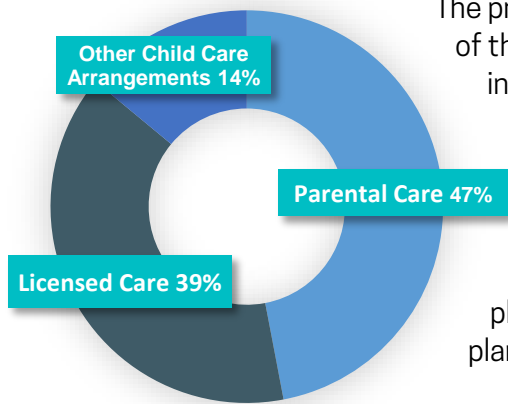


The following is a summary of the key findings of a child care needs assessment conducted in the Tri-Cities, as part of the Coquitlam River United Way Avenues of Change project. In September 2016, Westcoast Family Centres Society engaged Jane Beach and Associates to undertake the child care needs assessment, with data collection complete by May of 2017. The full report is accessible by contacting us at [wfc@westcoastfamily.org](mailto:wfc@westcoastfamily.org).

Only those who lived in one of the five Tri-Cities communities (Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam, Port Moody, Anmore, Belcarra), and had at least one child aged 0 to 8 were invited to complete the survey. There were 1,024 “pre-screened” participants resulting in a total of 988 valid respondents, representing 1,550 children aged from 0 to 8 years old. Detailed characteristics of these households can be found in the report.

	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Coquitlam	537	54%
Port Coquitlam	263	27%
Port Moody	169	17%
Anmore	15	1.5%
Belcarra	4	0.5%



The primary purpose of the survey was to collect basic demographic information and detailed information on respondents’ child care use, needs and preferences. The information collected is intended to encourage productive discussion amongst various child care stakeholders in the Tri-Cities.

Below are key highlights on the report findings most relevant to future planning and policy development, including some key considerations for planners and organizational stakeholders.

## 1. The percentage of children who have access to a child care space in the Tri-Cities appears to be at or above the provincial average. However, this access is not necessarily equitable.

- There were enough licensed child care spaces for 19% of all children, and enough full- and part-day licensed centre-based spaces for 23% of children 0-5 across BC according to most recent publically available data.<sup>1</sup>
- Data compiled by the Tri-Cities Child Care Resource and Referral Program indicates that as of January 2017, there were 7,651 licensed child care spaces across the Tri-Cities, or enough child care spaces for approximately 23% children 0-12, and 4,597 full- and part-time centre-based spaces for approximately 32% of children 0-5.
- Public information on any increase to the percentage of children for whom there is a licensed child care space in BC since 2014 is not yet available. It would appear that the percentage of children for whom there is a licensed child care space is at least equal to the provincial average.

“We had a very anxious year waiting for space to open, right up to the week before I was due to go back to work.”

<sup>1</sup> Friendly et al (2016) *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2014*. Retrieved from: <http://childcarecanada.org/sites/default/files/ECEC-2014-full-document-revised-10-03-16.pdf>

- The percentage of families whose children were enrolled in licensed child care decreased with each additional child 0-8 in the household. A number of respondents indicated that paid work was no longer feasible due the high cost of childcare for more than one child. Others indicated that they had to piece together a variety of less than optimal, cheaper alternatives.

2. There is a need for child care beyond those households where all parents are working full-time. They seek affordable child-care options to accommodate work, school, or child development opportunities.

- The findings suggest that a number of parents are not necessarily at home full-time by choice, and that if affordable childcare was available they would access it.
- For respondents where one or both parents were at home full-time caring for children:
  - 35% of respondents with children younger than school aged indicated a need for full-time child care, five days/week.
  - 19% were on a waiting list for child care
  - 41% reported that they would change arrangements if a preferred option became available at a price they could afford.
    - Respondents indicated that their current child care arrangements were temporary until a preferred option became available for 40% of children younger than three years, for 21% of children 3-5 years and for 27% of school age children.
- Respondents whose children are not enrolled in the parents' preferred child care arrangement indicated that affordability was the main barrier to accessing a preferred licensed child care arrangement.

"If there had been an affordable childcare option available for children aged 12 months then I may well have done that and returned to work after my first or second child was born. I decided not to return to work as it would have cost more than I would be earning, hence I'm a stay at home mom."

3. Licensed centre-based child care was the preferred option of respondents.

- More than half the respondents using licensed child care arrangement indicated they were satisfied with the quality, hours, and location.
- The only instance where licensed care was not the first choice was of parents with children aged 3-5 years, who usually spoke Korean or Farsi at home. For those parents, a licensed centre-based preschool was the preferred option
- The least preferred option was an unlicensed caregiver providing care in the caregiver's home.
- 49.2% of respondents indicated that they need full-time child care five days/week for their children younger than school age.
- Survey respondents who wanted to change their current arrangements overwhelmingly wanted centre-based, licensed child care.
- Cost was mentioned by 80% of respondents as a barrier to using their preferred option, more than twice the percentage of any other barrier.

"Great staff with low turnover, good program, good communication, open to parent suggestions, close to work."

4. About half the respondents with school age children reported that it was "somewhat" or "very" difficult to find suitable out of school care.

- Respondents from Port Coquitlam reported the most difficult finding school age care. 34% of respondents with school age children in Port Coquitlam indicated that it was "very" difficult, compared to 28% in Coquitlam and 21% in Port Moody.

“Our son will be starting kindergarten this fall. As difficult as it was to find full-day child care, it's even hard to find after-school care, especially a facility close to his school that does pickup. My wife and I both work and are unable to get away during the afternoon to pick him up. We don't know how we will manage if there are no after-school care options near our elementary school.”

- Parents expressed frustration commonly with the following:
  - long waiting lists
  - new schools being built without provision for school age child care
  - children having to attend schools out of their catchment area to access child care
  - securing child care for only one of two school age children
  - lack of transportation for children to an out of school program when child care was not located in their child's school

## 5. There is a reported need for different hours of care and enrolment options.

- The most common change requested was related to hours. More specifically, longer hours of care, but the need for more flexible enrolment options and indicated that they needed longer hours due to commuting and/or greater flexibility in enrolment.
- In 46% of households where all parents worked full-time, neither parent worked in the Tri-Cities. As a result, many parents were looking for child care that is open for longer hours than a typical centre or family child care home, or they are commuting with their children younger than school age. This contributes to the time poverty experienced by many young families, as they opt for time-consuming commutes in order to live in more affordable housing.<sup>2</sup>
- A number of parents indicated that they had to pay for full-time child care even though they required a part-time arrangement, due to lack of alternative options.

“My husband and I both have good paying jobs but we still send the kids to our parents two days a week to make it slightly more affordable. We also have to send our kids to our parents to accommodate our work hours. It is impossible to find somewhere open after 6:00 pm. I am extremely lucky my daycare will take my kids as early as 6:15 if I have an early shift. I know this is an issue for many parents as lots of us not only work shifts out of the regular 8-4 but we also commute!”

## 6. There are distinct needs of respondents who have been in Canada for less than 10 years.

- 44% of respondents were born outside of Canada; 20 % had been in Canada for less than 10 years.
- Coquitlam had the highest percentage of respondents who had been living in the community for five years or less (58%).
- The annual household income was less than \$50,000 for 56% of respondents who had been in Canada for less than 10 years.
- The distinct needs of respondents who have been in Canada for less than 10 years include:
  - They were more likely to have a parent at home full-time,
  - Less likely to use licensed child care
  - More likely to be in a low-income household
  - They were more likely to participate in free, community-based early childhood drop-in programs, including StrongStart and library story time

“Me and my family came to Canada as a refugee 5 years ago. I have 2 children, one is school age and one is 3 years old. Both children have health issues. Only my husband works and makes very little money. If child care is affordable, I would go for work and help my family.”

<sup>2</sup> See Generation Squeeze at: [http://www.gensqueeze.ca/the\\_squeeze](http://www.gensqueeze.ca/the_squeeze) for information on the time and money squeeze facing young families

We encourage all stakeholders to read the full report on child care use, needs, preferences and satisfactions collected from respondents with children 8 years and younger. With the information collected by this survey our intention is to encourage more discussion for all community stakeholders in the Tri-Cities. In addition:

- It is important to note that expressed need does not always translate to demand. Parents may identify a need for a particular type of child care arrangement, but **if it is not affordable, they will be unlikely to use a space**. Other factors such as quality, convenience and hours of operation all play a role in parents' decision-making in trying to balance work, home life and child care arrangements.
- **Municipal planners** and **community stakeholders** may want to consider the following:
  - setting targets for service levels;
  - developing policies that will encourage planned coordinated expansion, such as ensuring that space for child care is considered for all public buildings;
  - working with the school board to expand access to school age child care;
  - encourage and increase training requirements for staff;
  - supporting non-profit provision;
  - establishing benchmarks for affordability
  - advocating on behalf of parents and providers with the provincial government
- Public policy, funding, regulation and organizational infrastructure are key drivers of the availability, affordability and quality of child care. Parents need child care and related early childhood programs in increasing numbers, but increased access without quality does children and families a disservice. Local planners will need to consider how to **meet the needs of parents**, while ensuring **programs are in the best interest of children**, encouraging quality provision beyond the minimum requirements.

## About Us



BUILDING BLOCKS FOR BETTER LIVES

**Westcoast  
Family Centres**

Westcoast Family Centres Society began providing services in 1984. Our multi-service organization continues to deliver child-centered, family focused programs, respecting the dignity and integrity of all family members. We are primarily funded by the Ministry of Children and Family

Development, as well as generous support from other organizations including United Way of Lower Mainland and other community partners. Our mission is to strengthen relationships between children and families and between families and their communities. In May 2016, Westcoast Family Centres Society convened a Child Care Panel for initial discussions with a child care consultant partnered with a researcher from the HELP at UBC. In September 2016, Westcoast Family Centres Society contracted with Jane Beach and Associates to undertake the child care needs assessment. This report presents the key findings of a child care needs assessment conducted in the Tri-Cities between September 2016 and May 2017, as part of the Coquitlam River United Way Avenues of Change project.



Launched in 2013, Avenues of Change is a five-year project, funded by the United Way of the Lower Mainland. It is being undertaken in four neighbourhoods where three preconditions were met: 1) the larger community had a history of a well-functioning Early Years Coalition, including strong inter-sectoral leadership and prior interest in place-based approaches; 2) a minimum of 100 kindergarten children in any school year, and 3) middle to high overall vulnerability rates as indicated by the Early Development Instrument (EDI), a population-level research tool that measures five core areas of early child development, and is used by all school districts across the province. The Human Early Learning Partnership at UBC analyzes the EDI data collected by kindergarten teachers, and summarizes results at provincial, regional and neighbourhood levels. The aim of the Avenues of Change project is to reduce child vulnerabilities.

Contact us at [wfc@westcoastfamily.org](mailto:wfc@westcoastfamily.org) or 604.944.2500