

INFORMATION

ON

DAY CARE

PRESENTED BY THE COMMUNITY TASK FORCE
ON DAY CARE --- A Committee composed of
parents and representatives from the
following organizations:

Edmonton Day Care Council (with representatives
from - Primrose Place Day Care Society
- Jasper Place Day Care Society
- West End Day Care Society
- Beverly Day Care Society
- Students' Union & Community Day
Care Society.
- Community Day Nursery Society
- Downtown Day Care Centre Society
- Glengarry Day Care Centre.

Canadian Committee on Early Childhood
Alberta Association for Young Children
Parents for Day Care
Edmonton After-School Care Association
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THE DEMAND FOR DAY CARE SPACES

The Province of Alberta and the City of Edmonton have made some progress in the last seven years in providing day care spaces. In 1966, there was one community supported day care centre and this, combined with the licensed commercial centres, provided 379 spaces. This was estimated to be one space for every twenty pre-school children whose mothers worked. In 1973, Edmonton day care spaces totalled some 1,700 - greater than a four-fold increase. There are licensed spaces now available for one in six children of the estimated 10,500 pre-school children whose mothers work. Out of the 1,700 spaces, only 440 are subsidized day care centres and another 120 are subsidized family day care spaces. In addition, there are now about 100 spaces for after-school care in either subsidized centres or publicly supported after-school care co-operatives.

There is a great need for more high-quality, low-fee day care facilities. And there is a demand for these facilities as the following facts show:

1. Waiting lists for subsidized day care centres are not kept beyond nine months. Many people therefore cannot even get on the waiting list. This is producing a considerable amount of anger and resentment towards the paucity of services available under government subsidy.
2. The working mother is a fact. The percentage of married women who are working is steadily increasing. Last year a City survey found that in 29% of families with pre-schoolers, the mother works. In 8% of families with pre-schoolers, the mother is the sole source of income.
3. According to the same survey, 48% of all working single parent families with pre-school children use babysitting services, while 6% use private day care facilities and another 6% use public day care facilities. Unless subsidized day care is available to women who can earn only minimal incomes, working is not an alternative to remaining on public assistance. Therefore, it is likely that many of the remaining 40% are largely dependent on public assistance. It is judged that this is attributable in large part to the scarcity of subsidized day care spaces. Families with pre-schoolers where the mother only works have a medium income in the 3,000 - 4,000 dollar range. For these 2,400 families, the alternative of commercial spaces, babysitting, etc., (even apart from supply or quality questions) is not really available. Since 1970, the percentage of the provincial public assistance caseload attributed to single parent families has increased from 17½% of the caseload to 39½%. In absolute terms, the single parent public assistance caseload has increased from 8,500 in March of 1971 to 11,600 two years later.
4. A total of about 100 publicly supported after-school care spaces must be compared with the estimated 10,100 children aged 5 - 9 of working mothers. There are 42 spaces in subsidized centres, the remainder in co-operative centres receiving City loans or United Way grants.

5. The fees for day care for various types of facilities are as follows:
 - subsidized centres: \$10.00 - \$120.00 per child per month
 - private centres: \$60.00 - \$120.00 per child per month
 - after school co-operatives: \$25.00 - \$40.00 per child per month
 - housekeepers: \$2.00 an hour to \$450.00 per month
 - babysitting: \$65.00 - \$120.00 per month.

This schedule of costs means that lower income families must rely on space being available in subsidized day care centres. Priority in admission to centres has been given to low income families, single parent families and parents with special needs. In general, families with pre-schoolers in Edmonton have a medium income \$1,000 less than other families. Pre-schooler families with the mother only working have a medium income \$6,000 less than the average family income in Edmonton. Moreover, families with pre-schoolers are found to pay more than average for rent and mortgages. Accordingly, subsidized day care centres with fees based on income typically have 65% of their children from low income families, 25% from middle income families, 10% from high income families, 2/3 of the families using day care centres are single parent families.

6. Many middle and higher income families also are anxious to use subsidized day care centres despite the higher cost to them over many alternative forms of day care. This is because of the standards that subsidized day care centres have adopted. Moreover, because of the priority system admitting children to subsidized day care centres and the fact that these centres are always full (as compared with commercial centres which are usually about 3/4 full) higher income parents are usually unable to get their children into publicly supported day care centres, despite the fact that they are quite prepared to pay in proportion to their income.
7. Subsidized day care facilities are still sparsely located around the City. This puts special strain on those parents who do not have a car.
8. Information centres in Edmonton (AID, West 10 and Open Door) receive on the average over 100 calls per month from persons seeking suggestions on where they can place children with babysitters or day care. AID Service has followed up the last 18 referrals they made to day care centres. They found that 6 were accepted but two of these did not have the transportation necessary. Nine were not accepted, in five cases because the centres were full, in two cases they were not eligible and in two cases they could not afford the fee.
9. The day care concept seems to be well accepted and seen as a necessary service by the community-at-large. This is shown by the results of two surveys:
 - A. The results of the City Social Needs Survey in 1972 of 2,564 chosen households is as follows:

When asked if they felt that such services (day care) were needed in their neighbourhood, 45% of those interviewed replied "yes", 27% replied "no" and 24% were undecided. 4% did not respond. Asked "would you use such a service if you had pre-school children"-

1. 2% said they now use day care services.
2. 46% said they would use such service.
3. 39% would not use such service.
4. 8% were undecided.
5. 5% did not respond.

B. A survey conducted by the Province of Alberta on "Public Attitude Towards Public Assistance in Alberta" yielded the following information from 2,192 persons replying to the questionnaire as of November 6, 1972. In response to the question "How important do you see the following service which might be offered by the government along with public assistance programs?" were the following answers:

<u>Day care centres and babysitting services</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>NON-URBAN</u>	<u>URBAN</u>
Very important	22.6	11.7	27.8
Important	59.7	65.0	57.6
Not very important	12.7	20.0	9.7
Not important	5.0	3.3	4.9
N.R.	(2)	(0)	(2)

Note that 85% of urban Albertans believe it is important for the government to provide day care centres and babysitting services while less than 5% believe it is not very important.

WHAT VALUE - OUR CHILDREN?

A QUESTION OF PRIORITIES

Fifty percent of all the factors determining intellectual functioning are formulated by the age of four and variations in the environment have little effect on the I.Q. after the age of eight. The greatest effect takes place between the ages of one to five.

This means that by the time the child reaches the school system, it is too late!!!

PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Because of the pressures of living in an industrialized society, the family increasingly requires support services in order to remain an effective, stable unit.

These needed support services include but are not limited to:

Health services

Educational services

Social services which include child care services.

FAMILY DAY CARE: Screens licenses and supervises private family homes which are used mainly for infants and pre-school children who cannot be admitted to day care centres (group programs).

MOTHER'S DAY OUT PROGRAM: Primarily mother's relief and socialization of isolated pre-school children.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM: Provides program and supervision for children 5 to 12 prior to school in the morning, over the lunch hour and after school, for children of working parent(s).

It should be noted that all these services are essential as part of a co-ordinated community service program effort to meet the growing needs of modern families.

The stress today is on day care because of the overwhelming evidence as to the urgent unmet need in this area, and is in no way to be interpreted as excluding other child care needs and programs.

DAY CARE AND ITS BASIC GOALS

A good day care is a place that serves during the day, children 2½ years up to school age, through the use of a program prepared by the staff, especially educated to work with pre-school children, in consultation with parents. The program attempts to insure the child's physical well-being, to deepen his emotional growth, to stimulate his social skills and to promote mental growth so that he becomes "hooked" on learning in its broadest sense.

Day care does not take over the child-rearing functions of the family, but attempts to augment and strengthen the child-parent relationships whenever needed and involve parents closely in the aims of the day care program.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINED STAFF

Day care centres must receive sufficient financial support to maintain competent permanent staff in adequate ratios of adults to children.

Our friendly untrained day care staff responded to a question concerning how to handle behaviour tantrums by saying:

"Oh, I learned the solution to that a long time ago. I take the child into the bathroom, stick his head in the toilet, and flush it twice. I have no problem with that child again."

The most convincing proof of the need for training day care staff is to simply observe a centre with qualified staff and then compare it with one without.

WHAT VALUE IS DAY CARE?

It is important to see how day care can fit into a comprehensive community program designed to alleviate and prevent social problems that tear away at the very fabric of our society. Day care is both preventive and developmental in nature.

Mental health of parent(s) - what we are talking about involves quality of relationships between human beings.

FACT: Almost 9% of Canadian families are single parents.

Although society should make it possible for mothers/fathers to remain at home if so desired, it is not sound social policy to force them to do so.

FACT: Contrary to popular thinking, absence of good day care does not result in fewer mothers/fathers going to work, but results in them being forced to find second-rate care for their children.

FACT: Our society is dependent on working mothers.

Since many of the jobs held by mothers are not jobs men would want or accept at that wage level, our society is dependent on working mothers and must recognize its dependency by making it possible for mothers to work without sacrificing the health of their children and without reducing the quality and the strength of their family life.

Case in Point: A telephone conversation between a day care director and a mother. The mother describes two or three nightmarish experiences with babysitters and then tells of finding a "trustworthy" person on the other side of the city. The problem is that she earns only \$220.00 a month and can't afford a car. It's impossible to take the bus during rush hour after work to the babysitters and manage to get home before it's too late in the evening. Therefore she is forced to leave her child at the sitters until the weekend. The tearful separation every Monday is tearing the mother apart. She anxiously asks about vacancies in the day care centres, all have long waiting lists. Earliest expected vacancy is 12 to 18 months.

Most families in desperate situations struggle on in silence and their plight never reaches anyone! It is unrealistic and irresponsible of government to expect direct demand from such persons who lack knowledge of the political machinery to make their needs known.

DAY CARE IS EFFECTIVE IN HELPING DISADVANTAGED CHILD

Poverty is inherited: Children born into poverty, grow up, marry and have children who inherit attitudes, perspectives and life styles that perpetuate the condition. Many children are retarded because of exposure to an environment that destroys learning ability.

Quoting Walter North:

"...I.Q. scores increase with prolonged enrollment in a day care program.....early enrollment is preferable to late enrollment. Greatest gains were for children between the ages of three and four years of age."

Well-staffed day care centres in partnership with parents have not only proven to be safer than haphazard child care arrangements but have also demonstrated that emotionally and intellectually the children receiving day care are beyond children of similar background who have not received an equivalent pre-school group experience.

DAY CARE - PREVENTION OF DELINQUENCY

A good pre-school program acts as a catalyst to the child's success in school and as an effective human being.

The vast majority of adolescents on probation have experienced school difficulties. An adequate day care experience preparing the child for greater success in school may well be the most significant program that could develop for the prevention of delinquency.

DAY CARE AUGMENTS OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES

Day care can be a valuable resource in supplementing the work of the other community services such as:

- Early identification and referral of problems (perceptual, emotional, physical)
- With respect to mental illness of parent, day care can provide adequate care for child during hospitalization and later rehabilitation
- Psychiatric services are overtaxed by persons who have experienced a crippling relationship with their parent(s). The question is not one of day care versus parental care but rather one of quality of relationships. Children in neglect could be given care in a day care which might alleviate a bad home situation and at least would remove the child from it.

- Cultural conflicts (at least of the children of immigrants) can be lessened before the child starts school.

The supportive role is being recognized - over one-third of the children being served by the subsidized centres have been referred by other agencies.

DAY CARE IS AN INVESTMENT RATHER THAN SIMPLY AN EXPENSE

To do nothing is to bring its own price - which we will not be able to afford.

Poverty is costly. Its most grievous costs are those felt directly by the poor themselves, but it also imposes very large costs on the rest of society.

It is estimated that one poor man costs the public purse as much as \$140,000.00 between seventeen and fifty-seven.

If a day care program can intervene in the life of only one child to prevent him from costing the public purse the above quoted figure, the whole operation of a good day care centre for at least two years would be covered.

Further, the majority of single parents who have had to drop out of upgrading educational programs have stated that inadequate child care facilities was the reason. Not only does this put added stress on the family, but the community has lost the potential increased usefulness of the parent.

WELFARE IS NOT THE ANSWER!

Children from families on welfare did poorer in school than did children from families who earned no more money than if they had been on welfare.

Children from welfare families have greater psychiatric impairment than do children from low income non-welfare families.

Day care is obviously a superior alternative to welfare.

WHERE IS THE MONEY COMING FROM?

The answer is obvious. Either day care is a preventative program or it is not. A number of governments are on record as saying it is. If the claim is sincere, then we can't spend too much. The more we spend the more we prevent and thus the more we save. The decision then is not where does the money come from as we will either pay it on prevention or on the more costly rehabilitation programs. The real question to be faced clearly is, do we think day care is preventative? If we believe day care is preventative in that it helps to break the cycle of poverty and/or believe that day care programs should be viewed as developmental programs, helpful to most children, then the more we invest in day care the more we save. If there is a shortage of money and if we are not sure that money is going to be more plentiful, then the only winning proposition is to make the future easier by investing in day care now. An ounce of prevention.

It is a sad commentary on our society that we are willing to pour so much money into so many rehabilitation services when a little concentration on prevention could have accomplished so much more. One cannot help but wonder why it is that governments are willing to pay a massive amount of monies if parents will only give up their children but are unwilling to give the necessary kinds of support to keep the families together!!!

ALBERTA IS ONE OF THE MOST CHILD-CENTERED PROVINCES IN CANADA??

It's a myth! Some directors are receiving as many as 30 phone calls a week about vacancies in addition to those already on the waiting lists. When parents are told the waiting list is already large enough to fill two more centres and that no more applications can be accepted, they explain their own tragic circumstances. How do you decide of the 100 desperate families on the waiting list which few are more desperate than the others?? How do you tell a parent that there is no hope of them getting into the centre for at least a year???

Almost every family now using the centres have their own horror story of inadequate child care facilities, stories of emotional and physical child abuse.

Ask a parent about how child-centered Alberta is!!!!

WHAT VALUE - OUR CHILDREN?

We pay every time unmet social needs' boil up into violence. We pay for the one in six Canadians who become mentally ill. We pay every time some significant contribution is not made because the person's potential was squashed early in life. Good day care is expensive but poor day care is more expensive.

Our goals need to go beyond the prevention of possible breakdown and to view the pre-school years as pregnant with the possibilities of promoting growth, self-actualization and a new and better society here in our Alberta!!!!!!

COMMUNITY TASK FORCE ON DAY CARE

The Preventive Social Service Program is the mode through which public funds are made available to subsidize day care services. At present, such funds (a combination of municipal, provincial and federal monies) are being provided for all three types of day care discussed. It is estimated that in the present year, Alberta through Preventive Social Services will provide approximately \$670,000.00 in the direct support of day care services in Edmonton. Because of the nature of Preventive Social Services as a cost-sharing program, this expenditure will be shared by all three levels of government, with the Province providing less than one-half of this amount. Under new guidelines the federal share will increase to 50% of the total costs in the coming year. The balance is split with the City of Edmonton providing 20% of the costs and the Province of Alberta the remaining 30%. It should be appreciated that the Preventive Social Service Program through its unique arrangement provides a relatively inexpensive way for the City and the Province to make available badly needed community services.

At present, the capacities of the subsidized day care programs are very limited. There are currently eight centres in operation. These centres provide care for a combined total of 431 pre-school children in the 2½ to 6 year age range. This represents approximately one subsidized space for every 57.5 children in this age range. If we include the capacity of the non-subsidized centres with very minimal required standards we find the following situation: approximately 1700 spaces for a ratio of 1 space for every 14.5 children in the 2½ to 6 year age range.

It is interesting to compare the utilization figures for the subsidized and non-subsidized programs. The subsidized centres actual enrollment is 99.1% of their licensed capacity. In fact, all centres have extensive waiting lists as will be discussed later. The utilization ratio for commercial centres is 74.9%. Thus it can be seen that the extension of commercial services will not automatically solve the need for additional day care service. There are two factors operating here. The first is that many people cannot afford to purchase services from

the commercial programs. Without the availability of subsidy they are unable to acquire care for their children. For many people this means the frustration of giving up employment and turning to public assistance. The second factor is the quality of care provided in commercial programs. Within the financial limitations faced by the commercial operators, in spite of many good intentions, it is impossible to offer a quality program. Thus, many people including those able and willing to pay the full costs of the service are seeking service from the Preventive Social Service funded programs creating a demand far greater than the centres are able to meet.

Capacities in the other two types of subsidized day care are even more limited. The Family Day Care Program has a capacity of 120 while the After School Care Program can accommodate 42 children. Both of these services have extensive waiting lists.

The current per diem rate for subsidizing centres is \$6.00 per day. On this basis the cost of providing care for one child for one year is \$1,500. From this, it is able to project the number of new spaces which could be made available with additional operating funds. For example, the availability of an additional \$150,000 in operational costs would provide an additional 100 day care spaces. An additional \$150,000 in capital would be needed to provide building facilities for these 100 spaces.

Besides the problem of insufficient operating funds there is another problem in the financing of developing day care services. This is in relation to the provision of capital costs. Up to this time the City of Edmonton has not provided capital costs for day care through the Preventive Social Service Program. This has resulted in community groups having been forced to solicit space in other facilities such as churches which are often not ideal. Lack of funding for capital costs has prevented steady development and planning according to geographical distribution. As new areas of the city develop it is necessary to construct new facilities requiring much greater capital funding. This may become a major obstacle in developing new programs unless the Preventive Social Service Program is able to provide assistance in this area.

November 19, 1973.