

## Telephone Survey Results

Administration completed a telephone survey of child care services facilities operating in Edmonton between March 6 and March 9, 2015. The survey selected 133 facilities, of which 82 completed or partially completed the questions, representing a 62 percent response rate and making contact with 28 percent of all facilities. Seven responses were excluded from the analysis due to being incomplete (1), the facility is no longer in operation (4), or the respondent declined to participate (2). Where there was discrepancy between the data provided by the Child and Family Services Region 6 and the survey results, the telephone survey results were used for the analysis.

### Capacity

Of those facilities surveyed, a shortage of child care spaces is not apparent in the survey results, where 53.7% of child care facilities are operating below licensed capacity, and the average capacity utilization is 89.2%. The waitlists are not specific to any age group. On the other hand, 67.1% of facilities do have a waitlist. Nearly one third of facilities are operating below capacity, yet those facilities still have a waitlist. This would indicate that there is a bottleneck somewhere in the process independent of licensed capacity.

Capacity					
Facility has a waitlist?	Operating at capacity	Operating below capacity	Facility not operating	Total	Number of Facilities
<b>Yes</b>	37.8%	29.3%	0.0%	67.1%	55
<b>No</b>	8.5%	20.7%	0.0%	29.3%	24
<b>Unknown</b>	0.0%	0.0%	3.7%	3.7%	3
<b>Total</b>	46.3%	50.0%	3.7%	100.0%	82

The most likely underlying issue is a labour shortage, which constrains the total children that can be cared for below licensed capacity and the facility operator's concern over the quality of care (operating below licensed capacity on purpose). The facility operators may feel that they can only comfortably accommodate a certain number of children, which is lower than their approved capacity. Or there may be an issue finding qualified staff to meet the staff to child ratio required by the province.

The charts below show the range of waitlist size seen in the capacity numbers, where the average available capacity is much higher than the median.

Facilities with a Waitlist	
# Facilities with a waitlist:	55
Average waitlist size	44.2
Median waitlist size	20.0
Mode waitlist size	20.0

All Facilities	
# Facilities	82.0
Average waitlist size	27.6
Median waitlist size	4.5
Mode waitlist size	0.0

The data shows that there are many facilities that do not have a waitlist, and a few that have a very large waitlist. Removing four downtown facilities reduces the mode from 20 to 4, showing that the

downtown facilities are substantially influencing what would be considered typical across the city. The large waitlists could be explained by having an advantage relative to the location, the reputation, the cost, stability of enrolled students (low turnover), inability to attract or retain staff to maintain staff to child ratios, or something else.

Of those who responded to the survey:	
Total licensed capacity of survey sample	5075
Utilized licensed capacity of survey sample	4526
Average licensed capacity utilization of surveyed	89.2%
Operating at capacity	35
Operating below capacity	43
Did not know/declined to answer this question	4
Average available spaces in facilities operating below capacity	16.0
Average available spaces in all facilities	8.8

Of the 82 facilities surveyed, there are ten with waitlists 50 or larger, three of which are located in downtown neighbourhood boundaries. Some facilities do not maintain waitlists because they have found that parents will often not follow-through with enrollment when a space opens.

Most programs currently offered are either for toddlers (245) or for school-aged children (245). The next most offered program is pre-school (127) and there are hardly any facilities that offer care for newborns or infants.

Child Care Services Program Type Count		
Program type of those surveyed:	Surveyed	Total
Day care program	47	246
Pre-school program	7	127
Out of school care program	22	246
Innovative child care program	0	9
Program not running/no useful responses	5	0
Total	82	628
	13.1%	100.0%

In the downtown specifically there are six child care services facilities, three of which have waitlists in excess of 50 children. Only one facility surveyed has more than 100 families on a waitlist, and that facility is located downtown and has a waitlist in excess of 400 children. Longer waitlists are a result of several factors, including: leases or operational subsidies that restrict enrollment to a specific employer, operational decision to maintain a certain standard of quality care (purposefully operating below licensed capacity), a lack of outdoor play space, and the higher cost of leasing space.

### Barriers to Expanding Child Care Services

Overall, the survey respondents thought that there was a mix of regulatory and non-regulatory barriers to expanding child care services. The table below summarizes opinions about the types of barriers identified by respondents.

Opinion Regarding Barriers to Expanding Child Care Services	
There are regulatory and other barriers	36.8%
There are regulatory but not other barriers	3.9%
There are other but not regulatory barriers	36.8%
There are not any barriers	21.1%
No response	1.3%

In addition to questions about capacity and waitlists the telephone survey asked:

1. *Do you believe there are regulation barriers to creating more childcare downtown?  
If so, what in your opinion are the barriers?*
2. *Do you believe there are other barriers to creating child care spaces?  
If so, what in your opinion are the barriers?*
3. *How would you suggest the City facilitate further development of Child Care Services across the City?*
4. *Are you affiliated with a school, religion or other institution? (specify)*

Regarding question 1), the regulatory barriers identified were:

Barrier	Details
Parking	Not enough parking/on street parking is dangerous, Parking variances took too long to obtain, Parking requirements are too high, do a study of actual operational needs of child care facilities
Processing time	Parking variances took too long, Lots of paperwork, Process takes too long. This was felt overall, not specifically about the City of Edmonton.
Provincial requirements	Safety Code requirements, Multiple levels of government approval, regulations are barriers, but beneficial, Per-child area (play space, etc.)/no space to expand, Inflexible requirements.
Finding a suitable location	Difficult to meet parking requirements, Per-child area (play space, etc.)/no space to expand, Development requirements restrict available locations, Leasing problems due to process time and requirements

Regarding question 2), the other barriers identified were:

Barrier	Details
Financial	Government of Alberta cut subsidy program and ended the “Creating Child Care Choices” program, and subsidies are needed to cover operating costs, Commercial space is expensive, Staff to child ratio, Finding & retaining qualified staff, City taxes too high, Renovation/set-up costs, Parents ability to pay, subsidy implementation problems
Staffing	not enough staff, obtaining certification is extremely difficult, high turnover of staff, previous teaching experience is not easily recognized, ratios make daycare unaffordable for families
Finding suitable location	School growth pushes out child care, Parking requirements, Daycare competition, Generic difficulty, Playground space lacking

Regarding question 3), some solutions identified were:

Potential Solution	Details
Facilitate expansion	City facilities – recreation centres, libraries, etc. - , Expand zoning locations, incorporate child care services needs in neighbourhood planning, allow child care services in school Portables, work with the School board to allocate child care facilities space in new schools, and grant more variances to adapt the rules to particular site conditions
Play space	rely on public park infrastructure, allow the provision of additional indoor play space in lieu of outdoor space, allow more flexibility for staggered times for the use of existing outdoor play space
Process improvements	evaluate the licensing process to make it more straightforward, including having only one set of rules for all government agencies, make the process faster, reduce the number of regulations
Separation Distance	child care services facilities should have a minimum distance to limit competition and spread access evenly across the city
Subsidize	create more reasonably priced child care, give incentives to developers to develop child care in new buildings, support teachers and help create more qualified staff, restore provincial subsidy, create geared-to-income child care
Other	advertise the value of service – child care workers are professionals not babysitters -, create a central database with vacant capacity or job postings, standardize operations and pay scale between facilities, maintain enrollment during economic downturn as more parents will stay home during hard times

Regarding question 4), school affiliation is as follows:

Child Care Services facility Affiliation with Institutions	
Community League	5
Catholic elementary school	8
Public elementary school	7
Edmonton Public School Board and Edmonton Catholic School Board	2
Islamic school	1
Jewish school	1
YMCA	2
Other	6
Not affiliated	43
unknown	1
Total	76

32 child care facilities surveyed are affiliated with an institution of some sort, whether it is the school board, a place of worship, or a community volunteer organization, while 43 are not affiliated.