

PURPOSE

This funding provides **Early Childhood Services (ECS) children** with a basic **ECS program** to help prepare them for entry into grade 1 and provide a foundation for later success.

CONDITIONS

- Revised** 1. Basic instruction funding is provided to **ECS operators** for each eligible **child** enrolled in an **ECS program** which provides access to at least 475 hours of instruction.

Note: Some modification to this requirement is allowed for children with special needs (mild, moderate, or severe) who because of their special needs or young age cannot be accommodated by a 475-hour program (ie. they may require more or less hours). Also some special needs children, either because of their disability or young age, may benefit from an **in-home program** or from a combined program involving school hours and home visits. A combined program must have a minimum of four home visits to qualify for funding. See definition of **in-home program** in the Glossary of Terms for more details. Any other exceptions to this requirement must be submitted in writing to the Director of School Finance.

- Revised** 2. An approved **ECS operator** must be prepared to accept and organize programming for all eligible **children** for whom programming is requested, including **children with special needs**.

3. A **child** referred to in Section 30(1)(a) of the *School Act* is not a resident or non-resident student of a **board**, therefore, approved **ECS operators** shall not use the residency or non-residency of the **parent** of a **child** in a district or **division** to:

- a) deny a **child** access to the program; or
- b) differentiate as to the fees charged for the program.

- Revised** 4. The ECS count must not include any **child** counted by another **ECS operator** for funding purposes in the school year. An eligible **child** can only be claimed by one **ECS operator** per year. The **ECS operator** claiming the **child** is responsible for ensuring the **child** was not claimed by another **ECS operator** in the current school year.

However, if a **child** attended more than one **ECS program** on September 30 and a resolution cannot be reached as to which **ECS operator** should count the **child**, then the Basic Instruction funding will be split accordingly. For example, a **child** may be enrolled in a morning program with one **ECS operator** and also enrolled in an afternoon program with another **ECS operator**. Neither operator may be aware of the duplicate enrolment until Alberta Learning has identified the enrolment conflict. If at

Revised that time a resolution cannot be reached as to which **ECS operator** should count the **child** then the Basic Instruction funding is split accordingly.

5. **ECS operators** are eligible for one year of Basic Instruction funding for regular **ECS children**. Children must be at least 4 years 6 months of age and less than 6 years of age on September 1. The minimum age may vary depending on the school entrance age policy of the **school jurisdiction** the child will enter. Alberta Learning will not provide more than one year of funding for a regular **ECS child**.

New 6. An **ECS child with a disability** may qualify for more than one year of funding. See definition of **child** in the Glossary of Terms.

7. Alberta Learning provides funding for a basic 475 hour **ECS program** which includes support for instructional salaries and benefits, learning resources, furnishings and equipment. **ECS operators** may not charge a fee for services provided within the basic 475 hour program.

8. An **ECS operator** may charge a fee to **parents** of **ECS children** in a basic 475 hour program to offset non-instructional costs such as supplies, snacks and field trips.

9. **ECS operators** that offer an **ECS program** with more than 475 hours may charge a reasonable fee to cover the cost of the additional hours.

10. All individuals age 5 years and 6 months or older, but less than 6 years of age on Sept. 1 are counted as **funded students** (rather than as **children**) if they are eligible to enter grade 1 under the **school** entrance age policy of a **school jurisdiction**. The exceptions to this are:

- a) if the **child** has spent less than the number of years in the program for which he/she is eligible for funding, i.e., received less than three years program unit funding; or
- b) if the **child** has not enrolled in an **ECS Program** prior to this age; or
- c) if the **child** has been assessed as **developmentally immature**. This **child** is not eligible for special needs funding.

In these circumstances, when in the opinion of the **school jurisdiction** and the **parent**, an **ECS Program** is appropriate, the individual is counted as a **child** under ECS.

11. All individuals who are age 6 years or older, but less than 7 years on Sept. 1 are counted as **funded students** except individuals who are in an **ECS program** and are:

- a) **developmentally immature** or
- b) entering an **ECS program** for the first time.

These individuals (a and b) are counted as **children**.

12. An individual who is eligible to proceed to grade 1, but has been identified as **developmentally immature** and whose program plan involves both ECS and grade 1 instruction may be counted either as a **child** or as a **funded student**.
13. Individuals aged 6 to 7 years old, who require another year of ECS and who have been assessed as having special needs (mild, moderate or severe) must be counted as **funded students**. If an individual is **developmentally immature**, they are not considered to have special needs. If the individual does have special needs then they are to be counted as a **funded student**.
14. Under no circumstances can an individual be counted as both a **funded student** and as a **child** in the same school year.

REQUIREMENTS

1. New Private ECS Operators

The form "Notice of Intent to Operate" will be sent to new **private ECS operators** by their respective Zone Services Branch upon request. New **private ECS operators** will be required to provide a Certificate of Incorporation under the *Societies Act*, or be registered as a non-profit company under Part 9 of the *Companies Act*, or be incorporated as a non-profit corporation under an Act of the Legislature. Also required is documented proof that the ECS facility meets all applicable municipal and provincial public health, safety and building standards requirements, and a signed declaration that the program will operate in accordance with the *School Act*, Section 30 .

2. Existing Private ECS Operators

The form "Notice of Intent to Operate" will be sent to **private ECS operators** by their respective Zone Services Branch in June. **Private ECS operators** may be required to provide documentation such as the current status of their Certificate of Incorporation and proof that their facility meets fire and health safety standards.

3. **Private ECS operators** must complete and submit the "Notice of Intent to Operate" form to their respective Zone Services Branch by July 31. The information on this form initiates the first payment of the school year.
4. **Private schools** that operate **ECS Programs** must complete and submit by May 31 a **Private School** "Annual Operational Plan". The Notice of Intent for ECS operations within **private schools** is incorporated into the Annual Operation Plan.
5. All **private ECS operators** must advise their respective Zone Services Branch within one week of any changes which occur in facility, society, programs, or teaching staff during the school year. **Funded private schools** must send a list of any teaching staff changes to their respective Zone Services Branch by September 19.

6. A **private ECS operator** must maintain a blanket fidelity bond with respect to the **private ECS operator** for employees and board members in the amount of \$50,000 or the accumulated surplus plus 40 percent of Alberta Learning funding for the program year (the value of the first payment in the first month of operation), whichever is less.
7. Funding for ECS basic instruction is made on the basis of **child** registration information submitted to Information Services.
8. Funding for ECS basic instruction is calculated by multiplying the number of eligible ECS **children** by the rate for ECS basic instruction.
9. For **ECS programs** beginning in September, the **count date** is September 30 and the information must be submitted by October 3 to Information Services.
10. For **ECS programs** beginning after September 30 the count will be taken as of the last **operating day** in the month in which the **ECS program** begins. The information must be submitted within three weeks of that day to Information Services.
11. If any adjustment is required to the enrolment data reported to Information Services, please complete the "Add, Change, Delete" Form (form 03AL1.2c) and submit to School Finance.

CONSIDERATIONS

1. **ECS operators** who are intending to cease operation of an **ECS Program** should refer to the policy under the Appendices Section of this Manual.
2. Alberta Learning has an agreement with the Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency (Cancopy). Most **schools** in the province are covered in the license. Alberta Learning makes the payment for the license on behalf of all participating **private ECS operators**. The cost of the license, plus GST, is recovered from **private ECS operators** on a full-time equivalent student basis. It is up to the individual **private ECS operators** to apply for any GST rebate from the Government of Canada.
3. Edulink, a multi-functioned data exchange software tool, has been created to help **private ECS operators** and Alberta Learning simplify current data management and exchange processes.

Alberta Learning will deduct 35¢ plus GST per **child** on behalf of all **private ECS operators** using Edulink. This deduction will be made in September and based on the prior year frozen funded **child** count for ECS. The deduction will be reflected on the October funding statement. It is up to the individual **private ECS operators** to apply for any GST rebate from the Government of Canada.

Alberta Learning will forward the maintenance fee of \$195,000 to Edmonton Catholic **Schools**, the host **board**. This funding will provide for the annual maintenance budget, but it is not sufficient enough to pay for significant changes to the software.

REFERENCES

Advisory Manual on Early Childhood Service (1996)

Kindergarten Program Statement

Early Childhood Services Policy 1.1.3

Early Childhood Services Regulation AR 31/2002