

# CHILDREN BIRTH to SIX in Guelph and Wellington County: Child Care & Early Learning

## Ontario Child Care System

The quality of child care programs plays an important role in children’s early development. Children who are considered to be vulnerable due to concerns related to their development and/or the environment in which they spend their time, are found to be most affected by poor quality child care environments<sup>1</sup>. Child care and early learning programs have an important task to provide environments that are responsive, caring, and stimulating, and which encourage children’s learning and social skill development. Child care in Ontario can be licensed or unlicensed care. Child care that is “licensed” is regulated by the *Ontario Day Nurseries Act*. Informal or unlicensed care is not regulated. Licensed care can be for-profit or not-for-profit day nurseries

(child care centres, nursery schools, pre-school programs) or private home child care settings. In Guelph and Wellington County, there is a shortage of licensed child care spaces for children of all ages. In particular, licensed infant spaces are limited or not available in some communities. This is a challenge for parents trying to find quality child care for their children. Most children in our community are placed in unlicensed (or informal) child care settings. Many parents are able to find informal child care arrangements that they are very satisfied with, however this system is not regulated. For parents who do shift work and/or have children with special needs it can be much more challenging to find quality child care to meet their families’ needs.

**Child Care and Early Learning Spaces in Guelph and Wellington<sup>2</sup>**

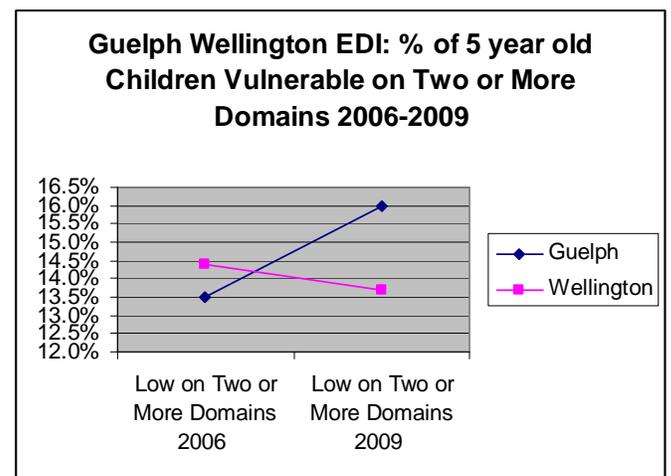
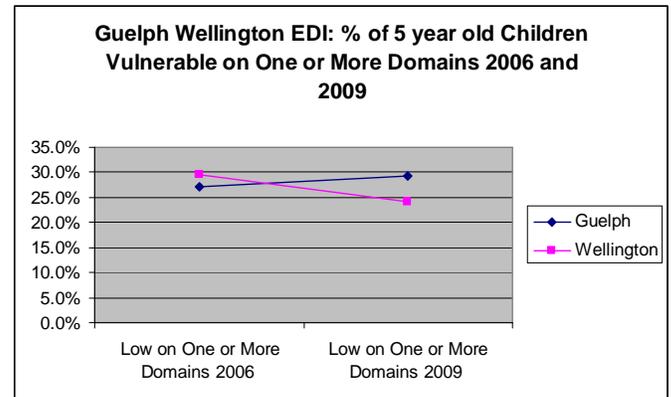
Geo-political area	Infant Child Care Spaces (up to 18 months)	Toddler Child Care Spaces (18 to 30 months)	Preschool Child Care Spaces (30 months to 3 years)	JK/SK Child Care Spaces (4 & 5 years)	School Age Child Care Spaces (4-12 years)	Total Child Care Spaces
Guelph and Wellington County	68	338	1,340	372	753	2,871 spaces in 61 centres
Guelph	68	265	960	312	573	2,178 spaces in 40 centres
Wellington County	0	73	380	60	180	693 spaces in 21 centres
Centre Wellington	0	38	131	30	30	229 spaces in 6 centres
Erin	0	10	104	0	120	234 spaces in 6 centres
Guelph/ Eramosa	0	0	32	10	30	72 spaces in 2 centres
Mapleton	0	0	16	0	0	16 spaces in 1 centre
Minto	0	10	53	0	0	63 spaces in 3 centres
Puslinch	0	0	28	0	0	28 spaces in 2 centres
Wellington North	0	15	16	20	0	51 spaces in 1 centre

**Full-Day Kindergarten Program**

At present, the provincial government is implementing the *Full-Day Kindergarten Program* which will give 4-5 year olds access to full-day learning. The implementation will take 5 years, with 15% of elementary schools in Guelph and Wellington offering Full-Day Kindergarten starting in September 2010. In phase 2, another 5% of schools will offer the program<sup>3</sup>. Full-Day Kindergarten is an exciting new phase in supporting learning and development for Ontario’s children. In the short-term, some identified challenges are as follows: barriers to the delivery of special needs services; loss of qualified Early Childhood Educators to the Ministry of Education, and planning for the provision extended-day child care<sup>4</sup>.

**The Early Development Instrument**

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) was created by the Offord Centre for Child Studies to measure children’s readiness to learn or developmental health. With input from a number of people who work closely with children, the Canadian-made instrument gathers information from teachers about senior kindergarten children’s physical health and well-being, social and emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills, and general knowledge<sup>5</sup>. The chart below illustrates the percent of children that are vulnerable on one and two or more EDI domains. The 2009 results show that just less than 30% of children in Guelph and 24% in Wellington County are vulnerable on one or more domain, while about 16% of children in Guelph and 14% in Wellington County are vulnerable on two or more domains. This is important information for parents, service providers and planners, because scoring low on one ore more domains indicates that a child is vulnerable and would benefit from supports to help them catch up to classmates. Children who score low on two or more domains and do not receive intervention are more likely to fall further behind throughout their school years<sup>6</sup>.



The Low-income-cut-off (LICO) is a measure of the “income level at which a family may be in strained circumstances because it has to spend a greater proportion of its income on necessities than the average family of similar size”<sup>7</sup>. As families’ incomes move further away from the LICO (that is, household income increases) children’s scores on all five domains generally increases. However, although average scores are lowest for families in the lowest income group, the number of middle income children experiencing difficulties is reported as higher because they are the largest socio-economic group<sup>8</sup>. This is an important consideration determining whether targeted programs or universal programs are the appropriate response in the effort to improve child developmental health outcomes.

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<sup>1</sup> McCain, M.N., Mustard, F.J. & Shanker, S (2007). *The Early Years Study 2 Putting Science into Action*. Retrieved Oct. 2007 at

[http://wwwFOUNDERS.net/fn/news.nsf/24157c30539cee20852566360044448c/5e0d29958d2d7d04852572ab005ad6a6/\\$FILE/Early%20Years%20Study%202%20-%20Putting%20Science%20into%20Action%20March%202007.pdf](http://wwwFOUNDERS.net/fn/news.nsf/24157c30539cee20852566360044448c/5e0d29958d2d7d04852572ab005ad6a6/$FILE/Early%20Years%20Study%202%20-%20Putting%20Science%20into%20Action%20March%202007.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Community Services Team, County of Wellington Child Care Services (2010) *County of Wellington Child Care Service Plan 2010-2011*. Guelph, Ontario: County of Wellington Child Care Services.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education (Retrieved July 15 2020)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/earlylearning/>

<sup>4</sup> GGK Early Learning and Child Care Working Group meeting, Personal Communication, April 29, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Janus, M., E.K. Duku, K. E. and Stat, P (2005) Development of the Short

Early Development Instrument (S-EDI). Report for the World Bank . Offord Centre for Child Studies, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioural Neurosciences, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada. Retrieved May 29, 2010.

Available at:

[www.offordcentre.com/readiness/files/REPORT.short\\_edi\\_june2005.pdf](http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/files/REPORT.short_edi_june2005.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Lynn Bestari (Data Analysis Coordinator) Personal Communication Aug. 10 2010

<sup>7</sup> Statistics Canada (2001). *Income trends in Canada 1980 to 2001 - User's guide*. Retrieved Dec. 2007 at

<http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/75F0002MIE/75F0002MIE2003003.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> McCain, M.N., Mustard, F.J. & Shanker, S (2007). *The Early Years Study 2 Putting Science into Action*. Retrieved Oct. 2007 at

[http://wwwFOUNDERS.net/fn/news.nsf/24157c30539cee20852566360044448c/5e0d29958d2d7d04852572ab005ad6a6/\\$FILE/Early%20Years%20Study%202%20-%20Putting%20Science%20into%20Action%20March%202007.pdf](http://wwwFOUNDERS.net/fn/news.nsf/24157c30539cee20852566360044448c/5e0d29958d2d7d04852572ab005ad6a6/$FILE/Early%20Years%20Study%202%20-%20Putting%20Science%20into%20Action%20March%202007.pdf)