

Establishing a Private Early Childhood Services (ECS) Program

Application Process and Requirements

Background

The first six years of a child's life are important to their development and future education. Children who are cared for and who have positive experiences during the early years are more likely to develop and learn in ways that help them meet their full potential.

Alberta Education is responsible for Early Childhood Services (ECS). ECS are education programs for children under the age of 6 and include Kindergarten (the year before Grade 1) and educational programming for children as young as 2 years 8 months.

There is a wide range of ECS programs in Alberta that support parental choice in the education of pre-school children.

Application Process

The application process and requirements for those who wish to establish a private ECS program in Alberta are described below:

1. Formalize your organizational structure

ECS programs must be incorporated as a society under the [Societies Act](#) or registered as a non-profit company under Part 9 of the [Companies Act](#) or operate under a special act of the legislature. Private ECS programs must operate in accordance with their approved bylaws.

2. Notify Alberta Education of your intent to establish a private ECS program

Contact School Accreditation, Standards and Print Services Branch at edc.privateschools@gov.ab.ca or 780-427-7235 (toll-free by first dialing 310-0000 within Alberta) about your intent to establish a private ECS program. Information and the application forms will be provided to you to complete, along with a list of supporting documents to submit.

3. Submit the application and required documents by the deadline of January 20

Complete applications received by the due date are considered according to the following process. An application may be rejected at any stage of this process, and if so, it does not continue to the next stage.

- i. A team from Alberta Education will review the application.
- ii. An on-site interview with the applicant will be conducted by a team from Alberta Education.
- iii. The applicant submits an Annual Operating Plan (AOP). Refer to the [Submitting the Annual Operating Plan](#) fact sheet for information.
- iv. The Minister of Education determines if the ECS program is approved to operate.

4. Monitoring of ECS Operators

In the first year, Alberta Education will monitor the private ECS operator and program for compliance with Alberta Education requirements.

All ECS operators are monitored by the School Accreditation, Standards and Print Services Branch on an ongoing basis.

Types of Private ECS Programs in Alberta

ECS refers to programming offered by school authorities prior to compulsory schooling that meets the diverse needs of young children and their families. Kindergarten is part of the ECS continuum of programs and refers specifically to the education program for children in the year prior to Grade 1. The following are settings in which ECS programs may occur:

- **Centre-based ECS programs** are provided at a specific facility.
- **Community-based ECS programs** are provided in early childhood settings such as preschools and daycare centres. Please refer to the [Community-based programming in early childhood settings](#) fact sheet for more information.
- **Accredited private schools** that are eligible for funding may apply to operate an ECS program.
- **Designated special education ECS programs (private ECS operators)** – an ECS program in which at least 70 per cent of the funded children enrolled have a severe disability/delay.

ECS programs must be operated in facilities that comply with all applicable municipal and provincial public health, safety, fire and building standards.

Programming Considerations

ECS operators shall provide access to a minimum of 475 hours of instructional program activities for each child during a school year. They must meet the requirements set out in the [Early Childhood Services Regulation](#), including offering a Kindergarten program that complies with the [Kindergarten Program Statement](#).

Instruction is the process in which Alberta certificated teachers take responsibility for ensuring that learning activities for children are directed toward achieving the outcomes of approved programs of study and/or individualized program plans through:

- Face-to-face interaction with children for the purpose of teaching and assessing children's achievement of outcomes, and/or
- Interaction with children who are engaged in classroom learning in a Kindergarten, preschool, playschool, daycare or child-care setting, and/or family-oriented programming sessions.

Family-oriented programming is an optional ECS program for a child with a severe disability/delay. It is an individually planned, developmentally appropriate intervention, designed to actively involve the parent, or alternate caregiver, in the child's educational programming across settings. It is done under the direction of a certificated teacher and is based on a 1:1 service delivery model involving the parent, teacher or developmental specialist, and in most cases, the child. Please refer to the [Family-oriented programming](#) fact sheet for more information.

A special education program consistent with the [Standards for the Provision of Early Childhood Special Education](#) must be offered to any student with special needs enrolled in a private ECS program. The [Funding Manual for School Authorities](#) and the [Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12](#) contain more information about ECS programming.

Funding

Private ECS programs are eligible for funding from the first year of operations pursuant to the Minister's authority to make grants under the [Government Organization Act](#) and the [Education Grants Regulation](#). Refer to the most recent [Funding Manual for School Authorities](#) for details on applicable funding rates. In addition, please see the [Requirements for Establishing a Private ECS Program](#) section.

Child Care Licensing

Some private ECS operators may also wish to become licensed under the *Child Care Licensing Act*. Contact Children's Services to inquire about starting a [Child Care Program](#).

Fees

Private ECS operators and accredited private schools who offer ECS programs may only charge parents reasonable instructional fees for hours of instruction beyond 475 hours and non-instructional fees to offset costs, such as supplies, snacks and field trips.

Contact Information

If you have questions about the private ECS program application process and requirements, please contact School Accreditation, Standards and Print Services Branch at 780-427-7235 (toll-free by first dialing 310-0000 within Alberta) or edc.privateschools@gov.ab.ca.

Requirements for Establishing a Private ECS Program

The private ECS operator is responsible to the Minister of Education for meeting the requirements of provincial legislation and regulations as set out in this chart

The private ECS operator provides a program of studies that meets the goals and standards adopted or approved by the Minister consistent with the Kindergarten Program Statement and the Alberta Programs of Study .	✓
The private ECS operator agrees to regular evaluation and monitoring by the Minister.	✓
The private ECS operator operates in a facility that complies with all applicable municipal and provincial public health, safety, fire and building standards (zoning and building code).	✓
The private ECS operator maintains individual student records consistent with the Student Record Regulation .	✓
The private ECS operator annually provides the Minister with an Annual Operating Plan.	✓
The private ECS operator employs teachers with valid Alberta Teaching Certificates issued in accordance with the Certification of Teachers Regulation .	✓
The private ECS operator must offer access to a minimum of 475 hours of instruction for each child during a school year.	✓
The private ECS operator is incorporated as a society under the Societies Act , or as a non-profit company under Part 9 of the Companies Act or operates under a special act of the legislature.	✓
The private ECS operator appoints a secretary and a treasurer, or a secretary-treasurer, for the program who is neither the chair, nor a trustee, nor the president of the organization.	✓
The private ECS operator appoints an auditor who is registered and qualified to perform an audit engagement under the Chartered Professional Accountants Act and reports this individual's name and address to the Minister.	✓
The private ECS operator keeps in force a blanket fidelity bond in the minimum amount of \$50,000 covering the operator and employees of the ECS program.	✓
The private ECS operator has a general liability insurance policy in the minimum amount of \$2 million for each occurrence of loss or damage resulting from bodily injury or death and for loss of damage to property.	✓
The private ECS operator annually submits to the Minister a Budget Report and Audited Financial Statements along with the Auditor's Report, Notes to the Financial Statements, Management Letter and Independence Letter.	✓
The private ECS operator only charges fees to parents of funded children in a 475 hour program to offset non-instructional costs such as supplies, snacks and field trips.	✓
The private ECS operator that offers a program with more than 475 hours may only charge a reasonable fee to cover the cost of the additional instructional hours.	✓