

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Early Learning and Care What are we hearing?



JUNE 2020

People's experiences

- Even with affordable daycare, the hours of operation for most providers is based on the traditional 9-5 work model, with most programs ending at 6 p.m. Accommodation needs to be made for fluctuating work schedules. These challenges increase for a person with disabilities.
- With limitations to daycare options, it makes it difficult to find a full-time job, as there are no services after 6 pm.

Challenges and opportunities with COVID-19

- Children are at a higher risk of abuse because they are home all of the time. There is no escape or refuge. School was an escape for some kids.
- Food security for a lot of children is also an issue, as some are no longer receiving the food they need.
- There are no childcare services provided for parents who are going to work or going back to work.
- The numbers say that domestic violence has gone down, but this does not convey the truth as the people who would support or report are no longer in contact with families and children (i.e. teachers, counsellors, bus drivers, childcare providers, doctors, etc). The violence is now even more behind closed doors, as individuals are isolated with their abusers, potentially 24/7.
- Parents are overwhelmed helping children with schoolwork and managing access to, and affordability of, technology. These challenges increase when parents have additional barriers including language, lack of education and income.
- Uncertainty of ability to afford childcare - will the \$25 a day program continue after government review?
- It is difficult for kids to understand and interact with other people due to the non-verbal communication that is missed due to masks.
- The default of having family help with childcare is removed because of COVID.
- Sexual health clinics were closed, family planning was put on pause for many. Birth control is not covered by income supports.

What's needed

- Sending families emergency kits for children i.e. diapers, books, activities for the children and parents.
- Job providers may need to create onsite childcare services for their employees.
- Long term, there needs to be a national daycare strategy that addresses the diverse needs of parents, including flexible daycare hours.

Enough for All Lever of Change - Early Learning and Care
Quality care environments can contribute to children's growth and development, which in turn helps prevent intergenerational poverty. Easy access to care also helps increase families' capacity for gainful employment. Calgarians deserve improved access to affordable, quality child care options that cater to the diversity of the city.

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