

Child Care Co-operatives



Introduction

Childcare co-operatives (sometimes called day care co-ops) provide educational or daycare services to children and their families. They range in size from a few families to very large school-like organizations with hundreds of members. Childcare co-operatives are structured as not-for-profit organizations and generate revenue through member fees, fundraising efforts, or sometimes grants and government funding. Any surplus that is generated goes towards improving the services and assets of the co-op.

Childcare co-ops offer a number of benefits to participating families that may be absent from traditional or private day care because they are member-owned and democratically run. For example:

- parent-members direct the type of services that the co-op offers through exercising their democratic rights at member meetings;
- parents can be involved in the governance and decision making of childcare co-ops by being elected to the board of directors; and

- parents can have direct involvement in their child's care through volunteer opportunities.

Different Types of Childcare Co-ops

Preschool or Educational Co-op

These co-ops provide educational services to participating children on either a part-time or full-time basis. Qualified teachers or educators are employed by the co-op to teach the children, and parents of the children that attend the school assist as volunteers on a regular basis. In some very large preschool co-ops different educational services are offered to children of different ages. Parents also sit on the co-op's board of directors, which governs the day-to-day business and operations of the co-op.

Daycare Co-ops

Daycare co-ops are similar to preschool co-ops in that there is an educator available, but parents are usually less involved. These co-ops are designed for parents seeking consistent, full-time daycare for their children.

Babysitting Co-ops

Babysitting co-ops are a much more informal type of co-op, where parents in a neighbourhood or community come together to jointly provide and share babysitting responsibilities. This type of co-op will often operate without formally incorporating under the Ontario *Co-operative Corporations Act*.

How Do They Work?

A group of parents, families, educators and community members will come together to form a co-op. The co-op will then elect a board, hire educators to staff the co-op and buy (or make arrangements to lease) space for operating. Childcare co-ops also must be licensed to operate in Ontario – they must apply to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services and have the facilities inspected annually in order to keep the license in good order.

Most childcare co-ops choose to incorporate rather than operate informally, in order to provide their members with a measure of protection from liability. This also allows the

- There are over 1,300 co-operatives, credit unions and caisse populaires incorporated and operating in Ontario, with 1,900 locations in 400 communities.
- In 2012 alone, 73 new co-ops incorporated in Ontario.
- Housing is Ontario's largest co-op sector (45%), followed by Financial Services (17%), Child care (17%) and Agriculture (6%).
- The co-operative sector in Ontario represents a very conservative \$30 billion in assets (2007).

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co-op to take out insurance that protects the organization.

Childcare co-ops will sometimes operate within the confines of other organizations or co-ops. For example, a housing co-op may have a group of members come together to form a babysitting co-op, or a university or other large organization like a hospital will run a childcare or daycare co-op on the premises for employees.

Resources

Parent Co-operative Preschool Corporation

PCPC is a non-profit co-operative corporation that supports parents and educators from childcare centers who are dedicated to creating quality learning environments for young children. Members of PCPC are legally incorporated and licensed in Ontario. All are non-profit and many are co-operative organizations.

pcpcontario.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT

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**More resources are
available at:**
CoopZone Network
coopzone.coop

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