

Early Childhood Services

4. Completing a Program Unit Funding (PUF) Application

The following information is provided to assist school authorities in completing a PUF application. School authorities must complete their PUF application process using the web-based Program Unit Funding SharePoint and Program Unit Funding System (PUFS).

Declaration

The contact person named on the application form must be the person most familiar with the programming and supports for the eligible children. The secretary-treasurer reviews and submits the application to Alberta Education using PUFS, or signs page 1 of the paper application. With this signature or PUFS submission, the secretary-treasurer declares that the conditions outlined on this page have been met.

Details of Children in Program Unit(s)

Alberta Student Number (ASN)

Applications cannot be submitted to Alberta Education without an ASN for each child named on the application. If it appears that a child does not have an ASN, ASNs can be created through Provincial Approach to Student Information (PASI) Prep tool. For assistance with PASI Prep, please contact the Alberta Education Help Desk at 780-427-5318; toll free in Alberta by first dialing 310-0000.

Name of Child

- Click on the Alberta Student Number box.
- “ASN Lookup” appears on screen.
- Enter ASN – click “submit” Note: ASN displayed on “Lookup Student” should be the same ASN as the one in PUFs on the pre-approval list.
- If child’s name and date of birth are not correct (including exact spelling of name) please edit student information in PASI Prep.



Program Unit Funding (PUF) is provided to school authorities for Early Childhood Services (ECS) children with severe disabilities/delays who require additional support beyond that offered in a regular ECS program. PUF is provided for individualized programming that meets the educational needs of children with severe disabilities/delays who are at least 2 years, 6 months of age and less than 6 years of age on September 1. PUF may be paid for a maximum of three years for each eligible child.

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Program Unit and Clustering

A program unit refers to a single child or to children sharing resources and programming. Two or more children within a unit are referred to as a cluster.

Age

PUFS calculates correct age based on the date of birth provided by the ASN Lookup.

Location of Child's Program (please include A.M. or P.M.)

- List location(s) of centre-based programming.
- Indicate instructional hours, e.g., Mon–Fri, 9:00–11:30 AM.

Renewal (R) or New (N)

- Indicates **Renewal** (a child who has received PUF previously) or **New** (a child who has not received PUF in a previous year).

Assessed Primary Disability/Delay Code

- Code is based on current *Special Education Coding Criteria*.
- Ensure code entered in this column is the same code as the one that appears on the PUFS pre-approval list.

For further information, please see the *Special Education Coding Criteria* that is available through the Extranet. In order to access the Extranet website, go to <https://phoenix.edc.gov.ab.ca/login/default2.asp>.

Program Start and End Dates

Accurately identify the dates that each child starts and ends programming. This may not be the start and end date for the ECS program in which the child is registered. Programming must occur between September 1 and June 30.

Centre-based Programming Hours

Centre-based programming refers to the instructional program hours. Flexibility within an ECS special education program allows for centre-based programming to be delivered in a school or community setting. Regardless of the site, a certificated teacher must be directly involved with centre-based programming hours.

When a designated special education ECS program is the provider of the on-site centre-based programming, a certificated teacher must be teaching in the classroom. When planning centre-based programming for a child, ECS operators must ensure the number of programming hours does not exceed what is appropriate for the child's age and developmental level.

- A child's program should be integrated into the regular classroom or early learning environment as much as possible. Providing support for children in an enabling environment where focused intervention can take place in a small group with appropriate peer modeling and interaction is essential. A model other than direct one-on-one assistance is most appropriate for all children.
- Children with language delays need to be in a supportive, language-rich environment where they are able to interact on a continuing basis with children who have appropriate language skills. Programming that focuses on one-to-one adult-to-child interaction and is done in the child's home is not a model that is supported by the Learner Services Branch and will not be approved on PUF applications.
- When planning centre-based programming for a child, ECS operators should ensure that the number of hours does not exceed what is appropriate for the child's age and developmental level. Programming that exceeds the 475 hours of centre-based programming for a child who is less than kindergarten age is not considered appropriate for a child who has a Severe Delay Involving Language (code 47) and will not be approved on the PUF application.
- Full day-every day programming is an option that should only be considered for children in the year prior to entering Grade 1. If you are planning a program that exceeds 475 hours of centre-based programming for any child who is less than kindergarten age and meets eligibility criteria for code 41-46 please submit your request in writing to the Learner Services Branch prior to beginning the program.

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Instructional programming does not include:

- teachers' convention
- professional development days
- teacher planning days
- staff meetings
- statutory and school authority-declared holidays
- lunch breaks
- recesses
- time taken for the registration of children
- time during which child is being transported.

Child Leaving a Program before the Specified End Date

Contact the Learner Services Branch and request that the application be returned to the school authority to make revisions to the program end date and number of family-oriented programming sessions completed.

Program Unit Funding Budget

All school authorities must submit a PUF budget as part of the PUF application. A ceiling is established based on the number of centre-based program hours and/or family-oriented programming sessions as reported on the Details Page.

For certain cost categories, school authorities are required to attach an excel spreadsheet that provides details of these costs. School authorities should use one spreadsheet for all the required cost categories and may use a separate tab on the spreadsheet for each cost category.

Budget Categories

INSTRUCTIONAL COSTS

Instructional Salaries and Wages

The following are considered eligible expenditures:

1. Includes salaries/wages for teacher assistants who are directly involved in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the PUF child's program.
2. Special education consultation by a certificated teacher with special education experience/training which provides special programming support for the classroom teacher in a regular ECS environment including:

- assistance with Individualized Program Plan (IPP) development, monitoring and evaluation
- provision of programming strategies
- suggestions for resources and materials
- support of off-site program components.

When the child is in an off-site program the certificated-teacher-to-child ratio must allow for the certificated teacher to be actively involved in and directing the individualized program, including planning, delivery, assessment and communication with the child's parent. The certificated teacher is at the child's placement on a regular basis and while at the play school/daycare is engaging in some or all of the following activities:

- observing the child and the interaction between the child and the teacher assistant/play-school teacher and/or the child and other children in the program
 - direct teaching/assessment of the child
 - providing the teacher assistant/play-school teacher with strategies or next steps
 - coaching the teacher assistant in use of ongoing activities that support the child's learning.
3. For school jurisdictions with a designated special education ECS program and/or a congregated special education ECS program, the cost of the classroom teacher may be included under this category. For an explanation of congregated programs, please contact a Learner Services Branch manager. In these cases, school authorities must declare the Base Instruction funding received for all children in the designated or congregated programs on the PUF application.

The salary for a regular ECS classroom teacher is not included as part of program unit cost. ECS Base Instruction funding is provided to support the cost of hiring a certificated classroom teacher.

Employer's Portion of Fringe Benefits

This refers to the employer's portion of benefits for teacher assistants, teachers and special education consultants who are employees of the school authority.

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Specialized Services and Supports

The following are considered eligible expenditures:

1. Services of qualified professionals that are not provided free by public service agencies. All options regarding service delivery should be considered. Services and supports must be relevant to the child's educational program and in direct support of the educational goals and objectives included on the child's IPP. Examples:
 - speech-language pathology
 - occupational therapy
 - physical therapy
 - orientation and mobility
 - psychological and other services, and assessments
2. Pre-school or play school fees may be claimed as an eligible PUF expense when educational programming is provided in a pre-school or play-school setting. The school authority should ensure that procedures related to payment of fees are developed and implemented consistently.
3. School authorities may occasionally need to contract placement in a daycare setting for delivery of the child's educational program. If educational programming is provided in a daycare setting the school authority must ensure that:
 - placement in the daycare is the best available option for the child's educational program,
 - daycare fees are only claimed for that portion of the day required for the educational component of the child's program, and
 - costs for child care are not included on the PUF budget.

Supplies and Materials

This includes supplies and materials that are specific to the child's program and are in addition to supplies purchased for the classroom with Base Instruction funding. Costs in this category typically range from \$200 to \$300 and may not exceed \$500 per child. All purchases are specific to an individual child's program needs.

PARENT INSERVICE

Includes costs for parents to attend in-province workshops, seminars, inservice and specialized training sessions specifically related to the child's program and designed to enhance the ability of the parent to facilitate the child's development.

Costs in this category are usually in the \$100 to \$400 range per child. School authorities are encouraged to pool parent inservice resources and use expertise available in the school authority and/or community to provide inservice opportunities for groups of parents who may need similar information or strategies.

STAFF INSERVICE

Includes costs for program staff to attend workshops, inservices, special courses and seminars related to their responsibilities in the child's educational program. Costs in this category are usually in the \$200 to \$500 range per child. Personnel who are not employees of the school authority are not eligible for staff inservice.

TRANSPORTATION COSTS

Details regarding funding to school authorities for transportation of PUF eligible children are available in the current [Funding Manual for School Authorities](#).

Reasonable transportation costs for PUF eligible children not covered by transportation funding can be claimed as a PUF expense. To determine the transportation costs that may be covered by PUF, all transportation costs must be reported on the PUF budget form. All transportation revenues must be deducted from the transportation costs. Transportation costs may be claimed for:

- transportation to and from school (regular and special transportation costs),
- transportation of staff for family-oriented programming sessions (to a maximum of 36),
- field trips provided in addition to field trips for the regular ECS class or for a PUF eligible child who, because of his/her disability/delay, requires special transportation on a regularly scheduled field trip

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- in-program transportation of a PUF eligible child during the school day from the school/centre program to another program or service as part of the PUF eligible child's IPP.

Transportation claims from Private ECS Operators must be submitted electronically by October 31. Transportation claims from School Jurisdictions must be submitted electronically by November 30. Only PUF eligible children enrolled by the September 30 count date are eligible for transportation funding.

FACILITY COSTS

Funding allocations for facilities differ for school jurisdictions and for private ECS operators. Therefore, claims for facility costs allowed on the PUF budget also differ depending on the type of school authority.

For Private Designated Special Education ECS Programs, facility costs (including rent) may be claimed as PUF costs however the funding provided under section 2.6 of the current [Funding Manual for School Authorities](#) will be applied to these costs.

For school jurisdictions—including jurisdictions with congregated and Designated Special Education ECS programs—renovations to and maintenance of a building to be used for the benefit of all PUF eligible children are not eligible for PUF funding support. Education provides Plant Operation and Maintenance funding as well as Infrastructure, Maintenance and Renewal funding to cover these types of costs.

PROGRAM COORDINATION COSTS/Administration Costs

For school jurisdictions, this includes reasonable costs for the coordination of ECS programming and some administrative support costs—typically costs in this category are between \$800 to \$1200 per child. School jurisdictions are advised that costs for school and system administration are not eligible under this cost category as funding for school and system administration is included in the ECS Base Instruction funding.

Private Designated Special Education ECS Programs may claim reasonable administration costs (typically in the 6% to 12% range) and ECS Administration funding revenues will be applied to these costs.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT AND FURNITURE

This includes expenditures for specialized equipment and furniture that is required to meet the special education needs of a PUF eligible child and/or a group of PUF eligible children. School authorities are advised to be aware of current information regarding provision of adaptive or augmentative devices by other agencies and to seek funding from these sources first. Learner Services Branch managers are available to provide assistance and advice in this area.

School authorities should keep on file a written recommendation from an appropriate specialist indicating the need for specialized equipment. This recommendation should specify the relevance of the equipment to the child/children's current education program, how it directly supports the goals and objectives of the IPP, and the projected costs of the equipment. These costs should be reasonable and based on more than one price quote.

If a PUF eligible child changes schools in Alberta and continues to have use for the specialized equipment or furniture specifically purchased for that child, the equipment or furniture goes with the PUF eligible child. If a specialized piece of furniture is no longer required by the child, it becomes the property of the school authority, not of the PUF eligible child or the parents of the PUF eligible child.

Other Considerations

ECS Operators should:

- prepare a budget that is a reasonable estimate of PUF costs for the school year
- be aware that a partial year is considered a whole year; e.g., a two-month program still represents one year of funding
- plan carefully when considering programming for children who are less than 3 years of age on September 1 and when planning to offer programming for only part of the year.
- ensure parents have a clear understanding of the possible consequences of providing PUF prior to age 3 and/or partial years of programming.

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Designated Special Education ECS Programs

- Where at least 70% of the ECS children served have severe disabilities/delays, Designated Special Education ECS programs may include program costs in their Program Unit budget (except capital building costs and other fixed costs that would still be incurred if the program did not operate).
- If a school authority is operating a Designated Special Education ECS program the school authority must consider that 30% of the total enrolment should be children who do not have a severe disability/delay.
- Education is not accepting new applications for Designated Special Education ECS programs.

For Designated Special Education ECS programs and/or congregated special education ECS programs, Alberta Education will apply all appropriate revenues to the total program costs to determine a net program cost total to which Program Unit Funding will apply.

For private ECS operators who cease operating please see section 9.4 of the current [Funding Manual for School Authorities](#) for policies and procedures concerning distribution of assets.

Questions related to the preparation of budgets should be addressed to a Learner Services Branch manager.