriate for the season.

- c. Intentionally plan experiences and activities to develop small motor skills.
- d. Participate in physical activities with children.
- e. Plan physical experiences that encourage cooperation between children.
- f. Provide diverse physical experiences that are based on the skills and interests of each child.
- g. Adapt activities and experiences to ensure children with diverse capabilities can participate at levels where they can feel confident.

*Active movement indoors and out*

- h. Intentionally plan for a variety of indoor and outdoor physical experiences each day.
- i. Ensure use of technology that promotes sedentary behaviour (computers, television) is limited and focused on intended developmental outcomes.

*Meeting personal care and physical health needs*

- j. Ensure personal care routines for children are individualized.
- k. Ensure that resting and/or napping schedules for children meet their individual developmental needs.
- l. Respect children's dietary requirements for individual and cultural needs.

## **2.3 Child care programs promote competence, active exploration, and learning through play.**

**Indicators**

*Providing, engaging, and extending play experiences*

- a. Plan experiences that promote development and learning across all developmental domains (physical, social, emotional, creative and intellectual).
- b. Promote early literacy through daily programming.

- c. Provide extended periods of time for children to become actively engaged in a wide variety of self-selected, open-ended play.
- d. Provide open-ended experiences and opportunities to encourage creative expression.
- e. Be actively involved in children's play experiences.
- f. Provide cognitive activities and experiences at the developmental level of the children.

*Promoting social competence through play*

- g. Intentionally provide materials and opportunities for children to play in a variety of group sizes.
- h. Support children in the development of social skills according to their age and developmental levels.

## 2.4 Child care programs use observation, recording, and documentation to plan the program based on the needs, abilities, and interests of children and their experiences with families and communities.

### **Indicators**

#### *Planning schedules, routines and transitions*

- a. Plan schedules to support the children's learning experiences.
- b. Plan routines appropriate for the developmental levels of the children.
- c. Plan transitions to minimize stress on children.
- d. Demonstrate flexibility by changing schedules, routines, and transitions to best meet the developmental needs of children.

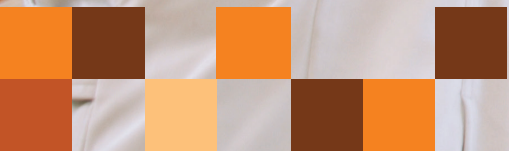
#### *Program Planning*

- e. Use information shared by families about their children's experiences, interests and needs in program planning.
- f. Observe and record children's knowledge, interests, curiosities, and knowledge learning to use as a basis for program planning.
- g. Invite children to participate in the development of program planning, routines, and rules.
- h. Document the references and resources used in program planning.
- i. Provide children with opportunities to share and display their learning.
- j. Monitor children's individual growth and development through documentation to share with parents.



## II. OUTCOMES FOR FAMILIES

The family has the primary responsibility for their children's well-being and development. When child care programs establish respectful, honest communication and joint decision-making with families, they enhance children's well-being and development. Families have a right to fully participate in their child's program.





## > Standard 3:

### **Relationships with families are supportive and respectful.**

Quality child care programs engage in family-centred practices with children and parents which contribute to positive environments that support children's learning and development. Parents must be able to participate in the child care program, visit the program anytime, and form relationships with the child care professionals. Equally important, parents need to be informed about the day-to-day experiences that take place in the child care program and be confident that their children are important to the program and child care professionals who care for them.

### **3.1 Child care programs work in partnership with families and respect their beliefs and expertise in their child-rearing role as primary caregivers.**

#### ***Indicators***

- a. Support the important child-rearing role of families in the children's lives.
- b. Build positive, respectful relationships with families.
- c. Respect the diversity of children and families which the program serves.
- d. Demonstrate respect for children's home language(s).
- e. Demonstrate appreciation for the contributions of families to the children, program, and community.

### 3.2 Child care programs implement clear, simple practices that promote communication and regular exchange of information with families.

#### *Indicators*

- a. Provide opportunities for families to share and exchange information with the child care program.
- b. Provide families with a clear intake and orientation process before their children begin care.
- c. Promote regular communication between the family and program.
- d. Provide opportunities for families to be involved in programming for their children.
- e. Consult with families about proposed policy/practice and program changes that may affect them.
- f. Implement a social media policy that defines monitoring and intention, and meets the program's outcomes.
- g. Protect the confidentiality of children and their families.

### 3.3 Child care programs support families through parental involvement, sharing of resources, and providing information regarding additional supports for their children.

#### *Indicators*

- a. Invite parents to participate in field trips and/or off-site excursions with their children.
- b. Invite parents to spend time in the program.
- c. Provide opportunities for families to develop relationships with each other.
- d. Provide information to families about programs and services offered by other community and social organizations.
- e. Act as facilitators for families in locating, contacting, and accessing specific supports for their children.
- f. Share information about a child only with parental consent.



### III. OUTCOMES FOR STAFF

Child care professionals are essential to the provision of high quality child care programs. Children benefit from child care professionals who incorporate their solid understanding of early learning and child development into practice. Child care professionals are most effective when they are supported, respected and valued in their work environment and given opportunities for professional growth.

## > Standard 4:

**Child care programs create a supportive work environment to maintain a team of qualified child care professionals and assist them in providing high quality child care services through program philosophy, policies, procedures, and practices.**

### **4.1 Child care programs have clear and current statements of program philosophy, policies, goals, and strategies in place to assist child care professionals in providing quality care.**

#### ***Indicators***

- a. Provide a thorough orientation for child care professionals before they begin working with children.
- b. Ensure each child care professional clearly understands the information presented to them during their orientation.
- c. Ensure all child care professionals are informed about changes to program delivery and government information that will directly affect them.

- d. Implement a process for the regular exchange of information with child care professionals.
- e. Involve child care professionals in the review of policies, procedures, and processes.
- f. Conduct staff meetings on a regular basis.
- g. Document the contributions of the child care professionals to any aspect of the program's development.
- h. Ensure meeting minutes are documented and shared with child care professionals.
- i. Plan meeting agendas that address the action or responsibilities determined at the previous meeting.

### **4.2 Child care programs have well-defined human resource and management practices to support a team of qualified child care professionals.**

#### ***Indicators***

#### ***Human resource practices to support child care professionals***

- a. Support staff through a human resources policy.



- b. Document and follow hiring procedures, outlining how individuals are recruited, interviewed, screened (reference and criminal record checks), and hired.
- c. Complete annual performance reviews and consult with child care professionals to develop individualized training plans and support the movement towards a higher level of education, especially for child care professionals not certified as Child Development Workers or Child Development Supervisors.
- d. Define procedures for child care professionals that support their participation in professional development opportunities.

#### *Professional practice*

- e. Incorporate a Code of Ethics to guide the practice of child care professionals.
- f. Develop clearly defined emergency procedures (for fires, natural disasters, and lock-downs) that child care professionals understand and follow.
- g. Recognize and celebrate the contributions of child care professionals.

### **4.3 Child care programs demonstrate a positive workplace environment and organizational culture that support the well-being and educational development of child care professionals.**

#### ***Indicators***

##### *Planning resources and supports*

- a. Ensure child care professionals receive appropriate work time to complete tasks and carry out responsibilities.
- b. Ensure child care professionals have access to resources and time to implement program planning.

##### *Professional development opportunities*

- c. Ensure child care professionals have training in key areas to support their work applicable to the age of children they work with.

##### *Workplace environment*

- d. Encourage cooperative and respectful working relationships.
- e. Engage in team building activities.



#### IV. OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITY

High quality child care programs engage in positive relationships with community organizations and involve their community partners and stakeholders in program evaluation processes. The well-being of children and families is strengthened when these partnerships extend to related human service providers in the community, including other professional supports.

## > Standard 5:

**Child care programs collaborate with community organizations and services to respond to the needs of children and families they serve.**

Child care programs are able to best meet the diverse needs of the children and families they serve when it establishes positive and collaborative relationships with the existing community partners and agencies.

### **5.1 Child care programs are responsive to the diverse needs of the children and families they serve.**

#### ***Indicators***

- a. Maintain information on resources and services for children and families.
- b. Assist families in dealing with barriers to access community resources and services.
- c. Respond to community complaints and concerns.
- d. Invite community stakeholders or agency representatives to provide support to the child care program.

### **5.2 Child care programs establish working relationships with organizations and services within the community.**

#### ***Indicators***

- a. Establish and maintain relationships with community organizations and professional groups that support families and their children.
- b. Collaborate with community agencies to create partnerships that support children and families.
- c. Use community resources to meet the needs of children and families it serves.

### **5.3 Child care programs have a clearly defined process for involving community stakeholders.**

#### ***Indicators***

- a. Invite families and relevant community stakeholders to participate in the program.
- b. Ensure stakeholders involved in the program reflect the diversity of the community.

- c. Implement an orientation process for community stakeholders involved in the program.
- d. Establish a policy for community consultation that is responsive to the needs of the program.

## > Standard 6:

### **Continuous quality improvement is demonstrated through ongoing self-monitoring and evaluation processes.**

Quality is not static—it is dynamic and requires a focus on continuous improvement. There is an understanding of best practices that is constantly evolving based on research findings. Similarly, the needs of families and the community change, for example, as a result of demographic shifts. To provide a high quality program, an organization must continually monitor itself, make changes, and evaluate the impact of the changes. Well-documented and consistently reviewed policies and practices, in partnership with relevant stakeholders, contribute to the effective management and operation of the child care program.

## **6.1 Child care programs engage in ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes involving administrative staff, families, child care professionals, and other stakeholders to support continuous quality improvement.**

### *Indicators*

- a. Maintain awareness of emerging best practices.
- b. Establish and implement an annual program review/ evaluation processes.
- c. Include child care professionals, administrative staff, families, and other stakeholders in the program evaluation process and incorporate the ideas brought forward into the program's decisions and policies.
- d. Encourage participants in the evaluation process to identify the program's strengths and areas for improvement.
- e. Regularly review policies and procedures of the child care program.

- f. Implement changes to policies and/or procedures on an ongoing basis.
- g. Implement a process to monitor progress between review periods.
- h. Use the outcomes from the evaluation process to set future goals.
- i. Communicate outcomes of the evaluation process to administrative staff, child care professionals, families, and other relevant stakeholders.

## **6.2 Child care programs use a Quality Enhancement Plan to set program goals annually.**

### ***Indicators***

- a. Use a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) and action plans as part of the review and goal-setting processes.
- b. Involve administrative staff, child care professionals, families, and other stakeholders in a development of a written QEP.

- c. Ensure goals and action plans are measureable.
- d. Ensure the goals and action plans reflect the resources available and circumstances affecting the program.
- e. Monitor the progress in carrying out the actions of the QEP throughout the year.

## **6.3 Child care programs have sound administrative policies and procedures in place to support quality services.**

### ***Indicators***

- a. Embed best practices of child development into policies and procedures.
- b. Implement policies and procedures in daily practice.
- c. Ensure awareness and compliance of all legal requirements and responsibilities are maintained for program operation.



## Alberta Child Care Accreditation Standards

*Booklet | Created - December 2013 | Last Revised - September 2017*

### > For more information:

Association for the Accreditation of Early Learning and Care Services: [aelcs.ca](http://aelcs.ca)

Alberta Children's Services, Child Care Accreditation and Funding: [humanservices.alberta.ca/accreditation](http://humanservices.alberta.ca/accreditation)

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