

Day Care Workers

Ongoing Training

Opportunity Report

Prepared for the
Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

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Introduction

This report has been undertaken to determine the training opportunities that exist in the area of ongoing training, post-diploma or otherwise, for day care workers. In particular, we are examining the extent to which such training would be supported by day care operators.

Methods

The bulk of the information in this report comes from a survey of directors of the 33 day care centres advertised in northern Alberta Yellow Pages. Of the centres contacted, 19 responded to our survey, either by fax or over the telephone. Further information comes from interviews with personnel at Alberta Family and Social Services, Day Care Staff Qualifications.

Employment and Training Levels

The day care centres surveyed had anywhere from 4 to 20 employees, with most employing 7 or 8 child care workers. The average of 8.7 staff suggests a total of 287 people working in the field in the 33 listed centres. Overall employment levels are likely to remain fairly stable over the next few years; however, the very high rate of turnover in this industry (about 40% per year) ensures that the demand for trained personnel will remain strong.

Alberta Family and Social Services (F&SS) has established a system of 3 certification levels for day care workers, based on education. Level 1 employees must have taken a 45 hour course in Early Childhood Development (ECD). For Level 2 an employee must have completed a certificate program or first year of a diploma program in ECD. Level 3 certification is accorded those who have completed diploma or who have a Bachelor of Education degree with some specialization in ECD. Day cares pay scales are generally based on the employee's level of certification and experience.

According to F&SS regulations, 25 % of staff within any given facility are required to have level 2 standing or higher and program directors need level 3. Day cares can receive exemptions from this if staff members are taking courses toward achieving the needed level. For example, a person with level 2 certification may work as a director if she is taking evening courses toward her diploma.

Across Alberta, F&SS figures show that 29% of day care workers currently hold level 2 or 3 certification, with the rest at level 1. This suggests that the regulations are being met; however, only 60% of program directors have level 2 or 3. This latter figure implies that many program directors need further training in order to meet provincial regulations.

Available Training

Early Childhood Development (ECD) certificate and diploma programs are available throughout northern Alberta. All northern colleges except for Fairview offer certificate programs and most offer diplomas. In addition, Grant MacEwan Community College offers a post-diploma, part-time program in Early Childhood Administration. ECD training is also available at many colleges in southern Alberta.

This training, while widespread, does not fill the needs of day cares everywhere. Directors in Lloydminster would like to see full 2-year programs available, and in Peace River there is no local training, making it hard to find qualified staff.

Demand for Continuing Training

Five of the 19 respondents reported that none of their staff had expressed any interest in further training. All others stated that at least some of their staff were interested in improving their skills through ongoing training.

Day care directors were asked which courses they would like to see made available to their employees. The most popular subject areas were:

- Administration (9 respondents)
- Special needs children (5)
- Early Childhood Services (ECS) (4)
- Programming (3)
- Discipline and behaviour (3).

Other subjects mentioned include dealing with parents, infant care, multi-cultural issues, child development and child assessment

Employer Support for Training

Pay scales in day care, particularly in those run privately for profit, are generally quite low. This limits the money that day care workers have available to spend on elective training. As a result, some support from employers is necessary for most staff to be able to continue their training. Most of the day care directors surveyed said that they were willing to provide some form of support for staff training (see Table 1 below). Twelve of them said that they were willing to pay the full cost of courses at least “in some cases.” Sixteen said that they would pay part of the cost. Eighteen directors stated a willingness to arrange for in-service training and 14 would be willing to provide time off work for training in at least some cases.

Table 1. Employer Support for Training

As an employer, are you willing to support ongoing training for your staff by:	Yes	No	In some cases	no response
Paying the full price of courses	3	6	9	1
Paying part of the cost of courses	7	2	9	1
Arranging for in-service training	14	0	4	1
providing time off for staff to take courses	7	4	7	1

While these results seem to show strong employer support for training, many respondents added the qualifier “if funds allow” to their answers. Most employers would like to encourage their staff members to improve their skills, but they often cannot afford to help pay for courses or to hire occasional staff to fill in for those away taking courses. A study conducted recently by Alberta Family and Social Services found that most day care operators supported the idea of training standards and improved training for day care staff, but were reluctant to pay for that training. In fact, provincial authorities have difficulty convincing some day care operators to ensure that their staff have the minimum training requirements.

Implications for Training

The strong support expressed for ongoing training suggests that there is a potential market for courses in such areas as administration and special needs children; however, the frequent lack of funds to back up this support suggests that the market is limited. Cost and time constraints will be significant limiting factors in any day care centre’s decisions regarding staff training. Any courses offered will have to be inexpensive and short.

The most promising opportunities in the training of day care workers appear to lie in two areas:

- In-service training, primarily for level 1 day care workers in such areas as special needs children, discipline and behaviour and dealing with parents.
- Evening courses geared toward day care directors. These could include classes in administration as well as second-year diploma courses for those working toward their level 3 certification.

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