

AECEA's stance on unregulated private babysitting:

The Association of Early Childhood Educators of Alberta (AECEA) acknowledges those who have decided to provide private, unregulated childcare for children, some of whom, through their own conviction, work to meet quality standards. Some may even have obtained their early childhood education certificate or diploma and work diligently to abide by health and safety standards and early learning and child care (ELCC) pedagogy to the best of their ability. However, we need to recognize that many do not put the learning, development, health and safety of the children as a priority. Some register as a business while others choose to work under the table.

What we have learned from tragedies that have taken place within private babysitting arrangements, including the recent Woolfsmith case, is that there is need for more oversight, rather than less. As an early childhood educator, these professionals should understand the need to work within a regulated child care system to ensure quality standards that are in the best interest of the children. We wouldn't expect a teacher, nurse or doctor to work outside a regulated system, yet our most vulnerable citizens are not guaranteed that their educators are well educated and prepared to support their development, nor are they ensured their educators are monitored in any real way.

AECEA has taken a strong stance to ensure there is appropriate monitoring of child care provision in the province and that quality provision is a priority for our young children. If associations like AECEA do not ensure this type of monitoring takes place, who is looking out for our children? We've heard from parents assuming all family childcare is regulated and have expressed they were shocked to hear their private arrangement was not monitored by government regulations.

AECEA's recommendations evolved from years of research indicating the linkage to quality from regulatory system supports.

Getting it Right (2020) shares some tragic examples in private, unregulated situations which tends to be a result of the lack of accountability we're experiencing currently in Alberta and across Canada. This document sets out a plan to merge a more cohesive system to protect both families and children as well as for educators who work to provide quality ELCC.

We recognize the lack of regulated spaces currently available to working parents in Alberta. This is not new, indeed, this is why AECEA is calling for government planning to ensure all families have access to quality and affordable child care and that we have enough qualified early childhood educators to meet this need. Instead of creating further division between regulated/unregulated care we ask that we stand together and work to transform Alberta's ELCC workforce into a recognized profession, within a quality licensed/regulated system. We need to draw a line in the sand in order to define how to classify what a profession looks like.

We acknowledge those who have opened their homes and for multiple reasons decided to remain private to care for children in the best way they could. This often occurred with limited resources, support and recognition. Moving forward, AECEA has created a plan that includes unregulated care. AECEA's mission advocates for higher educational standards, better wages and working conditions, and comprehensive system supports for all those in early learning and child care.