

Hamilton Access & Inclusion Community Engagement

In Hamilton, the city wants to expand child care. They asked local community-based services who knew many diverse families to find out what their child care needs are and barriers they experience when accessing child care. After hearing from families, the city made decisions about new child care spaces where they were needed most in Wards 6, 7, 3, and 4. Families input did and will directly impact child care options for all families in different parts of the city.



330+
diverse families...

Children living in low-income families, children of newcomers to Canada and official language minorities (Francophone), children with special needs and needing enhanced or individual supports, Indigenous children, Black and other racialized children.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

Cultural Responsiveness

Child care places should welcome all kinds of children and workers from different backgrounds so that everyone feels like they belong, they feel comfortable and can understand each other's cultures. Children should feel like they can express themselves and be comfortable in their identity including their Blackness. It's important to respect different ways that families do things, like their traditions, religions, families and children's first language, how they take care of children (including personal care such as hair), and their families' structures. Sometimes, it can be hard for families who speak languages other than English, especially when they're waiting for a spot in child care and they're also waiting for financial help. Making sure there's a variety of food options, like halal food for those who need it, is important. It's also good to have books and toys from lots of different cultures and languages so that everyone feels included. Offering children colouring materials that represent each child's skin colour, to draw themselves and their family. Being supportive to families where there's a single Black parent or caregiver is also important in child care places.



Indigenous

A child care center focused around Indigenous land-based learning, embracing outdoor education, and drawing inspiration from the natural surroundings. Including ceremonial gatherings, honoring ancestral traditions and fostering a deep connection to the land. Elders providing invaluable support to programs with songs in traditional languages, cultural teachings and traditional story telling in efforts to preserve and share their languages, cultures and traditions. The non-Indigenous community actively engages in ongoing efforts towards Truth and Reconciliation, recognizing the importance of acknowledging past injustices and striving for healing and understanding among all communities involved.

Inclusion

Child care places should have extra help for families and children who need it, like those with special needs. Giving families a break (e.g., respite and childminding) sometimes can really help them out. It's great when everyone, no matter their abilities, feels included and celebrated. Newcomer children who are just getting used to things should feel like their own selves are important too. Doing activities that respect a child's background can make learning more fun. Making sure the place feels safe and caring is super important for children to learn well. Spaces that are open for all children to learn is key. Being understanding and helpful to families going through tough times, like dealing with mental health or family concerns are a big part of making everyone feel welcome.



French

Most people like child care that's connected to schools. We need more learning materials and programs for children in French, and it should be in more places, not just some areas. Making sure the teachers who speak French get paid well is important so that French child care is good. Engaging a lot with the French-speaking community helps make sure things keep getting better for everyone. We value our French culture.

Belonging & Well-being

Belonging is being seen, heard, and valued without needing to change who you are.

Well-being refers to the importance of physical and mental health, incorporates capacities such as self-care, sense of self, and self-regulation skills.

Belonging & Well-being

SHARED EXPERIENCES

Barriers

Accessing child care can be tough because of waitlists and confusing processes. It's hard to know what spaces are available. Being close to home matters, specifically if we don't have vehicles, but understanding the system can be overwhelming for families, especially if English is not your first language. Many can't afford child care, and the shortage of spots stops caregivers from working or studying. Finding good care for children with special needs is often a struggle. Plus, child care hours might not match work hours, making things even trickier. Paperwork involved is overwhelming for families.



Needs

Parents need easy-to-find info about child care options nearby, with clear details on available spots and how to get in. They want a fair and clear waitlist system and regular updates from child care places. More choices for different types of care are important, from full-time to flexible care for children aged 0-12. They want safe places with good outdoor areas. It's crucial to have well-trained and fairly paid staff. Our children can see themselves through staff when attending child care. Making the sign-up process simple and building real connections between families and staff is key. Families need one-stop access through different services and help in different languages. Sharing information about free places for families to access learning materials, activities, play, physical activity, food and toys as well as learning materials for parents and staff to connect to. Listening to families and the community for ongoing improvements is very important too.

“ For every child to be accepted along with the family no matter the need. ”



NEXT STEPS

- ▶ Access and inclusion resource from the voice of families and their children
- ▶ Phase 2 Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Priority Neighbourhood Expansion
- ▶ Phase 2 Community-based Engagement



The storyboard content is owned by families who participated in the engagement and shared their experiences to allow the City of Hamilton to create this resource.

More Information: cwelcc@hamilton.ca

