Overview
There are two options for regulated child care in Ontario:

- centre-based licensed child care
- home-based child care associated with a licensed private-home day care agency

Licensed child care programs are operated by non-profit and for-profit providers, school boards, First Nations and municipalities.

As of March 2013, there are:

- 5,050 licensed child care centres
- 127 licensed private-home day care agencies
- 294,490 spaces in licensed child care centres
- 16,807 children enrolled in home-based care associated with licensed private-home day care agencies

How child care works in Ontario

The Ministry of Education:
- Provides funding, licensing and inspection to support high quality licensed child care.
- Ensures that complaints for unlicensed care are thoroughly investigated.
- Develops policy, programs and knowledge mobilization to support Ontario’s child care sector.

The province provides funding to municipalities and First Nations who are responsible for planning and managing the delivery of local child care services, including child care fee subsidies, operating funding and special needs resourcing.

47 Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards are responsible for planning and managing child care services at the municipal level, within provincial legislation, regulations, standards and guidelines.

- The Ontario government currently provides funding to 74 First Nations, one Tribal Council and three transfer payment agencies for on-reserve licensed child care.

Child care funding formula and framework

In December 2012, the government introduced a new funding formula and framework, a more transparent, evidence-based and equitable approach to allocating provincial funds that responds to demographics.

By giving municipalities more flexibility in their funding, they are able to adapt their programs to meet local need, while increasing stability and access for Ontario’s children and families.

The funding formula and framework are supporting child care operators as they adapt to the movement of four- and five-year olds out of child care and into full-day kindergarten.
Investments in child care
Since 2003, provincial child care funding has increased by 90 per cent, to more than $1 billion, annually.

The government is investing an additional $33.6 million over three years to further support the ongoing operation and modernization of the child care system, helping to protect the gains made through the previously announced four-year $346 million child care modernization investment.

Our government has provided investments growing to $51 million by 2015-16 to support child care operators, parents and children to seamlessly transition into full-day kindergarten.

In addition, the government is investing $12 million over five years to help non-profit child care centres make retrofits and renovations to serve younger children.

From 2012 to 2015, the government is investing $113 million to convert school space for licensed child care.

Child care modernization
On January 23, 2013, the government released the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework, which sets out a vision, guiding principles and strategic direction for early years programs and services for children age 0-6 and their families. The framework identifies the following priority areas for government action:

- continue with the implementation of full-day kindergarten by September 2014
- create an effective approach to implementing Best Start Child and Family Centres by September 2014
- improve the delivery of speech and language services
- stabilize and transform the child care sector

Child care legislation
The Day Nurseries Act is the legislation that governs licensed child care in Ontario. It sets out requirements to protect the health, safety and well-being of children in care.

The government’s next steps are building on actions to date to modernize and strengthen the child care sector in Ontario.

On July 10, 2014, the government re-introduced the Child Care Modernization Act. If passed, this legislation would modernize the child care and early years system in Ontario to:

- Increase access to licensed child care in home-based settings
- Include greater enforcement measures to support the safety of children in licensed and unlicensed child care settings.
- Help families make informed choices about their child care options.
- Strengthen quality in child care and early years programs.

The Child Care Modernization Act, if passed, would repeal and replace the Day Nurseries Act (DNA) with the Child Care and Early Years Act.

If passed, the Act would also amend the Education Act and the Early Childhood Educators Act (ECEA), 2007.

Child care licensing
The Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Branch of the Ministry of Education inspects licensed child care programs at least once a year. Inspections are carried out to:

- assess compliance with the Day Nurseries Act
- investigate complaints, issue licences and renew licences
- monitor operators who are having difficulty meeting licensing standards

In Ontario, an adult may care for up to five unrelated children under the age of 10 without needing a licence. (This is commonly referred to as informal child care). This means that it is illegal for individuals to look after more than five children under 10 years of age, in addition to their own children, without a licence. Informal (unlicensed) caregivers are not regulated or monitored. However, licensing staff will investigate complaints from the public about a person who might be providing care to more than five unrelated children without a licence.

For more information please visit: www.ontario.ca/childcare.