

Early Childhood Development Centres Pilot Project

Goals

What is the goal of this pilot project?

The goal of the demonstration sites is to implement and evaluate the integration of early childhood services and supports to offer a seamless experience for parents and young children.

What do you expect to achieve with these centres?

We expect to achieve seamless programming for children and parents through effective integration of kindergarten, early learning and child care programs, parenting support services and community resources. This investment in high quality early learning and child care will have an impact on building a strong foundation for a child's ongoing learning and development, which impacts the extent to which he or she will succeed.

What services will be available in these centres?

Each centre will have a team of staff delivering programming to parents and children. Core programs which must be offered in all four sites include;

- Full-time childcare
- Part-time childcare
- Parent supports (ie: playgroups and drop-in programs)

Each centre will offer additional programming based on local community needs. Examples of additional programming include:

- Toy and resource lending libraries
- Immunization clinics
- 3.5 Year Old Health Clinics
- Healthy lifestyle programs

What exactly does integration mean?

At each centre families will have access to a variety of early learning programs. These are programs and services which are already available in local communities, but they aren't available in one central location. Each site will serve as a neighbourhood hub where these services can be accessed in an integrated way, under the direction of a local board of directors. The location of the four demonstration sites in local schools also facilitates a child's transition into the school system.

Services

How will one of these sites operate?

Each centre will consist of a core team of staff who will deliver programs and services to young children and their parents. Each centre will have a non-profit board of directors to oversee operations. Each centre will work with other community partners in ensuring existing community resources are available at the centre.

What programs and services will be housed in the early childhood development centre demonstration sites?

Services will include full- and part-time child care, drop-in programs and play groups, which will be integrated with other programming, such as school-based services and parenting support programs. Other services, such as immunization clinics, toy and resource lending libraries, and collective kitchens, may also be provided.

Will all the centres offer the same programs and services?

All centres will provide full- and part-time child care, drop-in programs and play groups, and parent programs and support. Each demonstration site will have the flexibility to adapt its services to the unique needs of its respective community and to offer additional supports and services to young children and families. Examples of other services that may be provided include immunizations, prenatal and post-natal services, 3.5 Year Old Health Clinic, and rehabilitation services such as speech and language pathology.

Will they offer child care services? How many spaces will be created in each centre?

Yes, regulated child care services will be offered. The number of spaces will vary in each site. However, they must provide between 12 and 60 spaces, based on the needs of their community. Flexibility between part-time and full-time spaces is required.

Will the centres offer infant spaces for children 0 to 2 years old (infants)?

A: Because this is a pilot project and it is very costly to renovate for infant child care spaces, there will not be infant child care spaces offered. However, all children and families will still be able to access the drop-in programs and play groups.

Will they be licensed and regulated like other daycares in the province?

Yes, child care service providers at each site must obtain a Certificate of Approval from the Department of Social Development and must be operated in accordance with Day Care Regulation 83-85.

Are you going to prioritize based on the needs of the family, or are you going to offer services on a “first come, first serve” basis?

Because there will be a maximum number of full- and part-time child care spaces, these programs will be offered on a first come - first serve basis. All children and families will still be able to access the drop-in programs, play groups, and parent programs and support.

Isn't it likely that there will not be enough spaces to accommodate the demands for these services?

Each demonstration site has identified the needs of their community, so they have an understanding of the demand for services. This pilot project is also testing the capacity of each site, so we will make appropriate adjustments moving forward. The sites will be providing part-time early learning programs in order to be able to include as many children as possible. The drop-in programs, play groups, and parent supports will be open to everyone.

Will all parents be able to use the resources of these centres in their local communities, or just those who have their child in child care?

Yes, demonstration sites will support parents with young children, regardless of their child care arrangements, within the four communities.

Will these centres take business away from existing daycares in the community?

These demonstration sites will provide child care spaces to children and families in need of daycare services. There is a great need for new child care spaces to be created.

How will you evaluate the success/effectiveness of the demonstration sites?

The McCain Family Foundation is donating \$300,000 for a three-year evaluation of the pilot project. The Health and Education Research Group (HERG), based out of UNB and l'Université de Moncton, will be evaluating the 3-year pilot project.

Will more demonstration sites be announced in the future? When will you make this decision?

We will wait for the results of the evaluation to determine what next steps we will take.

Funding

How much money is government providing to these demonstration sites? What will this funding be used for?

Government is investing \$400,000 annually, \$100,000 per site, to create the four demonstration sites for a three-year pilot project. Funding will be used to support the integration of quality services. Each demonstration site will provide a budget to Government detailing how they intend to make use of these funds.

Why is Government investing in this concept? Where did this idea come from? Is this unique compared to other provinces?

This concept is based on the latest early childhood research and best practices in other jurisdictions. The Government of New Brunswick is one of the first in Canada to move forward with testing integrated early childhood development centres as a way to better integrate early childhood services and supports for parents and young children. Other provinces are looking at New Brunswick's approach.

Could demonstration sites approach businesses or other potential funding sources to request their participation in assisting financially?

Government encourages creative thinking and the four demonstration sites are welcome to approach other potential partners, keeping in mind that the demonstration sites need to have potential to be replicated.

Are the services at the centres going to be free of cost to parents?

Yes, there will be a variety of free programming available to parents and families. We anticipate that centres will charge a fee for child care services, as other daycares do. Low-income families can access child care subsidies from Social Development to offset their child care costs.

What will be the cost for child care?

The sites will provide a minimum of twelve (12) and a maximum of sixty (60) regulated child care spaces twelve months of the year at a reasonable cost, to be determined by the local non-profit board of directors. Low-income families can access child care subsidies from Social Development to offset their child care costs.

Why would parents have to pay for child care spaces when the government is funding the centre's operation?

Each early childhood development centre will be a non-profit site operated by a community-based non-profit network which will determine fees for certain services. Each centre must provide regular free programming to parents and children, but child care services will likely not be free. As in the case of other child care facilities, parents will pay for child care services. Low-income families can access child care subsidies from Social Development to offset their child care costs.

How will these facilities sustain operations after the three-year period?

Government will continue to financially support the demonstration sites during the pilot phase. In the proposals, each site has established a plan regarding how they will sustain their centres after the pilots. Government, along with businesses and community partners, will support the demonstration sites in becoming sustainable.

Partners

What is the role of private/non-profit partners in the early childhood development centre demonstration sites?

All partners - government, the early learning and child care sector, schools, businesses and employers, and community-based and government early childhood service providers - will work together to ensure that the best possible supports and services are easily available to children and parents.

Role of the School

Why are these being established in local schools?

The school is often the hub of the community and is known to parents and caregivers. This will also facilitate the transition to school for these children.

What will be the relationship between the school system and these early childhood development centres?

They will operate around a shared common vision and governance. All partners must work together to ensure that the best possible supports and services are easily available to children and parents. The school principal is one of the key partners in the community network. Success of similar sites in other jurisdictions relies on strong leadership from the school principal.

Given there are educational components to these sites, how is this not just a pre-kindergarten pilot program in disguise?

During our early learning and child care consultation in 2007, parents told us they did not want pre-kindergarten services. They told us they wanted integrated services in their community – places where they can access information, help their children get ready for school, and receive help with parenting questions.

The early childhood development centres will be neighbourhood hubs where children and parents can access existing programs and services under one roof. These sites will provide a venue where families can interact with other parents and forge ties with the education, health and non-profit sectors in the local community. Having these services within local schools provides opportunities for better integration and transition into schools.

Role of Government

What is Government's role in the demonstration sites?

Government will support established community networks in the design and implementation of four demonstration test sites to test early childhood centres as a way to better integrate early childhood services and offer a seamless experience for parents and young children.

Which departments are involved?

Four departments share responsibility for the pilot project: Social Development, Education, Health, and Wellness, Culture and Sport. The Government's Early Childhood Strategy complements the new Education Plan, the provincial Health Plan and the Wellness Strategy.