



Discovering your early childhood development community assets

Communities play a crucial role in creating the environments that shape early development. Knowing what early childhood development (ECD) assets your community has will help your ECD coalition to better understand how well your community is supporting young children and families. By gathering and sharing this information you will also contribute to important research that is being done across the province as part of Alberta Education's Early Child Development Mapping Initiative.



Communities are part of a child's early environment

Children are born and raised in environments that include their families, the community and broader society. The quality of these environments influences early development and has a lifelong impact on everything from health to success at school and work, behaviour, relationships and overall sense of well-being. Communities are part of the context in which young children develop and grow.

ECD coalitions can contribute valuable research information into the role that communities play in early development

Only you and the people in your community can answer the questions that will yield important research information and insights into the impact that communities have upon early development.



Consider 3 categories

Things in your community that influence early development may be:

How to approach your research task

The following process will help your ECD coalition with your research task.

Start with these questions

- What influences early development in our community?
- What are the positive influences?
- What are the negative influences?
- What would we like to see in our community that could improve or better support early development?



1 ECD community features:
 These can be natural (parks, forests, rivers and hills) or built (recreation centres, libraries, places of worship and playgrounds).

ECD community assets are things in the community that positively influence development and are valued by community members.



2 ECD community characteristics:

These are community qualities related to human activities, such as social and economic circumstances, population density, types of industrial activity, social cohesion (unity and respect for difference) and the histories and cultures of your community.



3

ECD community resources:

These are services, programs, people, organizations and activities that affect or may have the potential to affect child development. They may include:

- local associations (e.g. Neighbourhood Watch or parent-teacher associations), the skills of local residents,
- the resources of public, private and non-profit institutions (including their programs and services),
- economic resources, and
- the attributes, capabilities, actions and strategies that can help or sustain your community in hard times.

Follow 3 steps

These three steps will guide your ECD coalition in your community consultation process.

Engage

Reflect

Share

Engage

- Create a comprehensive list of the people in your community who have a direct or indirect impact on early childhood development. The list should reflect the diversity of your community.
- Contact as many people on your list as you can and ask them to tackle the four questions. This can be done in big groups, small groups, one-on-one, over the phone and by e-mail.
- Keep careful notes of your discussions and findings.
- Ask your ECDMap community development coordinator for help or ideas (see www.ecmap.ca for contact list).

Reflect

Come together as a coalition and reflect on your findings. Invite the people you have consulted if possible. Ask yourselves the following questions:

What influences early development in our community?

What are our community assets (things that affect early development positively)?

What has the potential to become a community asset?

What creative ideas do we see emerging?

Share

Share your findings with your community.

Share your findings with the Early Child Development Mapping Project (ECMap) team.

Your research will help to advance knowledge about the relationship between community environments and young children's development locally and across Alberta.

A more in-depth tool kit, *Discover your early childhood development (ECD) community assets: A tool kit for coalitions in Alberta*, is available to help you through this research process. Download a copy from www.ecmap.ca.

For further information, contact ECDMap at 780-248-1574 or ecmap@ualberta.ca or your ECDMap community development coordinator.

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