

ACE Partners with NECPA to Offer Voluntary Quality Certification for Canadian Early Learning Programs

New quality certification aims to support educators, elevate care standards, and protect parent choice

CALGARY, ALBERTA, CANADA, August 26, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [The Association of Canadian Early Learning Programs \(ACE\)](#) announced today that registration for the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) will open soon for ACE members.



**A Canadian Coalition Of
Childcare Operators**

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NECPA is a widely respected, independent accreditation body with over 30 years of experience advancing quality standards in early childhood education.

Recognized across North America and internationally, NECPA is known for its comprehensive

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*Krystal Churcher, Chair of ACE
National*

benchmarks, practical evaluator model, and whole-child approach. While based in the United States, NECPA operates globally, with accredited centres in Japan, Spain, and across the U.S., including Hawaii. Its 29 core quality indicators assess key predictors of program quality, including educator-child interactions, curriculum, family engagement, health and safety, and leadership.

Canadian childcare experts have consistently warned that minimum licensing standards, while important, may not be enough to ensure excellence.

“Minimum licensing standards alone cannot ensure high-

quality environments for children,” said Martha Friendly, from the Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

"Quality must be the central pillar of Canada's childcare system; without it, expansion risks being quantity without excellence," added Morna Ballantyne, from Child Care Now.

"We're excited to bring this gold-standard tool to Canada as an optional resource for providers committed to continuous quality improvement," said Krystal Churcher, Chair of ACE.

"Accreditation is a process that proves excellence, regardless of a program's ownership. The focus is always on outcomes for children, and this tool is available to all ACE members to strengthen the entire sector."

Key benefits of NECPA certification include independence, as it is fully self-funded and not government-administered, ensuring impartial, conflict-free evaluation. Peer-driven validation is also a strength, with all NECPA evaluators being current or retired operators who understand childcare realities. The process encourages professional growth by promoting educator development and evidence-based practice improvement. Accessibility is another benefit, as the program will offer support for small, rural, and home-based programs, including mentorship, professional development, and resources. Finally, Canadian relevance is ensured through standards that align with provincial frameworks in consultation with local experts.

This initiative arrives as many provinces, including Alberta, navigate the phase-out of previous government-funded accreditation systems and ongoing questions about space expansion under the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreement. By offering an external, voluntary accreditation option, ACE aims to fill a gap in quality infrastructure without adding burden to provincial regulators or taxpayers.

Churcher emphasized that NECPA accreditation is meant to compliment, not replace, provincial licensing. "This isn't a backdoor for deregulation. It's a frontline-led quality enhancement tool that ACE members can opt into to showcase their commitment to excellence," she said.

ACE is also engaging stakeholders, including educators, unions, and sector researchers, to ensure transparent implementation and continuous dialogue. "We welcome all perspectives, including those who raise concerns about privatization. Our goal is to raise the bar across the board while protecting choice, equity, and sustainability in childcare," Churcher added.

Member information session dates will be announced in the coming weeks to help operators learn more about the NECPA process and how it can strengthen their programs.

For ACE members interested in applying or learning more about NECPA in Canada, visit www.aacenational.ca/excellence-certification or contact ACE directly.

About ACE

The Association of Canadian Early Learning Programs (ACE) is a unified coalition of licensed childcare providers across Canada, from home-based care to nonprofit centres and private

operators. ACE advocates for a childcare system that is accessible, high-quality, affordable, and above all, sustainable. As frontline providers, ACE members bring firsthand experience and practical insight to the national conversation on childcare policy. United in our commitment to families, educators, and communities, we believe the \$10-a-day promise can only be fulfilled through inclusive, well-funded, and collaborative policymaking that respects the diversity of care models and the professionals who make early learning possible.

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