
Alberta child care grant funding guide

For wage top-up and professional development funding (including mandatory employer contribution and release time grants)



Alberta

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Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Guide (For wage top-ups, professional development, release time and mandatory employer contributions) |
Children and Family Services

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Overview

This document is a reference and policy guide for the official grant agreement between licensed child care programs in Alberta and the Alberta government. This document outlines the process, eligibility, conditions and accountability requirements for eligible licensed facility-based programs and licensed family day home agencies to access grant funding from the Alberta government for wage top-ups, professional development, release time, and mandatory employer contributions.

Types of grant funding

The Alberta government offers grant funding to licensed facility-based child care programs and licensed family day home agencies, including wage top-ups, professional development, and release time to support the recruitment, retention and professional development of qualified early childhood educators (ECEs) in supporting quality early learning and child care environments for children.

The Government of Alberta will allocate funding to programs operating under a current Affordability Grant, and that have a signed grant agreement to receive wage top-ups, professional development funding, release time funding, and mandatory employer contribution funding.

To apply for funding, refer to the [applying for funding](#) section of this document.

Wage top-up funding

Child care programs will receive wage top-up funding to administer additional pay for eligible certified ECEs, over and above the employer-paid wage. When the program administers the wage top-up to their ECE employees, it is considered a 'wage' and the program is required to assume the costs associated with administering the top-up in accordance with all applicable provincial and federal legislation. When the wage top-up funding is transferred to the contracted family day home educators, the licensed family day home agencies must also administer the payments in accordance with all applicable legislation.

Wage top-ups are paid up to a maximum of 181 hours per month.

**TABLE 1: WAGE TOP-UP RATES BY CERTIFICATION LEVEL
(EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2023 CLAIM PERIOD)**

ECE certification level	Amount
Level 1 ECE	\$2.64 / hour
Level 2 ECE	\$5.05 / hour
Level 3 ECE	\$8.62 / hour

Who is eligible?

The wage top-up funding is for frontline ECEs that are certified paid employees and contracted certified family day home educators who:

- provide direct child care, including program supervisors and alternate supervisors (as defined in the Early Learning and Child Care Regulation), as well as people hired in the role of family child care consultants/coordinators with a licensed family day home agency;
- are certified as an ECE Level 1, 2 or 3; and
- meet the conditions outlined in the [eligible hours for wage top-up](#) section of this document.

Who is not eligible?

This funding is not available to:

- individuals who are not paid employees, including volunteers (except for family day home educators providing services as contracted providers with licensed family day home agencies);
- owners and operators who do not draw a wage/salary;

- individuals, including owners and operators, whose hours are worked outside the business/operational hours of the program;
- individuals with work visas that restrict employment in child care;
- individuals whose income is funded by another program, such as Program Unit Funding through Alberta Education, therapists and assistants paid through other organizations;
- cooks/cleaners/accountants/receptionists not providing direct child care;
- individuals not certified by the Alberta Child Care Staff Certification Office; and
- individuals whose duties fall under the [non-eligible hours](#) section.

Eligible hours for wage top-up

Child care hours

Child care hours include time directly or indirectly related to providing child care by the following individuals:

- paid ECEs employed in a licensed facility-based program (including preschools) responsible for the frontline child care and supervision of children; and
- family day home educators under a contract with a licensed family day home agency to provide child care and supervision to children up to 12 years of age (not including their own) in their private residence.

Eligible child care hours include direct child care and supervision of children, as well as other related duties performed by the frontline ECE role, such as: cleaning, cooking, planning, organizing, completing administrative duties, planning, programming, setting up/taking down playrooms, purchasing play playroom supplies, participating in staff meeting, etc. These hours must be claimed under 'direct child care hours' in the online Child Care Claims Payment (C3P) system. Wage top-ups will be paid to a maximum of 181 hours per month.

Hours can be claimed for ECEs that are paid for attending staff meeting held outside of regular operational hours.

All claimed hours must be clearly documented on attendance records for audit purposes. The employer must pay the employee's base wage for all hours claimed with supporting payroll documentation.

ECEs with direct child care hours claimed in multiple programs will be eligible to receive the wage top-up to a maximum of 181 hours per month across all programs. Hours must not be claimed for statutory holidays and/or when the program is closed.

Refer to the [non-eligible hours](#) section for a complete list of hours not eligible to be included on the monthly claim form.

Note: If any educator is not certified, they must apply for certification to the Alberta Child Care Staff Certification Office to access the wage top-up funding. The application process is online at alberta.ca/child-care-staff-certification.aspx. Grant funding will not be allocated to programs on behalf of uncertified individuals.

Administrative hours

Programs may claim administrative hours for paid employees hired as program supervisors - as well as family day home agency coordinator and/or home visitor/consultant - for hours worked on site (on or off site, for family day home agency coordinators and/or home visitors/consultants) during the operational hours of the program. You can find definitions for these positions in the Schedule 1 (section 1(l) on page 11) of the Early Learning and Child Care Regulation, and the Family Day Home Standards Manual for Alberta (section "Definitions") at alberta.ca/child-care.

Administrative hours include:

- Hours worked by paid staff employed in the role of "program supervisor", a certified and designated staff member of a facility-based program whose duty is to supervise the provision of child care to children in the program.
- Hours worked by staff employed by the family day home agency in the role of an "agency coordinator" who manages the day-to-day operation of the licensed family day home service. The coordinator is responsible for administering the program and acting as a contact person for families in the community.
- Hours worked by staff employed by the licensed family day home agency in the role of "home visitor/consultant" who is responsible for the recruitment, approval, monitoring, training and support of program educators.

Programs can claim administrative time for the wage top-up for work both on and off site during operational hours.

Programs are required to have timesheets with a break-down of direct child care hours and administrative hours they have claimed.

Vacation time

Programs can claim wage top-ups for vacation time only ECEs that receive their regular wage while they are away from work using their annual vacation time. A maximum of 120 hour (up to 3 weeks) can be claimed per calendar year. Programs need to keep attendance and payroll records for these hours.

Programs are to claim eligible vacation time under “direct child care hours” in the online Child Care Claims Payment (C3P) system, for the month it was taken. System enhancements will be made in the future to make a separate record for vacation time.

Vacation time for wage top-ups cannot be carried forward for future years.

Non-eligible hours (which hours cannot be claimed)

Hours may not be claimed for:

- Statutory holidays and/or any time when the program is closed
- ECEs who are not paid during their vacation time
- Sick time
- Training time
- Administrative hours worked by an owner/operator who is not a paid employee in the role of a program supervisor
- Administrative hours worked by an owner/operator who is not a paid employee in the role of an agency coordinator or home visitor/consultant
- Hours worked off site (with the exception of agency home visitors/consultants responsible for the monitoring the homes of the contracted family day home educators)
- Hours worked during non-operational hours of the program
- Hours claimed above the 181 eligible hours per month
- Overtime hours worked at the rate of time and a half (1.5). Hours can only be claimed for actual hours worked (the additional “0.5 rate” is the responsibility of the employer)

Professional development funding

Licensed facility-based child care programs and licensed family day home agencies can receive professional development funding to help eligible ECEs with the costs of approved post-secondary tuition and textbooks, as well as approved conferences or workshops. Paid ECEs can use this funding to pursue further training and professional development opportunities to obtain higher levels of certification and strengthen leadership, management, administration, and early childhood education skills and knowledge.

TABLE 2: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING RATES

Professional development type	Funding rates per ECE
Workshops and conferences	up to \$500/year
Post-secondary coursework and Textbooks	up to \$1,500/year
Maximum available funding	up to \$2,000/year

Who is eligible for professional development funding?

The professional development funding is for ECEs who are paid employees or contracted family day home educators of eligible child care programs who:

- Provide direct child care, including as program supervisors (as defined in the Early Learning and Child Care Regulation), as well as individuals hired by licensed family day home agencies as agency coordinators or home visitors/consultants
- Are certified as ECE Level 1, 2 or 3
- Are Canadian citizens or official Permanent Residents of Canada
- Have worked at least 29 hours in at least one month from the date of the expenditure or the date the application was received
- Have submitted a Professional Development Funding Request Form from <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-child-care-grant-funding-program.aspx> and made a payment for the course, workshop, or conference within the same fiscal year (April to March)

Who is not eligible for professional development funding?

The following staff are not eligible for professional development funding:

- Those who are not paid employees or contracted family day home educators of eligible child care programs, including volunteers and program owners/operators who do not draw a wage/salary;
- Individuals, including owners and operators, whose minimum monthly hours required to be eligible for the professional development funding do not fall under the eligible hours for wage top-up category;
- Individuals that are not Canadian citizens nor hold official Canadian permanent resident status;
- Individuals whose income is funded by another program such as Program Unit Funding through Alberta Education, therapists and assistants paid through other organizations;
- Cooks, cleaners, accountants, receptionists and other support staff when not providing direct child care; and
- Individuals who were not certified by the Alberta Child Care Staff Certification Office.

What types of training costs are covered?

Professional development funding helps offset tuition fees and required course textbooks for approved post-secondary coursework. For educators certified as an ECE Level 1 or 2, this coursework should lead to a higher level of certification. For those at Level 3, coursework may be used to strengthen accounting, business, leadership, entrepreneurship, management, pedagogical leadership, administration, and early childhood education skills and knowledge.

Professional development funding may also be used to offset the cost of tuition fees, conference and workshop fees related to early learning and child care that have been approved by the Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program. Please email the Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program at cs.childcarefunding@gov.ab.ca to find out whether the course/conference/workshop you are interested in is eligible for professional development funding.

Expenses not covered by professional development:

- Accommodations, meals, alcohol, and travel costs
- Additional fees charged by an educational institution
- Non-approved courses, workshops or conferences (i.e., those not related to child development or not approved by the Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program)
- Language proficiency assessments (CELP/IP/IELTS)
- English as a Second Language coursework
- First-Aid training and food safety courses
- Resource books and materials not part of registered coursework

Professional development funding may not be requested if another grant or bursary has been awarded for the same purpose.

To apply, please submit a Professional Development Funding Request Form to the Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program. The form is available online at <https://cfr.forms.gov.ab.ca/Form/CDEV12397.pdf>.

Additional information

- The professional development balance resets every year on April 1. Any unused funding is not transferrable to the next fiscal year.
- Unused professional development funds are not transferable from one ECE to another.
- The expense for professional development is applied to the fiscal year in which the payment was made (not the date the service/product was received or the date the course/conference/workshop was taken or completed).
- The Professional Development Funding Request Form must be submitted within the fiscal year (April 1 to March 31) in which the expenditure was made (date paid) by the person or program.
- The deadline for submitting the Professional Development Funding Request Form is March 31 for all expenditures paid within the same fiscal year (April to March).

Release time funding

Release time funding is available to all ECEs who are eligible for the professional development funding. This funding allows ECEs to be paid while studying, completing post-secondary coursework, and/or attending workshops that have been approved for professional development funding. Upon completion of the training, ECEs are eligible for release time funding regardless of when training occurs, such as outside of regular working hours. The release time funds are a taxable benefit.

Programs need to apply for release time funds on behalf of their ECEs and transfer paid release time to the ECE as a taxable income.

Proof of course completion must be kept on file at the child care program and submitted as requested. Payment will be applied to the fiscal year the course was completed.

The following funding amounts will apply depending on the type of professional development opportunity.

TABLE 3: RELEASE TIME FUNDING RATES PAID TO ECEs AND EMPLOYERS

Release Time Funding Rates Professional Development	Amount to be transferred to ECE	Amount to be kept by employer program to offset wage related expenses
Post-secondary coursework	\$800 per 3-credit course (up to two 3-credit courses per fiscal year)	\$60 per course
Workshops/Conferences	\$17.50 per hour (up to 45 hours per year)	\$1.33 per hour

Who is eligible for release time funding?

Release time funding is for ECEs who are paid employees or contracted family day home educators of licensed child care programs who:

- are eligible for the professional development funding;
- are enrolled in/have paid for a post-secondary course, workshop or conference and is approved for the professional development funding; and
- have been approved for professional development funding by the Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program, which includes the request to access the release time funding.

Who is not eligible for the release time funding?

The following individuals are not eligible for the release time funding:

- individuals who funding; and

- ECEs who are enrolled in a post-secondary course, workshop or conference that is not approved by the Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program.

Additional information

- Release time funding is not paid automatically. Programs must request it using the Professional Development Funding Request form.
- The deadline to submit the Professional Development Funding Request form and request the release time funding is March 31 for training expenditures paid within the same fiscal year (April to March).
- Hours spent by ECEs in the post-secondary training, workshops and conferences are not eligible for the wage top-up funding, even if the release time funding was approved for this training.
- Programs receiving the funding must transfer the ECE portion of the funding as a taxable income (for employed educators) or as an income (for family day home educators) to the ECE for whom the Professional Development Funding Request was approved.
- Unused release time funds are not transferable from one ECE to another and must be returned to Children and Family Services using the program funding adjustment form found online at <https://www.alberta.ca/online-child-care-claims-system.aspx>.
- Pre-recorded workshops, conferences and coursework are not eligible for professional development funding or release time unless approved by the Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program.

Release time for successful completion of FLIGHT curriculum training (effective October 1, 2022):

- **Entry Level** training “Possibilities for Practice” Learning Series available through the Alberta Resource Centre for Quality Enhancement (ARCQE)
 - This six-part (2 hours each) professional learning series is an introduction to the guiding principles of practice intended to inform curriculum implementation.
 - Eligible for up to 12 hours of release time.
- **Intermediate Level** online course “Supporting Curriculum Practice” available through ARCQE
 - A six module 45 hour professional learning series focusing on supporting an understanding of the Alberta early learning and care curriculum framework (Flight) concepts from a leadership perspective.
 - Eligible for up to 45 hours of release time.
- **Advanced Level Course** “The Flight: Alberta’s Early Learning and Care Framework” provided through Grant MacEwan University
 - The 22-week Flight curriculum training outlines holistic play-based goals for children’s responsive care, play, learning, and development in four areas: well-being; play and playfulness; communication and literacy; and diversity and social responsibility.
 - Eligible for up to an equivalency of two 3-credit courses of post-secondary release time.

Summary of professional development and release time funding available per fiscal year

TABLE 4: TOTAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RELEASE TIME FOR ECES PER FISCAL YEAR

Types of professional development	Professional development rates per ECE	Release time rates per ECE
Workshops and conferences	up to \$500/year	Up to \$787.50/year
Post-secondary coursework and Textbooks	up to \$1,500/year	Up to \$1,600/year
Total available funding	up to \$2000/year	Up to \$2,387.50

Combined Total: up to \$4,387.50 per ECE per fiscal year

Mandatory employer contribution funding

Child care programs that receive wage top-up funding are eligible to receive mandatory employer contribution funding to assist the program with making the required payroll expenditures associated with the wage top-up amounts received by the program for employed ECES.

The mandatory employer contribution funding will assist programs by offsetting the payroll expenditures that the program is required to make on the wage top-up funding. The mandatory employer contribution funding is paid at the rate of 9.51 per cent of the wage top-up funding received by the program and intended to help offset related expenditures for Canada Pension Plan (CPP) contributions, Employment Insurance (EI), and Workers Compensation Board (WCB) premiums associated with wage top-ups.

TABLE 5: HOW 9.51% WAS CALCULATED

Employer Payroll Expenditure	Percentage (2023)	Total Mandatory Employer Contribution Rate (%)
CPP	5.95%	9.51% (OF THE AMOUNT OF WAGE TOP-UP FUNDING RECEIVED BY THE PROGRAM)
EI	2.28%	
WCB	1.28%	

Who is eligible for the mandatory employer contribution funding?

A program is eligible to receive mandatory employer contribution funding for each ECE staff member for whom the program receives wage top-up funding, and whereby the program also makes CPP contributions and pays EI and WCB premiums for that ECE staff member.

Who is not eligible?

A program shall not receive mandatory employer contribution funding for the following persons:

- individuals who are not eligible for the wage top-up funding
- individuals who are eligible for the wage top-up funding but for whom the program does not make CPP contributions and does not pay EI and WCB premiums

Additional information

Although the purpose of the mandatory employer contribution funding is to assist programs in making their required payroll contributions and premium payments on the wage top-ups by providing targeted funding, the program remains responsible for actually making and remitting all required payroll contributions and payments as required by law.

This payment will be reflected on the program's monthly Payment Summary Statement after the programs submits the ECE staff hours worked on the monthly claim form.

Grant funding agreement – how to sign

A new grant agreement needs to be signed when:

- the program is applying for funding for the first time
- there is a change to the program's licence holder
- the program is sold or purchased
- the Alberta government determines the signed grant agreement does not match the licence holder and/or program information

An individual with official signing authority for the child care program must use their account in the [Child Care Licensing portal](#) to access, review and sign the grant agreement for wage top-up and professional development funding if the program is eligible and interested in receiving wage top-up, mandatory employer contribution, professional development and release time grants.

For information on how to create a new account in the Child Care Licensing portal refer to the [Child Care Licensing Portal Operator Login Guide](#).

For instructions on how to access and sign the grant agreement for wage top-up and professional development funding refer to the [Child Care Licensing Guide – Signing Wage Top-up & PD Grant Agreements](#).

Child care programs are only considered approved for funding after grant agreement has been signed in the [Child Care Licensing portal](#). Funding will commence based on the “Effective Date” as stated on the grant agreement.

How to receive funding

Wage top-up funding

Once approved for funding, the program must have access to the online Child Care Claims Payment (C3P) system to submit monthly claims identifying staff names, eligible hours worked, and employer-paid wage. The claims system is available online at alberta.ca/online-child-care-claims-system.aspx.

For information about how to access an online Claims ID and password, contact the Alberta Child Care Claims Unit by calling 1-855-638-6121, or email at cs.childcareclaims@gov.ab.ca. Information is also available online at alberta.ca/child-care-staff-certification.aspx. The claims unit staff are always available to answer telephone inquiries Monday through Friday 8:15 am to 4:30 pm.

To receive the wage top-up funding, the program is required to submit an online monthly claim form through the C3P system listing, for each ECE for whom the funding is being claimed, the educator name, ECE certification and registration identification number, employer-paid wage (excluding the wage top-up), and the number of eligible hours worked as identified in this funding guide. **Programs must submit the monthly claim within 60 days** of the last calendar day of each month during the term of the program's agreement for wage top-up and professional development funding, and the month immediately following the term of the agreement.

The program will receive payment within 5-10 business days upon submitting the claim. Once the monthly claim has been processed, the program can access a monthly payment summary statement through C3P, which specifies the amount allocated on behalf of each staff member. This funding must be paid to the ECEs in accordance with the conditions set out in the grant agreement and this funding guide, inclusive of all legislated requirements.

Once the deposit has been made, the program may request any funding adjustments (due to errors and omissions to the claimed hours, inability to administer funding to staff, etc.) using the Program Funding Adjustment form at alberta.ca/online-child-care-claims-system.aspx. This form must be sent to the Child Care Claims Unit as instructed on the form. Programs must submit the adjustment requests within three calendar months following receipt of the original payment.

Professional development funding

A separate form is required to receive the professional development and release time funding. Programs must submit a Professional Development Funding Request form at: <https://cfr.forms.gov.ab.ca/Form/CDEV12397.pdf>.

To request the release time funding along with the professional development funding, programs must fill in the relevant section of the Professional Development Funding Request form and identify the purpose and use of requested funds. Funds may be requested for the costs of their ECE's post-secondary training, workshop or conference.

Once the Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program has assessed the Professional Development Funding Request form, the program will receive written notification indicating whether the funding has been approved. Programs will be given an explanation if their funding is not approved.

The approved professional development funding payment will be part of the overall child care program deposit when the next monthly claim is processed. The ECE name and professional development funding payment amount (including the release time funding, if approved) will be reflected on the monthly payment summary statement.

Program accountability

The program must comply with all the terms set out in the grant agreement that was signed between the grant recipient and the Minister, which includes the content contained in this funding guide.

All child care programs that receive grant funding must maintain required attendance records, receipts, and financial/payroll records to support all funding payments relating to wage top-ups, professional development (including release time funding, if applicable), and mandatory employer contributions. Programs are subject to selected or random audits by the Government of Alberta. If a program falsely obtains funds, fails to provide required documentation, or fails to report funding not paid to ECEs, the amount will be adjusted accordingly through the claims payment process. Eligibility for ongoing funding may be terminated.

Failure to comply with the terms set out in the agreement and this funding guide may result in recovery of the funding.

Wage top-ups

- The wage top-up funding is paid to the program as a grant. When the program transfers this funding to staff, payments fall under the definition of “wage” in Alberta’s Employment Standards Code. As such, the program must administer this funding as a wage in accordance with all applicable legislation.
- According to the Alberta Employment Standards Code, employers must pay at least the minimum wage. They must also pay to staff the legislated vacation and general holiday pay on both the employee’s base wage and the wage top-up funding. Information about the Employment Standards Code is available at www.alberta.ca/employment-standards.aspx.
- The employer is also responsible to pay the legislated premiums on the wage top-ups that include Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, and Worker’s Compensation Board premiums.
- For licensed family day home agencies, the top-up paid to family day home educators must be identified as income and administered according to all applicable legislation.
- The program must distribute the funding to each staff as a wage top-up, over and above the employer-paid wage, at the same amount as noted on the monthly claim payment summary prior to the legislated payroll deductions.
- Programs must reflect the wage top-up funding payments as a provincial government contribution on paystubs.
- Programs must keep a written record of all direct child care hours, programming/planning hours, and administrative hours claimed on staff/day home educators attendance records/time sheets (indicating date, start and end times).
- Programs must report on the monthly claim form the current rate of the employer-paid wage for each staff, not including the wage top-up.
- The program may not impose any extra conditions on ECEs outside the scope of the grant agreement and this funding guide regarding the distribution of funding to ECEs.
- Programs must report any unused or incorrectly reported funding using the program funding adjustment form at alberta.ca/online-child-care-claims-system.aspx.

Professional development

- The program must retain a copy of their submitted professional development funding request form, and all receipts supporting the professional development funding payments made to the program.

- Receipts must indicate the same expenditure that was claimed and must match the ECE's or program's name, amount of payment and payment date as was submitted on the professional development funding request form.
- Any funding that is paid without supporting receipts, not transferred to the ECE, or not used as approved on the professional development funding request form, must be reported using the program funding adjustment form at [alberta.ca/online-child-care-claims-system.aspx](https://www.alberta.ca/online-child-care-claims-system.aspx).
- If programs receive the release time funding payments:
 - The release time funding is paid to programs as grant funding but when the program transfers this funding to their ECE employee, payments fall under the definition of "wage" in Alberta's Employment Standards Code. As such, the program must administer this funding as a wage in accordance with all applicable legislation.
 - According to the Alberta Employment Standards Code, employers must pay at least the minimum wage. They must also pay to ECE the legislated vacation and general holiday pay on both the employee's base wage and the wage covered through the release time funding. Information about the Employment Standards Code is available at www.alberta.ca/employment-standards.aspx.
 - The employer is also responsible to pay the legislated premiums on the wage covered through the release time funding that include Canada Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, and Worker's Compensation Board premiums.
 - For licensed family day home agencies, the release time funding paid to family day home educators must be identified as income and administered according to all applicable legislation.
 - Programs must reflect the release time funding payments as a provincial government contribution on paystubs.
 - Programs must retain proof of enrollment/registration and/or proof of program/workshop/course completion supporting the release time funding payment. Programs must report any unused or incorrectly reported funding using the program funding adjustment form at [alberta.ca/online-child-care-claims-system.aspx](https://www.alberta.ca/online-child-care-claims-system.aspx).

Contact information

Funding

If you have questions about wage top-ups, professional development funding, release time funding, and mandatory employer contribution funding, please contact the Alberta Child Care Grant Funding Program at 1-800-661-9754 or email cs.childcarefunding@gov.ab.ca.

Additional information is also available online at <https://www.alberta.ca/alberta-child-care-grant-funding-program.aspx>.

Additional information about the Affordability Grant is available online at: <https://www.alberta.ca/affordability-grants-for-child-care-programs.aspx>.

Claims

If you have questions about submitting your monthly claim or the payments received, please contact the Alberta Child Care Claims Unit at 1-855-638-6121 or email cs.childcareclaims@gov.ab.ca.

Additional information is also available online at <https://www.alberta.ca/online-child-care-claims-system.aspx>.