



Childcare BC Universal Prototype Sites Frequently Asked Questions



Updated: November 9, 2018

Starting November 1, 2018, Childcare BC Universal Prototype Sites will begin testing a new funding and operational support model to move British Columbia towards a universal child care system. Parents with children enrolled at a prototype site will pay \$200 a month – or less – per child for full-time enrolment during regular business hours. For low-income families, child care could be free.

More than 50 prototype sites have been selected to represent the diversity of British Columbia’s geography, population and program types. They also reflect a range of operational models, including both non-profit and private organizations, so the Province can gain a deeper understanding of how best to support quality, licensed child care.

Around 2,500 licensed child care spaces are included in the prototype sites. Priority for the sites was given to those that provide licensed infant/toddler (under 36 months) spaces, though some prototype sites provide licensed child care for older children (aged 3 years to Kindergarten and school- aged).

Prototype sites are operational between November 1, 2018 and March 31, 2020.

For a [list of prototype sites](#) please see the website.

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General Questions

1. What is a prototype site?

Prototype sites are child care facilities that receive operating funding from the Province to offer low-cost quality child care in communities across the province.

The sites are being introduced to test funding models and operational supports required to move British Columbia towards a universal child care system. More than 50 licensed child care facilities were chosen through an open expression of interest process and will operate as prototype sites from November 1, 2018 to March 31, 2020. These facilities will offer child care at a maximum cost of \$200 a month per child for full-time enrolment during regular business hours.

The purpose of these prototypes is to gather valuable information about how well the model works for families and child care providers, and to inform the Province's plan to build a universal child care system over the next ten years.

2. What advantage is there for parents to with children at a prototype site?

The positive financial impact on parents with children enrolled at a prototype site is significant. Parents will pay no more than \$200 a month per child for full-time enrolment during regular business hours. For some low-income families, child care could be free.

Parents will also benefit from investment in the quality of child care services at these sites. Child care providers will receive a one-time Quality Improvement Grant to enhance programs, initiatives, and/or facility requirements, and some sites have been chosen to participate in an Inclusion Pilot that will explore new approaches to including children with extra support needs in child care settings.

3. Where is the funding coming from to pay for the prototype sites?

The Province is investing \$60 million over the next two years to fund these prototype sites. This investment comes from the [Early Learning and Child Care Agreement](#) between the Governments of Canada and British Columbia, which was signed in February 2018.

Prototype Site Selection

4. How were the prototype sites selected?

Prototype sites were selected through an open expression of interest process, supported by an expert panel to ensure that key criteria— like the diversity of British Columbia’s geography, population, program types and operational models — were considered, and that the range of sites would provide the Province with a deeper understanding of what contributes to quality care, a sustainable and engaged workforce, and effective organizational structures that support universal child care.

5. How many child care providers applied to be prototype sites?

There were more than 300 applications to the Province’s expression of interest.

6. Who was eligible to apply?

Applications were open to licensed facilities that are currently providing licensed child care for infants and toddlers under 36 months (the facility could also provide other licensed child care programs), have been enrolled in Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) Program for the past two consecutive years, and have been accepted into the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative at the time of their application. The licensed facility must also be in good standing with their Health Authority.

7. Why did providers need to be enrolled in the province’s CCOF program for two consecutive years to be part of this initiative?

We were looking for experienced and stable providers to participate in the prototype sites. Two years of continuous CCOF enrolment was required to ensure that applicants are established, in good standing and familiar with government’s reporting requirements.

8. What was the largest number of eligible spaces you were willing to consider through one organization?

There was no maximum number of eligible spaces per site. Each site must offer licensed child care for infants and toddlers under 36 months, but can also include other types of licensed child care programs.

9. Could operators with more than one site apply to have several facilities become prototype sites?

Operators with multiple locations were able to submit single applications for any of their locations that met the eligibility criteria. Sites were selective on an individual facility basis, rather than by application. The selection committee sought to select prototype sites throughout the province that represented a variety of child care organizations and service delivery models.

10. Were sites that operate full days but don't operate for the full week (i.e. Monday to Thursday) eligible?

Yes. As part of the selection process, the ministry wanted to have a range of child care service delivery models, including those with different service terms and hours as part of the prototype site initiative in order to help gain a more fulsome understanding of the many options that make up the child care sector in B.C.

11. Did the ministry consider the policies of a child care facility in making selections?

The ministry reviewed applicants' policy guides/handbooks to verify that facilities have comprehensive, transparent, and inclusive policies in line with the principles and objectives of the initiative. Examples of inclusive policies may include commitments to diversity and social inclusion, a commitment or list of services and/or supports for children with additional support needs, and the role of families in the facility.

12. If a child care provider has been selected as a prototype site, can they apply for a second licence and have these spaces funded as part of this initiative?

Only spaces licensed at the time of application will be considered for funding during the term of this initiative.

13. Will there be more opportunities to apply to become a prototype site?

These sites will run from November 1, 2018 to March 31, 2020. At this time, there is no consideration of future intakes. Once we have evaluated prototype sites, the objective is to use this information to determine next steps in the transition towards a universal child care system.

Prototype Site Funding and Operations

14. How much funding are prototype sites getting?

The total amount of funding will be customized to each facility, accounting for the variation in costs and organizational models in the child care sector. The individualized funding payment is based on a facility's reported revenues, with the exception of a maximum parent fee of \$200 a month per child for full-time enrolment during regular business hours, fund-raising, in-kind supports and other non-provincial government operational funding. The base payment will be supplemented with an administrative top up of 5% in recognition of additional administrative requirements.

Following the first stage of evaluation in March 2019, the prototype sites will receive a one-time Quality Improvement Grant to implement recommended site-specific enhancements. The grant can be used to implement programs, initiatives and facility improvements aimed at supporting the delivery of quality child care. The amount of the grant and specific permissible uses will be informed by the recommendations from the evaluation process.

15. Are prototype site operators required to stop all fundraising efforts?

No. Providers who fundraise for special circumstances can continue with those activities. The new operating funding provided to prototype types sites does not replace monies raised by fundraising efforts. The only type of revenue information relevant to determining government funding for sites is operating revenue, which in most cases comes from parent fees and government operational funding (CCOF/CCFRI, and the Affordable Child Care Benefit).

16. Are prototype sites also eligible for New Spaces Funding?

No. The prototype site initiative and related funding are limited to the number of spaces identified at the time of application.

17. What if a prototype site needs repairs not anticipated when the operator applied?

Prototype sites remain eligible for the Childcare BC Maintenance Fund (formerly the Child Care Minor Capital Funding Program) to help with needed repairs or the replacement of equipment to ensure the facility complies with licensing requirements.

18. What happens if a prototype operator's rent goes up during the contract period?

Anticipated costs are built into the contract, but prototype site operators will be able to have the amount of their contract reassessed if they experience extraordinary circumstances outside of their control that lead to a significant increase in operating expenses.

19. What is the Quality Improvement Grant?

The one-time Quality Improvement Grant, following the first stage of the evaluation, is to implement site-specific quality enhancements that are recommended by an external evaluator. The grant can be used to implement programs, initiatives and facility improvements aimed at supporting the delivery of quality child care. The amount of the grant and uses will be informed by the recommendations of the evaluation process.

20. Does a prototype site need to maintain full enrolment of licensed child care spaces while participating as a prototype site?

Under the terms of the prototype site contract, sites will be required to inform the ministry of the number of children enrolled in the facility in each care type. Where possible, a child should be enrolled in all child care spaces in receipt of prototype site operating funding, including both full-time and part-time spaces. Where a child care space becomes vacant, the provider should work toward enrolling another child in the vacant space as soon as possible. In cases where a child care space in receipt of prototype site funding has been vacant for an extended period of time, adjustments to the contract may be required.

While prototype sites may offer drop-in/occasional child care, these spaces will not be eligible to receive operating funding under the prototype sites contract.

21. What happens if an operator of a prototype site wants to withdraw before the end of the contract?

There is a 30-day exit clause in the contract to enable a smooth transition out of the initiative, if required by the prototype site operator. In the event the prototype site is found to be in default under the terms of the contract, the Province may end the agreement with 90 days' notice.

22. What happens at the end of the 18-months? Will providers continue to charge parents \$200 a month, or go back to charging full fees and not get any further help from government?

Information from the prototype sites will inform decision making regarding the future expansion of universal child care and the ministry will seek continued support from the Government of Canada for these sites when we renew our Early Learning and Child Care bilateral agreement.

If the ministry is able to continue with this initiative, current prototype sites will continue under a new funding mechanism.

However, if the ministry is unable to continue with this initiative, prototype sites will revert to their previous operational funding models, including market-based parent fees, and the ministry will restore previous levels of child care funding.

Prototype Site Parent Fees

23. How much will a parent pay for a child care space at a prototype site?

Monthly parent fees for all types of care at a prototype site are as follows:

- Full days (4 hours or more), full time (M-F):¹ \$200/month
- Full days, part time (e.g. full day, 3x per week): \$10/day to a maximum of \$200/month
- Half days (four hours or less), full time (M-F): \$140/month
- Half days, part time (e.g. half day, 3x per week): \$7/day to a maximum of \$140/month

Prototype sites must accept families eligible to receive the Affordable Child Care Benefit, previously called Child Care Subsidy. The Affordable Child Care Benefit may further reduce the above fees for eligible families.

Under the new benefit, households with an annual income of \$111,000 (or more depending on factors like the type of child care, child's age, and the family income) could be eligible. Families earning \$45,000 or less per year may be eligible to receive a benefit up to \$10/day (which will result in their receiving free child care), while families earning \$45,000 to \$111,000 (or more depending on individual circumstance) may be eligible to receive a pro-rated benefit, resulting in them paying less than \$10/day.

For more information about the [Affordable Child Care Benefit](#) please visit the website.

24. Will parent fees be increased at a prototype site?

Parent fees are capped at \$200 a month per child for full-time enrolment during regular business hours for the duration of the contract with the ministry. Prototype sites were required to include any anticipated cost increases as part of their application and the process to finalize their contract. If a provider has costs that increase unexpectedly during their participation as a prototype site, there is a mechanism to have their funding reassessed and adjusted at the Province's discretion.

¹ full time as per existing hours of service; does not include extended hours (Before 6 am, after 7 pm, or overnight service)

However, prototype sites may charge additional fees for extended hours and optional programming such as meal plans, or optional extra-curricular lessons/programming. Those fees are set by the facility and the ministry is not involved in setting or overseeing optional child care fees.

25. Will prototype sites offer extended hours?

Extended hours are times outside of the standard operating hours of a child care program and would not be included in the regular parent fee. Routinely, hours before 6 a.m. and after 7 p.m., weekends and statutory holidays are considered extended hours.

The hours that prototype sites offer may vary from site to site, and will for most sites, remain as they were prior to selection as a prototype site.

26. Can a prototype site charge parents if they pick their children up late?

If a facility currently charges late pick-up fees, they can continue to do so and would collect those fees themselves. Those additional fees are not covered under the ministry's prototype site contract.

27. Can a facility charge a waitlist fee while participating as a prototype site?

No. Prototype sites receive additional funding in recognition of the increased administrative requirements associated with being a prototype site. This funding is intended to cover any costs associated with managing waitlists, and therefore prototype sites cannot charge waitlist fees from parents during the course of their contract term.

A prototype site may charge families a deposit for applying to the facility's waitlist (in accordance with the facility's existing policy), which must be applied to the family's initial child care fees or refunded prior to enrolment at the request of the parent.

28. Why don't you just directly provide parents with the funding to bring down their child care costs?

Affordability is one of Government's top priorities, as demonstrated through the recent introduction of the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative – which provides a benefit to families regardless of income – and the new Affordable Child Care Benefit, which is income-tested to target funding to low and middle-income families.

The Province is looking at new child care models that support early learning, parents and providers, and have the necessary mechanisms in place to ensure accountability for public funding.

The prototype site initiative allows the Province to partner with child care providers to look at different ways of providing care within a universal model and to inform future expansion of universal care.

29. If a prototype site owner has their own child enrolled in one of the licensed child care spaces where they provide direct care, will they receive funding for their child?

One objective of the prototype sites is to gain more information on the costs of providing child care in a universal system. To achieve this, all child care spaces accepted for this initiative are eligible to receive funding, including spaces occupied by a facility owner's child. Facility owners in these circumstances have been required to disclose to the ministry how many spaces are occupied by their own children prior to entering into the contract.

30. Can parents, with children enrolled at a prototype site, contact the ministry if they have questions?

If families have questions about the operation or programming at their child care facility they should speak directly with the operator of the prototype site. The ministry is not involved in the day-to-day operations of the prototype sites.

If a parent has a concern about enrollment or fee policies at a prototype site, they can contact the ministry at MCF.Prototype@gov.bc.ca.

Evaluation of Prototype Sites

31. Will there be an evaluation of the prototype sites?

The ministry will be evaluating the prototype sites to help inform the development of universal child care over the next ten years. An external evaluator will be secured to collect and review information on the outcomes of reduced child care fees, program quality, and provider and family experience. The information will be used to inform B.C.'s transition to a universal child care system.

32. What will the evaluation involve?

The ministry will require monthly reports, which will include information such as enrollment, vacancies, the number of families served, operating expenses, staffing, and the demographics of families and children served.

Part of the evaluation will involve a review of prototype sites' business information in order to gain a better understanding of the cost of child care within various program models. The

information is being gathered and stored using confidential methods consistent with the requirements under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*.

Government also wants to understand how the prototype sites work for families, children and communities, and that is where parents can contribute. Parents will be invited to participate in surveys to inform the Province on the potential long-term benefits, and key considerations, of offering universal child care across B.C.