



Equity & Inclusion Policy and Commitment for Child Care Operators and Other Contracted Service Providers

Organization Information

Name of Organization: Cambridge Family Early Years Centre

Policy and Commitment Date (Established): Fall 2025

Policy and Commitment Date (Updated): June 2026

For more information about this policy, please contact Carol Carpenter, Executive Director at carolcarpenter@bellnet.ca.

Introduction

Cambridge Family Early Years Centre (CFEYC) is committed to providing a safe, warm, welcoming space for all. We are committed to un-learning and relearning alongside individuals, families and our Cambridge community. By developing and implementing this Equity and Inclusion policy, we are demonstrating our dedication to our staff, the families we serve and all the children that we welcome into our play and learning environments and experiences. It shows we are supporting our overall goal in upholding an equitable early year and child care system.

2026 Equity & Inclusion Focus Area

We are committed to the following focus area(s) for 2026:

Our new policy will be shared with families, community partners, Board of Directors, staff and anyone else entering our space. Staff will comply with the principals outlined in this policy as we will provide ongoing training to help support this. We are committed to having a shared understanding of our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion goals within our organization.

These commitments will guide our daily practice and help us to build a community where everyone continues to feel seen, supported and included.

We will provide a link between families and community partners to work together for the sake of the child.

Cambridge Family Early Years Centre is committed to focus on the following for 2026:

Supporting All Positions:

-Regular 1:1 check ins with all team members on a regular and consistent basis (monthly at most)

Participation:

-Families will be invited to share cultural traditions, photos, recipes and celebrations within our space



Indigenous Reconciliation

Indigenous Reconciliation, within our organization, means recognizing and honouring Indigenous cultures, languages, and ways of knowing as essential to the wellbeing and identity of Indigenous children and their families. It involves building respectful and reciprocal relationships, engaging in ongoing learning and unlearning for all staff, and celebrating Indigenous practices in meaningful and authentic ways. This commitment includes fostering inclusivity across all programs and environments, promoting active community engagement with Indigenous partners, and ensuring that our actions support healing, cultural continuity, and the self-determination of Indigenous Peoples.

Indigenous Reconciliation Current Commitments:

-We will continue to offer diverse materials that are intentionally sourced from Indigenous individuals and agencies that connect with each family's needs ie: story telling materials, books, puzzles, natural objects, and bringing as much outdoor play materials to the indoors through loose parts.

-We will commit to ongoing learning, unlearning, healing, understanding and compassion towards Indigenous Cultures. We will encourage all full time and part time staff to attend one of the Indigenous Professional Learning opportunities offered by the Region of Waterloo.

- Encourage staff and community participation in ongoing grassroots reconciliation initiatives, supporting locally led efforts that honour Indigenous culture ie: Orange Shirt Day, Every Child Matters

Barriers/Areas of Growth:

-Prior to these allyship opportunities, the CFEYC team will have a facilitated discussion in hub meetings to ensure staff can speak to our participation with intention.

-Introduce the concept of sharing circles or territorial acknowledgements into team meetings.

-Connect with local Indigenous agencies to explore opportunity for colocated programs and knowledge sharing.



Equity

Our policy is to ensure equitable access to services for everyone who walks through our doors. We are committed to offering support and resources to all families, regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances.

We also prioritize investing in our staff, ensuring they are well trained, supported, and valued. By caring for our team, we strengthen their ability to provide the highest quality of care for the children and families we serve.

We strive to create a place where families want to be, and where every person is welcomed with dignity, fairness, and respect. Our approach to equity is grounded in being different, fair, and just, ensuring that each family receives what they need to thrive.

We commit to the following to advance equity in our organization:

Equity Current Commitments:
-Equitable access to resources: We provide diverse, culturally responsive food supports for families experiencing crisis, ensuring no one is left without care during challenging times.
-Each staff member now has a translation device available to them when needed
-All staff attended Spectrum 101 and 102 training when offered.
-Fair and inclusive employment practices: We uphold equitable compensation, including equal pay across genders, and ensure that all staff are valued for their work and contributions.
-Curriculum rooted in equity: Our curriculum reflects and supports the full principles of equity, ensuring that every child sees themselves represented and has opportunities to participate, learn, and grow.
-Our space is fully accessible
-We have sensory friendly materials
-On display in our drop in space are words like Peace, Unity, Love, Respect and ask families to write down how to say these words in their language.
-Our centre is child-led
-Commitment to reconciliation: We actively participate in reconciliation-based activities and learning, honouring Indigenous children, families, and communities through meaningful action and reflection
These commitments guide our daily practice and help us build a community where everyone feels seen, supported, and included.



Barriers/Areas of Growth:
-Lack of appreciation and understanding from public that EarlyON professionals are on their own learning journeys and may make mistakes and support and grace in their learning is needed.
-Staff are still on a learning journey.
-Asking families how they would like to be addressed (ie: Grandparents or nontraditional guardians)



Diversity

We are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment where everyone feels respected, valued, and empowered to contribute. We honour and follow the Ontario Human Rights Code, which outlines our responsibilities as an early year's organization and guides us in creating equitable, welcoming spaces for all. Our commitment goes beyond compliance—it reflects our belief that every individual deserves dignity, fairness, and the opportunity to participate fully in our community.

We commit to the following to advance diversity in our organization:

Diversity Current Commitments:
-We will continue to welcome families to highlight their language and cultural experiences as part of the posted documentation and learning invitations within our centre
-We provide an abundance of reading materials from authors of different diverse backgrounds
-We will foster an environment where families feel welcome, accepted and have a sense of belonging by speaking and displaying their language and culture
-We will continue to intentionally select toys, books, learning materials that represent the diverse cultures, languages, genders, ethnicities, and family units of the individuals and families accessing our space.
-Open communication
-Providing a map where families can indicate their location of origin and linking information shared in intentional ways (i.e. books in centre)
-Ensuring books and resources purchased for the centre are diverse and represent diverse cultures, languages, family types etc.
-Multi-lingual welcome sign
Barriers/Areas of Growth:
-Participants not always receptive to staff or other families speaking multiple languages within the space.
-Fear of being wrong or missing a celebration or not accurately capturing information in conversations or documentation onsite.
-Staff members with various levels of comfort in supporting families requiring translation/interpretation



Participation

We actively encourage participation from all members, ensuring every voice is heard and contributes to our collective success. We believe in fostering an environment where every contribution is valued and collaboration drives our shared achievements. By creating space for open dialogue, shared decision-making, and meaningful involvement, we strengthen our programs and deepen our sense of community. When people feel empowered to participate, they not only shape our work—they help build a culture rooted in respect, belonging, and shared responsibility.

We commit to the following to advance participation in our organization:

Participation Current Commitments:
-Our space encourages free play to help foster social inclusion
-We provide links to early intervention specialists and families
-We utilize resource professionals on a daily basis
-Children are excited to see staff and engage with them
-Encouraging to speak freely, forgiveness and mentoring amongst staff. Hopefully these cross over with families.
-We record reflections and display documentations to reflect the learning that is happening.
-Annual surveys to participants to gather feedback to inform operations.
-EarlyON closes at 12:00pm on Fridays to prioritize team reflection, environment set up, professional learning and co-learning across all sites.
-Environments intentionally set up to support adult and child interactions and differing abilities.
Barriers/Areas of Growth:
-Families are invited to share cultural traditions, photos, recipes, and celebrations
-Sometimes programs are full so we could try to offer them more often.
-Language barriers can impact the ability to receive, understand, reflect on and respond to feedback given in a meaningful way.



Access

Access to resources and opportunities empowers individuals to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to our community. Additionally, supporting families within our reach strengthens the foundation of our society and helps create environments where children and caregivers feel seen, supported, and valued.

All of our program areas are accessible to everyone. We have worked intentionally to remove physical and environmental barriers by creating wide, open spaces, ensuring ground-floor access, and installing push-button doors. These features reflect our belief that inclusion is not an add-on—it is a core part of how we design, welcome, and serve.

We commit to the following to advance access in our organization:

Access Commitments
-We provide a link between families and community partners to work together
-Everything we offer is free of charge to families
-Some of our staff speak many different languages and are encouraged to speak those languages with families.
-We will use language translators when needed
-If needed, private, personal or quiet space can be provided to families as well as community partners
-We ensure all shelves, chairs, entrance ways, floor space etc is easily accessible to all. Children can reach the shelves; wheelchairs can fit in our space etc.
-Where possible, community partners are co-located within EarlyON Centres or in collaboration with mobile sites to support families.
Barriers/Areas of Focus:
-Funding & Resource Limitations for inclusive materials, adaptive equipment, and staffing
-Language barriers between educators and families
-Difficulty navigating cultural differences and unfamiliar beliefs
-Educators feeling unequipped or fearful of saying the wrong thing
-Unconscious bias and discrimination affecting interactions
-Parents not always receptive to support or differing approaches and cultural differences in parenting styles and expectations



Supports for Diverse Abilities

Supporting children with diverse needs and special rights ensures they have equitable access to education, health care, and community support. It is essential for fostering an inclusive society where every individual can thrive. This commitment also strengthens families, empowers communities to remove barriers, and helps create environments where children feel valued, understood, and able to participate fully in all aspects of daily life. By recognizing and responding to each child's unique strengths and challenges, we build a future rooted in dignity, belonging, and opportunity for all.

We commit to the following to provide supports for diverse abilities in our organization:

Supports for Diverse Abilities Commitments
-Specialized ongoing training for all staff as offered by the EarlyOn System
-Continue to connect families with outside supports such as KidsAbility, Monarch House, WRFN, Camino
-Offer specialized programming alongside community partners
-Always offering diverse materials such as noise cancelling head phones, timers, sensory toys etc
-Our programs are free and open to all
-We strive to empower families to build their capacity for self advocacy
Barriers/Areas of growth:
-Participants attending EarlyON can make other families feel watched or judged when attending with a family member with diverse abilities.
-RECE professionals often have limited education or experience in supporting those with diverse abilities.



Supporting All Positions

Supporting staff involves providing fair working conditions, meaningful professional development opportunities, and a supportive environment. This is key to employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. When staff feel respected, equipped, and encouraged, they are better able to bring their strengths forward and contribute to a positive, thriving workplace. Investing in our team not only enhances the quality of our programs—it reinforces our commitment to well-being, collaboration, and long-term organizational success.

We commit to the following to support all positions in our organization:

Supporting All Positions Commitments

-The Executive Director always has an open-door policy

-Mental Health supports are in place for staff

-Respecting needs and time of others, both as individuals and families

-Training is provided on how to support ourselves and others almost on a weekly basis.

-Best Practices are updated annually to ensure shared understanding of expectations.

-Opportunities for intentional reflection and documentation time and paid planning time are provided to all educators within their work hours.

-All staff participate in Communities of Practice monthly

-We actively support staff with any concerns in their work environment.

- Time Away From Work Policies (i.e. vacation and wellbeing days)

-As a host, EarlyON closes at 12:00pm every Friday to prioritize professional learning, reflection, environmental set up and team conversations.

Barriers/Areas of Growth:

-Regular 1:1 check ins with all team members and their lead happens on a regular and consistent basis (i.e. monthly at most)

-Busy schedules and high demands make staff feel like they don't have opportunities for collaboration at some sites/programs.

-Budget constraints affecting staffing levels, and access to tools



Accountability Measures for Staff and Families

Clear policies promote transparency and trust, they ensure everyone meets their responsibilities and contributes positively to the community.

Cambridge Family Early Years Centre follows the Ontario Human Rights Code and is committed to providing an inclusive, respectful and safe environment for all staff, children and families.

- *CFEYC upholds EarlyON Standards through the Best Practices*
- *We display Accountable Space posters throughout the centre*
- *Staff receive Spectrum training*
- *YMCA Handling Harm training*
- *Conflict Resolution*
- *Mini hub meetings weekly and monthly staff meetings*
- *EarlyON Parent Handbook*
- *Ongoing trainings*

Our staff follow the standards set out by the College of Early Childhood Educators and have a legal duty to report suspected child abuse or neglect. If you have a concern about the conduct or actions of a RECE, you may complete the CECE <https://college-ece.caseiq.app/portal> . Additionally, if you are a RECE and have concern, you may check out this document from the CECE's <https://www.college-ece.ca/wp-content/uploads/forms/Professional-Advisory-Duty-To-Report.pdf>

Families are encouraged to speak with staff members or supervisors about any concerns. If unresolved by the Executive Director, concerns will be directed to a regional level, Stacey McCormick. Looping in appropriate EarlyON Lead to support staff in maintaining accountability. More information is available at the www.gov.on.ca , www.regionofwaterloo.ca websites.

Please feel free to contact the Executive Director Carol Carpenter email: carolcarpenter@bellnet.ca

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