



Chapter Two

Programs & Services For Children

To be included and happy, your child needs what every other child needs: acceptance in the group, support, individual attention, and respect for their learning style. Children thrive in environments where they feel accepted for who they are. Just like other kids, children with disabilities do not need labels, separate activities or sympathy. They need to have the same opportunities that other children have to explore, learn and make friends in a safe environment.

2.1 The Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECIP)

The Early Childhood Intervention Program (ECIP) is a program for families with children 6 and under who have a disability or who are at risk of having a developmental delay. ECIP assists families in three key ways: child development, parental support, and community support. ECIP is family-centered, making sure that parents are included in all aspects of their child's program.

Eligibility: Children do not require any diagnosis. Eligibility is determined through a screening process that includes a home visit. If your child is eligible, you will have access to early intervention support with a trained Early Childhood Consultant (ECC) who will help to identify and to implement goals, as well as inform you about other services available for your child. You can obtain program services by direct referral, by contacting the local ECIP office yourself, or through a referral by a doctor, nurse, psychologist, therapist, social worker, or community agency. Since there is often a waitlist, ECIP advises families to connect with them as soon as possible.

- **Child Development Services:** ECIP provides each child a fun, unique program that encourages development and learning. Your family and the ECC assess your child's abilities and determine which skills to work on. Together, you set developmental goals and plan strategies to help your child succeed. There are typically two home-based visits per month in order to work on the identified goals and monitor progress. Between ECIP sessions, parents work with their child on specific tasks.
- **Parental Support Services:** ECIP workers use their experience to work with children with disabilities and enhance the natural skills that each parent has. There are educational and networking opportunities offered through ECIP. As a family-friendly program, ECIP works to adapt to each family's needs, resources, cultural values, schedules and responsibilities. The ECC can also refer you to other services and help to develop a team of service providers to assist in maximizing your child's development. In addition, when your child is going through a transition such as starting in a center-based program, the consultant can help you plan the process and share important information so that the transition goes smoothly.
- **Community Support Services:** ECC's are advocates in the communities they work in, bringing awareness about inclusion and gaps in services for children with disabilities. Many workers have helped to develop better early childhood services, especially in rural areas, by increasing public access to disability-related materials and offering training sessions to early childhood workers.



2.2 KidsFirst

KidsFirst is an early intervention program that is available in targeted communities. This federally funded and provincially run program gives vulnerable families in Saskatchewan the knowledge and tools needed to support the development of their child. While KidsFirst does not specialize in early intervention for children with disabilities, it offers home visits, early-learning opportunities, parenting courses, referrals to various supports in your community, as well as mental health and addiction services. Contact the Ministry of Education Early Years branch to learn more about the program.

Eligibility: You must be pregnant or have a child under 24 months and live off-reserve.

Services:

- Support from a home visitor who assists child development, parenting, and connecting to the community.
- Help to access services such as childcare and parent support groups.
- Early learning opportunities for children.
- Help regarding literacy, nutrition, transportation and specialized counseling services.

2.3 Preschool

Preschool, nursery school and playschool all refer to daytime programs that allow children to learn while they play. Preschool can be a great experience for your child if you prepare yourself and prepare the people who will be working with your child. When you are looking for a preschool, you may want to ask about their experience with children with disabilities. If they have no experience working with a child with an intellectual disability, you can help them understand the benefits of inclusion not only for your child, but also for the other children in the preschool.

If there is any hesitancy from the preschool director, do not be discouraged. They may be concerned that there are not enough staff to support your child's needs. It helps to have funding in place to ensure that your child receives the necessary support. If an assistant is required, you can reach out to your local school division to request funding.

2.4 Daycare

Finding a suitable daycare provider that suits your family's needs and provides the necessary supports for your child can be challenging. It is important to be as proactive as possible; many daycare providers have waitlists so you may want to begin inquiring early. Some parents find a good fit in a private caregiver and do not use a licensed daycare. Other parents have found a licensed daycare that understands inclusion and is willing to accommodate their child.

Choosing The Right Daycare

If you have an ECIP consultant, they will find programs and advise you on which ones might be best for your child. If you do not have an ECIP consultant, asking other parents or early childhood workers will allow you to find the best possible program for your child. The Licensed Child Care program of the Ministry of Education sets minimum standards and provides a yearly list of licensed daycare centres on their website. If you want to ask which daycares

are open to accepting children with disabilities, you can call a local child daycare branch (contact information is at the end of the chapter). They have information about which daycares have spots specifically for children with disabilities.

Child Care Subsidy

Daycare is a huge expense for many families. The Ministry of Social Services offers a Child Care Subsidy through the Child Care Subsidy Office. A Child Care Subsidy is a monthly subsidy that helps Saskatchewan families meet the costs of licensed childcare. Subsidies are provided directly to childcare facilities to reduce the fees charged to eligible parents. Subsidies vary on a sliding scale with income - the lower the income, the higher the subsidy. Childcare subsidies are only available for services provided in childcare facilities licensed by the Early Learning and Childcare Branch of the Ministry of Education. The subsidies are only available if you use licensed childcare 36 hours or more per month for a child who is not in school, or 20 hours or more for a child in grade one or higher.

Eligibility:

- Have lawful custody of a child under the age of 13 years or a child who have a disability under the age of 15. Children with disabilities can be in a licensed daycare and are eligible to receive childcare subsidies until they reach their 15th birthday.
- Use a licensed childcare facility.
- Be residents of Saskatchewan.
- Have a valid reason for care such as employment, education, or special health needs.

Child Care Inclusion Program

If you have found a good daycare, but the daycare feels that they are unable to provide additional supports for your child, you can apply for funding through the Child Care Inclusion Program. An early childhood professional such as an ECIP consultant or a child psychologist can make the referral for the funding. They need to assess your child and determine that there is a need for additional supervision, guidance, or assistance.

Eligibility: The daycare must be licensed and your child must attend at least 20 hours a month.

- **Individual Inclusion Grants:** these assist with the additional cost of supporting a child with diverse needs, to a maximum of \$300 per month.
- **Enhanced Accessibility Grants:** these assist with the additional cost of supporting a child with exceptionally high and diverse needs who requires extensive or one-on-one care beyond that which can be provided through an Individual Inclusion Grant. The level of funding must reflect the actual cost of the additional supports required, to a maximum of \$1,500 per month, as determined by the referring professional, the parents, and the childcare facility. To be eligible, the parent/guardian(s) of the child must be employed or enrolled in a recognized education program.
- **Adapted Equipment Grants:** these assist a childcare facility with the cost of adapted or specialized equipment necessary for the inclusion of a child with diverse needs. The maximum is \$600 per year or, in exceptional circumstances, \$1,200 per year.



- **Training and Resource Grants:** these assist a childcare facility with the cost of training and the resources necessary for the inclusion of a child with diverse needs, as determined by the referring professionals, the parents, and the childcare facility. Maximum is \$100 per year or, for enhanced accessibility, \$200 per year.

Troubleshooting

When a child has complex needs, it can be difficult to find a placement in a regular daycare. Some daycares in Saskatchewan have reserved spaces and specially trained staff who work with children with various disabilities. ECIP consultants generally help parents find daycare placements if they are having trouble, and will often have knowledge about what is available in your area. You can also call a program consultant at the Child Day Care program directly and ask if there are any reserved daycare spaces in your area. Part of their role is to be a resource for parents who are trying to find a placement for their child.

Government of Saskatchewan Child Day Care Regional Offices

Regina	(306) 787-4980	Saskatoon	(306) 933-6071
Moose Jaw	(306) 694-3644	Meadow Lake	(306) 236-7692
Swift Current	(306) 778-8531	North Battleford	(306) 446-7574
Weyburn	(306) 848-2497	Prince Albert	(306) 953-3612
Yorkton	(306) 786-5770	LaRonge	1-800-667-4380

2.5 Pre-Kindergarten Programs

The Ministry of Education funds educational programs for children with disabilities before they enter kindergarten. The educational goals of pre-kindergarten are to foster social, educational and language development through an experiential, child-centered program. Like early intervention, the goal is to focus on all aspects of development and offer the specialized supports that are necessary. There are limited numbers of Early Learning Intensive Support spaces available for children with complex needs. Contact your local school division to find pre-kindergarten programs. If you have an ECIP consultant, they can help your family with the transition into a pre-kindergarten, preschool or kindergarten setting.

2.6 Assessments

Before the school division provides funding, they may request to test your child in order to determine what their needs are. Since this is the first assessment in the school system, it is important that the assessment focus on strengths as well as needs, as it should provide a full and balanced picture of your child. Pre-K documents are now required to be placed in your child's official file, known as a cumulative file, under a Ministry of Education assigned student identification number. This assessment can also be used to determine if your child is eligible for support from Community Living Service Delivery (CLSD). If so, your family can request funding for respite and your child will be eligible for other types of support at age 18. If your child was already assessed, either with a private psychologist/psychiatrist, or at an assessment and service centre, such as the Alvin Buckwold Child Development Program in Saskatoon or the Wascana Rehabilitation Centre in Regina, then this assessment could also be used.