



Halton Region – Children’s Services, Social & Community Services Department

2024 Report of Municipal Directly Operated Child Care

June 27, 2025

SCOPE OF LIMITATIONS

We have completed our review based on information provided by The Regional Municipality of Halton, noting the following:

1. We do not assume any responsibility or liability for losses incurred by the Regional Municipality of Halton, or any other parties as a result of the circulation, publication, reproduction or use of this report contrary to the provisions of this report.
2. Our work does not constitute an audit or other form of assurance as defined by the Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario. Therefore, this work and the resulting report do not represent an auditor's opinion. Additionally, our work cannot assure that all errors, omissions, or irregularities have been identified. Our conclusions are based on reviewing information according to specific criteria in the format of a consulting report.
3. This report should be viewed in its entirety. Considering portions of the report or specific factors separately may lead to a misleading understanding of the process underlying it. Attempting to do so could place undue emphasis on particular factors, calculations, or analyses.
4. This report is based on the information, documents, and explanations provided to us, with our conclusions dependent on the integrity of this information as outlined in our scope of review. We did not verify the accuracy of third-party information, nor did we conduct investigative procedures to independently confirm the accuracy of such information.
5. If any of the information provided was inaccurate or incorrect, or if different information or assumptions are considered, the conclusions may vary, potentially significantly, from those stated in this report. Errors, omissions or irregularities of the materials provided could limit the associated benefits of the recommendations.
6. Management of the Region is solely responsible for any and all activities associated with accepting and implementing the recommendations. The scope of our work did not include any considerations or activities related to implementation.
7. We reserve the right, but will be under no obligation, to review this report, and if we consider it necessary, to revise this report in light of any information which becomes known to us after the date of this report.



Disclaimer

No opinion, counsel, or interpretation is intended in matters that require legal, tax or other appropriate professional advice. It is assumed that such opinion, counsel, or interpretations have been, or will be, obtained outside of the scope of this report.

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Executive Summary

The Ministry of Education 2024 Ontario Child Care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guideline (2024 Guideline) requires Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (“CMSMs”) to retain independent advice and to conduct a value-for-money review on their direct delivery of child care services. The Region of Halton (the “Region”, “Halton”), engaged Deloitte LLP to perform these services.

The purpose of the value-for-money review was to determine whether federal and provincial funding is being used efficiently and effectively by directly operated centres, and whether the child care services could be more efficiently offered instead by a third-party provider. The report, recommendations and management responses must be posted publicly. The Ministry of Education issued an addendum to 2024 Guideline provided by the Ministry of Education to note that “funding will not be withheld or adjusted based on the findings” of this report.

SCOPE

No criteria were set at the direction of the Ministry. Deloitte proposed to review the 2022-2023 operations against the following five criteria aligned with Canada-wide Early Learning and Childcare (“CWELCC”) policy objectives: **Affordability, Sustainability, Accessibility, Quality, and Inclusivity**. Prior to the collection of the information to perform the work, the Region agreed to the project plan and criteria.

To support their conclusions, Deloitte reviewed existing Regional Child Care policies, regional monitoring practices and examples of their use in practice. Deloitte performed analysis when needed to draw conclusions on how the Region has ensured it is exhibiting positive behaviours for each of the five criteria.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

The Region of Halton’s directly operated child care centres appear to achieve the CWELCC policy objectives of Affordability, Accessibility, Quality and Inclusivity.

Findings in the Sustainability objective noted that the Region is providing an annual Regional contribution to the operational costs of the Regional Child Care Centers (“RCCCs”) to fund investments in Affordability, Accessibility, Quality and Inclusivity. Our review indicated that private and non-profit child care centres appear to manage CWELCC funding more efficiently, but this could hurt the policy goals of the program and the Region.

Deloitte concluded that the Region’s directly operated child care centres appear to be a value for money as it relates to the efficient and effective use of federal and provincial funding and the ability to drive affordability, accessibility, quality and inclusivity across both the Region’s directly operated child care centres and third-party providers.

Deloitte was able to make this conclusion from evidence that the investments in Affordability, Accessibility, Quality and Inclusivity provided leading child care practices at directly operated child care centres and demonstrated child care excellence to third-party providers under their Service System Manager role, in each policy objective respectively.

Executive Summary

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the conclusions, Deloitte provided the Region with recommendations for improvement. The following pages summarize the observations, findings and recommendations. Management has been provided a detailed report.

SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AFFORDABILITY

The analysis of the rates charged by the Halton RCCC's demonstrated a commitment to affordability. The centres have effectively followed the CWELCC fee guidelines, implementing the appropriate percentage decreases in fees for both the 2022 and 2023 years. This has resulted in significant reductions in child care costs for families, making high-quality early learning and child care more accessible, aligning with the CWELCC program's objectives. Overall, the directly operated child care centres have successfully met the expectations of affordability.

Recommendation: Deloitte had no recommendations related to affordability.

SUSTAINABILITY

The analysis of the financial sustainability of revenues and expenses for the RCCC's revealed a need for ongoing financial support from the Region. Despite efforts to manage costs effectively, the centres have required a regional contribution to balance budgets in the years reviewed 2021-2023. The required contribution decreased from \$736,000 in 2022 to \$411,000 in 2023. The reduction in 2023 was primarily due to changes in health and safety protocols that inflated staff cost during COVID.

RCCC's salaries represent approximately 88% of total direct costs, which have been increasing due to measures outside their control. The centres have been able to freeze programming costs unrelated to staffing. The analysis shows that there have been no changes in the non-salary portion of the budget over the same period.

The Region continues to assess its commitment, through established budgeting practices, regarding the annual regional contribution to ensure the continued provision of quality child care services. Overall, the financial sustainability of the RCCC's is contingent these contributions and effective cost management.

Recommendation:

- Deloitte recommends that if and when the Region of Halton decides to no longer provide RCCC's with contributions to operating budgets, the Region should provide RCCC's with sufficient notice to allow RCCC's to adjust operations.

Executive Summary (cont'd)

SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

ACCESSIBILITY

The Region addresses accessibility by managing access to child care spots through a priority population wait list policy and emergency child care space procedure, and through geographical location. RCCC's provide services in traditionally higher need neighborhoods within the Region (Oakville and Georgetown). Although serving a high number of children with special needs, the RCCC's are not wheelchair accessible given the age of their facilities.

Recommendations:

- It is recommended that the RCCC's formally create a policy which outlines the emergency spot practice. Although this is already done in practice, the RCCC's cannot ensure the continuity of the practice without a policy.
- It is recommended that the Region develop and incorporate a reporting process to monitor the number children who meet priority waitlist criteria that are currently enrolled in the program in relation to total enrolment. This recommendation would then allow for the Region to investigate any decline in participation among priority families and work on outreach strategies.
- Given the RCCC's have a specific focus on ensuring accessibility, when child care needs are identified in Halton that could not be met by a community provider Deloitte recommends that the RCCC's should consider a business case to do so.
- Deloitte also recommends that the RCCC's along with the Region develop a plan to retrofit the directly operated centres to meet accessibility needs.

QUALITY

Delivery of How Does Learning Happen:

The Region of Halton Directly Operated child care centres has demonstrated a strong commitment to integrating the principles and foundations outlined in the Ministry of Education's "How Does Learning Happen?" Pedagogy into their policies and learning practices. This dedication is evident through their various policies including the comprehensive "A Guide to the Halton Regional Child Care Centres" which aligns with the four main foundations of the Ministry's framework. The Region's adherence to these foundations is not only evident in written and photographed materials but also in the day-to-day activities observed during visits to the centres. These visits provided valuable insights into how the educators and staff consistently prioritize and demonstrate their commitment to the principles of belonging, well-being, engagement and expression.

The directly operated child care centres are being monitored both externally by the Ministry of Education through annual inspections and internally by the Region of Halton on an ongoing basis. The internal monitoring is conducted through the application of Regional and RCCC specific policies with the oversight conducted by the Manager of Direct Child Care Services. The Region has also participated in third party monitoring on its overall delivery of quality learning.

Executive Summary (cont'd)

SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

QUALITY (cont'd)

Delivery of How Does Learning Happen (cont'd):

The Region has reasonably executed the implementation of the four foundations in the day-to-day activities and interactions at the directly operated centres. Deloitte has observed and the Region has clearly demonstrated how they incorporate and exhibit the four pillars throughout the various centres, classrooms, activities, and resources available to the children.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) + Truth and Reconciliation (T&R):

The RCCC's have not satisfied the objectives of having formal policies in place for equity, diversity and inclusion and truth and reconciliation. Per discussions with the RCCC's, it would be corporate policies that guide this work. the Halton Region does not have an EDI policy in place as of the date of this report.

While the Region has not yet implemented formal policies regarding EDI and T&R, the Regional Child Care Centres are moving in the right direction by incorporating practices that support these initiatives which contribute to high-quality learning for the children at the centres. These activities are underpinned by the Pedagogy , and truth and reconciliation calls to action. Through centre visits and documentation reviews, Deloitte has seen many examples of how EDI and T&R are embedded into the day-to-day practices at the centres.

Staff Skills and Quality Delivery:

The Region has effective hiring policies and practices to ensure that staff in the directly operated centres possess the necessary skills and qualifications for delivering high-quality learning. Ongoing professional development and learning opportunities are provided to promote and enhance the quality of learning at the centres. The Region also supports staff in their continuous development and growth, resulting in a significant proportion (over 70%) of staff who have been with the RCCC's for 5+ years. This longevity contributes to the extensive knowledge leveraged in day-to-day activities. However, to mitigate risks of knowledge transfer, it is recommended to develop and implement onboarding programs and leadership succession programs to ensure knowledge stays within the RCCC's to maintain high-quality standards over time.

Recommendations:

- While Halton Region Children's Services leadership has currently implemented an EDI & T&R workplan and regularly works with the centres on implementing various activities, it is recommended that when the Region establishes an EDI and T&R policy, this should be implemented by the RCCC's. Processes should then be established to allow the Region to closely monitor and regulate the ongoing activities specifically relating to EDI and T&R.
- To maintain staff skills and quality delivery, the Region should develop and implement child care training programs and leadership succession programs to ensure knowledge transfer within the RCCC's which, will safeguard knowledge, maintain quality and allow for continuity and seamless succession.

Executive Summary (cont'd)

SPECIFIC FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (CONTINUED)

INCLUSIVITY

The Region's dedication to inclusive practices and policies has created a positive and high-quality environment for the children. The collaborative efforts, professional development opportunities for staff, and the implementation of the Inclusion Memorandum of Understanding between centres and the Region's Children's Developmental Service Team all contribute to a successful inclusion program.

Through various sections of this report, it is evident that the Region has made a strong commitment to fostering an inclusive environment where all children feel welcome, supported, and able to participate in the child care program. The Region actively collaborates with children, families, supervisors, and staff at the RCCCs to ensure alignment and support regarding activities and learning plans implemented across classrooms. As highlighted in the Quality section, Procedure 3, staff members are provided with professional learning courses that enable them to develop the necessary skills to cater to each child's individual needs and facilitate their learning effectively. Supervisors and staff are monitored and accountable to implement inclusive best practice based on the responsibilities outlined in this agreement.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that the Region establish additional policies to support the monitoring oversight of inclusive practices at the centres. This will provide more extensive documentation of the inclusion activities happening at the centres.



OVERVIEW

Overview

Purpose

On November 30, 2024, the Ministry of Education (“EDU”) released the 2024 Ontario Child Care and EarlyOn Child and Family Centre Service System Management and Funding Guidelines (the “Guidelines”).

The guidelines introduced a requirement for a third-party value-for-money review of Municipal directed operated child care programs. The purpose of the value-for-money review is to determine whether Federal and Provincial funding is being used efficiently and effectively by directly operated centres, and whether the child care services could be more efficiently offered instead by a third-party provider.

The Region of Halton (the “Region”, “Halton”), governed by the Children’s Services Division within the Social and Community Services Department, directly operates three child care centres that have been supporting children and families for over 40 years. The three centre-based child care programs within the Municipality include:

1. Maple Avenue Regional Child Care Centre
2. Margaret Drive Child Care Centre
3. Sedgewick Crescent Child Care Centre

The Region engaged Deloitte LLP to conduct a value-for-money review of the operations of the directly operated child care centres. The criteria and scope of the review were established by Deloitte and agreed upon with the Region as directed by the Province. To support their conclusions, Deloitte reviewed existing Regional Child Care policies, regional monitoring practices and examples of their use in practice. Deloitte performed analysis when needed to draw conclusions on how the Region has ensured it is exhibiting positive behaviours for each of the five criteria.

The Region of Halton plays two key roles within child care; one as the Service System Manager for Child Care and the other as a direct operator of the three child care centres. This report focuses on the Region’s role as an operator of the child care centres and therefore, the Region has been evaluated on the criteria specifically to this role. As the Region is uniquely positioned to service in both of these roles, where applicable, the knowledge as the Service System Manager may be leveraged in recommendations as this knowledge is vital to assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of the activities of the directly operated centres.

Source of Funding

The three RCCCs are funded by a combination of Federal, Provincial, and Municipal funding as well as user fees. In 2023, the cost to operate the three regional child care centres was \$3,400,000. Regional contributions are required to address revenue shortfalls. Regional contribution in 2022 was \$736K and \$411K in 2023.

Overview

Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC)

On March 28, 2022, Ontario secured a \$13.2 billion agreement with the Federal government to fund the Canada-wide Learning and Child Care system (CWELCC) system. This program aims to improve early learning and child care through a phased approach, focusing on five pillars:

- Improved affordability
- Sustainability
- Improved accessibility
- High-quality services
- Inclusion

The CWELCC Agreement's funding supports the enhancement of Ontario's early learning and child care system by increasing quality, accessibility, affordability, and inclusivity. (*Per the 2024 Service Management and Funding guideline, Pg. 11*).

The Region of Halton (the "Region", "Halton") directly operates three child care centres that have been supporting children and families for over 40 years; Maple Avenue Regional Child Care Centre, Margaret Drive Child Care Centre, and Sedgewick Crescent Child Care Centre. The Region has engaged Deloitte to conduct a review of the operations of the directly operated child care centres ("Regional Child Care Centres" or "RCCCs") and identify findings and recommendations as outlined in the Ministry of Education's 2024 *"Ontario Child Care and EarlyOn Child and Family Centre Service Management and Funding Guidelines"*. The purpose of this report is to determine the following:

- Whether Federal and Provincial funding is being used efficiently and effectively by the directly operated municipal programs;
- Whether the child care services provided could be more efficiently and effectively offered by a third party provider without compromising quality.

Criteria and scope

The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC) outlines five main areas in which the program is aiming to achieve improvement. Therefore, these five pillars will be used as the main criteria and scope throughout the value-for-money report. We have categorized the five pillars outlined in the CWELCC agreement as either an effective or an efficient criteria.

EFFICIENCY

1. Affordability
2. Sustainability

EFFECTIVENESS

3. Accessibility
4. Quality
5. Inclusivity



AFFORDABILITY

Affordability

What does Affordability mean to the Ministry of Education?

Per the Ministry of Education's Service Management and Funding Guidelines, Pg. 27-28, 37-38, affordability focuses on making child care services financially accessible to all families ensuring that cost is not a barrier to accessing high-quality care which include the following factors:

- Fee Subsidies
- Cost-Sharing and Financial Flexibility
- Cross-Jurisdictional Access
- Special Provisions for Vulnerable Populations

What does Affordability mean to the Region of Halton, Children's Services?

Per the Region of Halton, cost should not be a barrier to accessing high-quality care. The Region is enrolled in the CWELCC Program which has reduced fees by 52.75% to date. Child care fee subsidy continues to be available for eligible families.

Procedures

The following procedures and steps were performed to assess affordability:

Procedure 1: Determine the affordability of the rates being charged by the directly operated child care centres

- Obtain a breakdown of the rates from 2022 to current day that the directly operated child care centres are charging families
- Compare the rates being charged to the respective decreases of expected CWELCC funding

Affordability (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Determine the affordability of the rates being charged by the directly operated child care centres.

The Halton Region Child Care Centres are enrolled with the CWELCC system which is a Federal initiative that came into effect on April 1, 2022, aimed at making high-quality early learning and child care more affordable and accessible for families across Canada. CWELCC is designed to reduce child care fees significantly over several years, with the goal of providing an average cost of \$10 per day for licensed child care by 2026. These subsidies are designed to support children under the age of six, with provisions for children nearing their sixth birthday but still enrolled in a licensed child care program. At the time of this report, according to the Region of Halton website, 88% of Halton's licensed child care programs (child care centres and home child care agencies) are enrolled in CWELCC. There are 275 sites representing a total of 18,867 spaces that are part of CWELCC in Halton. The three directly operated child care centres are included in the percentage and number of sites enrolled in CWELCC.

The table below provides an overview of the child care rates for different care types over the 2022, 2023, and 2024 years, showing the impact of CWELCC on reducing fees for families. The table is divided into several time periods with each row reflecting the rates families pay for each different types of child care. The Region of Halton also has these rates listed on their website:

Care Type	Rates			
	January 1 - 31, 2022	February 2022 - March 31, 2022	April 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022	January 1, 2023 - present
Toddler Half Day (9am-3pm)	\$ 37.76	\$ 38.52	\$ 28.89	\$ 18.20
Toddler fulltime	\$ 55.16	\$ 56.26	\$ 42.20	\$ 26.58
Preschool Part Time (9:30-11:30am)	\$ 19.08	\$ 19.46	\$ 14.60	\$ 12.00
Preschool Half Day (9am-3pm)	\$ 36.28	\$ 37.01	\$ 27.76	\$ 17.49
Preschool Fulltime	\$ 50.82	\$ 51.84	\$ 38.88	\$ 24.49

*April 1, 2022 - December 31, 2022, is reflective of 25% CWELCC reduction. January 1, 2023 - present is reflective of 52.75% CWELCC reduction

The Halton Region Children's Services is following the reduction goals in place by CWELCC. According to the table, from April 1, 2022 to December 31, 2022, the rates were reduced by 25%, and as of January 1, 2023, the rates were reduced by 52.75%, as part of the ongoing effort to ease the financial burden on families. Additionally, the Region provides further financial support through fee subsidies for eligible families, ensuring that the cost of child care is not a barrier to accessing essential services.

Child Care Fee Subsidy

The child care fee subsidy is designed to provide financial assistance to eligible families to help cover the cost of a space in a child care program and is available in addition to the CWELCC reduction. The subsidy can be received as a full subsidy or partial, which is based on the family's household income level. In 2022, 23 children at the directly operated centres received a fee subsidy, representing approximately 21% of the total average enrollment for the year. In 2023, 21 children received a fee subsidy, which was approximately 17% of the total average enrollment for the year.

Affordability (cont'd)

CONCLUSION - Procedure 1: Determine the affordability of the rates being charged by the directly operated child care centres.

The analysis of the rates charged by the Halton RCCC's demonstrated a commitment to affordability. The centres have effectively followed the CWELCC fee guidelines, implementing the appropriate percentage decreases in fees for both the 2022 and 2023 years. This has resulted in significant reductions in child care costs for families, making high-quality early learning and child care more accessible, aligning with the CWELCC program's objectives. Overall, the directly operated child care centres have successfully met the expectations of affordability.



SUSTAINABILITY

What does Sustainability mean to the Ministry of Education?

Sustainability involves ensuring the long-term viability and effectiveness of child care and early years programs. This includes maintaining financial health, supporting high-quality services, and adapting to changing needs and conditions. Per the 2024 Management and Funding Guidelines¹, pg. 27-30, sustainability involves:

- **Financial Health:** Ensuring that child care programs are financially stable through effective budgeting, cost management, and diverse funding sources. This includes the strategic use of Provincial and Municipal funds, parent fees, and other revenue streams to maintain operations and support growth.

What does Sustainability mean to the Region of Halton, Children's Services?

The Region of Halton has been committed to maintaining excellence in child care through regional contributions over the last 40 years.

Procedures

Procedure 1: Analysis of financial sustainability of revenues and expenses.

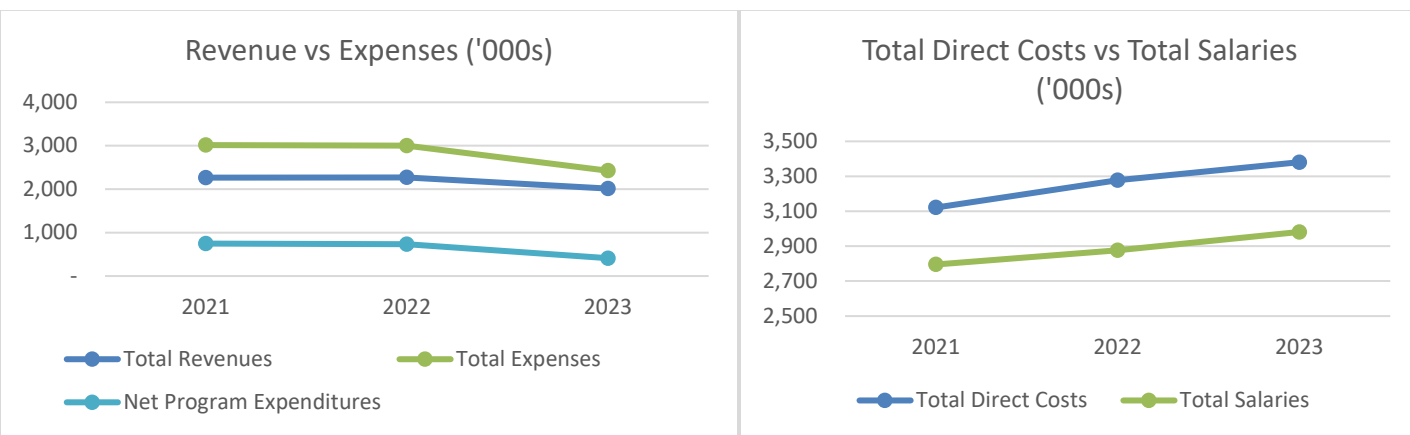
- Compared total revenues and expenses from 2021 to 2023
- Compared total direct costs to total salaries from 2021 to 2023
- Analyzed the total cost per child per day based on direct costs for the 2023 and 2022 years
- Analyzed the total funding received from third party compared to parent fees and direct costs

¹ [Ontario Child Care and Earlyon Child and Family Centres Service Management and Funding Guideline 2024](#)

Sustainability (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Analysis of financial sustainability of revenues and expenses

We received and reviewed the financial data for the RCCC's for the 2021 to 2023 years which reflected the following trends:



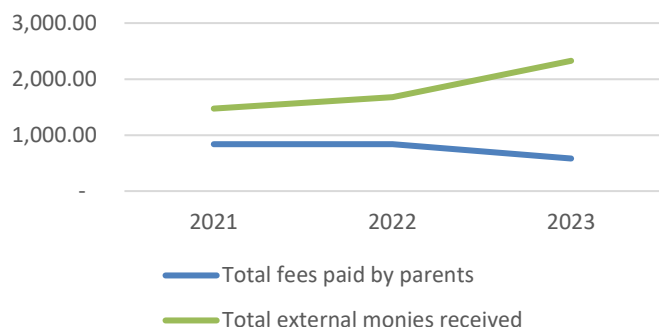
The directly operated child care centres require a regional contribution in order to balance. The regional contribution has decreased from \$736,000 to \$411,000 from 2022 and 2023 which was a result of gross expenditures decreasing from \$3,005,648 in 2022 to \$2,424,508 in 2023. Included in gross expenditures are total recoveries which include the CWELCC Revenue Replacement provided by the Province to supplement the decrease in child care fees from year to year (2022 – 25%, 2023 – 52.75%). As the percentage supplemented increased from year to year, the total recoveries increased as well and therefore, a decrease in total expenditures. It should be noted that 2021 and 2022 were not typical operating years in child care for the Region as a result of COVID-19. The impacts of COVID-19 resulted in higher costs due to staff resourcing challenges and lower enrolment which ultimately resulted in higher regional contributions. The regional contribution in 2019, prior to COVID-19, was \$350,361 which is substantially lower than the 2021 and 2022 years (\$746,945 and \$736,102 respectively). The 2019 regional contribution compared to the contribution in 2023 of \$411,051 represents a 17% increase which normalized over four years is approximately 4% increase in the regional contribution per year.

Total operating costs have increased each year, rising from \$3,014,744 in 2021 to \$3,380,792 in 2023 with the increase in 2022 to 2023 being approximately 3.16%. This increase is mainly due to increased salaries. Salaries represent approximately 88% of the total direct costs and increased by 3.67% from 2022 to 2023.

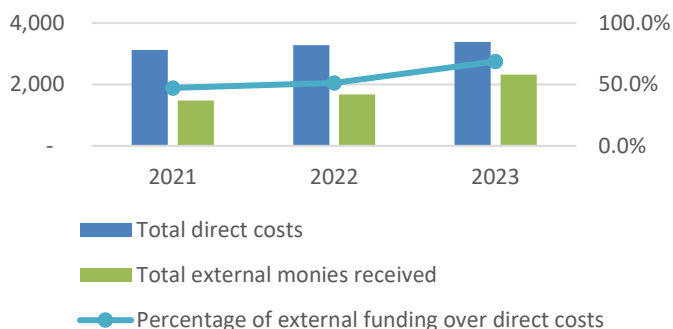
Sustainability (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Analysis of financial sustainability of revenues and expenses (cont'd)

External funding vs parent fees ('000s)



External funding vs direct costs ('000s)



Please note that the majority of monies received from external funding include grant funding which the Region includes under either Revenue or Recoveries in their financial data.

From 2021 to 2023, the funding received from the province has been increasing which is mainly due to CWELCC Fee Reduction funding. This funding has increased by 278% in 2023 compared to 2022. Revenue replacement of parent fees increased from 25% to 52.75% and average enrollment returned to pre-Covid levels this was to be expected. Overall, when analyzing total revenues approximately 80% of the funding is being received from fees and subsidy.

From 2021 to 2023, the percentage of revenue compared to expenses has ranged from 47% to 69% which indicates that the centres have been able to maintain their costs over the years. It should be noted that the increase in third-party funding appropriately reduces parent fee revenue which have decreased by 31% from 2022 to 2023. This decrease is expected due to the CWELCC mandated reduction which is being supplemented by Provincial funding.

Sustainability (cont'd)

CONCLUSION - Procedure 1: Analysis of financial sustainability of revenues and expenses

The analysis of the financial sustainability of revenues and expenses for the RCCC's revealed a need for ongoing financial support from the Region. Despite efforts to manage costs effectively, the centres have required a regional contribution to balance the budget in the years reviewed of 2021-2023. The required contribution decreased from \$736,000 in 2022 to \$411,000 in 2023, primarily due to a return to cost to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels. The reduction in 2023 was primarily due to changes in health and safety protocols that inflated staff cost during COVID.

Salaries in RCCC's represent approximately 88% of total direct costs, which have been increasing due to measures outside their control. The centres have been able to freeze programming costs unrelated to staffing. The analysis shows that there have been no changes in the non-salary portion of the budget over the same period.

The Region continues to assess its commitment, through established budgeting practices, to a regional contribution moving forward to ensure the continued provision of quality child care services. Overall, the financial sustainability of the RCCC's is contingent these contributions and effective cost management.

RECOMMENDATION:

If and when the Region of Halton decides to no longer provide RCCC's with contributions to operating budgets, the Region should provide RCCC's with sufficient notice to allow RCCC's to adjust operations.



ACCESSIBILITY

Accessibility

What does Accessibility mean to the Ministry of Education?

Per the Ministry of Education's Service Management and Funding Guidelines, Pg. 12, 37-42, accessibility involves ensuring that child care services are inclusive, physically accessible, culturally responsive, and easily reachable by families, particularly those in need of subsidized care and those with special needs. Accessibility involves several key aspects:

- Facilitating Access to Subsidized Child Care – *see Affordability Section*
- Inclusion of French Language Services – *not applicable to the Region of Halton.*
- Cultural Responsiveness – *see Inclusivity Section.*
- Accessibility of Child Care Centres: Child care centres are expected to ensure all children, including those with special needs, can fully participate in programs. This involves creating physical environments that are inclusive and adaptable to the needs of all children. Accessibility also means easily reachable by families.

What does Accessibility mean to the Region of Halton, Children's Services?

In the Region of Halton's Regional Child Care Centres, child care spaces are held for priority populations. Consideration is given to children in receipt of fee subsidy, Indigenous, francophone, children with special needs, Children's Aid referrals, and Halton Women's Place referrals. In addition, child care is accessible by public transit. Overall, the Region believes that cost, culture, disability and language should not pose barriers to access high-quality care.

Procedures

The following procedures and steps were performed to assess accessibility:

Procedure 1: Analyzing Accessible Spots

- a. Review the policies in place to ensure accessibility
- b. Examine the practices implemented by Halton to ensure their services are accessible to all children
- c. While maintaining confidentiality, evaluate the number and percentage of accessible child care spots available by month over a 12 month-period that align to what the Region deems as accessible.

Procedure 2: Assessing Location Availability and Physical Accessibility of Centres

- a. Evaluate whether the child care centre locations are easily accessible for the population they are intended to serve along with being physically accessible.

Accessibility (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Analyzing Accessible Spots

a. Review the policies in place to ensure accessibility (cont'd).

Starting January 1, 2017, Ontario Regulation 137/15 section 75.1 (2) mandates that *“Every licensee that establishes or maintains a waiting list described in subsection 1 shall develop written policies and procedures that, (a) explain how the licensee determines the order in which children on the waiting list are offered admission; and (b) provide that the waiting list will be made available in a manner that maintains the privacy and confidentiality of the children listed on it, but that allows the position of a child on the list to be ascertained by the affected persons or families.”*

The Regional Child Care Centres have outlined and mandated a waitlist policy along with an emergency spot procedure that is to be followed by each of the directly operated child care centres. The policies are as follows:

Regional Child Care Centre Wait List Policy

The Region has implemented a wait list policy in which no fee is charged when a family is placed on the waitlist.

The waitlist is maintained in chronological order; however, priority status is applied with the following considerations:

- Child is on the waitlist or in receipt of Child Care Fee Subsidy,
- Child or family member identifies as Indigenous (First Nations, Métis, Inuit),
- Child is connected to Halton Inclusion Services,
- Family currently residing at Halton Women's Place,
- Child or family is connected to services through the Children's Aid Society or
- Child has siblings currently attending a Regional Child Care Centre.

Emergency spot practice

Each centre has two emergency spots in which the centres are able to utilize in emergent situations. The considerations for those who meet the criteria to fill the spots are the same as priority status noted above under the waitlist policy.

Procedure 1a: Conclusion

The Region has reasonably executed the objectives of establishing and maintaining a waiting list as per the Ontario Regulation 137/15 section 75.1 outlines. The directly operated child care centres follow the wait list policy which outline the steps taken for children to join the list and the communications required while on the list. The RCCCs hold emergency spots but this is not formalized in a policy.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the RCCC's formally create a policy which outlines the emergency spot procedure. Although this is already done in practice, the RCCC's cannot ensure the longevity of the practice without a policy.

Accessibility (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Analyzing Accessible Spots

b. Examine the practices implemented by Halton to ensure their services are accessible to all children.

As noted in procedure 1a) under Accessibility, RCCCs have implemented several practices to ensure that their services are accessible to all children. These practices and policies are communicated by the Region to the parents, specifically the waitlist policy. Parents have the right to know their spot on the waitlist and have that transparency provided to them. Halton is obligated, by their policy, to also provide a reason for this decision, ensuring that parents are well-informed about the factors affecting their child's enrollment.

The Region relies on the centres and the supervisors at the centres to follow the established policies. While the Region provides guidance and expects the centres to adhere to these guidelines, they do not actively conduct their own monitoring of compliance with the policies in place (waitlist and emergency spot). The Region's current approach emphasizes communication and clarity by the centres but does not include direct oversight, specifically of the implementation of the waitlist and emergency spots. The responsibility largely falls on the centres to ensure that these policies are being met.

It should be noted that the Manager of Direct Child Care Services is required to oversee the operations of these centres and conducts many visits and holds several meetings which allow them the ability to observe the ongoing practices. However, when discussed with the Region specifically around the compliance of these policies, it was noted that the Manager only addresses issues raised by either the supervisor at the centre or through a complaint of a parent.

Procedure 1b: Conclusion

Even though the Region conducts direct oversight of the child centres through many visits and meetings held throughout the year and EDU provides a monitoring function, there is no formal documentation or policies/processes in place that actively outline how supervisors are accountable to ensure priority populations have equitable access to child care spaces and are actively ensuring these populations are reflected in enrolment numbers.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Region develop and incorporate a monitoring of accessible spots through a formal process where a review of current enrollments for each centre is analyzed to determine the number of accessible spaces occupied compared to total enrollment. This recommendation would then allow for the Region to implement the necessary mitigation strategies if the overall accessible spaces as a percent of total enrollment has declined.

Accessibility (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Analyzing Accessible Spots

- c. While maintaining confidentiality, evaluate the number and percentage of accessible child care spots available by month over a 12 month-period that align to what the Region deems as accessible.

The Region defines an “accessible child care spot” as a space that is specifically designed or modified to accommodate individuals with disabilities or limitations and require an additional staff to support them. The Region of Halton provided the monthly data for the 2023 calendar year that outlined the accessible spots occupied along with the total enrollment at each directly operated child care centre in the Region of Halton. We have taken this information and conducted an analysis of the accessible spots as a percentage of total enrollment per each month per centre. Here are the results:

	Sedgewick Crescent Child Care Centre			Maple Avenue Regional Child Care Centre			Margaret Drive Child Care Centre		
	Accessible Spots	Total enrollment	Accessible spaces as a % of total enrollment	Accessible Spots	Total enrollment	Accessible spaces as a % of total enrollment	Accessible Spots	Total enrollment	Accessible spaces as a % of total enrollment
January	7	38	18%	4	40	10%	8	35	23%
February	8	38	21%	5	39	13%	10	37	27%
March	8	40	20%	5	40	13%	11	41	27%
April	8	42	19%	5	40	13%	11	38	29%
May	8	42	19%	6	40	15%	11	39	28%
June	8	42	19%	6	40	15%	11	40	28%
July	8	39	21%	6	40	15%	12	41	29%
August	8	42	19%	6	42	14%	11	39	28%
September	8	42	19%	4	48	8%	8	40	20%
October	6	37	16%	5	45	11%	8	33	24%
November	8	39	21%	5	45	11%	8	33	24%
December	8	39	21%	5	40	13%	9	33	27%
Average	8	40	19%	5	42	12%	10	37	26%

*in terms of emergency spots, the Supervisor holds 2 spots in addition to accessible spaces

Across the three directly operated child care centres in Halton, the percentage of accessible spaces relative to total enrollment range from 8% to 29% per centre with the overall average at 12% to 26%.

The Halton Region Children’s Services conducted a geographical location comparison analysis that analyzed the licensed capacity, total enrollment, and those enrolled that required inclusion services collected in March 2024. The parameters of this analysis was a 3km radius of Margaret and Sedgewick centres and a 6km radius for the Maple centre. The analysis indicated that the centres within the “assessment area” (i.e., the radius identified) had on average a 2.67% to 3.07% of those identified as inclusion services enrolled compared to the licensed capacity. The directly operated centres in March 2024 showed an average of 15.38% to 21.43% of inclusion services enrollment compared to licensed capacity in the centres.

Accessibility (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Analyzing Accessible Spots

- c. *While maintaining confidentiality, evaluate the number and percentage of accessible child care spots available by month over a 12 month-period that align to what the Region deems as accessible (cont'd).*

Procedure 1c: Conclusion

Overall, the directly operated centres tend to maintain higher percentages of accessible spaces, which indicate a strong capacity to accommodate those with identified inclusion services. These centres are equipped to serve children with various types of learning needs, reinforcing the Region's foundational principles of "How does Learning Happen?."

CONCLUSION - Procedure 1: Analyzing Accessible Spots

The Region has policies in place to manage the accessibility of child care spots effectively, especially for wait lists. They prioritize learning opportunities for those with accessibility needs. To improve operations, they could implement an emergency spot policy and central monitoring system to ensure consistent adherence to these policies.

Accessibility (cont'd)

Procedure 2: Assessing Location Availability and Physical Accessibility of Centres

- a. *Evaluate whether the child care centre locations are easily accessible for the population they are intended to serve along with being physically accessible.*

The Region of Halton provided Our Kids Network (“OKN”) Neighbourhood Data from 2021, which includes information on specific neighborhoods, such as the social risk index score, the number of one-parent families, the percentage of people with no knowledge of official languages, the number of recent immigrants, the percentage of people with a non-official mother tongue, the racialized population, and the population living in low income. OKN researched this data through their own researchers and support strategy for children and youth needs in Halton. They have their own data portal that tracks neighborhood needs. This data was used by Deloitte to analyze and provide opinions on the accessibility of child care centres based on location:

Neighbourhoods	Average of Social Risk Index Score (2021) (Scored 0-9)	Average of One-Parent Families (%) (2021)	Average of No Knowledge of Official Languages (%) (2021)	Average of Recent Immigrants (%) (2021)	Average of Non-official mother tongue (%) (2021)	Average of Racialized Population (%) - 2021	Average of Population Living in Low Income (LIM-AT) (%) - 2021
Acton	1.00	0.16	0.00	0.00	0.09	0.06	0.06
Aldershot	2.00	0.15	0.01	0.03	0.18	0.17	0.08
Burlington	0.57	0.14	0.01	0.03	0.21	0.24	0.05
Escarpment	1.00	0.11	0.02	0.07	0.38	0.64	0.05
Georgetown	-	0.14	0.01	0.01	0.15	0.15	0.04
Milton	1.43	0.13	0.02	0.07	0.34	0.52	0.06
Oakville	2.80	0.14	0.02	0.07	0.36	0.43	0.09
Rural North Halton	1.00	0.09	0.01	0.00	0.18	0.16	0.07
Average	1.57	0.14	0.02	0.05	0.28	0.36	0.07

Overall, the Region of Halton itself has a social risk index average score of 1.57. It has an average of 14% one-parent families, 35% racialized population, and 28% non-official mother tongue speakers. The three directly operated centres are located in Oakville (two centres) and Georgetown (one centre).

Oakville, with a social risk of 2.8, exhibits higher social challenges compared to other neighbourhoods. The scale used for this index ranges from 0 to 9, where 0 represents no risk and 9 represents extreme risk. Oakville also has higher proportions of racialized populations (43%), individuals speaking non-official mother tongue (36%), and recent immigrants (7%), suggesting a need for accessible child care services within diverse communities. The percentage of one-parent families and low-income populations in Oakville further highlights the necessity for these services. Georgetown has a social risk score of 0, indicating minimal social challenges and potentially lower immediate need for child care centres.

Accessibility (cont'd)

Procedure 2: Assessing Location Availability and Physical Accessibility of Centres

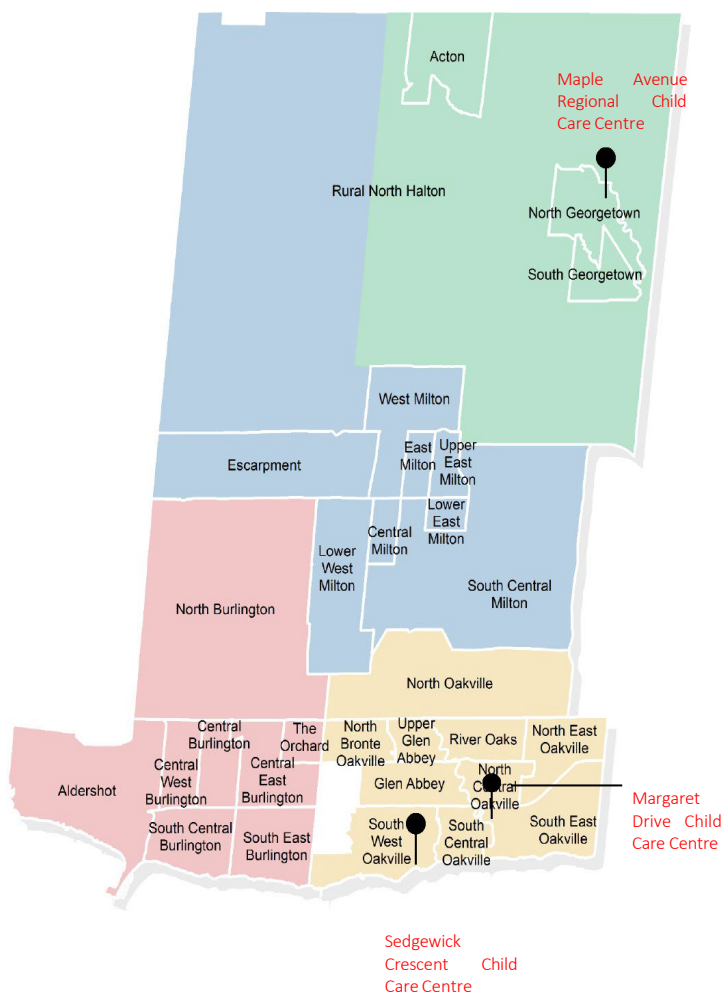
a. *Evaluate whether the child care centre locations are easily accessible for the population they are intended to serve along with being physically accessible (cont'd).*

The next two neighbourhoods, after Oakville, that outline a higher social risk are Aldershot and Milton.

Aldershot, with a social risk score of 2.0, demonstrates notable social challenges. The area has a relatively high proportion of one-parent families (15%), and individuals with non-official mother tongues (15%), indicating a considerable demand for child care services. Aldershot is not close in proximity to a directly operated child care centre as Oakville is approximately 20 minutes in distance and Georgetown is approximately 40 minutes away, making these centres not easily accessible for children and families living in these neighbourhood.

Milton has a social risk score of 1.43, indicating a lower level of social challenges on average compared to the Region itself; however, the third highest compared to other neighbourhoods within the Region. The neighbourhood has a percentage of 13% of one-parent families and a racialized population of 43%. The directly operated centres are

located within 25 minutes (Georgetown) and 30 minutes (Oakville) of this neighbourhood.



Halton Kids – Our Kids Network: 2023 OKN Neighborhoods Boundary

Accessibility (cont'd)

Procedure 2: Assessing Location Availability and Physical Accessibility of Centres

- a. *Evaluate whether the child care centre locations are easily accessible for the population they are intended to serve along with being physically accessible (cont'd).*

Physically Accessibility

Per the Region, Building Condition Assessments were completed in August 2022. The assessments conducted concluded that based on observations, two centres have not been designed to include accessibility features while one of the centres is not considered to be fully accessible. Therefore, the directly operated centres do not meet the requirement of being physically accessible.

Procedure 2a: Conclusion

Overall, the data provided highlights the importance of addressing diverse needs and social challenges within different areas of the Region of Halton when it comes to child care accessibility. By considering the social indicators and demographics of each location, more support can be developed to ensure that child care services are accessible and inclusive for all residents in the Region.

Halton Region is currently operating their directly operated child centres in two neighbourhoods within the Region (Oakville and Georgetown). The Region could assess how they can best support children in other higher risk neighbourhoods (such as Aldershot and Milton).

Per discussion with the Halton Region Children's Services, as required by the Province and approved by Halton Regional Council, they have recently implemented a directed growth plan which outlines priorities for enrollment and expansion relating to the CWELCC program for the period of 2024-2026. This plan aligns with the priority neighbourhoods and priorities for child care per the Ministry of Education and the CWELCC Guidelines.

Considering the significant distance to access child care in Aldershot and Milton, the Region of Halton's Department of Social Services, Children's Services Division, may take steps to address this challenge. As part of their oversight role, the Region may issue a request for proposal to identify community interest or ability to fulfill the need. If no community-based providers are able or willing to meet the requirement, the RCCC's should evaluate a business case to do so.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Under due process driven by the Region of Halton's Department of Social Services, Children's Services Division to address significant distance to child care centres, and when no community-based providers are able or willing to meet the requirements, Deloitte recommends that the RCCC's should evaluate a business case to do so.

It is also recommended that the RCCC's along with the Region implement a plan to retrofit the directly operated centres to becoming physically accessible.



QUALITY

Quality (cont'd)

What does Quality mean to the Region of Halton, Children's Services? (cont'd)

Quality is connected to the Ministry of Education's commitment to ensuring that child care and family services meet high standards that support positive outcomes for children and their families. Per the 2024 Management and Funding Guidelines, pg. 110-111, 115-116, quality is characterized by:

- **Consistent and High-Quality:** services should consistently meet high standards to effectively support the needs of children and families
- **Engaging and Responsive:** services must engage parents and caregivers and be responsive to the varied needs of families, including those from diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds
- **Integration with Community Services:** programs should work in collaboration with the broader community services to provide comprehensive support

What does Quality mean to the Region of Halton, Children's Services?

The Halton Regional Child Care Centres believe that every child and family should have access to high quality care as these child care programs support children's learning, development, health and well-being (*Per the Guide to the Halton Regional Child Care Centres, Pg. 7*). Halton Region Children's Services has adopted a Child Care Quality System Framework that outlines the principles and practices to elevate the quality of child care programs for children, families and the early years workforce. *Halton's Early Years and Child Care Quality System Framework* outlines three main principles: Foundational Principles, Operational Practices, and Pedagogical Practices.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

The Region of Halton's Regional Child Care centres prioritize diversity and inclusion by honoring children's beliefs, cultures, languages, and experiences from their families and communities. Educators engage with each child's family culture, promoting family partnerships and community involvement through activities like community walks and cultural sharing. This approach fosters a sense of belonging and supports the growth and learning for all children.

Truth and Reconciliation

The Region of Halton's Regional Child Care Centres' are committed to Truth and Reconciliation by respecting the diverse beliefs, cultures, languages, and experiences of the children they serve. They engage in continuous professional learning and collaborate with the Halton Region Indigenous Relations team and Indigenous community organizations to incorporate diverse perspectives into their curriculum and daily practices. This commitment fosters a respectful and inclusive community for educators, children, and families.

Procedures

The following procedures and steps were performed to assess quality:

Procedure 1: Delivery of “How does Learning Happen?”

- a. Obtain an understanding of the policy implemented by the Region to the centres around high-quality
- b. Obtain an understanding of how the policy is monitored by the Region to ensure execution and existence and evaluate the quality control measures in place to ensure adherence to these principles.
- c. Observe and take practical examples of the four foundations (belonging, well-being, expression, and engagement) in the day-to-day activities and interactions

Procedure 2: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) + Truth and Reconciliation (T&R)

- a. Obtain an understanding of the policy implemented by the Region to the centres around equity, diversity, and inclusion and truth and reconciliation.
- b. Obtain an understanding of how the policy is monitored by the Region to ensure execution and existence and evaluate the quality control measures in place to ensure adherence to these principles.
- c. Observe and take practical examples of how equity, diversity, and inclusion and truth and reconciliation principles are integrated and practiced in day-to-day activities and interactions.

Procedure 3: Staff Skills and Quality Delivery

- a. Review hiring policies and practices to see if staff have necessary skills and qualifications
- b. Examine staff turnover rates to assess stability and continuity along with staffing levels and ratios to provide high quality care
- c. Evaluating whether staff have access to ongoing professional development and learning opportunities to enhance their skills

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Delivery of “How does Learning Happen?”

a. Obtain an understanding of the policy implemented by the Region to the centres around high-quality.

The Halton Region Children’s Services aims to provide a high-quality environment by following *How Does Learning Happen?*, *Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years*, and the *Ministry of Education’s Policy Statement on programming and pedagogy in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA)*.

The educators at the Regional Child Care Centres embed and implement the four foundations of *Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years* throughout the day-to-day activities. “A Guide to the Halton Regional Child Care Centres” outlines various ways in which the educators demonstrate each foundation on pages 4 and 5:

Belonging

- Creating positive learning environments and planning experiences where your child’s
- learning and development is supported,
- Creating a welcoming space that encourages you to share your home life,
- Recognizing your child’s unique spirit, individuality, and presence, and
- Building positive relationships through daily interactions with your family.

Well-Being

- Developing programs that nurture healthy development,
- Creating spaces indoors and outdoors where your child can be active in play or quiet and reflective, respecting their individual need for rest and play,
- Creating a nutritious and diverse menu that recognizes your child’s individual food preferences and/or allergies,
- Monitoring your child’s health and well-being, maintaining open communication, and
- Collaborating with community partners and families to create goals that support your child’s development and create an inclusive environment.

Engagement

- Encouraging you child’s exploration, play and inquiry,
- Providing child initiated and adult supported experiences,
- Ensuring ongoing communication about your child and the program, and
- Implementing an inclusive learning environment that reflects and builds upon the interests of your child.

Expression

- Providing play-based activities that follow your child’s interests,
- Creating pedagogical documentation to bring your child’s thinking and learning to life through
- Written observation, photos, and examples of work,
- Encouraging your child to interact and communicate in a positive way with their peers by
- supporting their ability to self-regulate (understanding and managing their own behavior and reactions), and
- Offering a variety of materials and equipment so that all children can be included in play.

Deloitte noted that Halton’s program guide matches the principles articulated in the “How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years” document, the Foundations of Learning section (pg. 23).

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Delivery of “How does Learning Happen?”

- a. *Obtain an understanding of the policy implemented by the Region to the centres around high-quality (cont.)*

Record Keeping Policy

The Halton Region has two policies; Corporate Records Management Program and Records Retention that are implemented to ensure proper record keeping and retention of key documents. Specifically, the Records Retention policy has a specific section for the Regional Child Care Centres which outlines the schedule required for documents such as attendance sheets, inspection reports, incident reports, and policy and operational reviews.

Monitoring Compliance and Contravention of Policies and Procedures

The Halton Regional Child Care Services has implemented this policy specifically to ensure review, compliance and contravention of all applicable policies, procedures and individual plans as it applies to the Regional Child Care Centres. This policy is applicable to all Halton Regional Child Care Centre staff, students and volunteers. The activities within this policy are required to be conducted upon hiring/start of placement and on an annual basis. Any changes to policies would also result in a review from staff at the child care centres.

Procedure 1a: Conclusion

The Region has established policies to support high-quality learning delivery. The Region has captured the four foundations of Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years into their own Guide to the Halton Regional Child Care Centres. The guide is the foundation of a high-quality learning environment at the Region’s directly operated child care centres.

Quality (cont'd)

- Procedure 1: Delivery of “How does Learning Happen?”**
- b. Obtain an understanding of how the policy is monitored by the Region to ensure execution and existence and evaluate the quality control measures in place to ensure adherence to these principles.*


Ministry Inspections

The Ministry of Education conducts annual inspections of child care centres to ensure compliance with licensing requirements under the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) which verify that the centres meet health, safety, and quality standards. The inspections involve reviewing documentation, observing practices, and ensuring that policies and procedures are in place and followed. Additionally, the Ministry addresses any complaints from the public and follows up on serious occurrences. The goal of these inspections is to support licensees in maintaining compliance, improving program quality, and ensuring the well-being of children in care. The criteria for child care centres are categorized into three tiers/stages. Tier 1 centres have maintained a regular license, no enforcement actions, and minimal non-compliances over the past three years. Tier 2 centres also maintain a regular license with no enforcement actions but are not in the bottom 10% for non-compliances. Tier 3 centres have received a provisional license or enforcement actions and are among the bottom 10% in terms of non-compliance severity. All three directly operated child care centres within the Region of Halton have been categorized as Tier 1 as of 2024. Outlined below are the results of the inspections that have taken place with the Region of Halton’s directly operated child care centres for the 2023 and 2024 years:

	Inspections	Non-Compliances
2023	2 Licensing Inspections 1 Monitoring Inspection	1
2024	2 Licensing Inspections 1 Monitoring Inspections	1
Total	6 Inspections	2 Non-Compliances

Monitoring Compliance and Contravention of Policies and Procedures

This policy requires that all Halton Regional Child Care staff, students, and volunteers sign an Annual Staff Monitoring Form to confirm that they have reviewed and understand the policies of the Halton Region’s Children’s Services Division. In addition, the policy specifies the Supervisor’s responsibilities to monitor the Halton Regional Child Care staff, students, and volunteers’ compliance of the various policies covered within the Division. This is done through observation and program reviews and the completion of the Compliance and Contravention Observation Form. This Form is required completed a minimum of once per year by supervisors, or other educators at the centres, and is only completed if there are issues identified through daily activities. The supervisor reviews the forms with the educator or staff at their 1:1 meeting to provide feedback. The document is mandated by the EDU and contains the following information:



CSF 22b
February 2017

Compliance and Contravention Observation Form
Observations of Pedagogical approaches described in the Program Statement/Vision, compliance and/or contravention of policies, procedures and individual plans are considered when monitoring staff, students and volunteers.

Staff Name: _____ Location: _____

DATE	OBSERVATIONS	FOLLOW-UP	SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE	STAFF SIGNATURE

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Delivery of “How does Learning Happen?”

- b. Obtain an understanding of how the policy is monitored by the Region to ensure execution and existence and evaluate the quality control measures in place to ensure adherence to these principles (cont'd).*

Halton Region Children’s Services Internally Monitoring:

The Halton Region Children’s Services has designated a Manager of Direct Child Care Services who is responsible for overseeing the operations of three child care centres and ensuring the delivery of high-quality programs for children. The main purpose of the role is to lead the development, delivery, and evaluation that supports the early learning and child care program to improve services for children and families. Reporting to the Director of Children’s Services, the Manager actively participates in the oversight of the activities at the directly operated child care centres, including site visits, centre events, planning and performance meetings, and parent surveys.

Quality First Program

The Region of Halton participated in the “Quality First” program which was run by a third party, The Halton Resource Connection (“THRC”), that evaluated the quality of learning provided in the child care centres. As all three centres are in Tier 1, four visits were conducted in the 2023 year. This program included a development of an action plan (one per classroom) which was then analyzed and measured against during each visit. Educators were required to attend and complete professional learning session(s) and reflect on the learning conducted. By the end of the program, a “In Good Standing Checklist” was reviewed and signed off by the consultant at THRC.

Margaret Drive and Maple Avenue Regional Child Care Centre had their checklists completed November 2023 which outlined the action plan part 1 and part 2 had been developed and completed by the third and fourth visits, respectively. Sedgewick Crescent Region Child Care Centres had their checklist completed December 2023 which outlined the action plan part 1 and part 2 had been developed and completed by the third and fourth visits.

Procedure 1b: Conclusion

The directly operated child care centres are being monitored both externally by the Ministry in yearly inspections and internally by the Region of Halton on an ongoing basis. The internal monitoring is through the application of Regional and RCCC specific policies with the oversight conducted by the Manager of Direct Child Care Services. The Region has also participated in third party monitoring on its overall delivery of quality learning.

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Delivery of “How does Learning Happen?”

- c. Observe and take practical examples of the four foundations (belonging, well-being, expression, and engagement) in the day-to-day activities and interactions.*

Deloitte visited the three directly operated Regional Child Care Centres — Maple Avenue, Margaret Drive, and Sedgewick Crescent. During these visits, Deloitte observed that all three centres successfully integrate cultural practices and educational initiatives into their daily operations. These practices align with the “How Does Learning Happen?” framework, which emphasizes the four foundations of belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression.

Building on these observations, the educators at the Regional Child Care Centres actively engage in observing and documenting each child’s progress to support their future growth, learning, health, and development. The Region of Halton provides several resources which can be utilized by the educators to support these objectives. These resources include:

- The Parent/Guardian Share Information Form is created from the “How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years” document and is aligned with the four foundations: belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression. The Region of Halton uses a strength-based assessment model of measuring and evaluating each child’s learning. The form includes talking about each child’s strengths and next steps in detail, specific to each foundation.
- The Program/Work Plans stems from the “How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years” document as it is aligned with the four foundations: belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression. Each week, learning is documented on how it happened, categorized based on the four pillars. A reflection is also done on ideas Educator’s would like to in the future.

These resources are not mandated; however, they are frequently leveraged and utilized by the educators to provide families with a snapshot as to what their child is learning.

Look See Wonder Tour

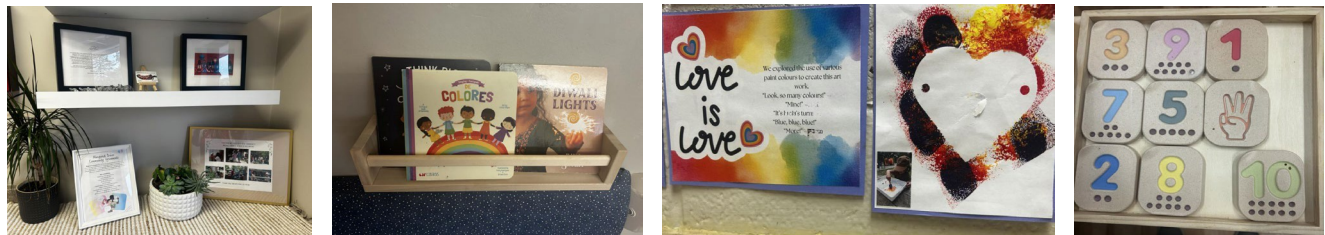
The Regional Child Care Centres host “Look See Wonder” share nights to bring together child care educators for discussion on focused topics. For example, the RCCC hosted an EDI, Truth & Reconciliation event to honor Gord Downie and Channie Wenjack by answering their call to action to “Do Something” in the context of creating a reconciliaACTION and discussing residential school’s history. Each centre hosts two tours annually, averaging 7-8 participants primarily from the Halton Region. Although offered through the Halton Resource Connection (THRC), participation has been limited to Halton Region so far.

Quality (cont'd)

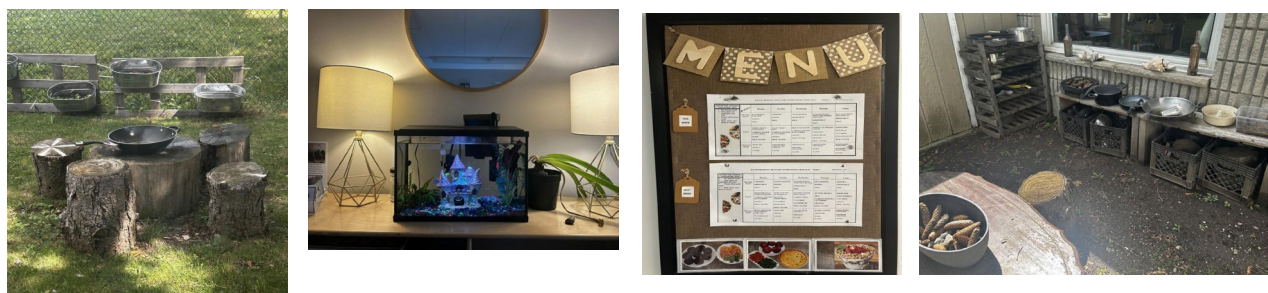
Procedure 1: Delivery of “How does Learning Happen?”
c. Observe and take practical examples of the four foundations (belonging, well-being, expression, and engagement) in the day-to-day activities and interactions (cont'd).

The Regional Child Care Centres have provided the following pictures that showcase the foundations in action:

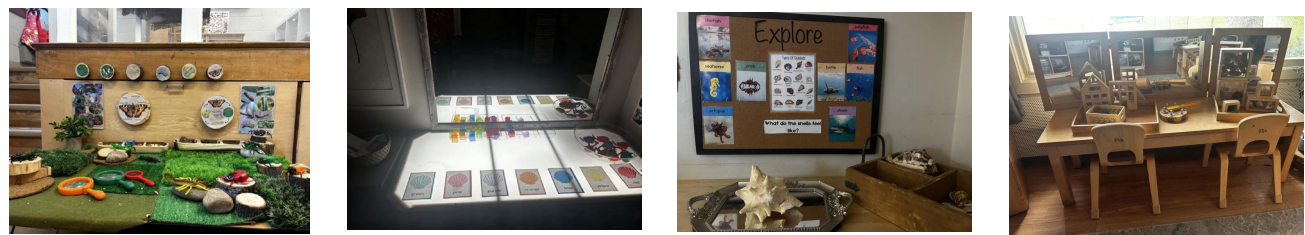
Belonging



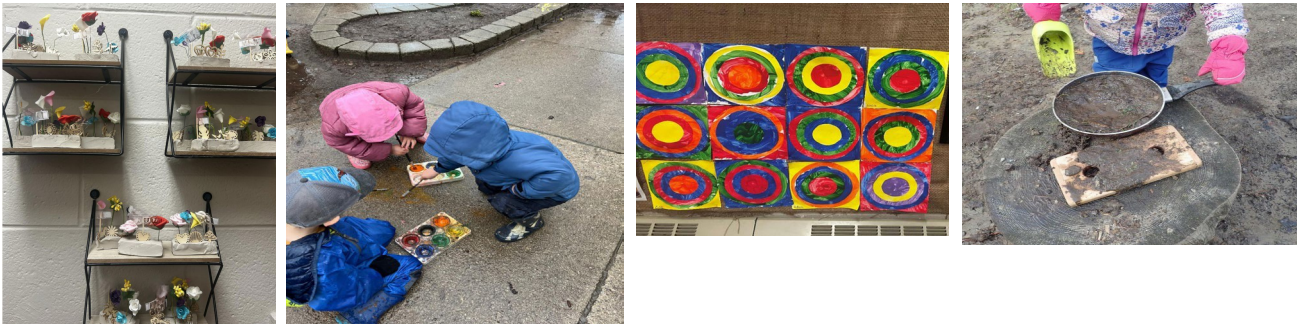
Well-Being



Engagement



Expression



Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Delivery of “How does Learning Happen?”

- c. Observe and take practical examples of the four foundations (belonging, well-being, expression, and engagement) in the day-to-day activities and interactions (cont'd).*

Procedure 1c: Conclusion

The Region has reasonably executed the implementation of the four foundations in the day-to-day activities and interactions at the directly operated centres. Deloitte has observed and the Region has clearly demonstrated how they incorporate and exhibit the four pillars throughout the various centres, classrooms, activities, and resources available to the children.

Conclusion – Procedure 1: Delivery of “How does Learning Happen?”

The Region of Halton Directly Operated child care centres has demonstrated a strong commitment to integrating the principles and foundations outlined in the Ministry of Education’s “How Does Learning Happen?” into their policies and learning practices. This dedication is evident through their various policies including the comprehensive “A Guide to the Halton Regional Child Care Centres” which aligns with the four main foundations of the Ministry’s framework. The Region’s adherence to these foundations is not only evident in written and photographed materials but also in the day-to-day activities observed during visits to the centres. These visits provided valuable insights into how the educators and staff consistently prioritize and demonstrate their commitment to the principles of belonging, well-being, engagement and expression.

The centres are actively monitored and assessed by the Ministry of Education to ensure compliance with the Ministry’s standards. The centres’ achievement of a Tier 1 classification signifies minimal non-compliance and serves as a testament to their dedication to maintaining high-quality care and education. This classification reinforces the fact that the centres consistently meet and exceed the expectations set forth by the Ministry.

The Halton Region Children Services has brought in a third party over the past 15 years to assess the quality of the centres through four site visits, the creation and review of action plans, and the completion of the “Good Standing Checklist” upon the end of the program.

In addition to the external monitoring, the Halton Region Children’s Services has a role dedicated and responsible for the monitoring of the directly operated child care centres. The purpose of this role is to provide support to the child care centres and help develop and improve the delivery of the programs and services provided to children and families.

Overall, the RCCC’s commitment to integrating comprehensive policies and demonstrative practices showcase their dedication to providing high-quality care and education.

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 2: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (“EDI”) + Truth and Reconciliation (“T&R”)

a. *Obtain an understanding of the policy implemented by the Region to the centres around equity, diversity, and inclusion and truth and reconciliation.*

Through discussions with the Region, there are no set policies in place that mandate the activities or actions that need to be conducted by the centres and staff around EDI and T&R. With that being said, the Halton Region Children’s Services has created a workplan focused for the year 2024 – 2025 to set out and track EDI and T&R activities which focus on the priority areas such as:

- Professional learning and reflective practice
- Engaging families and children in culturally responsive programming
- Creating learning guides to support educators
- Continuing the commitment towards Truth and Reconciliation

The workplan was completed and implemented in January 2024. The action plan itself outlines the key activities, action steps required, target date of completion, resources required, and the progress of the activities. The activities in the plan are listed by priority areas and include the following as activities (but not limited to):

- Monthly staff meetings that include discussions with Program Support Consultants on practices
- Ongoing professional development
- Family events (such as dig days, canoe garden) along with information boards at each centre
- Creation of learning guides to support educators with implementing EDI and T&R programming
- Presenting at the Metis Nation of Ontario Conference
- Currently planning activities to be organized at each centre for National Truth and Reconciliation Day

In addition to the above, the Region has created a collaboration site for all staff to upload relevant resources and documents that can be shared amongst the centres and utilized by each.

Procedure 2a: Conclusion

The RCCC’s have not satisfied the objectives of having formal policies in place around equity, diversity and inclusion and truth and reconciliation. Per discussions with the RCCC’s, they are obligated to follow Regional policies on EDI; the Region does not have an EDI policy in place as of the date of this report.

Without formal policies, this may result in ambiguity regarding the centres stance on issues surrounding equity, diversity and inclusion along with truth and reconciliation. Currently, the RCCC’s base their EDI and T&R initiatives on the pedagogical guidelines, and the truth and reconciliations call to actions outlined in their child care program statement.

RECOMMENDATION:

While Halton Region Children’s Services leadership has implemented a EDI & T&R workplan and regularly works with the centres on implementing various activities, it is recommended that when the Region established an EDI and T&R policy, this should be implemented by the RCCC’s.

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 2: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion ("EDI") + Truth and Reconciliation ("T&R")

b. Obtain an understanding of how the policy is monitored by the Region to ensure execution and existence and evaluate the quality control measures in place to ensure adherence to these principles.

As noted above, as there are no mandated policies in place, and therefore, no policies to monitor. However, the Halton Region Children's Services has practices in place currently to monitor the workplan that has been created. The workplan itself includes a section that tracks the progress which is done through monthly meetings and discussions with Program Support Consultants. Supervisors will report on EDI to two managers depending on the circumstance, either at a divisional level or a program level. EDI is a required corporate KPI with progress reviewed quarterly on an individual basis. In addition, all documentation that is generate from the activities of the work plan are stored in a collaboration site which can be accessed by the Regional Child Care Centre's staff.

Procedure 2b: Conclusion

The Region has not satisfied the objectives of having formal processes in place that monitor the policies in place around equity, diversity and inclusion and truth and reconciliation as the policies themselves do not yet exist. As a result, monitoring is not formalized against a Regional policy. In lieu of the policy, staff monitor against the How Does Learning Happen pedagogical practices.

RECOMMENDATION:

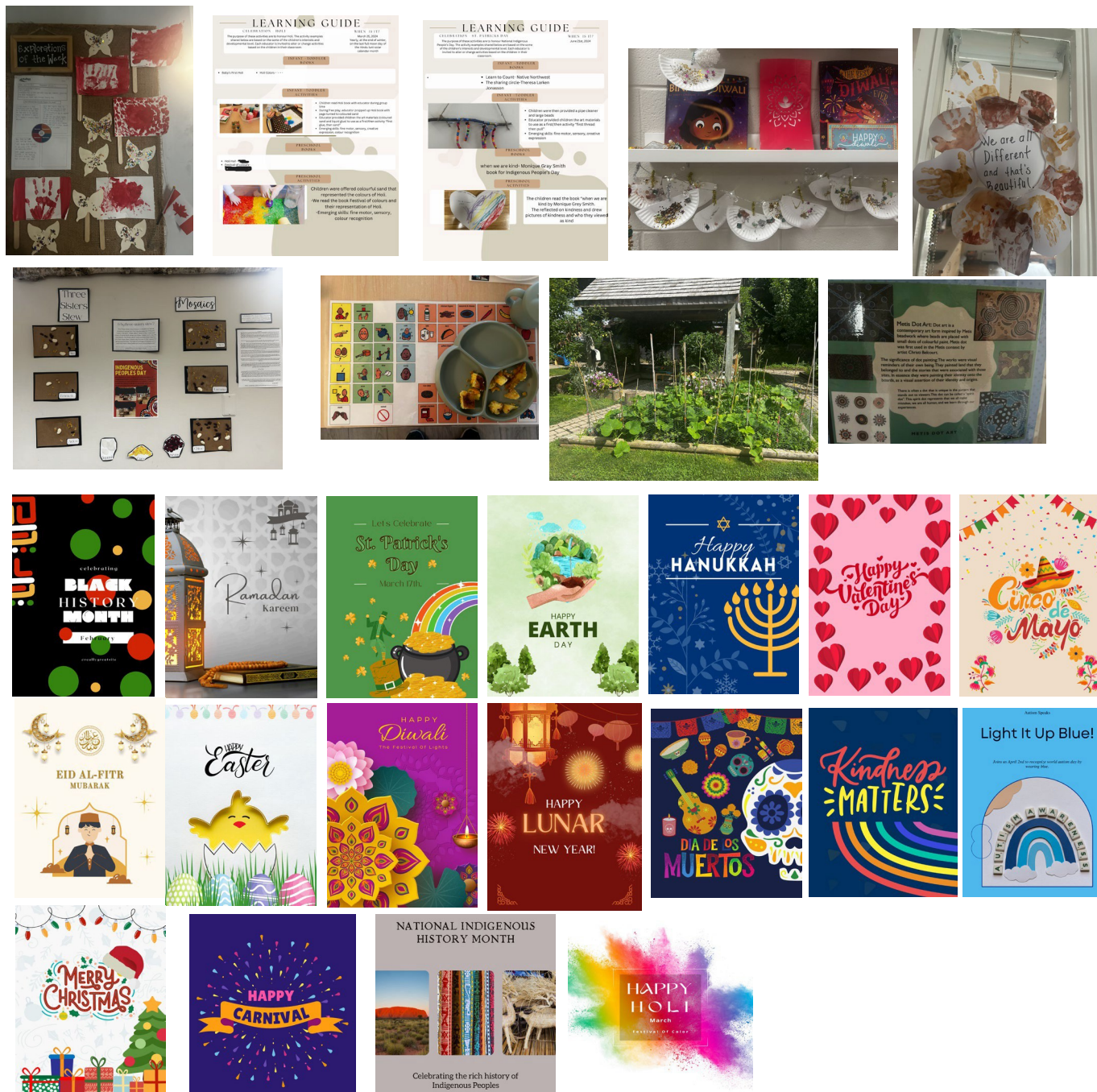
Procedure 2a recommended the implementation of formal policies. Once implemented, it is recommended that the Halton Region Children's Services set up central monitoring processes for Halton Region's Children's Services to oversee policy adherence at the child care centres. This monitoring will allow the Halton Region Children's Services to mitigate any potential risks, ensure compliance, evaluate policy effectiveness, identify improvement areas, and streamline workflows, particularly concerning EDI and T&R.

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 2: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (“EDI”) + Truth and Reconciliation (“T&R”)

c. Observe and take practical examples of how equity, diversity, and inclusion principles are integrated and practiced in day-to-day activities and interactions.

Deloitte visited the three directly operated Regional Child Care Centres — Maple Avenue, Margaret Drive, and Sedgewick Crescent. During these visits, Deloitte observed the integration of equity, diversity, and inclusion into their daily operations. The Regional Child Care Centres have provided pictures that showcase this in action.



Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 2: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (“EDI”) + Truth and Reconciliation (“T&R”)

c. Observe and take practical examples of how equity, diversity, and inclusion principles are integrated and practiced in day-to-day activities and interactions (cont'd).

Procedure 2c: Conclusion

Deloitte has observed and the Region has clearly demonstrated how they incorporate and exhibit these practices throughout the various centres, classrooms, activities, and resources available to the children. The Region has reasonably executed the implementation of EDI and T&R practices in the day-to-day activities and interactions at the directly operated centres.

Conclusion – Procedure 2: Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (“EDI”) + Truth and Reconciliation (“T&R”)

Per discussions with the RCCC's, they are obligated to follow Regional policies on EDI; the Region does not have an EDI policy in place as of the date of this report.

While the Region has not yet implemented formal policies regarding EDI and T&R, the Region is moving in the right step with incorporating practices that support these initiatives which support high-quality learning for the children at the centres – underpinned by the pedagogical guidelines, and the truth and reconciliations call to actions. Through centre visits and documentation reviews, Deloitte has seen many examples of how EDI and T&R are embedded into the day-to-day practices at the centres.

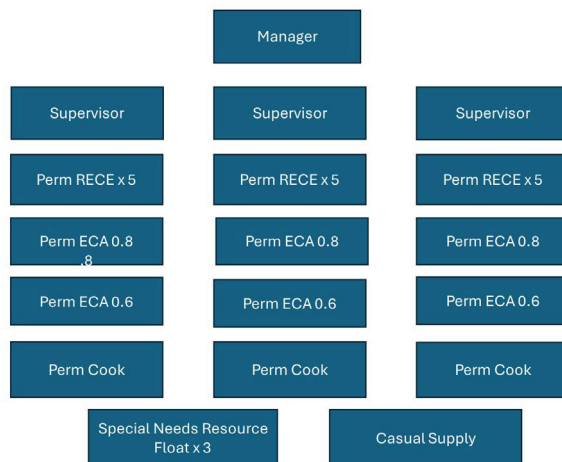
When the Region established an EDI and T&R policy, Deloitte recommends this should be implemented by the RCCCs. Central monitoring processes should then be established to allow the Region to closely monitor and regulate the ongoing activities specifically relating to EDI and T&R.

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 3: Staff Skills and Quality Delivery

a. *Review hiring policies and practices to see if staff have necessary skills and qualifications.*

The Halton Regional Child Care Centre has the following clearly defined organizational structure for the three centres:



While the Region follows and leverages the overall hiring practices of the Region of Halton (i.e., those that are applied to all departments), there are interview tools that are utilized specifically to hire those individuals for the Child Care Centres.

Early Childhood Educator Assistant (ECA) and Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Interview Tool

The ECA interview tool has been the primary hiring tool used over the past six months. The ECE interview tool is another resource for hiring early childhood educators; however, they have not needed to use it to recruit for ECE roles in two years. Both interview tools focus on evaluating candidates based on a set of specific qualifications and knowledge essential for the role. The Region requires candidates with a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and registration with the College of Early Childhood Education (for both ECA and ECE roles). First Aid certification, including Infant and Child CPR, is also required, emphasizing the importance of safety and emergency preparedness. The interview tool also assesses the knowledge of the following (but not limited to):

- Strong teamwork, time management, and communication skills
- Preferred experience with young children, second language proficiency, and intercultural understanding
- Ability to create inclusive and responsive learning environments
- Application and documentations of child learning theories and pedagogy
- Verification of credentials and passing a Criminal Records Check
- Physical capability to lift 50 pounds

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 3: Staff Skills and Quality Delivery (cont'd)

a. *Review hiring policies and practices to see if staff have necessary skills and qualifications (cont'd).*

Early Childhood Educator Assistant (ECA) and Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Interview Tool (cont'd)

The ECA interview scoring guide ensures candidates are evaluated consistently with a final score out of 24 with the ECE interview scoring guides having a final score out of 28. A scale of 0-4 is used with 0 representing not rated and 4 representing exemplary.

Supervisor Interview Tool

There is a separate tool used to hire supervisors. From a requirement standpoint, the only difference lies in the education where candidates must obtain a Diploma or Degree in Early Childhood Education from a recognized Post-Secondary Institution. Per review of the tool and the job posting there are other preferred skills that the region looks for such as 3-5 years of experience in a supervisory role, experience with the Ontario Child Care Management System (OCCMS), and having the ability to provide coaching, training, mentorship to improve performance for staff. The Scoring is similar to that of an ECA or ECE except the total is out of 20.

RCCC Educator Certifications

The RCCC educators consist of 32 permanent employees with a range of qualifications and certifications in early childhood education. 31 employees hold the Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) credential but one who holds the Early Childhood Assistant (ECA) certification, which is common in the field. Additionally, some staff members have Bachelor's degrees in areas such as Child and Youth Studies, Applied Science, Psychology, Business, and Sociology. Other certifications among the staff include Resource Consultant Certification, Developmental Disabilities Worker Certification, Forest School Accreditation, and in-home child care certificates. These qualifications highlight the different educational backgrounds and specialized training of the RCCC educators.

Procedure 3a: Conclusion

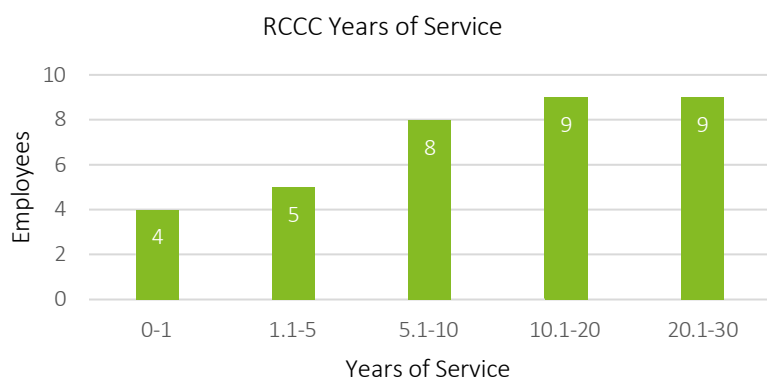
Overall, the Region has established hiring policies and practices to ensure staff have the necessary skills and qualifications to deliver quality in the directly operated child care centres. The Region has implemented various interview tools to assess potential candidates to ensure they have the necessary skills and qualifications required for the applicable position. In addition, the Region requires specific qualifications and certificates for certain positions within the child care centres, along with the requirement for intercultural understanding, which aid in providing overall high-quality learning.

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 3: Staff Skills and Quality Delivery

b. *Examine staff turnover rates to assess stability and continuity along with staffing levels and ratios to provide high quality care.*

The RCCC currently has 35 employees (32 educators plus 3 cooks) in which the average tenure of employees is approximately 13.38 years, with a standard deviation of 9.19 years, indicating a wide range of service lengths among the employees. The minimum tenure is 0.67 years (around 8 months), representing non-permanent supply staff, while the maximum tenure is 29 years among permanent staff, showing a significant span of service lengths. The median tenure is 15 years, with the 25th percentile at 21.5 years. These statistics show us that the RCCC's have considerable experience which contribute to the overall stability and efficiency of the services provided.



The RCCC Years of Service graph provides insights into the number of employees categorized by their years of service within the RCCC. The y-axis represents the number of employees, while the x-axis breaks down the years of service into five categories: 0-1 years, 1.1-5 years, 5.1-10 years, 10.1-20 years, and 20.1-30 years.

The count of employees increases with tenure, peaking at nine employees for both the 10.1-20 years and 20.1-30 years categories. Out of a total of 35 employees, a total of 18 employees have more than ten years of experience in the RCCC, indicating a high retention rate, as the number of employees in the longer tenure categories are significantly higher than in the shorter tenure ones.

There are many benefits to having employees with a longer tenure which include extensive experience, developed advanced skills, and a deep familiarity with the industry and organizational processes. Employees are effectively benefiting from on-the-job training and continuous professional development, contributing to enhanced quality of work. Additionally, high retention rates typically indicate employee satisfaction, suggesting that the organization provides a supportive and rewarding work environment.

While there are many benefits, there are implications of long tenure which could pose some challenges if these individuals were to ever leave the RCCC. Specifically, the risk of knowledge transfer to future employees could be great as the extensive experience of those who have been in the position for quite some time have vast knowledge that may not be easily shared with the individual who takes on the role subsequently.

Alternatively, new staff also bring fresh perspectives and adaptability to drive innovation, prevent stagnation and promote growth in the rapidly changing landscape of the centres.

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 3: Staff Skills and Quality Delivery

- b. Examine staff turnover rates to assess stability and continuity along with staffing levels and ratios to provide high quality care.*

Procedure 3b: Conclusion

Based on the analysis conducted, the majority of the Region's educators have a long tenure at the child care centres (5+ years 26 out of 35, with 18 employees for 10+ years). The staff will often possess extensive knowledge, experience, institutional memory which can contribute to stability, mentorship opportunities and efficient operations within the child care centres. The Region needs to balance the benefits of long-tenured employees with the challenges of adopting innovative practices and knowledge transfer. The RCCC's should strive for a healthy mix of long-term employees and new talent to harness the benefits of both.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Region should develop and implement child care training programs and leadership succession programs to ensure knowledge stays within the RCCC's and the Region.

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 3: Staff Skills and Quality Delivery

- c. *Evaluating whether staff have access to ongoing professional development and learning opportunities to enhance their skills.*

Professional Learning Summary

Focusing on the 2022 and 2023 years, the Halton Regional Child Care Centres have offered a variety of professional learning opportunities for early childhood educators, highlighting on areas such as professional development, safety and compliance, child development and care, technology and skills training, and different workshops and webinars. In 2022, 26 courses were completed while in 2023, 67 courses were completed. The courses ranged in topics such as: leadership and management; equity, diversity and inclusion + Truth & Reconciliation; Health and Safety Training; Nutrition and Wellness; and Software and Tools Training.

Starting January 1, 2025, the RCCCs will implement a new policy of having two dedicated closure days for professional learning, in addition to their current practice of closing for one day to provide professional development for educators and staff.

Performance Measurement Form – Office, Clerical, Technical (OCT) Employees

The Halton Region Performance Measurement Form for OCT Employees is a tool designed to evaluate employee performance over a specific review period, from April 1 to March 31. It includes sections for employee and supervisor details, signatures, and a review of performance competencies. The competencies evaluated are results orientation, customer service orientation, teamwork and cooperation, effective communication, and flexibility. Each competency can be rated as consistently, usually, or occasionally demonstrated. The form also includes sections for key accomplishments, training and development opportunities, and an overall performance rating categorized into exemplary, successful, developing performer, and needs improvement. Finally, it provides space for additional comments from both the employee and the supervisor to capture a complete picture of the employee's performance and areas for development. Deloitte received a completed form and noted in the example provided that the employee thoughtfully wrote out their accomplishments with the supervisors providing comments and feedback on their performance.

Talent Development Form

The Halton Region Talent Development Plan is a tool designed to facilitate discussions between employees and their managers about career aspirations and development objectives. The form includes sections for employee and manager details, career aspirations, and development plan objectives. It encourages managers to discuss with employees where they are in their career journey, identify the next steps, and ensure success in their current role before progressing. The development area section allows managers to choose scenarios that align with the employee's development needs, either to increase performance in their current role or to grow potential for future roles. This includes identifying competencies to be developed, methods for development such as on-the-job assignments, external training, mentoring, and partnering with subject matter experts or senior leaders for guidance. Deloitte received a completed form and noted in the example provided that the employees actively filled out their areas of performance with their manager.

Quality (cont'd)

Procedure 3: Staff Skills and Quality Delivery

- c. *Evaluating whether staff have access to ongoing professional development and learning opportunities to enhance their skills (cont'd).*

Based on our review, the Region has met the expectation of providing the RCCC staff with opportunities for professional development, growth, and learning opportunities. The allowance of professional learning days, the various courses that have been completed, and the performance/talent development forms outline the Region's focus on providing a space for staff to continue to develop their career.

Procedure 3c: Conclusion

The Region has satisfied the objectives of providing staff with access to ongoing professional development and learning opportunities to enhance their skills. The Region has established a strong framework to evaluate and support employee development, creating a supportive environment for ongoing learning. Employees can choose from a variety of learning opportunities, allowing them to enhance their skills and knowledge in diverse ways. The RCCC staff have access to a wide range of learning and development opportunities, ensuring continuous growth and professional development. It is evident that the staff are taking advantage of these opportunities as there was a significant increase in the courses taken from 2022 to 2023. In addition, the Region will also be providing two dedicated learning days for their staff starting in 2025.

CONCLUSION - Procedure 3: Staff Skills and Quality Delivery

The Region has effective hiring policies and practices to ensure that staff in the directly operated centres possess the necessary skills and qualifications for delivering high-quality learning. Ongoing professional development and learning opportunities are provided to promote and enhance the quality of learning at the centres. The Region also supports staff in their continuous development and growth, resulting in a significant proportion (over 70%) of staff who have been with the RCCCs for 5+ years. This longevity contributes to the extensive knowledge leveraged in day-to-day activities. However, to mitigate risks of knowledge transfer, it is recommended to develop and implement onboarding programs and leadership succession programs to ensure knowledge stays within the RCCC's to maintain high-quality standards over time.



INCLUSIVITY

What does Inclusivity mean to the Ministry of Education?

Per the Ministry of Education's Service Management and Funding Guidelines, Pg. 58, inclusivity ensures that child care and early years programs are accessible, equitable, and welcoming to all children and families, regardless of their background, abilities, or socio-economic status. Program design and implementation should include: *Inclusive Participation* and *Authentic & Caring Relationships*.

Procedures

The following procedures and steps were performed to assess inclusivity:

Procedure 1: Identify how inclusivity is demonstrated in the child care centres

- a. Obtain an understanding of the policies implemented by the Region to the centres around inclusivity
- b. Obtain an understanding of how the policy is monitored by the Region to ensure execution and existence and evaluate the quality control measures in place to ensure adherence to these principles.
- c. Observe and take practical examples of inclusivity in the day-to-day activities, interactions, and practices. Evaluate inclusive practices by the centres such as individualized learning plans, culturally responsive teaching methods, etc.

Inclusivity (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Identify how inclusivity is demonstrated in the child care centres

a. *Obtain an understanding of the policies implemented by the Region to the centres around inclusivity.*

The Region of Halton has demonstrated dedication to promoting inclusivity across various aspects, as highlighted in previous sections of this report, particularly through Quality, Affordability, and Accessibility. These efforts include celebrating holidays from diverse cultures, ensuring equal access to child care for all children, and providing opportunities for families across different income ranges to enroll in their child care programs. The Region's "Program and Philosophy Statement" outlines that the goal of the RCCC's "is to provide an inclusive enriched child care environment which honours and respects all children's beliefs, culture, language, and experiences acquired from their family and community".

Implementation is the responsibility of the child care programs. The child care program is required to explore professional development opportunities to enhance staff competency in inclusive practices.

In addition to these policies, the Region has implemented a Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") which is as an agreement between Inclusion Services (a department within the Region) and each individual Regional Child Care Centre – Maple Avenue, Margaret Drive, and Sedgewick Crescent. The ultimate goal of this agreement is to strengthen the collaboration between the Region and the RCCCs by highlighting and identifying programs and services provided that demonstration quality inclusion. The agreement outlines specific responsibilities for both Inclusion Services and the child care centre, aiming to ensure that children receive appropriate support within the program.

The MOU is valid for a period of 3 years from the signed date and if there is a change in ownership or supervisor, a revised memorandum will be required. The MOU has been signed by each supervisor from each centre in October 2022. Other signatures included on the memorandum are the program owner/director and the inclusion services supervisor.

In addition to the MOU, the Region has implemented a policy and procedure around "Individualized and Medical Needs" which is specific for the Regional Child Care Centres and outlines the requirement for the RCCC's staff to develop Individualized Support Plans ("ISP") for each child with individualized or medical needs. Per the policy document, it outlines that the purpose is to provide "the child the opportunity to participate in the child care program in a meaningful way, focusing on facilitating belonging, well-being, expression, and engagement". The policy document outlines the roles and responsibilities of both the Regional Child Care Supervisor as well as the Regional Child Care Centre Staff. The document was approved by the Children's Services Director in February 2024 and is effective as of March 2024 with a review to be conducted in 2027.

Procedure 1a: Conclusion

The Region has created policies to support inclusivity in the centres, in addition to inclusions aspects of Quality, Affordability, and Accessibility policies. RCCCs have signed an MOU with Inclusion Services. It appears that inclusion is embedded in program statements, and formal policies address program delivery that is accessible, equitable, and welcoming to all children and families, regardless of their background, abilities, or socio-economic status.

Inclusivity (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Identify how inclusivity is demonstrated in the child care centres

- b. Obtain an understanding of how the policy is monitored by the Region to ensure execution and existence and evaluate the quality control measures in place to ensure adherence to these principles.*

The Supervisor of the Children's Developmental Services is responsible for the oversight of the Memorandum of Understanding with Inclusion Services (MOU). As noted under Quality, procedure 1b, the Manager of Direct Child Care Services at the Region actively participates in the oversight of the centres by conducting various activities such as frequent site visits, planning, staff, and leadership meetings.

The Region has also assigned Inclusion Supervisors to facilitate the MOU which is done through meetings and presentations for new centres, centre renewals, or when there are new supervisors, directors, or owners at the centre. The Region has Resource Consultants (RC) who are assigned to centres where they meet with the educators and supervisors regularly. RCs are assigned to Inclusion supervisors who meet every 4-6 weeks to review any child specific caseloads and/or centre caseloads. If any centre issues arise, the RCs will connect with their Inclusion supervisors to determine other resources to engage. The Inclusion supervisors attend monthly regional organizational status meetings where inclusion concerns can be addressed. If there are any MOU breaches, it is brought forward to the Manager of Children's Development Services. A plan is then developed to bring the centre into compliance.

From a documentation perspective, attendance at MOU meetings is tracked and any notes from meetings with Resource Consultants and their Inclusion supervisors are kept in staff folders. Organizational status meeting minutes are also documented along with Centre Service Coordination meeting minutes which are distributed to all participants. The RCs do maintain a Centre file; however, documentation is done on an exception basis and therefore only occurs where there are any inclusion concerns at the centre level. Any child specific information is documented in the child's file.

Procedure 1b: Conclusion

Due to the oversight of various roles within the Region such as the Resource Consultants and the Inclusion Supervisor, the Region has created an environment where any issues identified are able to be brought forward and addressed in a timely manner. However, in line with the findings presented in the Quality section of this report, it is evident that there is a lack of formal documentation outlining the necessary internal monitoring processes for ensuring the implementation of the Region's policies within the centres. As a result, the Region has not satisfied the objectives of monitoring the policies in place.

RECOMMENDATION:

We recommend that the Region develops robust internal policies to outline the monitoring and oversight of internal processes pertaining to inclusion. These policies would act as preventative controls as they would focus on promoting centralized monitoring, governance and ensuring consistency in monitoring activities across all centres.

Inclusivity (cont'd)

Procedure 1: Identify how inclusivity is demonstrated in the child care centres

- c. *Observe and take practical examples of inclusivity in the day-to-day activities, interactions, and practices. Evaluate inclusive practices by the centres such as individualized/adaptability learning plans, culturally responsive teaching methods, etc.*

The Quality section of this report includes practical examples that effectively integrate inclusivity within teaching methods. For instance, Procedure 1c highlighted the four foundations of quality which incorporated books that represented diverse cultures and races. In addition, EDI and T&R practices were evident in the day-to-day activities at the centres and was viewed through classrooms, activities, and resources available to the children. This approach exposes the children to various cultures that create the inclusive environment where children feel welcomed and represented.

In addition to this, the Region has also modified both the physical aspect of the classrooms (i.e., equipment within the rooms) and have created individual learning plans where required for children. Deloitte observed individualized support plans which outlined the following:

- Plan developed to support the child's full participation in the program
- A listing of all supports/aids and/or adaptations required for the child to actively participate at the child care centre
- Any special instructions relating to the use of supports or adaptations

In reviewing these individualized support plans, it is evident that the RCCC's do their best to ensure that the child is able to fully participate in the day-to-day activities at the centre regardless of their individualized needs. The plans outline any specific needs required for the child such as which chairs to use and when, how to transport the child from one spot to another, which activities they prefer, how food is to be administered, feeding instructions, etc. Deloitte was also able to observe these during each site visits as the Supervisors were able to identify modifications throughout the classrooms.

Procedure 1c: Conclusion

The Region has reasonably executed the implementation of inclusive measures in the day-to-day activities at the directly operated centres. Deloitte has observed and the Region has clearly demonstrated how they incorporate and adapt their practices, classrooms, and centres to ensure an inclusive environment for children and the families.

Inclusivity (cont'd)

Conclusion - Procedure 1: Identify how inclusivity is demonstrated in the child care centres

In conclusion, the Region's dedication to inclusive practices and policies has created a positive and high-quality environment for the children. The collaborative efforts, professional development opportunities for staff, and the implementation of the agreement between centres and the Region all contribute to the overall success of creating an inclusive child care program.

Through various sections of this report, it is evident that the Region has made a strong commitment to fostering an inclusive environment where all children feel welcome, supported, and able to actively participate in the child care program. The Region actively collaborates with children, families, supervisors, and staff at the RCCCs to ensure alignment and support regarding activities and learning plans implemented across classrooms. As highlighted in the Quality section, Procedure 3, staff members are provided with professional learning courses that enable them to develop the necessary skills to cater to each child's individual needs and facilitate their learning effectively. Furthermore, the Region has implemented an agreement between the centres and the Region to ensure a shared commitment to inclusive practices. Supervisors and centres are monitored and reviewed based on the responsibilities outlined in this agreement.

Moving forward, it is recommended that the Region establish additional policies to support the monitoring and oversight of inclusive practices at the centres. This will provide more extensive documentation of the inclusion activities happening at the centres.



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