



Provincial Office  
for the Early Years



**The B.C. Early Years Strategy:**  
*An Update*

May 2016

## Section 1:

# *What is the B.C. Early Years Strategy?*

The B.C. Early Years Strategy is the Province's long-term plan to ensure our youngest citizens have the best possible start in life. It was released in 2013 and builds on the Province's \$1-billion annual investment in the early years. It outlines a flexible and responsive approach to the changing needs of families in B.C., and it grounded in the following goals:

1. Improving **Access** – Helping to ensure that early years programs and services, including child care, are available for children who need them.
2. Improving **Quality** – Ensuring that programs and services are high-quality and evidence-based.
3. Improving **Affordability** – Enabling parent choice through strategic and sustainable financial supports.
4. Improving **Coordination** – Ensuring that government and community programs and policies are integrated to meet the needs of children and families.

The B.C. Early Years Strategy establishes a one-government approach to meeting these goals, informed by ongoing engagement with communities, other levels of government, and stakeholders.

## *The Provincial Office for the Early Years*

The Provincial Office for the Early Years (EYO) works across ministries to oversee the implementation of the B.C. Early Years Strategy. The EYO's goal is to move from strategy to action, implementing the B.C. Early Years Centre network and formulating a range of other ways to increase the quality, accessibility, affordability of early years services across B.C.

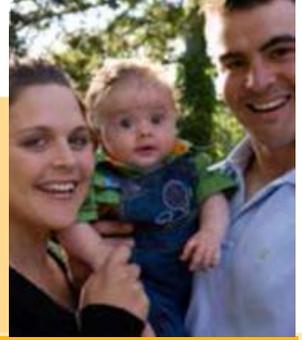
This work involves identifying and filling gaps in B.C.'s early years infrastructure. It also requires examining and challenging existing services and supports to ensure investments are made in a way that brings the greatest possible benefit to children and families.

Along the way, EYO staff engage widely with stakeholders and other levels of government to learn how we can best achieve the goals of the B.C. Early Years Strategy.

THE FAMILIES AGENDA  
FOR BRITISH COLUMBIA:  
Building a sustainable  
quality early years strategy  
to support BC families



BC'S FAMILY  
AGENDA



## *Vision, Mission, Values, and Mandate of the Provincial Office for the Early Years*

**Vision:** Partners at the local, regional, and provincial level effectively collaborate to provide integrated early years programs and services that lead to improved outcomes for children in BC.

**Mission:** Through leadership and effective relationship building, the Office encourages and supports partners to exercise their respective policy, legislative and funding levers to promote an integrated system of programs and services for children.

**Values/Principles:** the following principles guide the work of the Early Years Office

*Focus on Outcomes:* The Office puts children at the centre of all of its efforts and planning. A focus on improving outcomes for children underpins all aspects of work for the Office.

*Understanding imperative for collaboration:* Improving outcomes for children in BC requires joint effort and leadership of various partners. The Office strives to recognize the unique and potentially intersecting roles of various partners and encourages these partners to exercise their respective spheres of influence and authority to improve outcomes for children. The Office believes no single entity is solely responsible.

*Willingness to change:* The Office is committed to supporting **change** that results in improved outcomes for children and families, including when this change challenges a widely accepted status quo.

*Transparency:* The Office believes that open and transparent communication with partners and the public is the foundation of strong public policy and investment.

*Accountability:* Ongoing evaluation of policies and investments is necessary to ensure children and taxpayers receive maximum benefit from provincial decisions and investments.

### **Mandate:**

1. Oversee implementation of the Early Years Strategy;
2. Support the ongoing integration and coordination of early years programs and services in communities;
3. Ensure policy and programming at the provincial and community level is coordinated, evidence-based, and strategically aligned; and
4. Establish a network of Early Years Centres across the province.

## Section 3:

# Progress in 2015/16



### Improving Access

#### B.C. Early Years Centres

B.C. Early Years Centres help families access the services and information they need to help their children grow and develop. In 2015/16, 14 new Early Years Centres were added, bringing the total number of sites to 26. In addition, a third call for proposals was announced in 2015/16 and in early spring, it was announced that 21 additional B.C. Early Years Centres will join the network bringing the total to 47 sites. Ten of these new locations will serve Aboriginal communities. New Early Years Centres can be found in the following locations:

#### Phase II

- Abbotsford
- Bulkley Valley
- Cranbrook
- Fort St. John
- Francophone
- Invermere
- Kamloops
- Kitimat
- Newton
- North Kootenay
- Sea to Sky
- South Surrey-White Rock
- Tri-Cities
- Williams lake

#### Phase III (to be established over spring and summer of 2016)

- Port Alberni
- Grand Forks
- Kelowna
- Downtown Vancouver
- New Westminster
- North Shore
- Richmond
- Saanich
- Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows
- Penticton
- Clearwater

#### Phase III Early Years Centres serving Aboriginal communities:

- Adams Lake Indian Band
- Canim Lake First Nation
- Burns Lake
- Fort Nelson
- Houston
- Katzie First Nation
- Lytton
- N'amgis First Nation
- Taku River Tlingit First Nation
- Westbank First Nation

#### B.C. Early Years Centre Evaluation

The University of British Columbia's Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) has continued to conduct an evaluation of B.C. Early Years Centres. Information and reports will continue to be posted to [goo.gl/NYP2Ca](http://goo.gl/NYP2Ca). This research will help inform the development of new B.C. Early Years Centres.



### Early Childhood Educator Bursary Program

Under the BC Early Years Strategy, \$500,000 in new funds have been contributed to the Early Childhood Educator Bursary Program in 2015/16. This brings the total contribution to \$2 million since 2014/15. The priorities of this bursary program are to support Aboriginal students, students attending Aboriginal Early Childhood Educator programs, and students attending Infant Toddler Educator programs. Bursaries offset the cost of enrolling in accredited early childhood education programs. As of February 2016, 757 students have so far been supported. This includes 118 Aboriginal students.

### Child Care Major Capital Funding

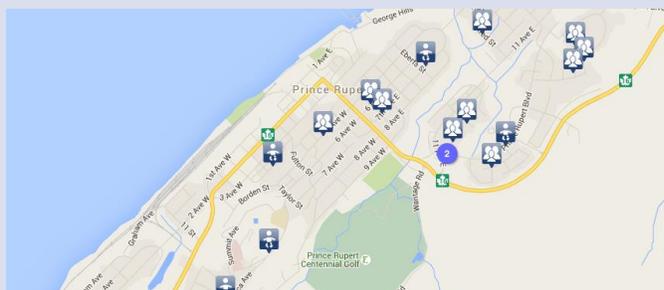
The Child Care Major Capital Funding program provides up to \$500,000 to selected child care operators to create new child care spaces. In the 2015/16, 1,488 spaces were funded, bringing the total new spaces funded under the Major Capital Program to 2,400 since 2013/14. The goal is to create 13,000 new spaces by 2020. Priority was given to facilities located on school grounds or co-located with other amenities.

In 2015/16, \$8.2M was awarded to build new child care spaces including:

- 8 projects creating over 430 spaces on school grounds
- 7 projects creating 245 spaces co-located with other family support programs
- 5 Aboriginal-focused projects creating over 200 spaces

### Enhanced Funding for Aboriginal Infant Development Program (AIDP) and Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program (ASCD)

AIDP offers home-based services to families from birth to age 5 who have (or are at risk for) development delay or disability. ASCD offers community-based supports delivered within a cultural model to families with extra support needs. Under the B.C. Early Years Strategy, these programs benefited from a \$2 million enhancement in funding beginning in the 2015/16 year to better serve Aboriginal families in many communities across the province. It is expected that with this investment, 400 more Aboriginal children will have access to these important early intervention services.



### Enhanced Online Child Care Map

In 2015/16, improvements to the Province's online child care map were developed. As of spring 2016, new features will help families search for child care near their home or work. Licensed child care operators will be able to profile their facility and indicating if they have vacant spaces.



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## Improving Affordability

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### Early Childhood Tax Benefit

As of April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015, families in B.C. began receiving the B.C. Early Childhood Tax Benefit to help with the cost of raising children under age 6. Approximately 180,000 families received benefits in the initial month. Benefits from this program are tax-free and are combined with the federal Canada Child Tax Benefit and the B.C. family bonus program into a single monthly payment that is intended to support families with the costs of raising a young family, which can include child care costs.

## Improving Quality

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### Child Care Resource and Referral Review

Child Care Resource and Referral program assists parents in finding and making informed choices about child care. The program also provides training, resources, and other support services to local child care providers (in particular, license-not-required child care providers). In 2015/16, the Provincial Office of the Early Years and the Ministry of Children and Family Development commissioned an independent review of the Child Care Resource and Referral program to better understand how the mandate and activities carried out under this program support the goals of the B.C. Early Years Strategy.



### Occupation Standards for Early Childhood Educators

The Province continues to work towards the development of a provincial curriculum guide that will ensure consistency across educational institutions that train early childhood educators and ensure new early childhood educators in B.C. have the competencies required to provide high quality, inclusive programming to children throughout the province. A curriculum guide will allow institutions to focus on the development of course content and delivery in relation to outcomes and competencies. This is an ongoing project.

### Review of StrongStart BC

StrongStart B.C. is a school-based parent/child drop-in program for children aged from birth to age five. There are 326 programs in operation across the province. In 2015/16, the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Office for the Early Years partnered to undertake a review of StrongStart B.C. The review will help the Province fully understand the impact of the program to various populations, including children, caregivers, and the community. It will also identify how StrongStart B.C. works with community partners like family resource programs. The review should be complete by late Fall 2016.

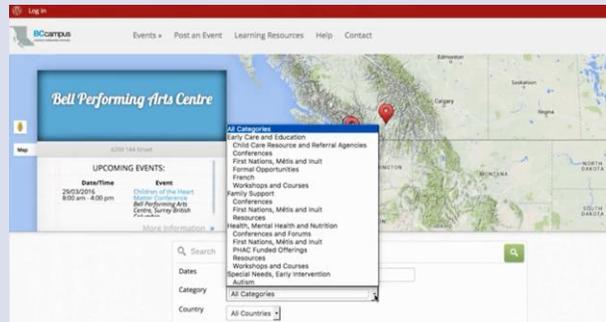


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## Professional Development Web Portal

In 2015/16, the Provincial Office for the Early Years commenced the development of an online Professional Development Portal for early childhood educators and others employed in the child care sector (e.g. behavioural interventionists and licensing officers).

The portal will help users find quality learning opportunities and to communicate with one another. It will allow them to search by community, key term (e.g., child care or mental health), key competency, or date range. Professional development providers will be able to post learning opportunities and indicate fees, intended learning outcomes, and other details.



The Professional Development Web Portal will increase access to and awareness of professional development opportunities, helping to build workforce capacity. It will coordinate the multitude of training opportunities offered by a multitude of funders and in the process, will help realize efficiencies by giving training providers a clear picture of the learning opportunities planned for their area, redundancies will be avoided.

A pilot version of the portal will be operational within one year, and will incorporate ongoing user research and increased functionality over time.

## Improving Coordination

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### Review of Local Early Years Planning

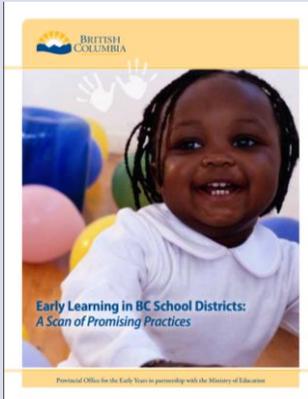
In 2015 the Provincial Office for the Early Years undertook a review of local early years planning initiatives. The purpose was to identify both strengths and opportunities that will support the development of a new model of planning that has greater potential to make positive impact on child outcomes across the province. A copy of a report on our findings will be made available on the Provincial Office for the Early Years website.

### Superintendent of the Early Years

In April 2015, a new position—the Superintendent of the Early Years—was established. The Superintendent is a joint appointment by the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Office of the Early Years. The work of the Superintendent is to lead the development of high impact strategic stakeholder relationships across school districts in support of the BC Early Years Strategy.



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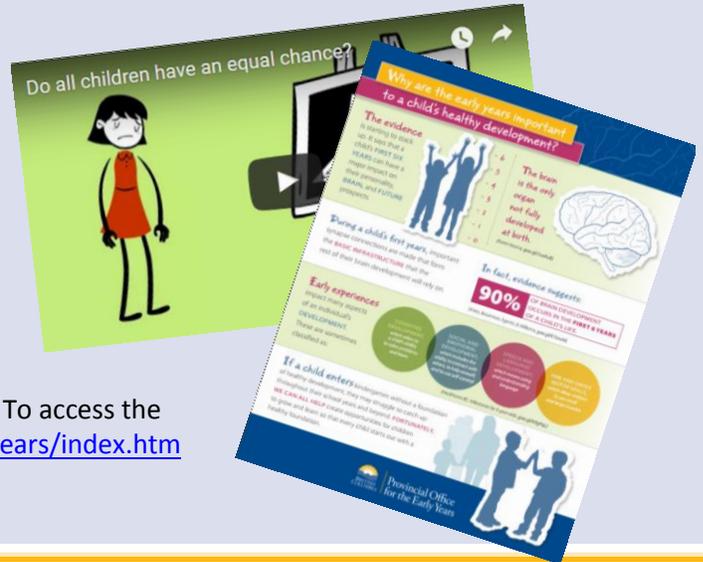


### Scan of School District Promising Practices

In Fall/Winter of 2015, the Superintendent for the Early Years conducted interviews with District Superintendents in all 60 school districts. The purpose was to identify the programs, policies, and initiatives that each school district had in place related to the early years. Many promising practices were identified, including Kindergarten transition initiatives and space-sharing agreements. The purpose of the review and report is to share best practices and also to identify areas for further exploration. See [goo.gl/h90wcO](http://goo.gl/h90wcO) for a report describing these practices.

### New Multi-media Awareness Materials

Provincial Office for the Early Years produced three short videos with accompanying posters highlighting the importance of the early years. They are designed to appeal to an audience outside of the early years sector, and can be used by communities to heighten awareness and to entice new partners to become engaged in the early years. To access the materials, see our homepage: [mcf.gov.bc.ca/early\\_years/index.htm](http://mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_years/index.htm)



## Conclusion

The Provincial Office for the Early Years contributes its successes over the 2015/16 year to its many partners, including those at the community level. Staff from school districts, health authorities, service delivery agencies, local governments, and more have helped us understand how the B.C. Early Years Strategy can be designed and implemented to benefit families across the province.



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