



Working together for a community based, non-profit child care system that is high quality, affordable, accessible, publicly funded and accountable.

CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS CONSIDERING COMMERCIAL CHILD CARE

Who owns and operates child care can make a significant difference to the quality of the service. A strong body of evidence consistently shows that for-profit child care is generally of lower quality than public and non-profit child care.

The differences between these business models are found in areas that matter very much for children – overall quality scores, health and safety practices, compliance with regulations, and staff training, wages, benefits and retention rates.

While we all expect that the women and men who work with young children have the best interests of children at heart, it is the case that the prime duty of commercial child care companies is to maximize return on investment so that profits are distributed to investors or to individuals holding shares. In other words, their prime duty is to make money. Expenditure on things like wages and benefits are often minimized while as much revenue as possible is extracted from parent fees. In commercial operations, the business of providing child care is a means to an end rather than an end in itself. This is not the case in the non-profit and public sector where the only goal is the delivery of quality care.

Commercial child care – specifically child care chains – are growing in Canada. And, since the demand for child care is greater than the supply, parents may consider using these services. When looking for child care all parents want to ensure that the service they choose is safe, nurturing and educational. There are some excellent tools to help parents choose child care, including two provided by the province of British Columbia:

- [Parent's Guide to Selecting Childcare](#)
- [Choosing Child Care](#)

But parents should ask some additional questions when considering a commercial chain. These questions relate specifically to wages and benefits, staff stability and continuity, credentials and compliance with regulation. They directly relate to quality.

Staff Credentials

- Do all of the staff hold a valid license to practice, issued by the province of BC? If not, are some staff working under an exemption (which means they have not completed the training necessary for the job)?
- Is this license posted for each staff member?
- If your child is under the age of 3, do a significant number of the staff hold an additional license for infant and toddler care?
- Do all staff have a current first aid certificate posted?
- Do all staff have a Criminal Record Search as required in BC?
- Do any of the regular staff have training to work with children who have special needs?

Staff Stability

- How long have the staff worked for the program?
- How many of the staff are permanent employees?
- How many of the staff are casual, on call, or on a short-term contract?
- Is there a core staff team who will work with your child every day, or do staff rotate through other programs?

Staff Wages and Benefits

- What is the regular hourly wage for the staff? The Early Childhood Educators of BC – the organization advancing early childhood education and educators – recommends a starting wage of \$20 per hour plus benefits.
- Are wages similar to those paid in other child care services in the area?
- What benefits are provided for the staff?
- Do staff have paid professional development days?

FEES

- What are the fees parents pay?
- Are they about average for child care programs in the area? If they are higher, why?
- If staff wages are comparatively low but parents fees are comparatively high... why?
- Are there any extra fees charged, and if so, what are they for?

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- What opportunities are there for parents to be involved at this centre?
- Are there regular Parent Meetings?
- Are there regularly scheduled conferences with parents?
- When requested, are parents provided with a copy of the program's most recent report from the Community Care Licensing Officer?
- Do parents have access to the program's budget and financial statements?

Parents are encouraged to ask these questions when considering which child care service to choose for their family.

Parents should also know that there are better solutions. Parents can read and endorse our "Community Plan" for a high quality, affordable, accessible system that can work for BC children and families: <http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/plan/>

Then, parents can advise their local politicians about the need for public investment in a quality, non-profit and public child care system.

More information regarding public, non-profit child care can be found at: <http://www.cccabc.bc.ca/> and <http://childcarecanada.org/>