Child Care Partnerships
Creating Child Care Spaces
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This guide focuses on building or renovating space to create new child care spaces.

For information on providing child care in your home, contact your local health authority or Child Care Resource and Referral Program.
Introduction

Child care providers play an important role in our communities, helping to ensure that families have a range of quality child care options to choose from. This publication is designed for those who plan to provide child care in a workplace, newly built or renovated space, school building, housing development or apartment complex.

The B.C. government also supports and provides funding for other types of child care. These include Family Child Care, provided in the caregiver’s home. If you are interested in offering this type of care, your best first step is to contact the Community Care Licensing branch of your local health authority, www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/child/index.html, or your local Child Care Resource and Referral Centre, www.ccrr.bc.ca.

You may also find some useful information in this guide. However, it is focused on the process of developing a child care centre – rather than the requirements for providing child care in your home.

What follows is an overview of steps you’ll need to take and issues you will want to consider as your child care centre begins to take shape. The order of the steps may vary according to individual circumstances. For example, you might find a suitable site and begin your planning from there. Or you might start with adequate funding already arranged.

In other words, the text that follows is only a general guide, with links and information to help you plan your child care centre in greater detail.
Child care centre in a public building
Starting Out

Licensed child care facilities in B.C. are governed by a set of regulations, enforced by Community Care Facilities and Licensing officers in each of the regional health authorities. This is a good place to start your work in developing a child care centre. Your local licensing officials can provide information on:

- standards you will have to meet in areas such as space requirements, furniture and equipment, staff qualifications and ratios of staff to children, and
- other steps you may need to take, such as applying for a business license, building permit or zoning approval.

Some health authorities also have regular orientation sessions for new child care providers, with in-depth information on licensing requirements, as well as opportunities to ask questions and meet others working in the field. For links to B.C. health authority websites, go to: [www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/child/index.html](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/child/index.html)
School-based child care
Develop a business plan.

Research and Planning

Like any major undertaking, building or renovating a child care centre requires careful planning. If you are stepping into the role of owner-operator for the first time, you may want to seek some support and assistance with the business planning process.

The website www.SmallBusinessBC.ca offers a range of resources related to planning, starting and operating a business in B.C. These include sample business plans, as well as an interactive business planning advisory service. For links to planning information related to specific municipalities, go to www.civicnet.bc.ca

Developing a business plan will help you get a clear understanding of the challenges that may lay ahead, and help ensure you focus your resources effectively.

Your business planning process should address questions such as:

- What are the child care needs in your community?
- What types of child care are you planning to provide? Are you considering more than one type?
- What licensing, zoning and safety requirements will you have to meet?
- How many children will you accommodate, and what will be their age range?
- Where will you get your financing? What kind of cash flow can you expect?
- Will your centre operate as part of your business? Or will you form a non-profit society?
Another key consideration is timing. The pace of construction and renovation projects is determined by a number of factors, including zoning and permitting processes, and the availability of skilled labour and materials. As you carry out your business plan research, you should get a clearer idea of how long the project will take.
Experts Who Can Help

As you move forward with your business planning process, it’s also a good idea to consult with others who are active in the child care sector, such as:

- staff in the Ministry of Children and Family Development, which funds and supports a range of child care programs
- local government officials; many municipal and regional government offices have a specific staff person or department that assists with child care issues
- your local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) agency; CCRR staff can provide information and connect you with other child care providers in your community; for more information, go to www.ccrr.bc.ca
- other child care providers; this can be especially valuable if you are planning to operate a child care centre in British Columbia for the first time.

You may also want to consult with legal, financial and business experts such as:

- an accountant
- a banker
- a realtor
- an insurance agent
- a financial advisor

You should expect to continually revise and update your business plan as you work to develop your child care centre. A clear, well-written up-to-date business plan can be a great asset as you seek funding, community support and various approvals.
Modular built child care
Selecting a Site

Unless you are in a position to take over an existing child care centre, you have several options: renovate an existing space, build a new centre or use available space in a public building, such as a school. Either way, you will want to consider:

- where the space is located
- its proximity to public amenities, such as parks and transit routes
- its proximity to places of employment
- its proximity to any environmental or physical hazards, and
- expected development costs.

Another key issue is space. As part of your business planning process, you should identify how many square metres of indoor and outdoor space you will need and select a site that can accommodate those needs.

Basic space requirements

Generally, there are three types of space in any child care centre:

- activity spaces for play, learning and quiet time
- support spaces such as washrooms, children’s storage spaces, kitchen, hallways and building service areas, and
- outdoor play spaces.
The Child Care Licensing Regulations set out the following minimum, per-child space requirements for activity areas and outdoor spaces:

- at least 3.7 square metres/40 square feet of indoor space and 7 square metres/75 square feet of outdoor space per child for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and
- at least 3 square metres/32 square feet of indoor space and access to an outdoor play space, with no minimum size requirement, per child for school-aged children.

That means, if you are planning to open a child care centre for 25 preschoolers, you need 92.5 square metres/995 square feet of indoor space and 175 square metres/1884 square feet of outdoor space.

The licensing guidelines determine space requirements, with the exception - at this time - of the City of Vancouver, which has additional child care space guidelines.

Once you know your space requirements and other key considerations, you can work with a realtor to find an appropriate site. Whether you choose to build or renovate will likely depend on the options available in your community.
Finding a space to renovate

Spaces in existing buildings are often appropriate for child care facilities. You may wish to start by determining if there is under-utilized or vacant space available in public buildings such as hospitals, schools, community centres, neighbourhood houses or churches that have the appropriate zoning.

Local government or regional health authority officials might have suggestions that can point you in the right direction.

Private buildings – either commercial or residential – can also offer good potential. A realtor should be able to provide a list of potential sites.

Finding a site to build on

Check with local government officials, health authority staff and your real estate professional to learn about appropriate building sites in the neighbourhoods that interest you.

Certain sites may already be designated for child care facilities as part of your local community plan. Some municipalities may have an interest in combining a child care with a larger development. This may provide an opportunity to partner with a developer.
Selecting the best site for your needs

Once you are familiar with the options in your community, you may want to do a strategic options analysis. This is a process for comparing and contrasting your available options, based on criteria such as:

- estimated project cost
- estimated time for completion, and
- each potential site’s ability to meet your needs.

Talk to local government and licensing officers, as well as any expert advisors you are working with, to answer the following types of questions for each site you consider:

- Is child care an allowable use for this site in the local zoning schedule?
- How long is the typical wait for various permits and approvals?
- What is the availability of skilled labour in your geographic area?
- Are adjacent land uses acceptable? Are they compatible with child care uses?
- Would there be support for your centre in the community?
- Are outdoor spaces on the site sufficient and pleasant (e.g., not in deep shade for most of the day)?
- Would significant safety improvements be required (e.g., fencing)?
These are just some of the questions you will need to ask to determine which site is best for your centre. You may wish to seek out additional advice or assistance from experts such as:

- an architect
- a general contractor
- a building inspector; if you are planning to renovate, an inspector can identify any deficiencies in an existing building that must be addressed
- an environmental consultant, who can help you determine whether toxic or hazardous materials are present on the building site, or in an existing structure
- your legal and financial advisors.

If you are establishing a non-profit society to deliver child care services, it can be helpful to have people such as lawyers and accountants on your board of directors.

Regardless of your business model, you should consult legal and financial experts throughout the planning and development process – and continue to update your business plan as needed.
Heritage home conversion to child care centre
Financing Your Child Care Centre

With your business plan in good shape and a shortlist of sites selected, the next step is to secure your funding.

Usually funders are keen to see other partners in the community and government coming to the table to support your project. Typically, one commitment leads to another, so it is good practice to keep potential funders aware of your progress and to maintain a current, concise version of your business plan that you can use to demonstrate your project’s feasibility.

The B.C. government has programs that offset the costs of constructing and operating licensed group child care facilities. This is another potential source of funding. For more information, go to: http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/providers.htm

Once you have funding commitments in place, you can move forward to secure your space.

Make sure your accountant or financial advisor and your lawyer are involved, and that all due diligence has been performed concerning the purchase or lease of the property. This is key to controlling costs, not only at this stage, but also later in the building stages. Identifying costs at an early stage will help prevent surprises during construction.
Designing Your Centre

With a space or site secured, you can turn your attention to the detailed design of your centre. If you are already working with an architect, you may want to ask his or her firm to present a fee proposal for architectural services for your project.

The architect is responsible for:

- designing your centre
- applying for permits on your behalf, and
- helping to administer your contract with a builder.

It is also standard practice to have your architect seek fee proposals and statements of credentials from other consultants you will need on the project, such as:

- engineering professionals
- a landscape architect, and
- a play equipment contractor, if you want custom-built equipment for your outdoor areas.

Together, these experts make up the design team that will help you translate your vision for a centre into reality.

Another, more simple option is to choose a modular, pre-fabricated building – shortening construction time and helping keep your costs in check. This option is becoming increasingly popular with child care providers. Your local licensing and permitting officials can tell you about any specific requirements related to modular buildings.
Business-based child care
**Getting the Necessary Permits**

Most municipalities have a two-step permitting process for construction projects. First you need a development permit. Then you need a building permit. Your architect can tell you what’s required for each process, and can make the applications on your behalf.

Processing time for these permits can vary greatly and should be factored into your business plan.

Your local municipal office can help you get a sense of how long the process will take and what kinds of fees are involved. For links to municipalities, go to: [www.civicnet.bc.ca](http://www.civicnet.bc.ca)
Modular built child care
Creating your Centre

This is one of the most important stages in the project, so you may wish to hire a professional builder to oversee construction, renovation or, if you choose a modular building, the final assembly and set-up process.

Talk to others in your field who have experience with similar projects. Ask for the names of builders who have worked on child care facilities, and find out what the people who worked with those contractors thought of their performance. Once you have a list of potentially suitable builders, ask them to submit Expressions of Interest for Pre-Qualification to you or your group. This will help you refine your shortlist to include only those who are available and interested.

If you are unable to find good referrals, you can place an advertisement in a trade journal or the legal section of your local newspaper, describing your project and inviting Expressions of Interest for Pre-Qualification from general contractors.

You can then assess their qualifications and experience, and make a shortlist of those who appear to be a good match. The experts you are working with can help you make a final decision about which builder is best for your project. You may also want to hire a manager to oversee the construction process, which can be very complex and demanding.
Ground-up construction of a child care centre
Opening your Centre

Once your centre is well under way, it’s important to work with your licensing officer to ensure you have met all the necessary requirements to open your centre, i.e., staffing and programming.

Once this final check is complete, you may want to advertise with regional, local or community newspapers, liaise with neighbourhood schools and meet with representatives from local child care organizations, to publicize your new centre and find potential new clients.

Planning an opening event for your centre is also a good way to publicize your centre, build relationships with community members and network with other providers. An open house event is a good opportunity to show people what you have to offer.

A Final Word

Creating a new child care centre demands considerable work and resources and, like any business venture, carries its share of risk. However, the rewards can be tremendous – not just for you, but for the children, families and community you serve.

The child care spaces you create will foster early childhood development, and help ensure that parents have a range of quality child care options in their neighbourhoods.

This is important work, so thank you for your interest.
Vancouver Island Region
South Island 250-475-2235
Central Island 250-714-0424
North Island 250-287-2818

Vancouver Coastal Region
The North Shore 604-983-6700
Powell River 604-485-3310
Richmond 604-233-3147
Sea to Sky 604-892-2293
Sechelt/Gibsons 604-885-5164
Vancouver 604-675-3900

Fraser Region
Burnaby/New Westminster 604-918-7683
Maple Ridge 604-476-7000
Tricities 604-949-7700
Langley 604-514-6121
Surrey/White Rock 604-587-7610
Delta 604-507-5478
Abbotsford 604-870-6000
Chilliwack 604-702-4950
Mission 604-814-5515
### Appendix

#### Licensing Offices in B.C.

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<tr>
<th>Interior Region</th>
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<tr>
<td>Kamloops</td>
<td>250-851-7340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelstoke</td>
<td>250-814-2244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salmon Arm</td>
<td>250-833-4100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams Lake</td>
<td>1-888-702-7771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 Mile House</td>
<td>250-395-7676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vernon</td>
<td>250-549-5714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelowna</td>
<td>250-868-7835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penticton</td>
<td>250-770-3530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cranbrook/Golden</td>
<td>1-888-426-7566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invermere</td>
<td>1-800-661-2445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creston</td>
<td>250-428-3873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nelson/Trail</td>
<td>250-505-7200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Forks</td>
<td>250-443-3150</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dawson Creek</td>
<td>250-719-6500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort St. John</td>
<td>250-263-6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Nelson</td>
<td>250-774-7092</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince George/Vanderhoof and Quesnel</td>
<td>250-565-2150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terrace</td>
<td>250-638-2222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smithers</td>
<td>250-847-6400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince Rupert</td>
<td>250-624-7480</td>
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</tbody>
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To access licensing information from the Health Authority web sites, go to:
- [www.viha.ca](http://www.viha.ca) for Vancouver Island
- [www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca) for Vancouver Coastal
- [www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca) for Fraser
- [www.interiorhealth.ca](http://www.interiorhealth.ca) for the Interior
- [www.northernhealth.ca](http://www.northernhealth.ca) for the North