

# University of Alberta-Affiliated Childcare Centres: Fact Sheet

March 2025

## What Are the University-Affiliated Childcare Centres?

- Six non-profit, licensed centres serve children of U of A faculty, staff, students, and community members.
- Three are on campus, three in nearby neighborhoods.
- Independently governed but historically supported by the university.

## Who Uses These Centres?

- Across the centres' 331 spots, **70-90%** are used by university-affiliated families
- Over 200 university families are on waitlists, especially for infant care.
- Centres provide the highest quality early childhood education and care, supporting students, faculty, and staff.

## Why Does Childcare Matter to the University?

- **Supports Academic & Professional Success:** Reliable childcare enables students, staff and faculty to focus on their studies and work.
- **Enhances Recruitment & Retention:** A lack of accessible childcare can deter top faculty, staff, and students from choosing U of A.
- **Contributes to Research & Learning:** The centres collaborate with university researchers and offer practical learning opportunities for students in fields like education, psychology, and health sciences.
- **Promotes Equity, Inclusion and Wellness:** Access to childcare supports parents in balancing work, study, and caregiving responsibilities.

### **SHAPE: The University Strategic Plan 2023-2033**

Childcare is not mentioned in U of A's key strategy documents like [SHAPE](#) or the more recent [Integrated Action Plan](#), launched by the Office of the Provost to Access, Belonging and Community. Nevertheless, childcare is a key service that enables the university's priorities:

"Our strategic plan is grounded in people. Our talented faculty, staff and students are the foundation for our university's past achievements and our future ambitions. **We must therefore take deliberate steps to support our people and create a culture where everyone can achieve their full potential.** This means being an institution where faculty, staff, and students want to be, where they feel they can develop professionally and personally, and access the support they need to succeed. It means being an institution where many different perspectives are valued and where we genuinely integrate into decision-making. And it means **being an institution where the health, well-being and flourishing of faculty, staff, and students underpin the implementation of this University Strategic Plan** — in every initiative, of every size." – page 13, *SHAPE*

"**Ensuring Access to Academic and Community Life refers to our institutional commitment to confirm that all students, staff and faculty have the support they need to flourish.** There are many ways to reduce recurring and preventable barriers that interfere with access to institutional services, spaces, resources and thereby a shared sense of community" - page 24, *Integrated Action Plan*

## What's Changing?

**University Funding is Ending:** The University of Alberta announced it will terminate its financial support for affiliated child care centres by January 2026. **No consultation with stakeholders took place.**

Previously, U of A financial support helped to:

- Cover monthly rent (on-campus centres pay rent to the University)
- Cover janitorial/maintenance costs
- Maintain a standard of excellence in early childhood education and care

New Direction:

- No funding beyond 2026
- On-campus centres must pay full market rent/maintenance fees
- Affiliation agreements (which prioritized university families) will end

## What about provincial funding?

- Recent changes to provincial funding is a further de-stabilizing issue for childcare centres that coincides with U of A's termination of financial support.
- Effective April 1, 2025, all families will pay a monthly flat fee, equivalent to \$15 a day, no matter the child's age.
- Centres will receive an operating grant from the province. For many centres, this grant will *NOT* make up the decline in monthly fee revenue. For others, it is stable.
- Centres can charge additional fees for extras (e.g. meals/snacks, field trips), but opt-out options must be offered to all families.
- Many low-income families will pay *MORE* for childcare after April 1, 2025

## What does this mean for Families & the University

- **Longer Waitlists & Uncertainty:** Without university prioritization, U of A families may wait longer for childcare.
- **Potential Reduction to Infant Care:** As infant care spots are more costly to offer, these may be reduced by centres facing operating deficits.
- **Downward Pressure on the Quality of Care:** Providing a higher quality of care that exceeds regulated minimum standards, as desired by the university community will be less feasible.
- **Reduced Research & Learning Opportunities:** Without affiliation, fewer university research projects and student learning experiences will take place at these centres.
- **Competitive Disadvantage for U of A:** Other post-secondary institutions that support on-campus child care will become more attractive to faculty, staff, and students with families.
- **Low income families pay more for less** - While provincial policy is primarily driving reduced affordability, the loss of the university funding means childcare centres will introduce additional supplemental fees to cover previously included services like meals and snacks. Families that opt-out must provide their own food—creating yet another cost for student-led families accessing childcare.

## What Are We Asking For?

1. **Reverse the Termination Decision** – Maintain affiliation agreements through 2027 for stability. Current cost: **\$298,600/year** (this represents **0.0154%** of all University expenses in 2024).
2. **Renew the 2003 Childcare Policy** – Form a working group (university, childcare centres, faculty, staff, students) to create an updated childcare policy that serves the University’s strategic plan and community.
3. **Commit to Affordable & Highest Quality Child Care** – Explore sustainable support models to ensure access and quality is maintained for university-affiliated families, particularly for low-income families.

## How Can You Help?

- **Advocate** – Engage with Deans, faculty associations, student unions, and senior U of A leadership.
- **Share Your Story** – Personal testimonials highlight the value of accessible, high-quality child care for students, staff, faculty and community.
- **Stay Informed** – Follow developments and participate in discussions.

## For More Information

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## Further Reading:

“Childcare changes cause concern” - The Penticton Herald - Amanda Jeffery (Local Journalism Initiative Reporter) - Feb 25, 2025

[https://www.pentictonherald.ca/spare\\_news/article\\_75603dbc-6151-5455-ae8a-50e5309e0c42.html](https://www.pentictonherald.ca/spare_news/article_75603dbc-6151-5455-ae8a-50e5309e0c42.html)

“Families Reeling after Alberta End Child Care Subsidy” - CBC - Michelle Bellefontaine (Reporter) - Jan 31, 2025

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/families-reeling-after-alberta-ends-child-care-subsidy-1.7447808>

“Alberta Can Do Better” - The Edmonton Journal - Susan Clarke (Opinion Editorial) – Feb 21, 2025

<https://edmontonjournal.com/opinion/columnists/opinion-child-care-that-works-for-all-alberta-can-do-better>