



# **Maximize** **Early Childhood Services**

**Team expectations for Delivery of**

**Early Childhood Services**

MAXIMIZE EARLY CHILDHOOD SERVICES

## **FUNDING PROGRAMS:**

Three different Early Childhood Services programs for young learners are provided through Alberta Education. The funding categories offered are Mild-Moderate Funding (MM), Program Unit Funding (PUF), and English Language Learning (ELL).

All funding is for the school year – September to June with strict deadlines to access the funding. The early childhood programs are designed to ensure that children are set up for success in the seven key learning areas when they enter kindergarten.

- Early Literacy
- Early Numeracy
- Citizenship and Identity
- Environment and Community Awareness
- Personal and Social Responsibility
- Physical Skills and Well-being
- Creative Expression

## **PROGRAM UNIT FUNDING (PUF):**

Program Unit Funding (PUF) can be accessed by children with moderate to severe challenges who are at least 2 years, 8 months of age and less than 6 years of age prior to August 31<sup>st</sup> of the funding year. PUF may be accessed for a maximum of three years for each eligible child. The final funding year must be the child's kindergarten year. Eligibility for funding is based on either assessments and test results provided by therapists, pediatricians, or psychologists, or on medical diagnoses. As with all intervention services, written approval is required by the child's parents/guardians. Funding approval from Alberta Education is based on the documentation meeting strict criteria.

Once parental approval has been received by the professional persons, the documentation is forwarded to Maximize Early Childhood Services (MECS) and, together with input from parents, educators and the MECS Certificated Teacher/Program Coordinator, we can determine eligibility and coding as well as appropriate supports.

*Except in extreme cases, children accessing PUF are expected to attend a **licensed** early childhood program such as a day home, daycare, preschool, or independent kindergarten. Please note we are not able to access funding for children attending kindergarten within a public-school board – the public school will have access to supports and services.*

### **MILD-MODERATE FUNDING:**

A child is eligible to receive Mild-Moderate Funding if the child is assessed with a mild or moderate delay in one or two developmental areas. It is expected that the child can follow directions and enjoys the company of other children in an early childhood setting (i.e., Preschool, daycare etc.).

A child receiving funding for support must be between 3 years, 8 months of age and less than six years prior to August 31<sup>st</sup> of the funding year and the final funding year must be the child's kindergarten year.

*Please note we are not able to access funding for children attending kindergarten within a public-school board – the public school will have access to supports and services.*

### **FUNDING FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS (ELL):**

A child receiving funding for ELL support must be at least 3 years, 8 months of age prior to August 31<sup>st</sup> of the current funding year.

ELL funding is available for 5 years. ELL and PUF cannot be combined, however, ELL can be combined with Mild-Moderate coding.

### **ROLE of PARENTS/ GUARDIANS:**

Parents are the foremost teachers of the child. Parents may notice challenges in their child's speech and language, motor skills or ability to regulate their emotions. Once a child is approved for funding, your child is assigned to a Certificated Teacher (CT) who will design an appropriate program and coordinate services which will usually include the services of therapist/s. Parental consent is required prior to provision of any services. The educator in your child's preschool or childcare is your first point of contact regarding your child's day to day program. The MECS CT is your contact for your child's individualized programming.

The information that the parents provide is of utmost importance. You, the parent, can provide information regarding your child's culture, background, or traditions which may positively impact the child and their learning / play program. It is important for the CTs/ Coordinators, therapists and all the people connected with your child have an appreciation for family celebrations and traditions that your child enjoys and experiences.

Parental support for your child during this critical time of expanded learning comes with certain responsibilities. General responsibilities include bringing and picking up your child from preschool, kindergarten or the childcare center at the scheduled time and informing team members if your child will be absent.

The CT's and therapists will keep you informed through contact notes, virtually, or in person so that strategies and progress can be shared – this has a significant impact on your child's success in meeting their individualized goals.

If your child is eligible for PUF you will be expected to attend 3 Individualized Planning Program (IPP) meetings per school year. These meetings provide a wonderful opportunity for you to share your perspectives about your child with the rest of the team members. The rest of the team members also share their recommendations, progress, views, and continuing expectations for your child. Scheduling of IPP's is done well in advance of the meetings.

If your child is not able to attend a scheduled session with a therapist or your CT, please let them know as far in advance as possible.

### **ROLE of CERTIFICATED TEACHER (CT)**

Once the therapists have reviewed your child's assessments with you, a MECS Certificated Teacher/Program Coordinator (CT) will contact you to discuss the implications and details of the program options and the requirements of the programming.

The MECS Certificated Teacher/Program Coordinator (CT) is a certificated teacher within the province of Alberta. The MECS CT oversees the funded program. They oversee your child's participation in the program they are attending. The CT that has been assigned to your child is trained in developmentally appropriate educational practice and play strategies.

Your assigned CT will use the recommendations from the assessments along with the input from program leaders and you, the parents, to develop and coordinate an appropriate educational program and where appropriate, make recommendations for Educational Assistant support.

The CT will visit the classroom to observe your child and to collaborate with the program staff on the child's strengths, challenges, interests and progress. They will often bring activities to support what your child is working on and, where an educational assistant is assigned, they will recommend activities and strategies to be included.

Amongst other responsibilities of the CT, they also visit children in their early childhood program to:

- o observe progress
- o deliver instruction to individuals or small groups, including enhanced program sessions for children who need hours
- o monitor for effectiveness of programming
- o mentor educational assistants

- o collaborate with program staff to garner input on programming, progress, and resources, strategies or PD needed
- o determine if additional assessments or support are required
- o demonstrate learning activities

They are the ones who create the Individualized Planning Program (IPP) for your child. This is a working document that is used by your child's team members throughout the school year. It will have your child's progress and successes. It is also shared with Alberta Education at the end of the school year. You will meet your CT and the rest of your child's team up to three times a year (dependent on level of needs) to discuss strategies, progress, successes and all of this will go into your child's IPP. This IPP will be shared with Alberta Education at the end of the school year.

The CT includes statements and standardized test results from the therapists and ties the many aspects of the program and people serving your child and family into the IPP document regarding the growth and development of your child.

**ROLE of PRESCHOOL TEACHERS AND CHILD CARE LEADERS:**

Preschool teachers and childcare leaders provide programs appropriate to the age and abilities of the children they serve. These programs are set up to encourage children to express themselves creatively and learn through play, music, art and physical movement.

Preschool teachers and childcare leaders provide your child's team with a summary of your child's success as well as their continuing needs. They have a working relationship with your child's educational assistant (EA), if one is assigned. They will provide the EA with information regarding the general learning expectations of the program and provide helpful strategies regarding your child. They will usually attend IPP meetings to make sure they are aware of the aspects of the services that your child has been receiving. Their input is also a part of the IPP document. At the end of the school year, they will write up a short synopsis of your child's activities for you and it will be included in the IPP.

**ROLE of EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANT:**

Depending on your child's PUF assessment, they may get an Educational Assistant (EA) assigned to them. The EA is the member of the MECS team who will work the most closely with your child on a day-to-day basis. You will have daily contact with them. They will be supporting the program teacher to support your child in the classroom as well as attending therapy sessions. They will be implementing the strategies suggested by the therapist/s into your child's routines in the classroom/ daycare settings.

They also provide feedback to the therapist/s and the program coordinator. That way everyone on your child's team is on the same page. They will also attend the IPP meetings.

They will follow the teacher/ childcare leader's guidelines and encourage social interactions within the childcare settings. They will model behavior and will set expectations for your child.

They will share your child's progress and successes with the rest of the MECS team and will provide updates at the IPP meeting.

**ROLE of \*THERAPISTS: (\*Therapists refers to speech therapists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists and behavior strategists).**

The Therapists are trained to instruct your child within the areas specific to your child's needs. They provide standardized assessment results to MECS who will then forward the results to Alberta Education for funding approval. The standardized assessment results will provide the basis for funding.

The Therapists guide the parents, teacher and the MECS team members by providing strategies specific to your child. They will usually attend the IPP meetings and provide the required test assessments, goal updates and summary statements for the final IPP meeting.

They will inform you, the EA, and the CT if they need to reschedule a session with your child. They will also provide another session date and time. They will be providing notes to the MECS team and to you. There may also be some homework for you take home.

The Therapists forward closing information and reports (where applicable) to MECS, CTs, and parents. At the end of the school year all documentation is uploaded to PASI (Alberta Education's central database) to be accessed by your child's receiving school.

**ROLE of MUSIC THERAPIST**

MECS is very fortunate to have access to Music Therapy. This is covered by Alberta Education funding. The music therapy sessions will not affect or take away from the funding hours that your child receives from other therapies such as speech therapy, physiotherapy, psychology, or occupational therapy.

The Music Therapy program has been created to provide additional opportunities to work on your child's IPP goals. Music Therapy sessions count towards the required programming hours. (See below regarding Enhanced Programming hours)

**ENHANCED PROGRAMMING HOURS**

Alberta Education stipulates the required number of programming hours in order for a child to be eligible for support funding. The number of required hours varies according to the coding/funding your child receives. The minimum is 300 hours for the school year, maximum is

475 hours. This equates to 7.5 - 12 hours per week over the course of the school year. For children who attend their licensed program for fewer than the required hours per week, we provide extra sessions in the same or nearby locations. You should have received additional information regarding these enhanced program sessions – please let us know if you have not received this information as, in many cases, it is important for you to be able to commit to your child attending the sessions. The additional information outlines the purpose of this enhanced programming. These sessions are at no additional cost, they are part of your child’s funded program.

We do recognize that you are receiving a lot of information and it can be confusing and overwhelming. If you have any questions at all, please ask the CT assigned to you or contact Liz Westman (Education Director) at [liz@maxecs.org](mailto:liz@maxecs.org) or 403 807 3451

We are excited to partner with you in ensuring your child is off to the absolute best start to their school career!