



March 9, 2016

BCACDI Position Document – Funding for Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development

The BC Government has budgeted millions of dollars to support the creation of more child care spaces through a major capital grant program: <https://news.gov.bc.ca/stories/apply-now-148-million-now-available-for-child-care-providers>. Our Association welcomes measures that will improve access to child care for BC families; however, the creation of spaces alone presents several challenges that Government has not yet addressed and will impact the potential success of the grant program. In particular:

- Access to new spaces for all children and youth in BC
- Availability of trained staff to provide quality care
- Viability of programs once they are in operation
- Lack of additional funding for those children who require extra support

BCACDI, in collaboration with representatives from the Supported Child Development Program and Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program, completed some data collection in the winter of 2015/16 with the intent to get a sense of the current landscape of SCDP and ASCDP services across the province.

Access for all Children and Youth in BC

Government has two key programs designed to support children and youth with special needs who require support to access child care spaces: Supported Child Development Programs (https://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs/scd.htm), and Aboriginal Supported Child Development Programs (https://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs/ascd.htm). Both provide a range of support and consulting services to enable children and youth with special needs to attend child care or preschool, thus providing their parents with opportunities to participate in the workforce or pursue further education. Every child has the right to experience participation and inclusion in child care and preschool settings regardless of any challenges they may have, and these programs provide that opportunity. Unfortunately, access to these programs is a serious issue in communities across BC. Supported Child Development Programs have not seen an increase in base contract funding to address wait times or expand services since 2009. Many Aboriginal Supported Child Development Programs are still developing their capacity to deliver “full ASCD services” in BC which in turn limits the full range of culturally appropriate, quality programming for Aboriginal children and their families; many of which have complex and compounded needs.

“Clients are waiting 5 months; this is too long - many children do not receive support from a program assistant, receive fewer hours than they need, or share support in groups of up to 5 children.”

BCACDI is a provincial non-profit organization, founded in 1996, which provides advocacy and opportunities for collaboration to member agencies throughout British Columbia. Member agencies are non-profit, accredited, and provide diagnostic, developmental, intervention and support services for children and youth with special needs and their families.



Wait Times in BC – Supported Child Development Program

The survey sent to Supported Child Development focused on access issues. 35 programs responded for a response rate of 73%. More than half of the respondents (55%) indicated families accessing their program waited longer than 1 month, and 20% had a wait time of greater than three months. Wait times negatively impact the ability for parents of children and youth with special needs to access the workforce or pursue studies. Further, it decreases the opportunity for children and youth with special needs to participate in an inclusive environment where they have the potential to build relationships with their peers and be supported to reach their fullest potential. At this time, Government is increasing the number of child care spaces in BC, yet has not committed to increasing the base contract funding for Supported Child Development. Their decision to not effectively fund these programs will ensure wait times remain unacceptable, and that new child care spaces being created in this Province through their major capital funding initiative are not equally accessible for children and youth with special needs.

“Aboriginal families have high needs and often require more supports outside of the child care setting needs. It takes more time to be able to connect with the families for initial and ongoing services.”

Wait Times in BC – Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program

The survey sent to Aboriginal Supported Child Development was intended to collect data to look at the capacity of this program. Specifically, looking at current caseloads, wait lists for services, and the mechanisms in place to collect and share data. 30 programs responded for a response rate of 77%. The Aboriginal Supported Child Development Program is still in its infancy in BC. It hasn't been in operation for nearly as long as Supported Child Development with some programs starting in 2005. ASCD is still growing in terms of the number of programs and their resource levels. There are many factors impacting the implementation of this program that demand a patient and enduring approach to ensure aboriginal children and families receive supports that are culturally relevant and responsive. Aboriginal children and families continue to be impacted by a large number of risk factors that increase the vulnerability of Aboriginal children that can include: remote or isolated communities with limited services, poverty, single parent families, grandparents raising grandchildren, families impacted by complex generational trauma resulting from residential school, increased domestic violence, more children in ministry care, as well as higher suicide, unemployment and incarceration rates to name a few. Consultants working in this program spend a considerable amount of time establishing trust and relationships within aboriginal communities, and focusing on activities to build capacity. Thus the program itself is not yet in a position to allow for wide spread data collection regarding wait times for access. However, resources are critical to ensure Aboriginal communities have the capacity to build a strong foundation for this program that will positively impact the lives of aboriginal children and youth with special needs accessing child care and preschool programs.

BCACDI is a provincial non-profit organization, founded in 1996, which provides advocacy and opportunities for collaboration to member agencies throughout British Columbia. Member agencies are non-profit, accredited, and provide diagnostic, developmental, intervention and support services for children and youth with special needs and their families.



The Consultants Perspective

Data is critical so that we can better understand the programs and services being delivered to children and youth with special needs and their families, but it is also valuable to share stories from those working on the front line. Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development consultants are dedicated and passionate professionals making a difference every day in the lives of children and youth in BC. A recent survey of consultants in both programs revealed some critical points:

“Due to limited resources, all three year olds are no longer receiving one to one support in preschool programs”

“We no longer offer services to children 13-19 as our budget does not allow. We also do not offer services for school age children who have non-working parents. We do not provide services to kindergarten aged children who parents would like to delay a year as our budget does not allow”

- Difficult prioritization decisions being made in some programs due to lack of sufficient resources. Some groups (e.g. Kindergarten aged kids being held back a year, youth with special needs, etc.) are being denied access to services and supports to help them reach their full developmental potential

“It’s only February, and projections for 2016-2017 already indicate that demand for staffing supports will exceed the budget by about 17%; and this is just with currently funded and waitlisted children (not counting new referrals)”

- The Province’s priority to increase the number of child care spaces in this Province will very likely result in even more referrals to these programs as spaces will be available in communities where this previously wasn’t the case. Yet many existing programs are already under-resourced. Wait times and access issues will grow even more prevalent.

“Families need help with food, shelter, clothing and transportation. These issues are very common as well as needing help to register for kindergarten, registering for the food bank and other community resources”

“Children have lost their space when no support, or inadequate support has been provided - other children have withdrawn from programs, due to the lack of support for children who need it (ie they have been bitten, hit, etc), and parents witness behavior challenges and feel their child is at risk”

“Making do and watering down the service has been the norm for many years.”



BCACDI
The BC Association for Child Development and Intervention

- There are many families with children and youth with special needs just trying to meet basic needs. The trusted relationship consultants from these programs build can help connect these families with other services and supports in their communities.

“Extra support was not available this year for some 4 year-old children in both daycare and preschool therefore they may be entering Kindergarten without a preschool experience”

- Teachers were quite clear in their last contract negotiations that more funding was needed to support children and youth with special needs in the school system. If we provide effective supports to children with special needs before they enter school then they will have greater potential to develop the skills necessary to be successful entering Kindergarten, and require less support from the school system.

“We are working with very remote communities that require a lot of travel with very limited funds to provide for that travel and time. We are currently working on breaking into the communities and as you may or may not know remote communities can be hesitant to engage in new services. Our mandate is to focus on the reserves and building capacity amongst the early childhood educator already supporting the children in community. We have been attempting to run groups that will build a level of comfort with the communities as well as working with the health leads to build relationship”

- Relationship building is a key component to ensure success of community programs such as Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development. Programs must be adequately funded to allow for the complexities involved in establishing effective community relationships.

Next Steps for BC

Ensuring our Province has an adequate number of child care spaces to meet the needs of families in BC is vital community infrastructure. Access to quality early childhood development programming provides children with safe socialization and development environments while parents fulfill their employment or training obligations. However, these child care spaces should be accessible to all children in BC even if they require some additional supports to participate. This is why it is so critical that Government ensures adequate resources for the Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development Programs in this Province. Government has a Provincial plan in place to increase the number of child care spaces, but no Provincial plan to ensure equal access for all children and youth. This is unacceptable, particularly when BC has an existing and evolving infrastructure of programs for both aboriginal and non-aboriginal children and youth with special needs that have the expertise to support these kids in child care and preschool environments. Government must ensure a parallel increase in funding for both Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development so these programs are there to support children and youth with special needs to access all of the new child care spaces created through the capital grant funding program.

Thank you for reviewing this position document. Don't hesitate to contact BCACDI for any questions or further discussion on supporting children and youth with special needs to access child care and preschool settings in BC.

BCACDI is a provincial non-profit organization, founded in 1996, which provides advocacy and opportunities for collaboration to member agencies throughout British Columbia. Member agencies are non-profit, accredited, and provide diagnostic, developmental, intervention and support services for children and youth with special needs and their families.

Office of the Provincial Advocate
PO Box 29191 OKM, Kelowna, BC; V1W 4A7
Ph: 250.212.0305; E-mail: Jason@bcacdi.org; Visit: www.bcacdi.org



BCACDI
The BC Association for Child Development and Intervention

Regards,

A simple, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a few loops and a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jason Gordon, MHS, BScPT
Provincial Advocate, BCACDI

Acknowledgements

BCACDI would like to acknowledge Supported Child Development and Aboriginal Supported Child Development advisors and consultants that participated in the survey. Their daily work supporting children and youth with special needs in child care and preschool settings is invaluable.

BCACDI is a provincial non-profit organization, founded in 1996, which provides advocacy and opportunities for collaboration to member agencies throughout British Columbia. Member agencies are non-profit, accredited, and provide diagnostic, developmental, intervention and support services for children and youth with special needs and their families.

Office of the Provincial Advocate
PO Box 29191 OKM, Kelowna, BC; V1W 4A7
Ph: 250.212.0305; E-mail: Jason@bcacdi.org; Visit: www.bcacdi.org