

# BUILDING THE FUTURE

## Burnaby's Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines



JUNE 2024





# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Land Acknowledgement

The City of Burnaby recognizes that we are on the ancestral and unceded homelands of the hə́hə́míhəm and Sḵw̓xw̓7mesh Sníchim speaking peoples and are grateful to be on this territory.

## From the Project Team

The City of Burnaby Child Care Design Guidelines represent the culmination of a collaborative effort, and we are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed.

A special thank you goes to the Burnaby Child Care Resources Group. Their unwavering dedication and expertise in quality child care were instrumental in shaping these guidelines. We also extend our sincere appreciation to the City's Development and Urban Design, Facilities, and Social Planning staff whose knowledge and commitment played a vital role in this project.

And a big thanks to these amazing individuals who shared their specialized child care design and operation knowledge:

Kim Adamson, Child Care Consultant  
Wendy Chow, Director of Operations, Vancouver Society of Children's Centres  
Mark Ehman, Principal, DA Architects + Planners  
Lynne Werker, Lynne Werker Architect

Your insights significantly enriched the content of these guidelines, and your contributions will help ensure high-quality child care facilities in Burnaby.

Sincerely,  
Sandra Menzer | Project Lead, Child Care Consultant  
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# City of Burnaby Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines

*A child who attends a child care program from infancy through young school-age years will spend more time in child care than all the hours of schooling, and in their early years may spend more waking hours in child care than at home.*

Jim Greenman - Caring Spaces, Learning Places (2005)



# SECTION 1

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## 1.0 Introduction

### The power of place

The physical environment of a child care centre, both indoors and outdoors, sets the stage and creates the context for everything that happens in that centre. Child care centres are a place where children (and staff) spend long hours each day, where routine needs are met, where relationships develop, skills are learned, abilities are enhanced and attitudes toward learning are formed.

Children thrive in safe, healthy, and high-quality spaces that cater to their unique needs and respect their view of the world.

These spaces must:

- » allow children to be with other children in large and small groups
- » offer spaces for children to be on their own
- » have safe, comfortable places to rest or sleep when they need, without being disturbed
- » enable children to move freely and explore safely
- » be flexible and adapt as children's needs and abilities change
- » flow directly from indoors to outdoors and back again
- » be warm, inviting, inspired by nature, stimulating, and challenging
- » offer a positive experience for eating and drinking
- » be inclusive and offer a sense of belonging

The location, layout, size, materials, and overall design of a child care centre directly impact the quality of the program and, ultimately, the long-term healthy development of children. A well-planned environment provides a strong foundation for a high-quality child care program, supporting children's learning and growth in countless ways.

**Building the Future:** The City of Burnaby's *Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines* are built upon the City's commitment to exceptional child care. They reflect current best practices in early learning and care and offer valuable guidance in creating inspiring spaces that nurture the well-being and development of all children.

## 1.1 City of Burnaby Context

The City of Burnaby recognizes the vital social and economic role [quality child care](#) plays in community well-being. This commitment goes back to the early 1990s with Council's adoption of the first [Burnaby Child Care Policy](#), aimed at providing residents with diverse child care options. Successes have included:

- » securing 7 City-owned child care facilities (with 331 spaces)
- » formal collaboration with the Burnaby School District for the establishment of up to 12 child care facilities
- » several zoning bylaw amendments, and establishing a [Child Care Resources Group](#)

Building on that momentum in July 2021, Burnaby Council approved the City's new [Burnaby Child Care Action Plan](#), a 10-year roadmap to address child care needs with a strategic focus on increasing access, strengthening partnerships, improving affordability and enhancing quality. Key commitments include:

- » creating 4,400 new child care spaces by 2030
- » amending the Community Benefits Bonus Policy and Official Community Plan to include more specific provisions for securing child care spaces as an amenity
- » building and enhancing partnerships

In May of 2022, Council agreed to confirm a set of principles values, criteria, and guidelines to assist the City in the development of exceptional child care spaces.

The following sections detail the City of Burnaby's [Building the Future: Burnaby's Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines](#).

## 1.2 Building the Future: An Overview of the Design Principles and Guidelines

### What is the intent?

The *Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines* were created to provide the City of Burnaby with **a framework and set of requirements for creating high-quality licensed child care facilities**.

These principles and guidelines are:

- » intended to **apply to all new City-related child care facilities** (initiated, funded, owned, or supported by the City) regardless of project type
- » aligned with the City's priorities, **primarily for centres serving children under 5 years old**, but apply to all types of licensed group child care settings
- » a public education resource for anyone interested in developing child care spaces in Burnaby

### How do these fit with other regulations and legislation?

The principles and guidelines complement existing regulations, legislation, and standards. They do not replace any provincial or City of Burnaby regulatory requirements, and they do not guarantee that the child care facility will be licensed. Meeting all the current regulatory requirements remains the responsibility of those developing a child care facility.

Typical regulations and standards that may be applicable include:

- » [BC's Community Care and Assisted Living Act](#) and [BC's Child Care Licensing Regulation](#)
- » [Director of Licensing Standards of Practice](#)
- » [Safe Play Space: design, materials, and supervision requirements for outdoor play spaces](#)
- » [Active Play: requirements for active play and physical movement in child care programs](#)
- » [BC Building Code](#)



- » [BC Human Rights Code](#)
- » [Accessible British Columbia Act](#) and the [BC Accessibility Handbook 2020](#)

In addition to reflecting current research and best practices for early learning and child care, the City's Child Care Principles and Guidelines also align with:

- » The Province of BC's commitments outlined in [Child Care BC](#)
- » [BC's Early Learning Framework](#)
- » [The Early Childhood Educators of BC Code of Ethics](#)
- » The Government of Canada's [Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework](#)
- » [The Canada-British Columbia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement](#)
- » [City of Burnaby's Commitments to Indigenous Peoples and Reconciliation](#)

## Inside this guide

*Burnaby's Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines* are written with a focus on achieving positive outcomes for children and families through high-quality environments.

### Definitions

**Principles** are core values that guide decisions about designing new child care centres.

**Guidelines** are specific requirements based on the principles, providing direction for implementation.

### Two main sections

**Section 2** outlines seven interconnected principles.

**Section 3** dives into each principle, providing an overview, supporting rationale, specific guidelines to follow, resources for further exploration, and visuals that help showcase the intended outcome.

The **Appendix** provides a glossary of terms used throughout the document.

**Important note:** for best results, a comprehensive review of all seven principles and their corresponding guidelines is recommended. They are intended to function as a cohesive framework.



# SECTION 2

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## 2.0 Building the Future: Burnaby's Child Care Design Principles

The City of Burnaby has committed to seven key design principles to ensure child care centres are spaces that nurture young minds and spark a love of learning, inspiring positive experiences for all. These principles address a range of factors, from well-designed indoor and outdoor environments that stimulate creativity and exploration to safe and accessible locations. Additionally, they prioritize encouraging family involvement and building a strong sense of community, while also supporting staff well-being.

### 1. Location, siting and safe access

Child care centres must be in safe, accessible areas that are carefully chosen to foster a sense of community and build trust among families.

### 2. Children - indoor spaces

Child care centres must provide a minimum of 3.7 m<sup>2</sup> of usable indoor floor space per child. This excludes areas like storage rooms, offices, washrooms, kitchens, entryways, hallways, circulation spaces, door swings, structural columns and service/utility spaces. Additionally, there should be a safe and direct connection, both visually and physically, to the outdoor playground.

### 3. Children - outdoor playground

Child care centres require dedicated outdoor playgrounds for each program, offering both covered and open areas for children's use. These playgrounds must provide a minimum of 6 m<sup>2</sup> of usable space per child, excluding areas like storage, waste disposal, walkways, gate swings and planters. Additionally, there should be a safe and direct connection, both visually and physically, to the indoor spaces.

### 4. Families

Child care centres must be designed to be welcoming, inclusive spaces that promote family involvement and encourage families to enjoy and benefit from the community that is created.

### 5. Staff - workplace environment

Child care centres must include support spaces for staff to promote a positive, healthy, and productive work environment.

### 6. Accessibility, inclusion and equity

Child care centres must be designed to be fully inclusive and accessible to ensure the meaningful participation of children with a diverse abilities developmental needs and backgrounds.

### 7. Resiliency and futureproofing

Child care centres must be designed to be flexible, durable, cost efficient to operate and incorporate climate change-resistant strategies.

By prioritizing these design principles, Burnaby has committed to creating child care environments that support the well-being of children, families, and staff. These spaces will not only nurture growth and development in the present but also ensure children are well-prepared for a bright and successful future.



# SECTION 3

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## 3.0 Principles and Guidelines

Quality environments are designed with the child's view of the world at the forefront, taking into consideration the size of the group and the ages being served. Children's learning environments must be relaxed, home-like, comfortable and welcoming. This section outlines the City of Burnaby *Child Care Design Principles and Guidelines* that must be followed during the detailed design and development stages for new child care spaces.

### 3.1 Location, Siting and Safe Access

#### *Setting the Stage for Success*

The location of a child care centre plays a critical role in its accessibility for families, ultimately impacting a child's well-being and the quality of care provided. Regardless of size or type (stand-alone, part of a larger structure, new build, or renovation), careful consideration should be given to these factors:

- » Proximity to home or work eases drop-offs and pick-ups, reducing stress for families.
- » Co-location with compatible community services or public infrastructure can offer building cost efficiencies and easy access to additional resources and amenities.
- » Shared resources and collaboration with other services can strengthen community networks for families.
- » A safe and accessible area builds trust in the centre's ability to safeguard children, providing comfort for both parents and children.
- » A well-designed and well-located centre can enhance a neighbourhood's character, responding to the demographic, cultural, and socio-economic makeup of the surrounding community.

#### Principle

**Child care centres must be in safe, accessible areas that are carefully chosen to foster a sense of community and build trust among families.**

#### Guidelines

Child care centres must be located:

- » with or near other services used by families like schools, community centres, and parks
- » in new residential centres or commercial areas where larger numbers of families can be expected to live or work
- » close to public transit routes
- » in areas with easy pedestrian access and good connectivity to the local neighbourhood
- » away from busy traffic corridors, commercial loading zones, industrial uses and from all noisy, noxious, and dangerous environments
- » with barrier-free access from the exterior to the interior of the building (i.e. providing a ramp if stairs are required)
- » where dedicated outdoor playground space is seamlessly connected and directly adjacent to the indoor spaces
- » where ample natural light is available
- » in spaces which can offer a continuum of services for children of various ages

Child care centres must have:

- » good wayfinding signage
- » well-lit entry points with safe close by access for parking for pick up and drop off
- » secure building entry access using intercoms and local alarms on exterior doors and gates
- » security cameras for perimeter and exterior entrances/exits only (i.e. not in areas occupied by children)



**Standalone facility on grounds of residential development**



**Ground floor of residential tower**



**Modular facility at elementary school**



**Nearby drop-off/pick-up parking**

## 3.2 Children - Indoor Spaces

### *A World of Wonder*

High-quality, nurturing indoor environments are designed with children in mind. This means considering the scale, layout, and features of the space to best suit the specific needs of the age group and number of children it will serve.

Spaces should be:

- » **Relaxed and homelike:** Comfortable and welcoming, with warm calm colours, fostering a sense of security and belonging.
- » **Supportive and flexible:** Designed to adapt to children's changing needs and interests, with a balance of open areas for exploration and smaller nooks for quiet, focused activities.
- » **Aesthetically pleasing:** Visually stimulating spaces, with engaging elements that spark curiosity and encourage exploring.

The layout should provide:

- » **Quiet spaces:** Dedicated areas for relaxation and individual reflection, allowing children to unwind or recharge.
- » **Active spaces:** Designated areas for energetic play and movement, encouraging physical development and exploration.
- » **Defined zones:** Similar spaces grouped together for clear organization, promoting easy flow for children and efficient supervision by staff.
- » **Essential support areas:** Well-equipped kitchens, laundry rooms, and conveniently located storage areas are crucial for staff to provide high-quality care.

**The reality of BC’s Child Care Licensing Regulations:** The Regulations mandate a minimum of 3.7 m<sup>2</sup> of usable indoor floor area per child. These minimums apply only to activity spaces used by the children, excluding storage rooms, washrooms, staff areas, kitchens and entryways. They also exclude circulation space (doorways, hallways), door swings, building inefficiencies (support columns), or service areas (janitorial closets, waste disposal).

## Principle

**Child care centres must provide at least 3.7 m<sup>2</sup> of usable indoor floor space per child. This excludes areas like storage rooms, offices, washrooms, kitchens, entryways, hallways, circulation spaces, door swings, structural columns and service/ utility spaces. Additionally, there should be a safe and direct connection, both visually and physically, to the outdoor playground.**

## Guidelines

Interior spaces must be wide open, flexible, with natural finishes, warm muted colours, and ample natural light.

## Support spaces

In addition to well-designed activity areas, each individual child care program requires functional support spaces to ensure smooth operations and staff well-being. These essential spaces include:

- » a staff office
- » a staff break room plus storage for personal belongings
- » a laundry room with washer/dryer, sink and storage
- » a janitorial room with mop sink, space for a janitorial cart and storage
- » a small meeting room (for meetings with families, colleagues, support services)
- » a multi-purpose/transitional welcome space (refer to Families)
- » garbage, recycling, compost areas
- » for programs that serve children under 36 months old: a secure dedicated program stroller storage and a secure dedicated family stroller storage (these two spaces can also be located outside (Refer to Children – Outdoor Playgrounds))
- » storage for emergency evacuation supplies, large enough to accommodate the volume necessary for the number of children and staff (secure emergency supply storage can also be provided outdoors)

## Shared spaces

Centres that have multiple programs may consider sharing spaces – however, additional square footage may be required, and sharing may not be possible if the floor plan does not allow easy, safe access to these critical spaces. Shared spaces could include:

- » kitchens (note that each program serving children over 18 months old needs its own refrigerator and microwave)
- » laundry rooms
- » adult, fully accessible washrooms
- » staff office
- » staff break room
- » garbage, recycling, compost areas within the centre
- » program and parent stroller storage

## Main activity room

Each individual child care program must have a main activity room with zones for active play (e.g. dramatic play, climbing, crawling, blocks), sensory play (e.g. water, sand), quiet play (e.g. reading, table games, puzzles), art, eating, and storing children's personal belongings.

Within the main activity room, there must be:

- » an art counter, adult height with sink and storage
- » a centrally located staff communication/work space counter, adult-height with storage
- » a family communications counter – adult-height, located near the cubby area
- » for programs that serve infants (birth to 18 months): a counter with refrigerator, sink and microwave
- » a dedicated storage room for program supplies and equipment
- » ample natural light with good ventilation with air conditioning and a view to the outdoors

Adjacent and directly accessible from the main activity room, there must be:

- » a cubby area with one cubby for each licensed space plus 2-3 extra cubbies for part time children, with space for staff to keep their outdoor gear and enough space for a group of at least 8 children and staff to get dressed for the outdoors
- » a quiet room for reading, retreat, and small group activities
- » for programs serving children 18 months and older: A multi-purpose gross motor/nap room large enough to accommodate all the children for sleeping on mats
  - » Inside the multi-purpose gross motor/nap room: dedicated storage for play equipment, sleep mats and children's personal sleep items
- » for programs serving children younger than 18 months: a crib/nap room for every 6 children, large enough to accommodate 6 cribs
- » for programs serving children from birth to 36 months: a crib/nap room for 6 children and a multi-purpose gross motor/nap room large enough to accommodate all the children for sleeping on mats
  - » Inside the multi-purpose crib/nap rooms: dedicated storage for mats, crib supplies and children's personal belongings
- » a children's washroom with the required number of toilets, child-height sinks and:
  - » for programs serving children under 36 months: an adult-height diaper change table with sink and area for children's potties
  - » for programs serving children over 36 months: a clear floor space for changing children
- » a fully equipped kitchen with commercial dishwasher, triple sinks, a hand wash sink, fridge, and upright freezer
- » an adult washroom, fully accessible with a fold-down diaper change table



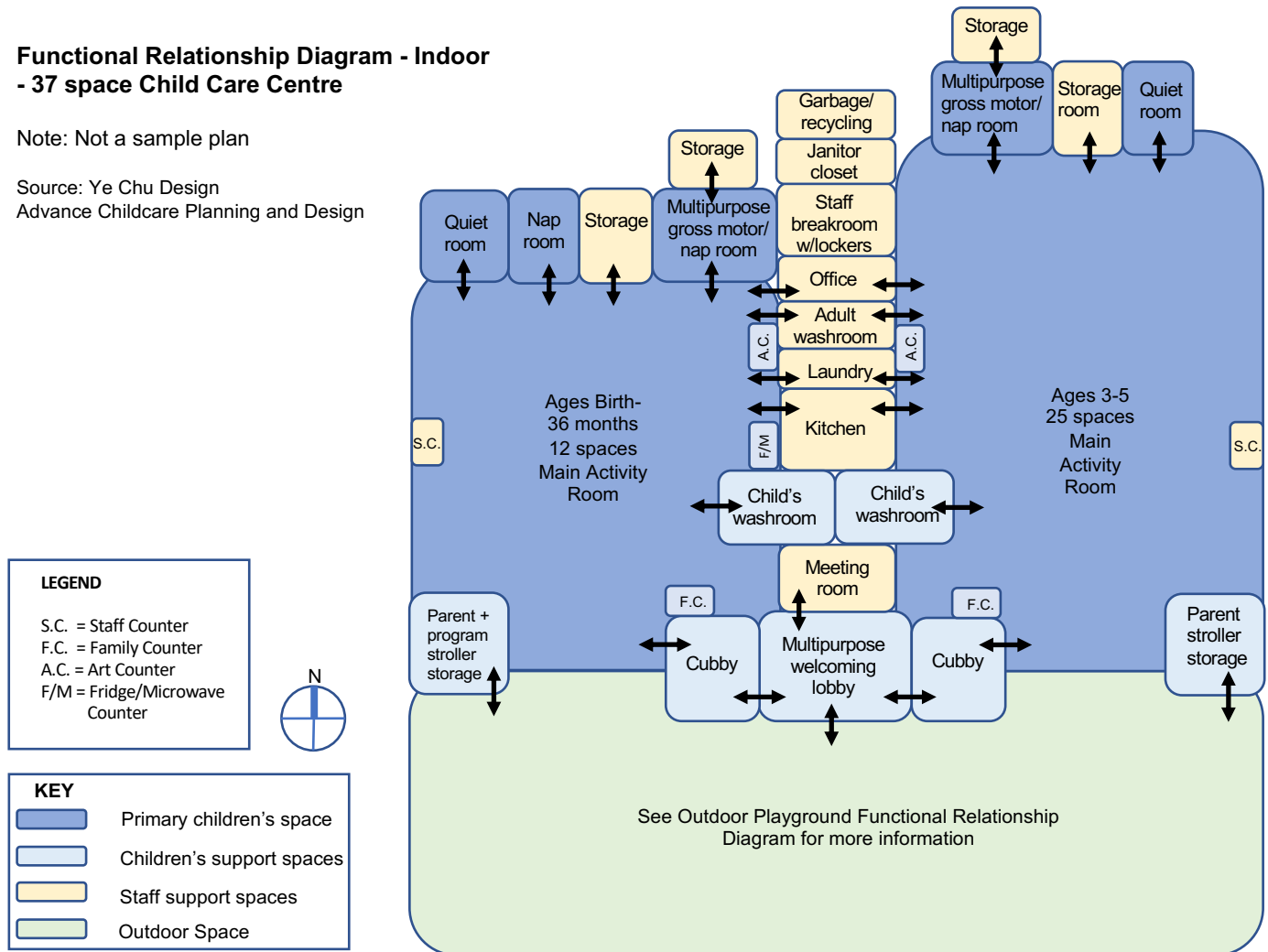
## References

- BC's Child Care Licensing Regulation
- City of Richmond Child Care Design Guidelines
- City of Vancouver Child Care Design Guidelines
- City of Vancouver Child Care Technical Guides
- Quality by Design: Child Care Centre Physical Environments: Beach, J., Friendly, M. (2005)
- BC's Early Learning Framework
- BC's Inclusive Child Care Tool Kit
- Province of BC Design Guidelines for Child Care Centres

### Functional Relationship Diagram - Indoor - 37 space Child Care Centre

Note: Not a sample plan

Source: Ye Chu Design  
Advance Childcare Planning and Design



## Main activity room



Photo: KK Law / Franci Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods Association



Photo: KK Law / Franci Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods Association



Photo: City of Burnaby



Photo: Mallen Gowing Berzins Architecture Inc.



Photo: City of Burnaby



Photo: City of Burnaby



Refrigerator/microwave in main activity room (infants)



Photo: City of Vancouver



Main activity room with adjacent quiet room

Photo: City of Vancouver

## Cubby area



Photo: Mallen Gowing Berzins Architecture Inc.



Photo: Kim Adamson



## Cubby area adjacent to main activity room

Photo: KK Law / Franci Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods Association

## Laundry room



Photo: Burnaby Family Life

## Art counter/staff counter



Photo: Sandra Menzer

## Shared kitchen



Photo: Marpole Neighbourhood House

## Children's washroom with diaper change counter



Photo: Kim Adamson

## Multi-purpose/gross motor/nap room



Photo: Kim Adamson

## Multi-purpose/welcoming lobby



Photo: SFU Child Care Society

## 3.3 Children - Outdoor Playgrounds

### *Where Adventures Bloom*

High-quality outdoor spaces rich with natural features and diverse areas are essential for children's growth learning, and exploration. These stimulating environments provide the freedom for children to:

- » **Explore:** Move through and learn about their surroundings, satisfying their natural curiosity.
- » **Pursue interests:** Follow their passions, taking calculated risks and testing boundaries in a safe space.
- » **Thrive in nature:** Outdoor play promotes physical health, emotional well-being, self-regulation skills, and even executive function development.
- » **Connect with the land:** Direct contact with the natural world allows children to experience plants, animals, and the changing seasons firsthand.

Key design elements:

- » **Seamless transitions:** Centres with a direct physical and visual connection between indoor and outdoor spaces promote a more natural flow between environments, encouraging frequent use of the outdoors.
- » **Nature's playground:** Outdoor areas designed to resemble the natural world, with a variety of textures, elements, and open spaces, foster a sense of wonder and exploration for children of all abilities.

**The reality of BC's Child Care Licensing Regulations:** These mandate a minimum of 6 m<sup>2</sup> of outdoor play space per child, but this does not translate to usable play area. The minimum doesn't consider areas like storage, waste disposal, pathways, and even planters. Once you factor these in, the actual play space shrinks considerably. Think about it: 6 m<sup>2</sup> is less than half the size of a standard parking space! After adding play structures and walkways, the usable space per child is significantly reduced.

The regulations also allow a single outdoor area to be shared by multiple programs with scheduled rotations. The limitations of shared outdoor space through scheduled rotations means programs may have restricted access due to scheduling rotations- this means that spontaneous outdoor play, might be limited by shared space schedules, especially during winter months. Designing a shared space for a wide age range can also prioritize safety for younger children, potentially limiting the play value for older ones.

#### Principle

**Child care centres require dedicated outdoor playgrounds for each program, offering both covered and open areas for children's use. These playgrounds must provide a minimum of 6 m<sup>2</sup> of usable space per child, excluding areas like storage, waste disposal, walkways, gate/door swings and planters. Additionally, there should be a safe and direct connection, both visually and physically, to the indoor spaces.**

## Guidelines

Outdoor playgrounds must be in a safe area (see Location, Siting and Safe Access) and designed with a variety of activity zones and differently-sized spaces that:

- » reflect the natural world and use natural materials
- » have a rich mix of surfaces and textures, flat and sloping, with more softscape and natural spaces than hard surfaces, and incorporate grade changes appropriate for the age of the children served
- » offer children places for exploration, to spend time with others, to find a quiet place to play or be on their own
- » contain materials that children can manipulate – sand, water, mud, plants, pathways, and loose parts
- » include planting zones for children and plantings that highlight the various seasons
- » offer clear circulation and pathways with access to all activity areas, including a wheeled toy route
- » provide easy access to water for children’s activities (e.g. a water pump near garden beds and sand play, or a misting station for cooling down in heat) and for maintenance (e.g. a hose bib)
- » are inclusive for children of all abilities
- » allow children to be challenged and take risks without being hazardous
- » include dedicated, secure, storage for toys, equipment, and supplies
- » plan for natural noise and privacy barriers, and which are fully enclosed with a non-climbable fence and childproof latches, with views to the surroundings
- » have uninterrupted sightlines to facilitate easy supervision of the children
- » are south-facing and offer a balance of sunlight and shade using structures that are permanent (e.g. building canopy), temporary (e.g.: shade sails, tents) and natural (e.g. trees)
- » provide adequate lighting throughout to support the use of the playground during darker days
- » contemplate alternatives to large, fixed play structures (either prefab or custom built) – these are costly, not as heavily used as imagined and reduce the overall play area for children due to fall zone requirements
  - » large, fixed play equipment is not mandatory in BC (see [Director of Licensing Standards of Practice – Safe Play Space](#))
  - » if using fixed play equipment, consider placing near the perimeter, or back-to-back if more than one program, to maximize the available space
- » consider the impacts of climate change (e.g. using drought-resistant native plants to mitigate the effects of drought and extreme heat, or ensuring good drainage to limit water pooling during periods of excessive rainfall)
- » are not located directly under open balconies or rooftop decks in mixed use facilities
- » examine the unique design needs required if a rooftop is being considered (e.g. higher perimeter fencing, exposure to weather, structural constraints, etc.)
- » offer interaction and connection between programs, (e.g. a lower non-climbable fence) if more than one program is offered in a facility

## References

BC Child Care Licensing Regulation

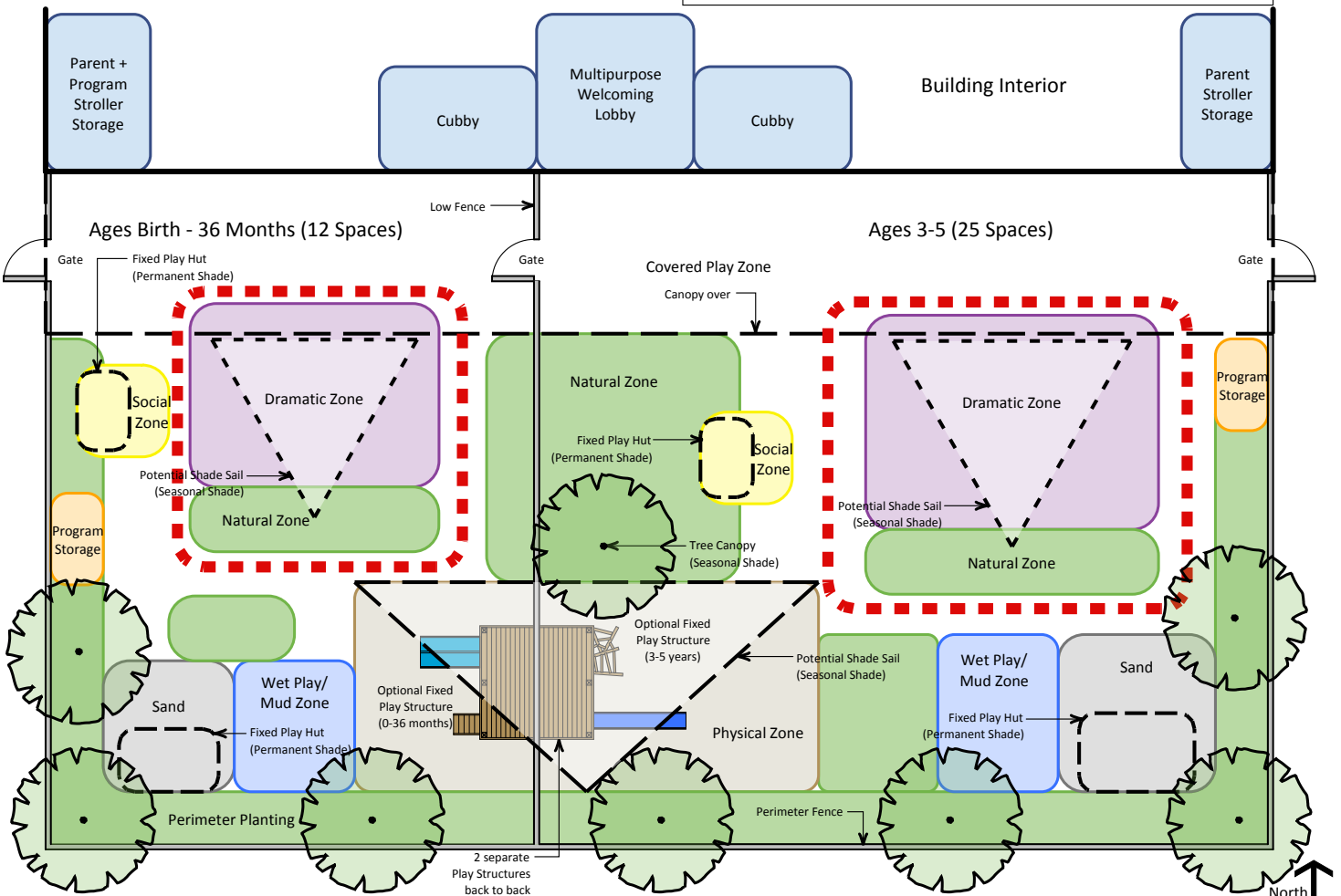
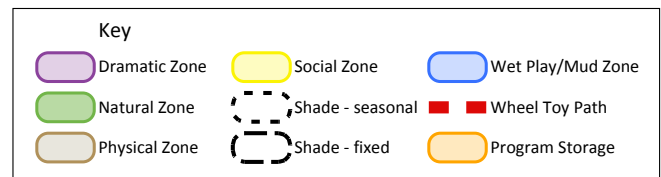
Director of Licensing Standards of Practice

- » Safe Play Space: design, materials, and supervision requirements for outdoor play spaces
- » Active Play: requirements for active play and physical movement in child care programs
- » Water Safety: recommendations to prevent drowning in child care programs

7Cs An Informational Guide to Young Children’s Outdoor Play Spaces, Consortium for Health, Intervention, Learning and Development (CHILD)

### Functional Relationship Diagram - Outdoor Playground 37 space Child Care Centre

Source:  
Groundswell Landscape Architecture



## Playground design examples



**Social zone**

Photo: Jennifer Stamp



**Built-in shading**

Photo: Jennifer Stamp



**Variety of grades**

Photo: Jennifer Stamp



**Large sandbox**

Photo: Jennifer Stamp



**Variety of surfaces**

Photo: Jennifer Stamp



**Outdoor storage**

Photo: City of Burnaby



**Variety of surfaces**

Photo: City of Burnaby



**Planting areas**

Photo: City of Burnaby



**'Natural' climber**

Photo: Sandra Menzer



**Back-to-back climbers - two programs**

Photo: Jennifer Stamp

## Playground design examples



### Low fences between programs

Photo: KK Law / Franci Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods Association



### Direct connection to the indoor space

Photo: KK Law / Franci Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods Association



### 3 programs

Photo: KK Law / Franci Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods Association



### Rooftop 4 programs

Photo: City of Vancouver



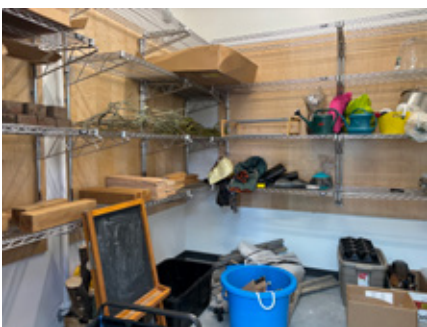
### Temporary/seasonal shade

Photo: City of Vancouver



### Natural materials

Photo: City of Vancouver



### Outdoor storage room

Photo: Marpole Neighbourhood House



### Sandbox with trellis

Photo: Sandra Menzer



### Quiet zone and outdoor storage rooms

Photo: Sandra Menzer



## 3.4 Families

### *It Takes a Village*

Families are a child's first and most important teachers. Their knowledge, love, and care are fundamental to a child's well-being and development. High-quality child care programs recognize this by fostering strong relationships between families, educators, and caregivers. Effective family engagement creates a bridge between a child's home life and their child care experience. This collaboration:

- » supports a child's overall development
- » enhances their sense of well-being
- » promotes a feeling of belonging in both environments
- » balances safety and security with a welcoming and accessible atmosphere

The layout should offer:

- » **Inviting spaces:** Public and private areas should be visually appealing and clearly defined, promoting a sense of welcome and controlled access.
- » **Open and transparent layout:** Both indoor and outdoor spaces should be wide open and transparent, allowing for easy supervision while providing comfortable furnishings that encourage adults to relax and connect with each other and the children.
- » **Transitional space:** A dedicated space prior to program entry provides families with a quiet area to ease children into the program, offering opportunities for relaxation and interaction with others. This space can also serve as a focal point for cultural representation, fostering a sense of arrival for families and children.
- » **Multi-purpose rooms:** High-quality inclusive programs need dedicated spaces for private meetings with educators or community support services. Additionally, observation areas, volunteer and practicum spaces, and flexible areas for family events and celebrations are valuable assets.

#### Principle

**Child care centres must be designed to be welcoming, inclusive spaces that promote family involvement and encourage families to enjoy and benefit from the community that is created.**

#### Guidelines

Child care centres must have:

- » a clearly defined, secure, well-lit entry point
- » a multi-purpose/transition/welcome space located adjacent to the main entry, and before entering the program cubby area
- » a small meeting room
- » ample natural light and soft warm artificial lighting
- » inviting layouts with wide open spaces that offer flexibility
- » windows, at children's heights, between corridors and rooms to allow for transparency
- » spaces for comfortable adult seating
- » natural finishes and warm muted colour tones

- » a dedicated space within the main activity area with an adult-height family counter for communication, sign in/out, and information sharing
- » safe places to store strollers and car seats
- » easy access to an adult, fully accessible washroom with fold-down change table

## References

BC's Early Learning Framework

Canada's Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework

Family Engagement - National Association for the Education of Young Children

The Early Childhood Educators of B.C. Code of Ethics



**Family counter**

Photo: Sandra Menzer



**Family counter**

Photo: Kim Adamson



**Main activity room: wide open spaces**

Photo: Francl Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods



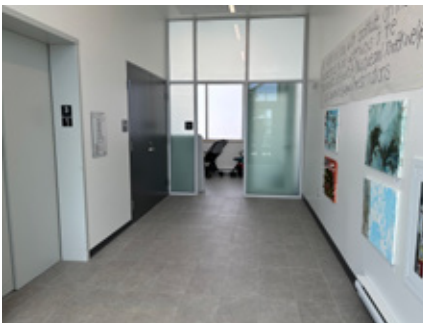
**Well-lit secure entry**

Photo: Francl Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods



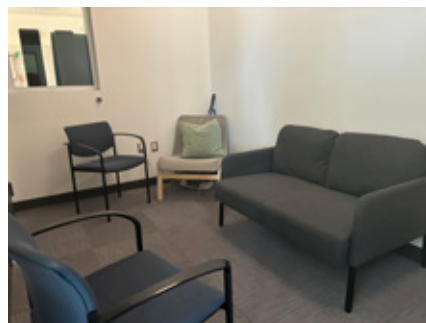
**Main activity room: spaces for adults**

Photo: City of Vancouver



**Dedicated stroller storage room**

Photo: Marpole Neighbourhood House



**Meeting room**

Photo: Marpole Neighbourhood House



**Meeting room**

Photo: Marpole Neighbourhood House

## 3.5 Staff – Workplace Environment

### *Building a Thriving Workplace*

Working with children is a physically and emotionally demanding profession. Staff must manage the emotional demands of caring for children, ensure constant vigilance for safety, and navigate diverse learning needs and behaviors. The design of a child care facility directly impacts staff experiences, influencing interactions with children and families. Ultimately, space plays a significant role in staff's ability to deliver a nurturing and high-quality program.

Well-designed facilities with dedicated spaces for staff communicate a clear message: Their professionalism is valued, and their role is essential. Dedicated staff areas contribute to:

- » **Staff retention:** By fostering overall well-being, these spaces can help reduce staff turnover, a major challenge in child care.
- » **Positive impact on children:** Staff well-being directly translates to the quality of care children receive. When staff feel supported, they can provide more positive and enriching interactions with children.

Centres that offer dedicated, comfortable areas for staff regroup, reflect, and that promote physical and psychological well-being, ultimately facilitate more rewarding interactions with children.

#### Principle

**Child care centres must include support spaces for staff to promote a positive, healthy, and productive work environment.**

#### Guidelines

Child care designs must include:

- » a dedicated break room to accommodate 25% of the expected number of program staff
- » a staff office to accommodate 25% of the expected number of staff with storage for administrative and regulatory documents
- » secure spaces for each staff to safely store their personal belongings
- » adult-height workspaces within each main activity room
- » a small meeting room adjacent to or accessible from the main activity room for meetings with families, colleagues, support services
- » spaces for staff to store their 'child care' clothing (i.e. outside coats, boots, hats)
- » easy access from children's activity spaces to adult washroom
- » large and dedicated storage rooms accessible from each program space (indoor and outdoor)
- » natural light and natural finishes with warm muted colour tones
- » convenient access to well-organized laundry, janitorial, waste management and other support spaces

## References

Government of Canada - Defining and Measuring the Quality of Early Learning And Care - A Literature Review

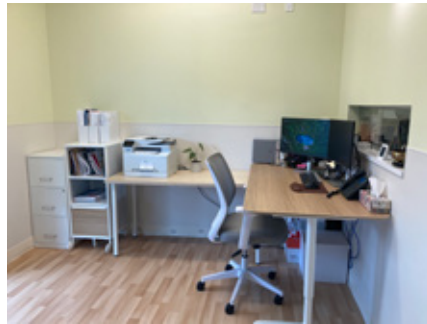
BC's Early Care and Learning Recruitment and Retention Strategy

Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care - OECD



**Large dedicated storage room**

Photo: Sandra Menzer



**Staff office**

Photo: Burnaby Family Life



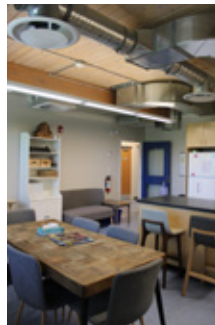
**Staff lockers**

Photo: Sandra Menzer



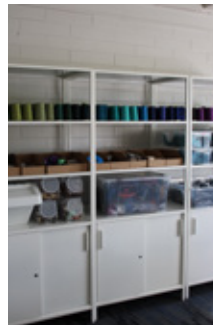
**Staff break room (one program)**

Photo: Burnaby Family Life



**Staff break room (multiple programs)**

Photo: SFU Child Care Society



**Dedicated storage**

Photo: SFU Child Care Society



**Built-in storage**

Photo: Kim Adamson



**Storage room with staff lockers**

Photo: Marpole Neighbourhood House



**Warm colours with built-in storage**

Photo: City of Burnaby

## 3.6 Accessibility, Inclusion and Equality

### *A Space Where Everyone Belongs*

A child care centre should be a welcoming space where everyone feels a sense of belonging and can participate meaningfully- both indoors and outdoors. Careful consideration and thoughtful planning will ensure that all children, regardless of their abilities, have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from the program. An inclusive design offers:

- » **Equitable access:** A physical layout that promotes a sense of fairness and creates an environment where all children feel respected and valued. It ensures equal access for everyone to the program's facilities and activities.
- » **Fostering acceptance:** By designing inclusive spaces, we actively foster a sense of acceptance among all children within the program. This inclusive approach allows children to learn and play alongside their peers, promoting understanding and respect for diversity.
- » **Well-being and engagement:** The physical environment significantly impacts a child's feelings of comfort, safety, dignity, and even mood. Inclusive design takes these factors into account, creating a space that supports the well-being and engagement of all children.

#### Principle

**Child care centres must be designed to be fully inclusive and accessible to ensure the meaningful participation of children with diverse abilities, developmental needs and backgrounds.**

#### Guidelines

Child care designs (in both indoor and outdoor areas) must:

- » provide accessible entrances to ensure convenient access for all users, regardless of abilities
- » create a logical and seamless flow that allows easy movement for all children
- » ensure that spaces are well-connected and avoid narrow pathways or tight corners that may impede mobility
- » reduce risk by using corner guards and rounded corners, soft-close hinges, slip-resistant and waterproof floor finishes, and ensuring no hardware that can cause injury is located at child's heights
- » incorporate clear and visual cues to aid children's ability to navigate the spaces independently
- » provide a variety of play areas that cater to different abilities and interests and that can accommodate children with physical disabilities, sensory processing differences, or other diverse needs. (e.g. inclusive play structures, sensory gardens, music, and art corners)
- » be adaptable and flexible to meet the diverse and ever-changing developmental needs of children of all abilities
- » provide warm lighting levels, natural and warm colours, acoustic materials to lower noise levels, and use materials and textures that promote a calm atmosphere
- » offer access to quiet spaces for retreat which are sensory-friendly with dimmable lighting and spaces for comfortable seating
- » encourage collaboration and interaction among all children through open and inviting communal spaces
- » support the dignity of children by having spaces that enable choice and respect privacy (e.g. partitions between toilets, doors on w/c partitions for programs serving children over the age of 3, all spaces large enough for a child with mobility devices)

## References

BC Human Rights Code

*Accessible British Columbia Act* and the BC Building Accessibility Handbook 2020

BC's Inclusive Child Care Tool Kit

City of Burnaby Diversity and Inclusion

City of Burnaby Access and Inclusion

## Children's washroom



**Enclosed stall**

Photo: Kim Adamson



**Change table**

Photo: Marpole Neighbourhood House



Photo: Lower Mainland Purpose Society for Youth and Families

## Main activity room



**Wide open spaces**

Photo: Franci Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods Association

## 3.7 Resiliency and Futureproofing

### *Investing in Tomorrow's Children*

Child care facilities play a vital role in our communities, supporting both social and economic well-being. Often serving as the heart of a neighbourhood, these spaces are in constant use, year-round. Therefore, it's crucial to design them for longevity, adaptability, and the ability to respond to the ever-changing world.

The ideal child care centre has a long-life cycle, remaining relevant and fit for purpose for many years to come and can adapt to future challenges and changing uses.

Futureproofing through design means:

- » sustainable and low-energy features which minimize environmental impact and reduce operational costs over time
- » flexible layouts and spaces to allow the centre to adapt to evolving program needs, technological advancements, social, regulatory, and economic changes, and unforeseen circumstances

#### Principle

**Child care centres must be designed to be flexible, durable, cost-efficient to operate and incorporate climate resistant strategies.**

#### Guidelines

Child care designs must consider:

- » Space planning: Prioritize an open and adaptable layout that allows for different configurations and reorganization of spaces as population or social needs change.
  - » Consider incorporating a commercial kitchen and include diaper change tables in all washrooms.
- » Technology: Incorporate advanced technology infrastructure like high-speed internet, Wi-Fi, smart systems that support interactive learning, security, and communication, and consider planning infrastructure to enable future electrical vehicle and bike charging stations.
- » Sustainability: Design the centre to be environmentally friendly, promoting energy efficiency and reducing the carbon footprint. Consider:
  - » incorporating renewable, clean energy sources for active mechanical cooling and heat recovery systems, and water-saving measures and designing the mechanical and control systems to be simple to use
  - » using low-carbon building materials, including for hardscaping and play equipment, such as locally-sourced wood and timbers, logs, rocks, and sand.
  - » use multiple lighting sources, controlled independently with occupancy sensors for non-child occupied spaces like storage rooms, laundry rooms.
- » Climate resiliency: Design the centre to support safe indoor and outdoor children's activities year-round. Consider strategies to minimize the risk to children of the ever-changing environment (i.e. extreme heat, drought, extreme cold, wildfire smoke, and atmospheric rivers).
  - » Exterior: provide shade and cover to protect from sun, rain, snow; install sufficient drainage with easy access and removable sediment traps; ensure natural elements and natural colours to reduce heat; add water source for cooling.

- » Interior: provide ample natural light with good window covers; install windows that open for cross-ventilation; ensure adequate mechanical ventilation (heating and cooling) with filtering
- » Use non-toxic commercial and/or institutional grade materials finishes and hardware for durability and ease of maintenance. In addition, consider:
  - » applying wall protection in all interior children’s spaces
  - » using plywood substrate or solid surfacing for all wet area counters
  - » interior finishes and designs which are easy to clean, disinfect and can withstand repeated use of cleaning agents

## References

City of Burnaby Climate Action Framework

City of Burnaby Environmental Sustainability Strategy

Clean BC Roadmap to 2030

Healthy and Sustainable Child Care Environments: Canadian Partnership for Children’s Health and Environment

## Playgrounds



**Permanent shade**

Photo: City of Vancouver



**Permanent covered area**

Photo: Francl Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods Association



**Permanent and seasonal shading**

Photo: City of Vancouver



**Wall protection**

Photo: Francl Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods Association



**Indoor: flexible and adaptable**

Photo: Francl Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods Association



**Children’s washroom (3-5 year-olds) with built-in change table**

Photo: Francl Architecture / UBC Properties Trust / University Neighbourhoods Association



# APPENDIX: GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

**Child care facility and child care centre:** a building or portion of a building which houses one or more programs.

**Child care program:** a group of children that have their own room or rooms.

## Age groups and types of child care

| Child Care Programs                                    | BC's Licensing Regulations – Care Programs | BC's Licensing Regulations – Maximum Group Size |
|--|--|---|
| Children birth to 36 months old (infants and toddlers) | Group Child Care (under 36 months)         | 12 Children                                     |
| Children 3-5 years old                                 | Group Child Care (30 months to school age) | 25 Children                                     |
| Multi-Age  | Multi-Age Child Care                       | 8 Children                                      |

Refer to *Schedule E* of the *BC Child Care Licensing Regulation* for allowable variations.

**Main activity room:** this is the largest of the inside spaces, with the other spaces typically connected and arranged around it.

**Gross motor/nap room:** this is a large multi-purpose space that functions as both a sleep room for children (typically 2-3 hours per day) and a large activity space during the rest of the day.

**Crib/nap room:** a separate dedicated single purpose sleep room with spaces for cribs (for children under 18 months old).

**Quiet room:** a separate room for a variety of quieter activities involving small groups of children and a place for children to be away from the large group.

**Staff communication and workspace:** a full height counter for staff to log critical information, access records and take phone calls.

**Family counter:** a full height counter where families sign their children in and out of child care daily and where parenting information and program resources are provided.

**Multi-purpose/transitional welcome space:** a comfortable space, prior to entering the program, which offers families a quiet time to ease the transition for their child and offers a space for resting and connecting with others. It also presents a sense of arrival for families and children and can be a focal point for cultural representation.

**Continuum of services:** more than one program in a child care facility, serving children birth to 5 years. The key concept is that children/families can stay in one location until the child leaves for school.

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