

Child Care Advocacy Forum

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Care Services

Coalition of Child Care
Advocates of BC

Early Childhood
Educators of BC

School Age Child Care
Association

Westcoast Child Care
Resource Centre

Western Canada Family
Child Care Association
of BC

This is one in a series of fact sheets outlining the importance of regulated child care to the people of BC. It was prepared by the Child Care Advocacy Forum, an alliance of six provincial child care organizations committed to developing a publicly funded, comprehensive child care system. If you would like to receive other fact sheets or for more information, please contact the Child Care Advocacy Forum.

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The Future Begins Today

Child care makes important contributions to society. This fact sheet outlines how high quality child care today can help build the best possible future.

- **In the first 6 years of life a child goes through the most critical periods for brain development. These periods help determine future capacity.**

As McCain and Mustard explain in *The Early Years Study* (1999), these years "set the base for competence and coping skills that will affect learning, behaviour and health throughout life...There are critical periods when a young child requires proper stimulation for the brain to establish the neural pathways...Many of these critical periods are over or waning by the time a child is 6 years old."

- **Unstimulating, unsupportive environments affect brain development, leading to negative health, socio-economic and emotional outcomes later in life.**

Dr. Clyde Hertzman explains it this way in his paper, "The Case for Child Development as a Determinant of Health":

Spending one's early years in an unstimulating, emotionally and physically unsupportive environment will...lead to cognitive and socioemotional delays... Because the central nervous system... 'talks to' the immune, hormone, and clotting systems, systematic differences in the experiences of life will increase or decrease the levels of resistance to disease. This will change the long-term function of vital organs of the body and lead to socioeconomic differences in morbidity and mortality.

- **High quality child care services help a child start grade 1 ready to learn and more likely to succeed – in school and in life.**

Gillian Doherty's *The Great Child Care Debate* (1996) reviews 21 international studies. While Doherty notes that programs must be staffed appropriately and adequately, she concludes that "child care may be beneficial, especially in the area of social and language skill development."

Some studies find that children who attend preschool programs score higher on tests and are less likely to repeat a grade than children who do not attend such programs. Some suggest that child care might even be linked to post-secondary education and future income.

High quality child care offers appropriate intellectual, social and emotional stimulation and teaching for children in the critical early years.

For a child who has developmental or other problems, intervention becomes harder and more expensive as a child ages. Qualified staff in a comprehensive child care system are key to early identification and intervention, and the provision of quality care so that ALL children have the brightest possible future.