



Questions & Answers Resource:

Amendments to the Child Care Ministerial Order

1. What is the Child Care Ministerial Order?

- The Child Care Ministerial Order is part of the legal framework under the *School Act*. It provides direction to boards of education on:
 - Reporting to the Ministry on child care policies and use of board property
 - Required content for board child care policies
 - Engagement requirements specific to child care on school property

2. What changes have been made to the Child Care Ministerial Order?

- The Child Care Ministerial Order was updated on April 20th, 2026.
- Boards are now required to describe how they will:
 - regularly identify suitable space and facilities in each elementary school in the district for child care programs, and
 - decide how and when those spaces could be used, based on need and availability.
- Boards must engage with individuals or groups who the board has identified as having an interest in the learning and well-being of students in the school district, and consider their feedback in the creation of their child care policies and the use of board property for child care. [Section 4](#) describes who boards must engage with and the Order now includes specific reference to Indigenous Education Councils and First Nations, including Modern Treaty Nations.

3. How can districts support “principles of Indigenous reconciliation in child care” and “inclusive child care”?

- The Child Care Ministerial Order requires boards to describe how they will support:
 - principles of Indigenous reconciliation in child care; and
 - inclusive child care.
- Boards should consider their role in supporting both board operated and third-party operated child care programs.



- In describing their approach, boards may wish to consider:
 - Building and maintaining respectful relationships with local First Nations, Indigenous communities, and Indigenous organizations to support a relational approach to reconciliation in child care.
 - Engagement with Indigenous Education Councils and First Nations, as outlined in the Order, to help inform local approaches.
 - How policies and practices can reflect inclusion of all children, including those with diverse abilities, cultural backgrounds, and support needs.
- Boards may consider the following information sources:
 - [Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#)
 - The BC [Early Learning Framework](#)
 - BC's inclusive child care [resources and supports](#)
 - BC's [Design Guidelines for Child Care Centres](#)
 - Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action
 - United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
 - Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA)

4. What does “assessing community need” mean?

- The Child Care Ministerial Order sets out that boards must describe their process for assessing community need for child care programs on board property. This means that boards must have a process to evaluate the demand for and availability of child care for children from birth to age 12 in the community.
- Boards may consider the following information sources:
 - District enrolment projections
 - Local Child Care Resource and Referrals (e.g., information regarding community demand and waitlists)
 - Local child care providers who provide services on or near school grounds (e.g., information regarding community demand, waitlists, and potential expansion planning)
 - Families whose children are enrolled in the district
- Where a process does not already exist, boards may consider an annual or regular survey of parents of children registered for kindergarten, up to those aged 12, between January and April to plan for the upcoming school year.



- In assessing need, boards may want to survey families at each school and consider:
 - Specific hours of operation for before- and after-school care (e.g., what's the demand for a 6:30am start time vs 7:30am start time?)
 - Days of care (e.g., how does demand vary over the school week? What is the demand for care on non-instructional days, including school breaks?)
 - How demand is influenced by cost of child care (e.g., what are other providers in the community charging? What are the CCFRI affordability benchmarks for the region? Consider communicating the anticipated fee at the start of the survey for families to keep in mind as they answer questions.)
 - The ages and needs of the children who need care (e.g., is demand concentrated in the primary years? Have families identified their child has a support need?)
 - Transportation needs (e.g., are families able to pick children up when the program closes?)
- Boards may want to consider the specific needs of families in their communities and ensure broad access to survey opportunities (e.g., offering the survey in alternate languages, providing electronic or paper options).
- Boards are encouraged to inform parents about the Province's [Affordable Child Care Benefit](#) which can help to offset the cost of child care.

5. How can districts identify “appropriate available space”?

- Appropriate available space is space on school property that could be used for child care, such as multipurpose space, enrolling classrooms, empty classrooms, gyms, libraries, hallways or alcoves, and outdoor spaces.
 - The *School Act* sets out that child care programs on school property must not interfere with educational activities (Section 85.4(b)).
 - Depending on the needs of the school community, before- and after-school care spaces could be shared spaces or dedicated spaces.
- Assessing appropriate available space in each elementary school will require working with district facilities personnel as well as school Principals and Vice Principals.



- Boards are encouraged to work with third-party operators that are already operating on school grounds in the district to understand the program needs and collaborate effectively in shared school spaces.
- In collaboration with Principals and Vice Principals, boards may want to develop a plan for each school that clarifies logistics, timing, expectations, and responsibilities in any shared use of a space. For example, planned extracurricular activities and anticipated school age care operations in a multipurpose space.
- BC's [Design Guidelines for Child Care Centres](#) provides considerations for navigating spaces for school age care on school grounds.

6. What are some considerations for “determining how and when” school spaces can be used for child care?

- Before creating new child care on school grounds operations, boards are encouraged to consider the operational viability of the program, whether board or third-party operated. Child care programs on school grounds must have sufficient enrolment to cover operating costs. Demand data from the needs assessment can help a district decide whether a program can run viably.
- When determining how and when to use spaces for child care, boards should:
 - Consider community need at the school level
 - Consider results of engagement with Indigenous Education Councils and others, as set out in the Ministerial Order
 - Collaborate with school-based employees as well as existing or planned third-party operators
 - Consider licensing more than one space for a single program (e.g., gym and library) to create program flexibility
 - Consider licensing enrolling classrooms (i.e., classrooms that are dedicated for K12 education during the day) for school age care on school grounds in collaboration with third-party operators and classroom teachers. This may look like:
 - Licensing multiple enrolling classrooms and rotating the school age care program through them over the course of the week
 - Licensing multiple enrolling classrooms and using one for before-school care and another for after-school care



- Scheduling the after-school care program to be outside for the initial 45 minutes of the program before arriving at the enrolling classroom for indoor activities
- BC's [Design Guidelines for Child Care Centres](#) has guidance on general planning for child care.
- BC's [Inclusive Child Care Toolkit](#) has information about designing spaces, programs and third-party contracts to include children of all abilities and backgrounds.

7. What type of engagement is expected under the Child Care Ministerial Order?

- The Child Care Ministerial Order requires boards to consider the results of engagement related to:
 - (1) the board's policy for child care, and
 - (2) the use of board property for child care.
- [Section 4](#) of the Order sets out that boards must engage and consider the results of those engagements with individuals or groups the boards have identified as having an interest in the learning and well-being of students in the district including
 - (a) employees of the board
 - (b) the Indigenous education council
 - (c) child care providers
 - (d) parents, and
 - (e) First Nations, including Treaty First Nations, and Indigenous communities, families, and service providers.
- While engagement practices will vary, consider:
 - Established connection points (e.g., Indigenous Education Councils, Parent Advisory Councils, staff meetings)
 - Giving participants enough notice and time for engagements
 - Providing opportunities to engage across multiple formats (e.g., surveys, meetings, written feedback)
 - Recurring or phased engagements that can be adjusted based on feedback



8. What is the Child Care Change Form?

- The Ministerial Order requires that if a board decides to change the use of board property that is being used for child care, they must provide the minister with written notification without delay and provide the required information.
- The ministry has created a standard [Child Care Change Form](#) to make sure the information received from school districts is consistent.

9. What is the purpose of the Child Care Change Form?

- The purpose of this form is to track changes to child care on school property. This will identify trends and allow the Ministry to offer support where possible to reduce the impact of the change on families, operators and districts.

10. When should the Child Care Change Form be completed?

- The Child Care Change Form must be completed when a board decides to change the use of board property currently used for a child care program.
- Examples include:
 - Relocating a child care program due to increased school enrolment.
 - Closure of a program where no operator is available to continue child care on school grounds.
 - Decisions to close or reduce board-operated child care programs or end agreements with a third-party provider.