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How to Start a Child Care Program in Vancouver



ChildCareBC

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Welcome to our comprehensive guide on starting a child care program in Vancouver! Whether you're an educator, community member, or organization interested in providing quality child care services, this document will walk you through the essential steps and considerations for creating a successful child care program that meets the needs of children and families in your community.

As you embark on this journey, it's important to note that many local and provincial resources are available to support you. These resources include BC's Early Learning Framework, information from the City of Vancouver, and Westcoast's own Administration and Management for Child Care Knowledge Base, which can be accessed at <https://bcearlyyearshub.ca/wccrc-knowledge-base/>. These resources offer valuable insights, guidelines, and best practices to help you navigate the complexities of starting and managing a child care program in British Columbia.

Licensed child care programs in British Columbia must adhere to B.C.'s Child Care Licensing Regulation, which outlines staff qualifications and ratios, play space safety, programming, record keeping, positive guidance, and health and hygiene rules. While meeting these regulations is essential, we also encourage you to strive for excellence beyond the minimum standards.

Quality child care programs create a warm and welcoming environment that focuses on the well-being and belonging of all children, physical accessibility, learning through play, exploration and creativity, opportunities for active play outdoors, positive interactions among children, warm interactions between staff and children, support for and communication with parents, and ongoing professional development of staff.

Throughout this guide, you will find valuable insights, resources, and strategies to help you create a high-quality child care program that makes a positive impact on the lives of children and families in your community.

Disclaimer:

The information provided in this document is intended to guide readers through considerations and steps involved in starting up a child care program in Vancouver, BC. It is important to note that regulations, laws, and guidelines related to child care may change over time. Therefore, readers are strongly advised to always consult with all relevant regulatory bodies, government agencies, and legal professionals to ensure they have the most current and up-to-date information regarding licensing requirements, health and safety standards, programming guidelines, record keeping practices, and other legal obligations. This document serves as a general overview and should not be considered a substitute for professional legal advice or regulatory guidance.

Step 1: Understanding the Need

Before diving into the intricate process of establishing a child care program in Vancouver, it's paramount to grasp the foundational understanding of the demand and support systems in place. Assessing the need for licensed child care services is not just a preliminary step; it's a cornerstone for creating a sustainable and impactful program. Through insights into government initiatives like ChildCareBC and collaborations with local regulatory bodies such as the Community Care Facility Licensing office, prospective providers can navigate the landscape of requirements and resources vital for delivering quality care. This initial step sets the stage for a thorough and informed journey toward building a child care program that truly meets the needs of children and families across communities in British Columbia.

- Learn about the demand for licensed child care programs in BC and the government's initiatives to support their development.
- Visit BC's Ministry of Education and Child Care website to read Our Plan: ChildCareBC.
- Understand the complexities of starting a child care program, including regulatory requirements and coordination with government authorities.
- Individuals who wish to open a daycare should email their requests to reachccfl@vch.ca. A representative will respond with the requested information, and a Licensing Officer will then continue the process.
- Get in touch with your local Community Care Facility Licensing office.

Resources:

Vancouver Coastal Health:

- Email: communitycare.licensing@vch.ca

Community Care Facilities Licensing

Vancouver Office: 1200-601 West Broadway
Vancouver, BC V5Z 4C2
Tel: 604-675-3800

- [Open a licensed child care facility](#)
- [Local Government Requirements: Handbook for Child Care Providers](#)
- [Child Care Licensing Regulation](#)
- [City of Vancouver Child Care Strategy, 2022](#)
- [Developing a child care centre in Vancouver](#)



Step 2: Identifying the Purpose and Goals

Embarking on the journey of establishing a child care program involves defining a clear vision and objectives. Follow these steps to identify the purpose and goals that will guide your program's development:

- **Define Your Program Philosophy:** Determine your child care philosophy, whether it's child-centered, Reggio-inspired, play-based, Montessori, or a blend of approaches. Consider how this philosophy will shape your curriculum and daily activities to meet children's developmental needs.
- **Understand Your Community:** Consider the unique needs and characteristics of your community. Engage with families, local organizations, and cultural resources to ensure your program resonates with and meets the diverse values and aspirations of the community.
- **Identify Age Groups:** Decide which age groups your program will serve. Tailor your curriculum and activities to meet the developmental milestones and needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers, or a combination of age groups.
- **Set Desired Outcomes:** Clarify the desired outcomes for children and families. This could include fostering a love for learning, promoting social-emotional development, building essential skills, and creating a nurturing environment that supports each child's growth.
- **Utilize Resources:** Refer to resources such as BC's Early Learning Framework to guide your program's goals and objectives. Incorporate best practices and research-based approaches into your planning process.

By following these steps and aligning your program's philosophy, age groups served, and desired outcomes with the needs of your community, you'll create a purpose-driven child care program that supports the holistic development of children and families.

Resources:

- [BC's Early Learning Framework](#)
- [BC Early Learning Framework: Resource List](#)
- [Understand the different types of child care in BC](#)



Step 3: Conducting Market Research

In the intricate landscape of child care, understanding the local demand is a pivotal step toward creating a program that effectively meets the needs of children and families. Step 3 focuses on conducting comprehensive research into the specific requirements of your community. This involves delving into factors such as the number of children in need of care, the demographics of the community, and the existing child care options available. By analysing this data, you can identify potential gaps or opportunities in the local child care market that your program can address, ensuring its relevance and impact. Additionally, reaching out to local stakeholders such as the school district and service agencies provides valuable insights and perspectives on child care needs, further informing your program's design and implementation. Utilizing resources like the City of Vancouver's Childcare Strategy, the Human Early Learning Partnership, and the Vancouver School Board's Childcare Facility Rental can enhance your research efforts and pave the way for a well-informed approach to addressing child care demands in your community.

- Research the local demand for child care services, including the number of children in need of care, demographics of the community, and existing child care options.
- Identify potential gaps or opportunities in the local child care market that your program can address.
- Contact your local school district.
- Contact local service agencies for thoughts on child care needs.

Resources:

- [City of Vancouver: Making Strides: Vancouver's Childcare Strategy](#)
- [Human Early Learning Partnership](#)
- [Vancouver School Board: Childcare Facility Rental](#)



Step 4: Developing a Business Plan

Transitioning from conceptualization to concrete implementation, Step 4 involves crafting a comprehensive business plan for your child care program. This essential document serves as a roadmap, outlining your program's mission, vision, goals, and operational intricacies in detail.

Key components to include in your business plan are:

- **Mission, Vision, and Goals:** Clearly define your program's purpose, long-term vision, and measurable goals that align with your mission of providing quality child care services.
- **Operational Details:** Outline the day-to-day operations of your program, including staffing requirements, curriculum implementation, administrative procedures, and quality assurance measures.
- **Financial Projections and Funding Sources:** Develop realistic financial projections, including startup costs, operating expenses, revenue streams, and potential funding sources such as grants, loans, or partnerships.
- **Marketing Strategies:** Identify target demographics, competition analysis, and marketing strategies to promote your program and attract families in need of child care services.
- **Timeline for Implementation:** Create a detailed timeline that maps out key milestones, deadlines, and tasks for the successful launch and ongoing management of your child care program.

In addition to these elements, research and incorporate steps to obtain a business license, insurance coverage, and necessary permits for your facility. Consider consulting with local government offices for insights on location suitability, space requirements, and regulatory compliance. Explore options for structuring your program as a non-profit or private group care entity, depending on your organizational goals and community needs.

Utilize resources like guides on writing business plans and administration and management policies specific to child care to ensure thoroughness and professionalism in your business plan development. This strategic planning phase lays the groundwork for a sustainable and impactful child care program that fulfills its mission while meeting regulatory standards and financial viability.

Resources:

- [How to Write a Business Plan](#)
- [Administration and Management for Child Care: Financial Policies](#)
- [Planning A Business](#)



Step 5: Securing Funding and Resources

One of the critical aspects of launching a successful child care program is securing the necessary funding and resources. In Step 5, you'll explore various avenues for financial support, leveraging government grants, loans, and community partnerships to bring your program to life.

Key considerations in this phase include:

- **Funding Opportunities:** Research and apply for available funding programs tailored to child care providers. This may include government grants like the ChildCareBC New Spaces Fund or initiatives such as the \$10 a Day ChildCareBC Centres, Child Care Operating Funding, Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative, and Early Childhood Educator Wage Enhancement programs.
- **Cost Assessment:** Conduct a comprehensive cost analysis covering expenses such as facility rental or purchase, equipment, supplies, staffing salaries, benefits, training, and administrative overhead. Factor in contingencies and long-term sustainability considerations.
- **Community Partnerships:** Explore collaborative opportunities with local organizations, businesses, and community groups. Partnerships can offer not only financial support but also access to resources, expertise, and shared networks beneficial for your child care program.
- **Government Support:** Stay informed about government policies, incentives, and resources available for child care providers. Leverage these support mechanisms to optimize funding and resource allocation for your program.

By strategically navigating funding opportunities and resource allocation, you can overcome financial barriers and build a strong foundation for sustainable and high-quality child care services. Utilize resources provided by entities like the City of Vancouver's funding initiatives for child care providers to maximize your funding potential and ensure a successful launch and operation of your program.

Resources:

- [City of Vancouver- Funding for child care providers](#)
- [ChildCareBC New Spaces Fund](#)
- [\\$10 a Day ChildCareBC Centres](#)
- [Child Care Operating Funding](#)
- [Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative](#)
- [Early Childhood Educator Wage Enhancement](#)
- [Start Up Grants](#)



Step 6: Meeting Regulatory Requirements

In Step 6, your focus shifts to ensuring compliance with the stringent licensing regulations and requirements governing child care programs in British Columbia. This critical phase is dedicated to familiarizing yourself with the comprehensive set of standards related to health, safety, staffing, and operational protocols established by government authorities.

Key actions to take include:

- **Understanding Licensing Regulations:** Thoroughly review the Child Care Licensing Regulation to gain a deep understanding of the specific requirements and standards applicable to your child care program. This includes aspects such as staff qualifications, child-to-staff ratios, health and safety protocols, programming guidelines, record-keeping practices, and operational policies.
- **Health and Safety Compliance:** Implement comprehensive health and safety measures to safeguard the well-being of children and staff within your facility. This includes adherence to sanitation practices, emergency preparedness plans, safe play environments, nutritional guidelines, medication administration protocols, and hygiene standards.
- **Staffing and Training:** Ensure that your staff members meet the qualifications and training requirements mandated by licensing regulations. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities to enhance their skills, knowledge, and capacity to deliver quality care and education.
- **Operational Standards:** Establish policies and procedures that align with regulatory standards, covering areas such as child supervision, discipline practices, transportation safety, parent communication, confidentiality, and incident reporting.
- **Fire Safety Compliance:** Contact your local fire department to obtain guidance and ensure compliance with fire safety regulations and protocols. This may include fire safety permits, inspections, emergency evacuation plans, and fire prevention measures tailored to your child care facility.

By diligently addressing regulatory requirements and implementing robust compliance measures, you demonstrate your commitment to providing a safe, nurturing, and legally compliant environment for children and families in your care. Utilize resources such as licensing regulations, fact sheets, and municipal checklists provided by entities like the City of Vancouver to navigate the regulatory landscape effectively.

Resources:

- [Child Care Licensing Regulation](#)
- [Fact Sheet- Obtaining a Licence](#)
- [City of Vancouver: Child Day Care Facility \(in an existing building\) Development Permit \(DP\) Checklist](#)
- [City of Vancouver: Apply for fire safety permits and inspections](#)
- [Applying For Your Child Care License](#)



Step 7: Designing and Setting Up the Space

Creating an inviting and enriching environment is paramount in providing quality child care services. Step 7 focuses on the thoughtful planning and design of a child-friendly space that prioritizes safety, comfort, engagement, and inclusivity for children of all ages and abilities.

Key considerations for designing and setting up the space include:

- **Layout and Furnishings:** Plan a functional layout that optimizes space utilization while allowing for clear sightlines and supervision. Choose age-appropriate furnishings, storage solutions, and learning centres that support various activities and learning experiences.
- **Play Materials and Sensory Play:** Incorporate a diverse range of play materials, including natural and recyclable items, to stimulate creativity, exploration, and sensory development. Include sensory materials like sand and water play areas to engage children's senses and promote hands-on learning.
- **Outdoor Space and Gross Motor Activities:** Designate ample outdoor space equipped with age-appropriate structures, equipment, and surfaces for gross motor activities and active play. Ensure safety measures are in place, such as soft ground coverings, spaces with shade and cover from weather, and secure fencing.
- **Accessibility and Inclusivity:** Create an inclusive environment that accommodates children with disabilities by ensuring accessibility features, adaptive equipment, and sensory-friendly design elements. Consider the principles outlined in the BC Early Learning Framework to guide your inclusive practices.
- **Quiet Area and Staff Space:** Allocate a quiet area within the space where children can engage in self-regulation activities or quiet play. Additionally, design a comfortable and functional staff space that supports collaboration, planning, and breaks for caregivers. Utilize resources such as the Childcare Design Guidelines provided by the City of Vancouver and consider consulting with Child Care Design Consultants listed in Appendix A, for expert guidance and recommendations. By integrating best practices in space design, sensory materials, outdoor play opportunities, and staff considerations, you create an environment that fosters holistic development, creativity, and well-being for children and staff alike.

Resources:

- [City of Vancouver: Childcare Design Guidelines](#)
- [Rules For Operation](#)
- [Design Guidelines for Child Care Centres \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://gov.bc.ca)

See [Appendix A](#) for a list of Child Care Design Consultants.



Step 8: Hiring and Training Staff

The success of your child care program hinges significantly on the quality and dedication of your staff members. In Step 8, the focus shifts to recruiting, training, and supporting qualified professionals who share a passion for early childhood education and align with your program's philosophy and values.

Key actions to take in hiring and training staff include:

- **Recruitment of Qualified Staff:** Seek out qualified and experienced staff members who hold relevant certifications such as Early Childhood Educator (ECE), Infant/Toddler Educator, Special Needs Educator, or Responsible Adult. Ensure candidates are passionate about early childhood education and demonstrate a commitment to providing high-quality care and education.
- **Comprehensive Training:** Provide comprehensive training programs that cover essential topics such as child development, curriculum implementation, positive guidance strategies, health and safety protocols, and cultural sensitivity. Offer ongoing professional development opportunities to support staff growth and enhance their skills.
- **Staff-to-Child Ratios:** Adhere to accurate staff-to-child ratios as mandated by regulatory standards. Ensure that staffing levels are adequate to provide attentive care, supervision, and support to children based on their age groups and needs.
- **Credential Checks and Certifications:** Conduct thorough background checks, including criminal record checks, for all staff members. Verify that supporting certificates such as first aid and food safety are up to date. Confirm that staff members hold the required qualifications and certifications for their respective roles within the program.
- **Ethical Standards and Philosophy Alignment:** Emphasize the importance of ethical conduct and professionalism by adhering to the Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Code of Ethics. Recruit staff members who not only meet regulatory requirements but also align with and value the beliefs and principles of your program's philosophy.

Utilize resources such as the Responsible Adult Fact Sheet, understand the different types of child care in BC guidelines, and administration and management resources specific to human resources in child care settings to guide your hiring and training processes effectively. By investing in qualified, trained, and ethically responsible staff members, you contribute to a positive and nurturing environment that supports children's holistic development and well-being.

Resources:

- [Fact Sheet: Responsible Adult](#)
- [Understand the different types of child care in BC](#)
- [Administration and Management for Child Care: Human Resources](#)
- [Early Childhood Educator Wage Enhancement - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)
- [ECE Code of Ethics](#)



Step 9: Developing Curriculum and Program Policies

Creating an effective child care program involves developing a curriculum that fosters children's learning and growth while establishing clear policies and procedures. Step 9 focuses on crafting a developmentally appropriate curriculum and program policies that support children's holistic development and ensure a safe, nurturing environment.

Key actions to take in this step include:

- **Developmentally Appropriate Curriculum:** Design a curriculum that aligns with the principles of BC's Early Learning Framework and supports children's learning across various domains such as cognitive, social emotional, physical, and language development. Incorporate play-based and hands-on learning experiences that cater to individual interests, strengths, and developmental stages.
- **Program Policies and Procedures:** Establish comprehensive policies and procedures related to health and safety, nutrition guidelines, discipline practices, parent involvement, communication protocols, and emergency procedures. Ensure that these policies reflect best practices, regulatory requirements, and the unique needs of the children and families in your program.
- **Individualized Care:** Tailor your program to meet the individual needs of each child, including those with diverse abilities, backgrounds, and learning styles. Provide differentiated instruction, support services, and accommodations as necessary to promote inclusivity and equity.
- **Family Partnerships:** Build strong, trusting partnerships with families by involving them in program decision-making, sharing information about their child's progress and experiences, and fostering open communication channels. Collaborate with families to support continuity of care and promote family engagement in their child's learning journey.
- **Structured Routines:** Establish structured routines for indoor and outdoor activities, mealtimes, rest periods, and transitions. Create a flexible schedule that allows for child-led exploration, group activities, quiet time, and weekly neighbourhood outings to enhance learning experiences and promote social interactions.

Utilize resources such as BC's Early Learning Framework and [Administration and Management for Child Care](#) guides specific to programming and curriculum development to inform your curriculum design and program policy development. By creating a well-rounded curriculum and implementing clear policies, you set the foundation for a high-quality child care program that prioritizes children's well-being, learning outcomes, and family engagement.

Resources:

- [BC's Early Learning Framework](#)
- [Administration and Management for Child Care: Programming and Curriculum Development](#)



Step 10: Marketing and Enrollment

Marketing your child care program effectively is crucial for attracting families and ensuring full enrollment. Step 10 focuses on developing a comprehensive marketing plan and implementing strategies to promote your program within the community.

Key actions to take in this step include:

- **Develop a Marketing Plan:** Create a marketing plan that outlines your target audience, messaging, promotional strategies, and timeline. Identify the unique selling points of your program, such as your curriculum, facilities, staff qualifications, and family-friendly policies.
- **Utilize Marketing Channels:** Utilize a mix of marketing channels to reach potential families, including social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), your program's website, printed materials like flyers and brochures, and participation in community events. Tailor your messaging to highlight the benefits and value of your child care program.
- **Engage with Local CCRC:** Contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Centre (CCRC) for support and resources related to marketing, enrollment, and community outreach. CCRCs can provide valuable insights, networking opportunities, and referrals to families seeking child care services.
- **Participate in Networking Events:** Engage in networking events, workshops, and community forums to connect with other child care providers, educators, and stakeholders. Networking opportunities can help you build relationships, gain visibility, and attract potential families to your program.

Utilize resources such as [Administration and Management Course](#) guides specific to community connections and enrollment strategies to enhance your marketing efforts and enrollment processes. By implementing effective marketing strategies and building strong connections within the community, you'll increase awareness of your child care program and attract families who align with your program's values and offerings.

Resources:

- [Administration and Management for Child Care: Community Connections](#)
- [Administration and Management for Child Care: Enrolment](#)



Congratulations on taking the first steps towards starting a child care program in British Columbia! By following the guidelines outlined in this document and seeking support from relevant stakeholders, you're on the path to creating a high-quality child care program that will make a positive impact on the lives of children and families in your community. Your dedication to understanding regulatory requirements, developing a purpose-driven curriculum, securing funding, hiring qualified staff, and implementing effective marketing strategies sets a strong foundation for success.

As you navigate through the intricacies of establishing your child care program, remember to stay informed, adaptable, and responsive to the needs of the children and families you serve. Building trusting relationships with families, engaging with community resources, and prioritizing child well-being and development will contribute to the long-term success and sustainability of your program.

This guide is a living document that will undergo continual review and updates to ensure that it provides the most current and relevant information and resources for starting a child care program in British Columbia. As regulations, best practices, and resources evolve over time, we are committed to regularly revisiting and revising this guide to reflect the latest developments in the child care industry. Our goal is to provide readers with accurate and up-to-date guidance that aligns with the ever-changing landscape of child care regulations, policies, and practices. We encourage readers to check back regularly for updates and revisions to ensure they have access to the most current information as they navigate the process of establishing and managing a child care program.

Good luck on your journey, and may your child care program be a beacon of learning, growth, and joy for all who participate!



Appendix A

Childcare Design Consultant List



First Name	Last Name	Company Name	Street Address	City	Postal Code	Phone Number	Email	Website	Focus
Natasha	Dempsey-Ceron	Child Care Development Manager, NUCCO	Suite 200-100 Park Royal	West Van	V7T 1A2	604-600-1564	taylor@nugo.ca	-	General
Bernice	Scholten	Vancouver Society of Children's Centers	200-1362 Seymour Street	Vancouver	V6B 3P3	604-718-6555	bernice@vsccc.org	http://www.vsccc.org/	General
Ana	Vojnovic	Concept Flioka	-	Vancouver	-	604-812-3102	postmodernidea@gmail.com	https://conceptflioka.com/university-childcare-centre/	General
-	-	HCMMA Architecture + Design	400 - 675 West Hastings Street	Vancouver	V6B 1N2	604-732-6620	vancouver@hcmma.ca	http://hcmma.ca/project/university-childcare-centre/	Architects
Anthony	Boni	Boni-Maddison Architects	3722 W. Broadway	Vancouver	V6R 2C1	604-688-5894	anthony@bonimaddison.com	www.bonimaddison.com	Architects
Peter	Turje	Communities Plus Architecture Inc	#806 - 318 Homer Street	Vancouver	V6B 2V2	604-484-2508	pturje@telus.net	-	Architects
Richard	Stout	Dysarchitecte	#260 - 1770 Burrard Street	Vancouver	V6J 3G7	604-697-7713	richard.stout@dysarchitecte.com	www.dysarchitecte.com	Architects
Douglas	Massie	Cherover Massie and Associates	#603 - 1200 West 73rd Avenue	Vancouver	V6P 6G5	604-264-1450	dmassie@shawlink.ca	www.cherovermassie.com	Architects
Jim	Hancock	IB/HB Architects	1285 W Pender	Vancouver	V6E 4B1	604-683-8797	jhancock@ibhgroup.com	www.ibi-hb.com	Architects
Richard	Iredale	Iredale Group Architects	220-12 Water Street	Vancouver	V6B 4K7	604-736-5581	richard@iredale.ca	www.iredale.ca	Architects
Gregg	Brown	KIMBR Architects Planners Inc	152 W Hastings Street Suite #300	Vancouver	V6B 1G8	604-732-3361	gbrown@kimbr.com	www.kimbr.com	Architects
Lynne	Werker	Lynne Werker Architect	825 Hendecourt Rd.	North Van	V7K 2X5	604-255-9189	lynn@lynnewerker.com	www.lynnewerker.com	Architects
Bruce	Raber	Stantec Architecture LTD	13401 - 108th Avenue	Surrey	V3T 5T3	604-587-8400	braber@stantec.com	www.stantec.com	Architects
Yo	Chu	-	1648 East 2nd Avenue	Vancouver	V5N 1C9	604-255-1475	markye@telus.net	-	Architects
Paul	Dirks	Dirks Landscape Design	-	-	-	-	https://www.dirksnaturalplaygrounds.ca	-	Outdoor Design
Gerry	Eckford	Eckford and Assoc. Landscape Architecture Inc	1690 West 2nd Avenue	Vancouver	V6J 1H3	604-683-1456	gerry@eckfordland.com	www.eckfordland.com	Outdoor Design
Donna	Rodman	Our Design Inc	1335 Fernwood Crescent	North Van	V7P 1K3	604-929-0776	donna@ourdesigns.ca	www.ourdesigns.ca	Outdoor Design
Rob	DeGros	Robert DeGros Landscapes Ltd	10954 Setchell Road	North Saanich	V8L 5P2	604-655-1003	robdegros@shaw.ca	www.robdegroslandscaping.com	Outdoor Design
-	-	SPACE2PLACE Design Inc	200-291 East 2nd Ave	Vancouver	V5T 1B8	604-649-4110	Studio@space2place.com	www.space2place.com	Outdoor Design
Les	Mennie	Natural Impressions (Paul Dirks neehew)	-	Delta	-	604-348-6460	les@playscapes.ca	www.playscapes.ca	Outdoor Design