

Purchasing Toys and Equipment

Play is a key element in childhood development and takes on a different meaning for young children. It is the way they experience the world around them. For many newcomer children this may be their first experience in a child care program and it is important to have appropriate toys and equipment that will enhance their development and experience. The right choices also support caregivers to better prepare the children for life in Canada. Parents will feel a sense of comfort as well, knowing their children are well cared for and safe while they focus on their own studies.



the necessities for a school age program. Furniture and equipment such as cribs, play pens and high chairs must meet guidelines set out by Health Canada (Hazardous Product Act). You will also need to consider the type of storage space that is available before selecting your toys and equipment.

Consider what the must haves are for each of the different ages groups in your programs. Factor into your budget replacement costs, maintenance and potential product recalls. Also consider how many locations for which you will be purchasing toys and materials.

The toys and equipment you use in your program can impact the safety and quality of the child care you provide. As an administrator, part of your responsibility is to ensure the toys and equipment in your program are safe and meet the requirements to protect the health and safety of the children while meeting their developmental needs as well.

This resource sheet can help you:

- Assess caregiver requests.
- Purchase materials and equipment within your budget.
- Allocate and spend budgetary allowances effectively.
- Choose equipment that will stand up to the wear and tear of a child care program.

Examine your needs before you buy.

One of the challenges in choosing toys and equipment can be how to make the best purchases for child care. To choose wisely you will need to examine the type of services you offer to clients and what the ages of the children will be. You will need to determine whether you will have infants, toddlers, preschoolers and/or school age programs. The type of the child care you offer will inform the sort of toys and equipment required. It is important to ensure that the toys and equipment you purchase meet the needs of the children in your care. What is required to operate an infant program will be quite different from

Make your decisions regarding purchases with the help of your caregivers. Discuss with them what is essential and what is not. Use their expertise to assist you when choosing; the ECE has been trained to understand childhood development and the materials that support it. They also have experience with adapting materials to the child care environment. Work together to identify the materials needed to address all developmental and cultural areas. Try to focus on the areas of interest for the children rather than those of the adults.

Remember children need to have appropriate toys and equipment, as well as proper supervision to ensure



that they are safe. Follow the standards set out by Health Canada (Hazardous Product Act) regarding the purchase of toys and equipment.

It will also be important for you to factor into your budget the ongoing replacement costs that are inevitable for toys and equipment as they wear out or break.

Considerations When Making Purchases

- Choose equipment designed for group care – more durable and cost effective.
- Purchase toys that are easy to clean and sanitize; toys that are not washable deteriorate quickly and can pose health risks. For example, young children have a tendency to kiss, hug and suck on toys.
- Choose quality toys - cheap toys need to be replaced more often.
- Test mechanical and electronic toys prior to use and check warranties.
- Avoid toys with sharps edges, rough plastic or wood construction which can be very abrasive on young skin.
- Consider the cost associated with toys and equipment that require a great deal of maintenance, the approximate life of the toys and equipment before required replacement, as well as batteries required.
- Purchase toys and equipment from a reputable child care supply company – these companies cater to group care for children and often offer warranties not found in local stores.
- There are many places to purchase materials for crafts and sensory play: child care supply companies, bookstores, grocery stores, and hardware stores.
- If you decide to acquire toys and materials from donations, second hand stores, dollar stores and/or yard sales, ensure that they are clean, safe and are made of non-toxic materials.
- There are many environmentally friendly products on the market; consider these when making purchases – you will be supporting children and caregivers in the program who suffer from allergies.
- When working with a fixed budget it is best to pur-

chase toys and materials that can be used by a variety of children and that have multiple uses.

- For children with English as a second language, the instruction of toys, games and materials need to be easy to read and follow.
- Select toys and materials that reflect a variety of the children's experiences and environment – have materials that relate to the seasons, and locations of the program.
- Cultural expectations will vary which can impact the choice of items.
- Toys can be the silent teacher and valuable learning tools; promote toys that extend play and are not gender specific.
- Children may not be familiar with toys and materials that have a focus on North American stereotypes, avoid trendy toys like Disney, or Barbie.
- Materials must be age appropriate – this is essential to ensure safety. Taking the time to choose appropriately can reduce the risk of exposing children to materials and equipment that can be dangerous to their health and wellbeing.
- Toys and equipment should meet the developmental needs of the children e.g.– no infant toys and equipment in the preschool space.
- Materials should be available in sufficient quantity to meet the developmental needs of the children, for example toddlers do not share well and will need multiples of toys where as preschool children may not.
- Purchase equipment appropriate to the size of space available – do not over crowd, or overwhelm. The requirements for operating a child care program set the standard for space, furniture and equipment for each of the different age group.
- Keep extra toys available for rotation – this keeps the children interested and will help to eliminate any behavioural issue that may arise.

Please visit our website for further resources and support.
www.mascanada.ca

Check Health Canada's website for product safety and recalls.
www.hc-sc.gc.ca

