



An Eye on Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba

October 2006

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Manitoba's Commitment to Quality Child Care

The federal government has given formal notice to terminate its *Moving Forward on Early Learning and Child Care Funding* with the provincial government effective March 31, 2007.

However, the provincial government remains committed to strengthening and building an early learning and child care system based on quality, not-for-profit services.

Manitoba continues to make significant progress towards the goals outlined in its *Five-Year Plan for Child Care*. The ongoing commitment to child care is demonstrated by the recent expansion of 750 new funded child care spaces and the implementation of a number of new initiatives to maintain and improve quality in 2006.



Reaching for Excellence in Early Learning and Child Care

Our athletes' accomplishments in the Turin Olympics earlier this year are now a part of history. The message they sent to all, is that excellence can be reached by anyone who works hard, trains and maintains a passion for reaching their goals.

While excellence in child care may not bring medals, your work matters to the children in your care. You are very important in their worlds and directly affect each child's development.

Many studies now show the importance of quality child care in growth and development. Children who experience high-quality child care have higher scores on achievement and language tests, show better social skills and have fewer behavioural problems. Quality child care can also increase the chances of academic success for children from at-risk families (McCartney 2004). In fact, children from all backgrounds, including those from more advantaged homes, are positively

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Reaching for Excellence in Early Learning and Child Care

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influenced by strong, child care programs (Peisner-Feinberg 2004). Quality child care, goes beyond custodial care. It includes more than the provincial health and safety standards because children may be physically safe but lack stimulation. (Griffin 2004)

Quality child care centres have the following characteristics:

- well-trained, educated staff who develop nurturing relationships and use a child-centred learning approach
- high staff-to-child ratios
- low staff turnover and high morale among staff
- good wages
- effective leadership (Peisner-Feinberg 2004)

Quality family child care homes have the same characteristics as quality centres. These providers value training and ensure the ages and numbers of children enrolled creates a well-managed and stimulating environment. In addition, quality family child care providers:

- focus on the children, giving them personal attention and care

- provide a daily routine but can be flexible to meet children's needs or capitalize on unplanned learning opportunities
- develop open, honest communication and partner with parents
- participate in professional development opportunities
- network regularly with other providers through an organized association (Doherty 2001)

There has never been a better time to reach for excellence in child care. Government spending is now supporting salaries of \$27,000 to \$30,000 for early childhood educators and providing increased operating grants for family child care homes. A number of other financial incentives and educational supports are also available. Challenge yourself. Take stock of your child care practices and learning environments. Pat yourself on the back where you excel and give yourself a push to make improvements where you know they are needed.

Read on to hear about some of the new initiatives to support quality child care in Manitoba.

Five Proposals Approved for Alternative Board Governance

Five proposals offering unique ideas to develop or implement alternative board governance models for child care were approved for up to \$12,000 in grant funding. Two of the proposals will strive to establish a governance model with other social services under one board. Another proposal will explore merging the boards of 10 child care centres into one governing body. In addition, a network in central Manitoba will compile a handbook on establishing and maintaining a hub model for the delivery of child care.

These alternate governance models will:

- support and build on existing community resources for children
- support an integrated, inclusive child care service delivery model
- show parental and community participation
- benefit community child care boards
- show an efficient, cost effective approach
- demonstrate an improved ability to meet the unique needs of community

The results of these projects and any written materials developed from these proposals will be shared with other non-profit child care centres.

The board governance initiative is important in guiding further development of a well-integrated early learning and child care system for our province.





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Taking Steps to Stabilize and Develop our Workforce

Manitoba recognizes that the foundation of a quality, early learning and child care system is qualified, dedicated early childhood education. Taking steps to stabilize and further develop the workforce is the first priority in building our system.

Here are some of the key initiatives to support this goal.

The Science of Early Child Development (SECD),

an online, multimedia resource, is available to all licensees of a family or group child care homes, every centre and nursery school. The resource was provided by Manitoba Child Care Program with the support of Manitoba Family Services and Housing. SECD provides valuable information for child care providers in five modules: developmental health, brain development, genetics and experience, coping and competence and communication and learning. This information is now at your fingertips online at your office or home.



All you need is a computer with a high-speed connection and a CD drive. Check it out; it's worth the time. If you run into any difficulties, visit the website at www.scienceofecd.com or contact Digital Learning at sales@digitallearning.biz for help. *Bridges* magazine will also feature tips for using this learning tool during the next year



Forty Hours of Training for Licensees of Family and Group Child Care Homes and Child Care Assistants (CCAs) in Centres

is now mandatory. To support quality child care in Manitoba, Manitoba Regulation 62/86 of *The Community Child Care Standards Act* was amended in April 2006 to require all family/group child care providers and all child care assistants working directly with children to have 40 hours of training. Information sheets were sent to all centres and homes to answer questions about this required training.

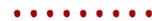
If you have general questions, contact your child care co-ordinator. To confirm approval of a specific course, call a qualifications co-ordinator at 945-6730 in Winnipeg or toll free 1-888-213-4754.

Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Recruitment Incentive Grant

is calling all former ECEs to return to the child care field. This initiative was set up to help centres having difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified staff. A grant of up to \$3,000 is being offered to eligible ECE IIs and IIIs to return to work in an eligible, non-profit, early learning and child care centre, or nursery school.

For more information:

Child Care Information Services
Phone: 945-0776 (Winnipeg);
1-888-213-4754 (toll-free)
Web: www.manitoba.ca/childcare



Financial Support for Training in early childhood education courses is a major part in Manitoba's efforts to support quality child care. The following three training grants are available:

- **An annual training grant** of \$250 for approved training was provided for 88 child care assistants (CCAs) employed in non-profit centres and 99 licensees of family/group child care homes in 2005/2006.
- **A staff replacement grant**, used to cover the cost of replacing existing CCAs in a nonprofit centre or licensees of family/group child care homes while they attend approved ECE workplace training, was provided to 62 centres for 89 CCAs and two family child care homes for two, child-care providers as of early 2006.
- **Tuition support** for full time post secondary students who are starting the two-year approved Early Childhood Education (ECE) program was provided to 130 students across Manitoba by February 2006.

There has never been a better time to upgrade your educational qualifications in early childhood education. Many providers are taking advantage of the financial support now available. Why don't you?



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Profile of an ECE Student in the North: Manitoba's Tuition Support Grant at Work

About five years ago, Cranberry Portage Children's Developmental Centre hired Jeanette Brightnose as a part-time cook. Her happy disposition, natural skills and abilities with children were quickly recognized by the director. The children and staff enjoyed spending time with her, so she was asked to substitute when full-time child care providers were absent. Substituting gave Jeanette practical experience in the infant and preschool program and over the years, her interest in learning more about early learning and child care grew.

By 2004, Jeanette was employed full-time at the centre as a child care assistant. She knew more training would increase her effectiveness at the centre. Jeanette's director, Lynn Dubois, approached her about taking the full-time two-year program at University College of the North (UCN) in The Pas. Jeanette received a \$4,000 tuition support grant from the Manitoba Child Care Program (MCCP).

Jeanette says she "felt a bit out of place at first," but was quite comfortable with her classmates by the end of the first week. Everything she is learning is relevant to child care and her previous practical experience helps her learn. Although her studies sometimes feel overwhelming, she says she's glad to be in the program at UCN.

Jeanette's goal is to get her Early Childhood Educator II (ECE II) classification and then would like to take the administration specialty to receive an ECE III. After she has more experience working with children, she says she may consider an administrative position. Born and raised in Cranberry Portage, Jeanette looks forward to resuming her work at the child care centre in her home community when she graduates from the course.

The board and director support Jeanette's studies and look forward to her working at the centre again. They are willing to provide Jeanette with whatever she requires to complete her education, including school supplies, staff resource materials and time on the centre's computer. Jeanette's commitment to her education is demonstrated in her driving two hours a day to go to school in The Pas. Recognizing the importance of trained staff in delivering quality child care, they believe Jeanette's new knowledge and skills will benefit the program.

It is often difficult to attract and retain qualified staff in small northern communities. Jeanette's education will help to ensure the required proportion of trained staff work at the Cranberry Portage Children's Developmental Centre. With the support of provincial funding, Jeanette and the centre's board are fulfilling a plan and a partnership that benefits everyone, especially the children in Cranberry Portage.



Jeanette Brightnose
University College of the North (UCN)

Announcements

Ruth Gregory has accepted a new position as a policy analyst for the Manitoba Child Care Program (MCCP) and **Carla Kernsted** moved into Ruth's previous position as a qualifications co-ordinator. Some of you know Carla as a child care co-ordinator in the downtown and west end areas. Please join us in giving Ruth and Carla our best wishes in their new positions.

Gerrie Stolz has been hired part-time as a qualifications co-ordinator for MCCP while she continues to teach child care for Red River College at Sistars and provides guidance as a competency based assessment advisor.

Mary Theberge, formerly a subsidy advisor, accepted a new position as a financial analyst with MCCP - Finance in early 2006. Effective September 2006, **Revita Dyck** also moved from subsidy to a term position with MCCP as a financial analyst.





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Part-Time Early Learning Experiences for Children Are Now More Accessible

CHECK OUT TWO NEW NURSERY SCHOOL INITIATIVES!

Nursery School Subsidy Now Available for Families with a Stay-at-Home Parent

A new subsidy for families using nursery schools, including those with a stay-at-home parent, is now available.

The subsidy is income-based only. This means parents do not need to be working or going to school to apply. Depending on family income, full and partial subsidies for attendance up to five sessions a week are available.

In partnership with parents, nursery schools help children reach their full potential by providing carefully planned activities that encourage children's exploration and creativity. The new subsidy will help ensure more Manitoba children have access to a stimulating, affordable early childhood program before they start school.

Here's how to apply: Go to our website at www.manitoba.ca/childcare to estimate your subsidy and apply online or call 945-0286 in Winnipeg or toll-free 1-877-587-6224 for information and applications.



Enhanced Nursery School Funding Initiative

Eleven nonprofit nursery schools were accepted into the enhanced nursery school initiative - six from outside Winnipeg and five from Winnipeg.

Screening criteria for these nursery schools included:

- meeting minimum licensing criteria
- offering inclusive programming
- supporting parents to meet their child's developmental needs
- sustainability
- willingness to charge \$5 per child per session
- working with other early childhood development partners
- working in a high needs area
- using funding for program enhancements
- improving accessibility for children to attend

Enhanced nursery school funding was set up to enable more low and middle income Manitoba families to enroll their children in quality, part-time early learning and child care settings that are working with other early childhood development initiatives, such as Healthy Child Manitoba programs.

Increased funding to nonprofit nursery schools will allow them to hold parent fees at a maximum of only \$5 per session. The increased operating grant will also allow quality enhancements to the nursery school program, such as improved equipment and toys and enhanced programs, including language, literacy, music and creative arts.

Child Care Subsidy

Here are answers to parents' frequently asked questions:

Question : My current subsidy is expiring. I want to apply again online. Do I need to know my current submission number?

Answer : No. Every submission has a different number which is automatically allocated by the system at the time of the submission.

Question : I have been approved for subsidy and have been asked to submit documentation such as verification of income (or education) and an authorization form with my signature. Can these documents be faxed or are the originals required?

Answer : All requested documentation can be faxed to 204-948-2143 in Winnipeg and 204-726-6539 in Brandon.

Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Capital Fund

The Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states that an important indicator of quality is the level of investment in and the appropriateness of buildings and learning environments for early learning and child care programs. With this indicator in mind, Manitoba established an Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Capital Fund. By now, all nonprofit centres have received information about the fund from the Manitoba Child Care Program (MCCP).

To summarize, here are the goals of the ELCC capital fund:

- to provide one-time funding of up to \$10,000 for project planning for construction or renovations of non-profit child care centres
- to provide funds over \$20,000 for building and renovating licensed, non-profit child care centres
- to support co-development of non-profit child care centres within surplus space in public schools, adjacent to public schools or within other community buildings
- to provide up to \$20,000 to pay for equipment, furniture and minor capital and leasehold improvements required by non-profit child care centres

All non-profit child care centres may apply to the ELCC Capital Fund.

If you have questions or would like to apply for a capital fund grant, contact your local child care co-ordinator or the MCCP-Finance area at 945-2669 or 945-3250 in Winnipeg; or toll-free 1-888-213-4754.

Applications will be reviewed after **October 16, 2006** by the Capital Fund Review Committee.

Don't forget the Green Building Policy for Provincially Funded Projects

The Green Building Policy applies to the site selection, design, construction and renovation of non-residential buildings, so it is important to review the policy during the planning stage of your project.

Any construction or renovation project receiving provincial funding must meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver building standards. For that reason, any projects approved under the new ELCC Capital Fund will need to meet the LEED Silver building standards.

Find the Green Building Policy online at www.gov.mb.ca/est/energy/pdf/green_bldg_policy.pdf.

A Green Building Co-ordination Unit to provide technical assistance will be appointed in early 2006/2007. For technical support and policy interpretations, contact Shaun Loney, director of Energy Policy at Manitoba Energy, Science and Technology at 945-5801 in Winnipeg; 1-800-282-8069 toll free; or email sloney@gov.mb.ca.



Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Child Care Centres Are coming!!!!

Look for new design guidelines for child care centres in late fall. The design committee consists of four child care co-ordinators, a representative from Services for Persons with Disabilities, a representative from the Manitoba Child Care Program and a writer.

The committee drafted guidelines by incorporating ideas from across North America. It is now seeking feedback from other stakeholders, such as Community Places, a recently renovated child care program, public health and fire authorities, as well as the Public Schools Finance Committee.

Developing these guidelines is another step in reaching for excellence in early learning and child care. An announcement will be made when the new design guidelines are available.



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Best Practices for Early Learning and Child Care

Early Learning and Care Homes

Work has begun on the *Best Practices Licensing Manual for Family Child Care Homes*. Several family child care providers and child care co-ordinators were part of a focus group to review, discuss and rework the first draft of the manual.

All participants received a copy of the draft to prepare for the focus group. The group discussed why these practices would or would not work in individual programs and how to improve them. Child care co-ordinators and others at the Manitoba Child Care Program also provided comments and suggestions to help ensure the best possible resource.

Although best practices are not part of minimum licensing requirements, they are to give family child care providers higher standards and goals to work toward. It is also important to note best interests of children are a priority and Best Practices support the further development of high quality programs and services.

Your child care coordinator will distribute the manuals when they are ready.

Early Learning and Child Care Centres

Centres are responding positively to *The Best Practices Licensing Manual for Early Learning and Child Care Centres* that were distributed in November and December 2005.

Lucille Hayward, director of **Wee Care Child Centre Carman Inc.** reports that the manual has fostered excitement and a renewed commitment to high quality child care in her centre. Each staff member takes a section of the new manual and presents it at staff meetings for discussion. They try to cover a couple of sections each meeting. These presentations have sparked discussion about changes to make within the centre or have validated what they are currently doing. The manual challenges them and enhances their passion for providing quality child care.

If your centre has found the manual helpful and has other ways of using it, please let your child care co-ordinator know.



A Parent's Guide to Quality Child Care

This valuable resource is currently being revised with the help of members of Manitoba's Child Care Regulatory Review Committee. The revision will ensure parents have up-to-date information about why high quality, early learning and child care is important and what to expect when visiting licensed centres, homes and nursery schools.

You have probably referred many parents to this guide, which is available on our website at www.manitoba.ca/childcare under Publications and Information - "For Parents."

If you have any ideas about improvements to the guide, please e-mail Margaret Ferniuk, New Initiatives/Communications Co-ordinator at mferniuk@gov.mb.ca.

The new version is scheduled for distribution late fall 2006.



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An Eye on Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba

Regional Updates

Child Care Co-ordinators:

Darlene Lee has relocated to the Transcona Access Centre, 845 Regent Avenue West. She can be contacted at 938-5186.

Joanne Palanuk accepted the child care coordinator position for the Winnipeg Downtown/Wolseley area. Her telephone number is 948-4379.

Glenn Wiederman is working fulltime in the Eastman region effective September 6, 2006.

Marcia Desmedt was hired to fill Glenn's vacant, part time position in the Interlake region. She can be reached at 785-5279.

Community Social Service Supervisors:

Diana Renaud is the new supervisor for the River East Access Centre. She supervises child care co-ordinators: Darlene Lee, Kathy Morton and Ruth Lindsay-Armstrong and can be reached at 938-5055.

Child Care Subsidy Advisors:

Pamela Bann, supervisor of child care subsidy, retired in December 2005 and **Kathy Brooks**, formerly of the Child and Family Services Branch, is the new supervisor. Kathy can be contacted at 945-2674.

Since the beginning of 2006, **Barb Moncrieffe**, **Angel Delorme** and **Crystal Bailey** (term) filled three vacant positions in the Winnipeg subsidy office.

Milena King (Boulanger), subsidy advisor in Brandon, is on leave until October 2007. **Suzyn Patience** is Milena's replacement.

News from the Children with Disabilities Program

Manitoba continues to be a national leader in child care, setting forth a clear direction for the improvement of quality environments. Children's Programs of the Services for Persons with Disabilities Division has identified specific commitments to better support children with disabilities and their families. Following are some highlights of activities planned for the Children with Disabilities Program this year:

- The division is developing an inclusion statement about children with disabilities for addition to the Manitoba Child Care Regulation. It will support facilities and providers as they continue to enhance their current practices to meet the needs of children with disabilities.
- A vision statement for the Children with Disabilities Program is being developed. It will inform the development of policies, procedures and standards designed to promote the full inclusion and meaningful participation of all children in child care.
- Information about the Children with Disabilities Program is being added to the Child Care Online website.
- Disability resources and inclusion strategies are being introduced to support licensed child care providers.
- Universal Design Guidelines for licensed child care centres are still evolving. They will establish the accessibility standards needed for all aspects of a child care environment to be used by as many people as possible regardless of age, ability or situation.
- *Parents' Guide to Quality Early Learning and Child Care* is being updated to include information on children with disabilities.

More information on these topics will appear in upcoming issues.



Calculating Operating Grants

QUARTERLY PAYMENTS TO CENTRES

Manitoba's Child Care Online automatically calculates your annual operating grant based on the number of funded spaces, number of months open and current grant rates. The operating grant is processed on the first day of every quarter, as long as your financial reporting requirements are met.

Quarterly payments are calculated by dividing the annual operating grant by 365 days and multiplying by the number of days in the quarter. The quarters are January to March (90 days), April to June (91 days), July to September (92 days) and October to December (92 days). Operating grants change depending on the number of days in the quarter.

QUARTERLY PAYMENTS TO FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Effective April 1, 2006, operating grants for family/group child care providers are released in quarterly installments. Here are the installment periods for this fiscal year:

- April 1 to June 30, 2006
- July 1 to September 30, 2006
- October 1 to December 31, 2006
- January 1, 2007 to March 31, 2007

This change was made due to:

- recent funding increases
- changes to licensed spaces over the course of the year
- closures before the end of the grant period

This change also reflects financial accountability requirements and practices.

Only one application for your operating grant is required per fiscal year. Grants are automatically issued on the first day of each quarter based on this application. Family child care providers are not required to submit an application each quarter for an operating grant.

Health & Safety

Routine Practices on How to Prevent the Spread of Infection at a Child Care Facility



Concerns about the possibility of a flu pandemic in Canada mean child care providers need to know and use routine practices to prevent the spread of infection. Manitoba Child Care Program's newsletter, *An Eye on Early Learning and Child Care*, will provide a series of articles by Genevieve Thompson, senior infection control practitioner with Manitoba Health. The articles will validate already existing practices and provide new information on other routine practices to prevent the spread of infection.

Hand Washing: The Single Most Important Practice to Prevent Infections

Individuals or "carriers" can spread micro-organisms without being ill themselves, or before and after they show symptoms. The Public Health Agency of Canada recommends routine practices be used in all settings that provide patient, resident and child care. Routine practices are a set of infection prevention and control precautions used for all direct client care, whether or not they are diagnosed as infectious. When consistently used, these practices will increase child and child care provider safety by preventing the transmission of most infections.

Hand Hygiene

When to Wash

Hand washing reduces the number of micro-organisms and is the **most important practice** to prevent the spread of infection.

Child Care Providers should wash their hands:

Before:

- caring for a child
- preparing and administering medications
- providing first aid
- preparing, handling, serving or eating food
- taking shifts and breaks

After:

- contact with blood, body fluids, non-intact skin and/or mucous membranes
- providing first aid
- contact with items visibly soiled or considered contaminated
- handling chemicals
- removing gloves used for any purpose
- handling pets/animals and/or their cages
- use of washrooms
- wiping nose
- smoking, eating or drinking
- changing diapers
- shifts and breaks

Always:

- when hands are visibly soiled

Note: Use of disposable gloves alone will not prevent the contamination of hands or spread of micro-organisms and **should not** be considered a substitute for hand washing.

Children should wash their hands:

- when they arrive at the child care facility

Before:

- handling, serving or eating food

After:

- contact with blood, body fluids, non-intact skin and/or mucous membranes
- contact with items visibility soiled or considered contaminated
- use of the toilet or having their diapers changed
- wiping nose
- playing on the playground
- handling pets/animals and/or their cages
- using play materials (such as finger paints)



Upcoming Events

Child care co-ordinators offer orientation sessions at 114 Garry Street in Winnipeg. Here is the 2006/2007 schedule:

Family Child Care I in Room 110 – November 16, December 21, February 15, March 15, May 17, June 21 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Family Child Care II in Room 108 – November 2, December 7, February 1, March 1, May 3, June 7 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Child Care Centre in Room 110 – October 26, February 22, May 24 from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Board of Directors in Room 110 – November 9, February 8, May 10 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.

To register or get more information call Child Care Information Services at 945-0776 in Winnipeg or 1-888-213-4754.

Children with Disabilities orientation sessions are provided by child care co-ordinators in their own areas. Contact your local child care co-ordinator for information.

Working Effectively with Violent and Aggressive States (WEVAS)

WEVAS is a training program aimed at increasing skill levels in order to prevent or to de-escalate violent and aggressive behaviours.

Certified WEVAS trainers are offering workshops at the St. Amant Centre from October 2006 to May 2007. For information on registering for the workshops, call 256-4301 ext 3450 or visit St. Amant Centre's website at www.stamant.mb.ca

Manitoba Families for Effective Autism Treatment (MFEAT) – Conference

Located at the Canad Inns – Polo Park on November 2 & 3, 2006. For more information, call (204) 667-2120 or visit the MFEAT website at www.mfeat.ca

Hand Hygiene Products

What to Use

Plain Soap and Water

- for routine hand washing

Alcohol-Based Hand Rub

- an acceptable alternative to soap and water if hands are not visibly soiled
- must contain a minimum of 60 per cent alcohol

Sufficient supplies should be taken for field trips outside the child care facility.

How to Use Dispensers

Do not add fresh soap or hand rub to a partially empty dispenser. The practice of topping up can lead to bacterial contamination of the product. If reusable dispensers are used, they must be emptied, washed and dried before refilling. Hand lotion bottles should not be reused.

Hand Washing Procedure

Plain Soap

1. Wet hands under warm running water.
2. Apply soap and distribute over hands.
3. Rub hands together vigorously for 10 to 15 seconds creating a good lather.
4. Using friction, cover all hand surfaces including fingernails, web spaces, thumbs and palms.
5. Rinse under warm running water.
6. Dry hands gently and thoroughly with a disposable towel.
7. Turn off faucet using a clean disposable towel.
8. Dispose of towel in a lined, covered, foot-operated garbage container.

Note: When necessary, caregivers should help children clean under the fingernails using a disposable manicure stick.

Alcohol-Based Hand Rub

1. Put two to three millilitres (a drop the size of a dime) of product to the palm of one hand.
2. Rub hands together covering all surfaces including fingernails, web spaces, thumbs and palms.
3. Let the product completely dry (15 to 20 seconds).

Infants and Toddlers

Caregivers who help infants and toddlers wash their hands should:

Wash the infant's hands with a warm, wet, single-use towel and soap. Rinse with a warm, wet, single-use towel and then dry. Show toddlers, who are able to stand by the sink, how to wash their hands in the same way older children do.

References:

Public Health Agency of Canada. *Routine Practices, Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Health Care*, 1999. Canadian Pediatric Society, Well beings, 2nd Edition, 1999.



Health & Safety

Make Safety a Priority

Blind and Curtain Cords

Keep the cords of blinds and curtains high and out of reach of children. Health Canada warns that cords from blinds and curtains present two main strangulation hazards:

- cords forming a loop in which the child can get caught
- long cords being wrapped around a child's neck

Tips to keep cords of blinds or curtains safe:

- Remove the loop in the cord by cutting the cord in half. Then, put plastic tassels or a break-away device at the end of the cords.
- Install metal or plastic clips/tie-downs to wrap around the cords for vertical blinds. You can buy these at hardware or department stores. When installing tie-downs, follow the manufacturer's instructions. Make sure that the tie-down device is securely attached to the wall beside the window and that the cord is tightly wrapped around the device.
- Wrap the cord around a cleat or two nails or screws attached to the wall near the top of the blinds or curtains, high and out of children's reach.
- Use a clip, clothes pin, or a big twist tie to keep the cord high and out of reach.

For more information, see www.healthcanada.gc.ca/blindcords.

Take-Apart Areas

Child care centre staff using **take-apart areas** for children, caution.

A Winnipeg parent raised concerns about his child playing in a take-apart area because toxic substances, such as lead, mercury and cadmium, are commonly found in used electronics. Documented research shows that many electronic items, including batteries, circuit boards and monitors, contain hazardous or toxic material that can cause significant health risks.

It is important for centre staff to ensure any items given to children to take apart are safe and free from toxic substances.



Planning for a Pandemic Influenza outbreak

An influenza pandemic could pose a serious threat to Manitobans and a strategy for the continued delivery of essential government services must be developed.

A deputy minister's Sub-Committee on Pandemic Influenza Outbreak Planning was established in October 2005 to co-ordinate the provincial government's response to a potential outbreak. The committee is chaired by Deputy Minister of Health and Healthy Living, Arlene Wilgosh.

The committee is analyzing and assessing the impact of a pandemic on Manitobans and strategies and planning guidelines for various groups and sectors are being developed.

- Local Government's Planning Guidelines – available on Manitoba Health's website
- Business/Organizations Planning Guidelines

- Child Cares/Schools/Institutions Guidelines – a committee with representatives from the Manitoba Child Care Program (MCCP) and the Manitoba Child Care Association (MCCA) is working on these
- Communications plans – have been developed at the federal and provincial government levels

In early 2006, Manitoba Health's Office of Disaster Management, Office of the Chief Medical Officer, Emergency Measures Organization and the regional health authorities held a series of town hall meetings in 16 communities across the province. The meetings were attended by about 850 elected municipal officials who learned about the potential issues and affects of pandemics and how to begin emergency planning.

Manitoba, as part of Canada's national pandemic plan, adapted the national framework to develop a provincial plan that can be found at www.gov.mb.ca/health/publichealth/cmoh/pandemic.



An Eye on Early Learning and Child Care in Manitoba

In Remembrance



Kathy Wiest

The child care community lost a valuable member of its team in August with the passing of Kathy Wiest. A subsidy advisor for more than 12 years, Kathy was actively involved in implementing the new subsidy computer system and changing policies and procedures.

The child care community will remember Kathy for her commendable work ethic, her fairness in dealing with parents and providers and her commitment to All Charities campaign activities.

Our deepest sympathy goes out to her family and friends.



Did you know...

As of August 2006, 879 (72 per cent) of all Manitoba's child care centres, homes and nursery schools were using Child Care Online.

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The online Licensed Child Care Search (LCCS) has also been active with many searches per year. For example, an estimated 7,706 people used the online licensed child care search and 25,648 child care searches were done in May 2006.

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With so many people using LCCS, child care centres are encouraged to provide a comprehensive description of their programs online for parents who are looking for child care in their area. For a good example, look at the **Checkerberry House Inc.** program profile.

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Results from Criminal and Child Abuse Registry checks, processed by the Manitoba Child Care Program, are used only for licensed child care facilities and are only shared with child care facilities. They are not intended for uses such as other employment, volunteering or enrollment in school.

