



Umbrella Family and Child Centres of Hamilton **2025 Annual Report**





2025 Annual Report

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Land Acknowledgement

Umbrella Family and Child Centres of Hamilton are situated on the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas. We recognize that our city is home to many Indigenous people and we have a responsibility to learn more and increase our understanding of this land's history, actively cultivating a sense of appreciation, respect, and belonging.

In our work with children, we are dedicated to respecting the land, nurturing a love and appreciation for the earth, and fostering an understanding of those who were the first caretakers and stewards of this land. We commit to fostering an appreciation of nature and a connection to the land in our programs, both indoors and outdoors as well as learning from Indigenous voices as we grow in this work.



2026 Board of Directors

Lois Sanders (Chair)
Erfa Alani
Christine Andrews
Jeffrey Boyle
Emma Garrod
Michael Highdale

Omar Iqbal
Caitlin Korff
Brittany Misurec
Sheryl Nadler
Anubha Sant

2026 Administrative Team

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Darryl Hall

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE OPERATIONS

Courtney Potts

Human Resources Manager

Lynne Berwick

Human Resources Coordinator

Sarah Wallace

Talent Acquisition Specialist

Geli Yong

Communications & Marketing Specialist

Nneka Onwualu

Senior Manager of Finance

Lori Finelli

Accounting Supervisor

Terry Townsend

Accountant

Jill Venema

Accounting Coordinator

Ashley Codispodi

Revenue & Billing Clerk

Taylor Lanigan

Receptionist and Office Clerk

Jennifer Miles

Julie Yim (temporary)

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF CHILD CARE PROGRAMS: Shawna Webster

Program Managers

Ashlie Boich
Breanna Domjancic

Program Supervisors

Jennine Bock
Zoubayda Choucair
Jane Cervi
Krista Genesiee
Kaitlyn Herman
Julie Kott
Connie Laccheo
James O'Connor
Brenda Parker
Jamie Pitre
Christine Potter
Sharon Ricketts
Linda Somma
Dana Szafranowski

Manager of Program Excellence Jennifer Allen

Pedagogy & Program Specialists

Ashley Franko
Andrea Lewis
Sophia Windett

Access & Inclusion Specialist Courtney Priest-Brown

CUPE LOCAL 3491

President

Missy Ashley

Vice President

Tara Stirling

Secretary/Treasurer

Rita Santini



Umbrella Family and
Child Centres of Hamilton

Our Mission

Excellence in early learning and child care.

Our Vision

Responsive, accessible and inclusive child care for all.

Our Values

Collaboration is the Key

Success is rooted in our partnerships with our team, children, families, and community partners.

Equity and Belonging Always

Children and families are at the centre of everything we do, and we celebrate their strengths with respect, passion and purpose.

Excellence Begins with Us

Investing in our team, promoting innovation, and nurturing quality improvement is what sets us apart.

Respect and Integrity are Essential

We will act with uncompromising honesty and integrity in everything we do.

Trusting Relationships Connect Us

We will create and build trusting relationships with our team, children, families and communities.



Chairperson's Message

Dear Staff, Families, and Partners,

As Chair of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to share Umbrella Family and Child Centres of Hamilton's 2025 Annual Report. This past year reflects the continued dedication, resilience, and passion of our educators, staff, and community partners, all of whom remain deeply committed to providing inclusive, accessible, and high quality care for children and families across our community.

Our dedication to pedagogy was further enriched through our engagement with the North American Reggio Emilia Alliance (NAREA) and our participation in the 2025 NAREA Conference. Umbrella Family was fortunate to send both educators and members of our Leadership Team to the NAREA Exhibition and Atelier, *Bordercrossings: Encounters with Living Things and Digital Landscapes*. These three days offered meaningful opportunities for reflection on our organizational pedagogy, alignment with *How Does Learning Happen?*, and deeper understanding of the philosophies and approaches of the programs in Reggio Emilia. The learning and dialogue from this experience continue to influence our work.

This past year, Umbrella Family focused its growth on expanding access to Before and After School programs across Hamilton. We opened 15 new programs serving both Kindergarten and School Age children, creating access for more than 200 additional children and adding 15 new positions to our organization.

Looking ahead, we are excited about continued growth across the City of Hamilton. In 2025, Umbrella Family was selected as the child care provider for the new centre at Mount Hope Elementary School, an expansion of our existing Before and After School programs. This new centre will include 88 CWELCC child care spaces across two preschool rooms, two toddler rooms, and one infant room, with completion anticipated for 2027. These developments represent a meaningful opportunity to extend our reach within growing communities while maintaining our commitment to consistency, strong pedagogy, and excellence in care.

In 2025, CWELCC continued to create meaningful benefits for children, families, and educators.

The 2025 fee reduction marked a significant step in improving affordability and access for families. At the same time, CWELCC investments supported increased stability in the workforce and recognized the essential expertise that educators bring to early learning. As the system evolves, Umbrella Family remains committed to working collaboratively with the City of Hamilton to ensure these positive impacts continue to support children, families, and the broader community.

This year also marked important progress in strengthening our workforce. Through the renewal of our collective agreement with CUPE Local 3491, we enhanced the employee experience and recognized the critical role staff play in delivering high quality programs. A significant milestone within this agreement is the introduction of a defined Benefit Pension Plan with CAAT, an important step in supporting the long term financial well being of our employees and strengthening our ability to attract and retain skilled professionals.

We are also proud to have maintained our Great Place to Work® certification for a second consecutive year, reflecting the positive and supportive environment we continue to foster. Our commitment to being an employer of choice is strengthened by the thoughtful feedback provided by our employees.

Our Board of Directors has continued to strengthen its governance role through recruitment, training, and a shared commitment to effective stewardship. I extend my sincere thanks to our Board members for their leadership, and to Jeff Boyle, Past Chair, for his dedicated service and guidance.

In closing, I extend my deepest gratitude to our educators and staff, who are at the heart of everything we do. Your dedication, care, and professionalism are the foundation of Umbrella Family's success. Together, we will continue to build a strong, responsive, and high quality child care system for the children and families we serve.

Warm regards,

Lois Saunders, R.E.C.E.
Chair, Board of Directors

2025 by the Numbers

2,300

Total Children Served



320

Staff and Educators



Number of Children Served Per Program

49

Infants

186

Toddlers

353

Preschool

1,712

JK/SK &
School Age
Before and After
School Programs

Number of Children in our School Break Programs



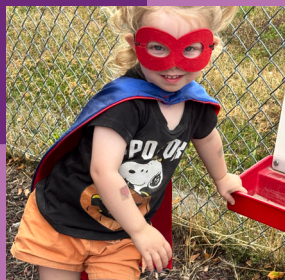
548

PA Days



412

March Break/
Winter Break



383

Summer Camp



2025 Locations & Programs



LOCATION	2025 PROGRAMS	LOCATION	2025 PROGRAMS
Ancaster Meadow	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School	Lincoln Alexander	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Balaclava	Before & After School	Michaëlle Jean	Before & After School
Bellmoore	Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School	Mount Hope	Before & After School
Buchanan Park	Before & After School	Mountview	Before & After School
Cathy Wever	Toddler, Preschool, After School	Queensdale	Before & After School
Dundana	Before & After School	Ray Lewis	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Dundas Central	Before & After School	Rosedale	Before & After School
Eastdale	Before & After School	Shannen Koostachin	Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Gatestone	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School	Sir Wilfrid Laurier	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Greensville	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School	South Meadow	Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Helen Detwiler	Before & After School	Templemead	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
Hillcrest	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School	Viola Desmond	Infant, Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School
James MacDonald	Before & After School	Winona	Before & After School
Lawfield	Toddler, Preschool, Before & After School		

2025 Highlights

At Umbrella Family and Child Centres of Hamilton, our work is grounded in the belief that high-quality early learning and care is built through strong relationships, thoughtful pedagogy, and open communication. Over the past year, the collective efforts of our educators, families, community partners, and leadership have continued to shape environments where children thrive and experiences are guided by intention, reflection, and care.

In 2025, we deepened our commitment to delivering exceptional early learning by strengthening pedagogical practices, enhancing the quality and consistency of care, and improving how we connect and communicate across our organization. These priorities have supported our efforts to respond to the evolving needs of children, families, and staff while maintaining a focus on continuous improvement.

Together, we have:

- **Advanced pedagogical practices** across our centres, supporting inquiry-based learning.
- Strengthened the quality and consistency of care, focusing on **building inclusive environments** for every child.
- Enhanced communication with families and staff, creating clearer, more meaningful opportunities for **connection, feedback, and collaboration**.
- Supported ongoing professional learning to **empower educators** in delivering high-quality early learning experiences.

Each step reflects our ongoing commitment to fostering **belonging, well-being, engagement, and expression** for every child. We are proud of the progress we have made together and look ahead with confidence as we continue to strengthen the quality and impact of our programs.



2025 Highlights

Programs & Pedagogy

Positive Outdoor Pedagogy and Playground Enhancements to support Children's Well-being

Throughout 2025, UFCC engaged in multiple playground enhancements to support stronger outdoor pedagogy and enhance the well-being of children through a positive connection to nature. Renovations took place at our Lincoln Alexander and Cathy Wever locations with the intention to minimize concrete surfaces, add greenery and natural items, and promote opportunities for various types of play.

Supporting Our Educators' Pedagogical Journeys with Enhanced Onboarding Program

Throughout 2025, UFCC continued to make updates to our onboarding program to ensure educators are supported in their pedagogical journey. Employees spend their first day of employment at our Head Office being supported by our HR and Program Excellence Teams. During these sessions, the PE Team works to support new educators in their understanding of Umbrella's pedagogical expectations, programming ideas, and pedagogical documentation. This first day not only helps educators to feel confident in their roles but also helps them connect with other new employees, building a support system and camaraderie. A detailed onboarding plan then commences on site, with a buddy and guidance from the site Supervisor to support continued growth.

Along with changes to our employee onboarding, we also made significant changes to our Supervisor



onboarding program. Previously, Supervisors spent significant time learning various administrative requirements and IT systems that would support them in their roles. We have transitioned to a 100% team-focused onboarding program, with no administrative requirements within the first few weeks of employment. This allows Supervisors to deeply immerse themselves in their programs and support their new teams, building a strong foundation for future work.



2025 Highlights

Collaborative Learning and Critical Thinking through the study of Pedagogical Documentation

We know that strong pedagogical documentation supports high quality programs in multiple ways: through making learning visible, deepening our understanding of children, supporting pedagogical planning and reflective practice, and the professional growth of educators.

It was important that this work start with our leaders so that they can use this knowledge to support our staff. We spent the early months of 2025 engaging in a book study of Susan Stacey's groundbreaking book, *Pedagogical Documentation in Early Childhood: Sharing Children's Learning and Teachers' Thinking*. We worked collaboratively with our ASCY Professional Learning Consultants to drive professional and personal growth among our Supervisor team by fostering deep, collaborative learning, enhancing critical thinking, and boosting engagement with the book's content.

This was followed up with a few members of our Leadership Team joining Susan at the Bordercrossings Exhibit for an in-depth conversation on the exhibit, as well as her book.

Expansion of our Program Excellence Team to Support Pedagogical Growth and Promote Inclusion

To support continued pedagogical progress throughout the organization and ensure all 27 of our locations are appropriately supported, we expanded our Program Excellence Team to include two additional Pedagogy and Program Specialists. Each Specialist supports nine locations which allows them to truly understand the nuances, strengths and support needs of each location. Further, we began to recruit for a net-new position of an Access and Inclusion Specialist to broaden our ability to provide inclusive child care to all children. This role acts as a liaison with our community partners, strengthening collaboration, and partnering to support children and families.

Building Educator's Practical Skills in our Annual Summer Camp Training

Our annual summer camp training in June 2025 had two areas of focus: invitations and provocations as well as supporting challenging behaviour.

We were thrilled to welcome the ASCY/Lynwood



Partnership Program to provide insightful training to our teams on how to recognize, understand and support challenging behaviours in our programs. The training gave educators practical skills to enhance their understanding and prepare them for a successful summer camp experience.

Understanding Inclusion Through a Sensory Lens

We received our sensory kits through ASCY and the City of Hamilton through the spring and summer of 2025. We started off the 2025 school year with a wonderful opportunity to work closely with ASCY in hosting the TIPS Community of Practice at our Shannen Koostachin location to showcase the use of these new kits.

2025 Highlights

Our Commitment to EDIB in Our Classrooms

Our Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee completed the Halton Equity Diversity Roundtable (HEDR) Organizational Assessment tool in June 2025. Based on the information we received, we were pleased to develop an action plan to enhance quality improvement in the area of EDIB as an employer.

Key components of the plan included developing resources for educators that could be used alongside children to learn more about different holidays, religions, and days of significance. These

guides are created with cultural appreciation rather than appropriation in mind and support educators in authentically learning alongside the children in their group. The guides are filled with pedagogical prompts and ideas to support deeper learning within the classroom environment.

Further, through our parent survey, we gathered important data that gave us further insight into the needs of our families and how they view how diverse, equitable and inclusive our programs are. Representing our families and children well starts with knowing who we serve. This data will be important as we move forward in our work.



2025 Highlights

Operations

Our Employees Designate Us a Great Place to Work® for the Second Year in a Row

In May 2025, we were designated a Great Place to Work® for the second consecutive year based on our employee feedback survey that was completed by all staff, including educators, cooks, support and supply staff, supervisors and our Head Office Admin team. This recognition is especially meaningful because it is grounded in the voices of all staff, including educators, cooks, support and supply staff, supervisors and our Head Office Admin team. Their feedback helps us better understand what we are doing well, where we need to grow, and how we can continue to support one another in meaningful ways.

Employee input has directly shaped our key priorities, informing how we invest in our people, improve communication, and create an environment where staff feel respected, heard, and valued. This ongoing dialogue ensures that our decisions reflect real experiences and evolving needs.

Being recognized as a Great Place to Work® signals that listening to our employees is making a measurable difference. It not only helps us attract and retain dedicated, talented individuals, but also reinforces that a responsive, people-focused organization is a stronger one. By acting on what our employees share, we build more effective teams, generate better ideas, and ultimately deliver higher-quality outcomes for the children, families, and communities we serve.



Technology Upgrades to Support High Quality Programs

Information technology plays a critical role in supporting quality care within our child care centres by enhancing communication, organization, and overall classroom efficiency.

To strengthen this capacity, we have introduced a new IT support company to reduce downtime and improving system reliability. In addition, we are actively working to replace aging devices to ensure staff have access to up-to-date, dependable technology. The implementation of data tablets has further supported a seamless connection between educators, children, and centre operations, minimizing disruptions throughout the day.

These efforts reflect our commitment to maintaining a modern, responsive learning environment where technology enhances rather than distracts from, quality care. Continued investment in IT ensures that both educators and children benefit from efficient, well-supported systems that align with best practices in early childhood education.



2025 Highlights

Communication

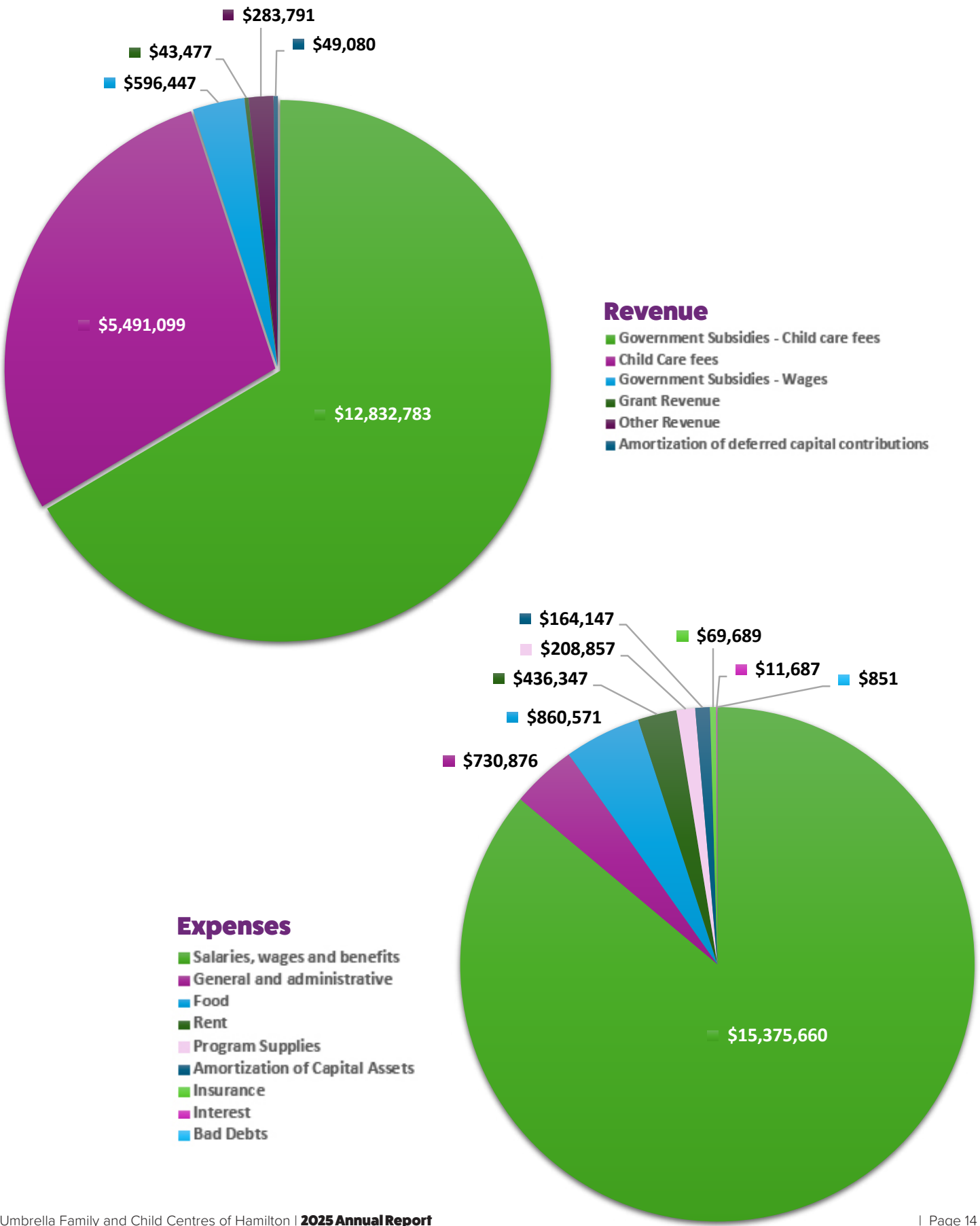
Through Meaningful Communication with Families and Staff

Building strong relationships with families was a key priority, supported through improved communication strategies such as the expanding use of our parent communication platform, Kindertales, and the introduction of quarterly family newsletters beginning in September 2025. In addition, feedback gathered through the Family Needs Survey and the EDIB Survey helped inform our program planning to ensure that our programs are responsive, inclusive, and reflective of the diverse needs of our community.

Staff engagement remained a key focus in 2025, with multiple opportunities for participation, communication, and feedback across the organization. Educators played an active role in planning the annual Umbrella Wide Event through a cross-functional committee that included administrators, supervisors, and frontline staff, fostering a strong sense of collaboration and shared ownership. The Umbrella Wide Event, held on November 6, was attended by 140 staff, with post-event survey results showing 95% of respondents enjoyed the event and 86% indicating they look forward to future team gatherings. Engagement was further strengthened through a Town Hall on December 2, where staff received updates on the Great Place to Work Action Plan and the Collective Agreement, and were invited to submit questions to leadership, with responses shared broadly to ensure transparency and accessibility.



Statement of Operations



Long Service Staff

Thank you!

5 YEARS (hired in 2020)

Elisa Barletta
Hunter Davis
Raissa Kamongue
Yamileth Trujillo
Graciela Villalta Lagos
April Whitelaw

10 YEARS (hired in 2015)

Victoria Hernandez
Joshua Macdonald
Tara Pedder
Carly Ruddy
Marnie Shorthouse
Kristina Srbljanin

15 YEARS (hired in 2010)

Helen Khames
Sakeena Sultana

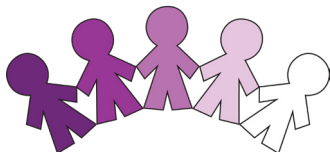
20 YEARS (hired in 2005)

Sophia Windett
Khadija Zouiten

25 YEARS (hired in 2000)

Sharon Ricketts
Alica Unno-Bordi

**Umbrella Family and
Child Centres of Hamilton**



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