



**FORT MCMURRAY
EARLY YEARS
COALITION**

2016

Childcare Needs Assessment

Introduction to EYC

The Early Years coalition serves as an advisory group to Early Childhood Coalitions of Alberta. They are committed to providing an on-going structure for sharing of information resource building and creating stronger connections among the early years stakeholders in the community. The coalition works to bring awareness and education to the community at large on the importance of the early years.

Vision Statement:

A community of united voices empowering children and families to ensure healthy child development & knowledge for children, parents, caregivers, teachers, and community through an adaptable and progressive child focused network.



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Mission:

To ensure healthy child development knowledge for children, parents, caregivers, teachers and community.

Goals:

- Incorporate the priorities of the coalition into the everyday work of the membership.
- To deliver key messages in our community that relate to the 5 developmental areas of the child:
 - Physical Health & Well-being
 - Social Competence
 - Emotional Competence
 - Language and thinking Skills
 - Communication skills & General Knowledge

Needs Assessment rationale

In May 2016 the entire population, 80,000 people, were evacuated from the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo due an out of control wildfire, 2700 structures burnt. A state of emergency lasted over 5 months and a gradual reentry was staggered over a period of months starting in June. Multiple areas of town were drastically affected with many homes lost to fire. After reentry many childcare providers faced a changed situation as they dealt with loss of staff, loss of families in programs, as well as some dealing with loss of center. In November 2015 a subcommittee of the Early Years coalition met to assemble local data to inform decision makers about the status of childcare in the community of Fort McMurray. This needs assessment was identified during this subcommittee meeting.



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Methodology

Licensed childcare facilities and daycares were connected with and asked to answer a short survey.. Centers were approached by members of the Early Years coalition and then all information was collated into one document.

<http://asset.rmwb.ca/files/RMWB-Re-entry-Timeline Print.pdf>

Nine Centers were approached in total. Two centers were unable to contribute at this time and presently Northlands School board does not provide Out of School care. (centers in blue were unable to contribute at this time):

- The YMCA, connected to the Public School Board
- Fort McMurray Catholic School Board
- Wheaton Penney Childcare Centre
- Children 1st Childcare Centre
- Child Development Day homes
- Fort McMurray Montessori Academy
- The Boys and Girls club
- Northlands School district



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Needs Assessment findings

Centre vacancies

Five childcare providers were able to provide information. These five providers represent 57 centers (Including childcare centers and day homes) In total there were 126 vacancies in all of the child care center.

Waitlist

Currently there is waitlist for all centers, and all of them are extensive. Generally speaking there is a much higher need for childcare for children under 19 months. In Fort McMurray there are over 522 children waitlisted as of this Needs Assessment. 231 of those waitlisted are under 19 months.



Staff vacancies

At the time of the survey there were 23 staff vacancies from the five childcare providers. Every center expressed a challenge in finding qualified staff to fill vacancies.

The stories

Centers

“Two Out of School Care programs were closed due to the wildfire. This affected 55 childcare spaces that have had to be redistributed to serve community, including one that is currently running out of a library space.”

“We had 2 staff not return, combined with the closure of 2 programs we hired 2 new full time staff.”



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“We could use about 3 more staff but we are having a very hard time finding qualified workers.”

“Some of our employees are not coming back because they themselves cannot afford childcare, especially if they have multiple children.”

“We lost the majority of our staff to the fire”

“We lost good staff to the fire”

“We get resumes from fast food workers, about 10/100 have ECE qualifications.”

“Huge demand for care for younger children. We can’t meet those needs”

“We can’t meet need for care for younger children because the ratios are low and we can’t make money on that age group.”

“We had a center that would be able to care for 66 children be unable to open. We would need 10-11 staff to operate”

“We struggle to find staff on non-instructional Fridays as we operate for 12 hours and we typically only operate 7 hours a day.”



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Day home

Infant/toddler spaces – I find it has always come to personal preference in a DH. We have a lot of immigrant/ESL DH providers and I find that parents are reluctant to use these providers due to language not being the first language or sad to say the cultural barrier. Even though we tell the parents that the child care the DH providers provides is very nurturing and quality they will choose another option.

Preschool spot - - these are spots are open due to transportation to and from epp/ecdp. or most children will attend DC centers to assist preparing children for school we find. Again, the cultural barrier.

DH providers most of our DH's came back to re-open only about 5 didn't return or closed for other reasons. We are continuing to re-open more homes and are seeing a child care need for January 2016 with infants / mother's returning to work.



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