

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION



University
of Victoria

uvic.ca/rpkm

Enhancing access to early childhood development programs and services

What you need to know:

Providing equitable access and reducing barriers to Early Childhood Development (ECD) services is of incredible value as this directly supports children's overall development and future well-being. How we understand and/or enhance children's early environments can support children, families and society.

What is this research about?

This literature review highlights smart practice recommendations from scholarly and grey literature related to ECD programs and resources for families and their children before birth to age six, focused on prevention and early intervention.

ECD generally refers to children's earliest years of development, primarily from before birth to age six, which are the years of vital importance for children's overall development. ECD services are defined as supportive preventative or intervention measures intended to promote healthy development in the below six age group.

This research supported an evidence-based analysis and decision-making process for the Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island's *Early Childhood Development* impact area.

What did the researchers do?

The researchers gathered, synthesized and presented the relevant research, gaps and smart practices identified in the literature.

The researchers search online databases including Google Scholar, JSTOR, and Worldcat, by reviewing Canadian ECD service providers' websites for academic and grey literature (reports, etc.), and then by reviewing references to find additional literature. Literature and data was from high-income countries (HIC), published in English and in the last 20 years.



UVic researchers reviewed literature to support an evidence-based decision-making process for the Foundation's impact area "Early Childhood Development" (Photo credit: Design_Miss_C from Pixabay).



HUMAN & SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

RESEARCH
IMPACT
CANADA | Turning
research
into action

researchimpact.ca

What did the researchers find?

Four themes were identified in the literature and data:

- Health and nutrition
- Early learning and childcare
- Safety
- Race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES)

The review resulted in the following main findings:

- Children's formative years are of incredible value, a time when both threats and benefits to life-long development are intensified; how children's early environments are understood and/or augmented can support healthy human development on individual and societal scales
- Health and nutrition, early learning and childcare, safety and race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status are key themes in ECD; these themes are interconnected and complex, requiring ECD service responses rooted in nurturing care, utilizing multisector and integrated approaches
- Equitable access to ECD services, a reduction of barriers within HIC's ECD service systems, has become an international measure of quality ECD
- Smart ECD practices utilize people and place-based approaches and community driven development with the intended goal of supporting or initiating ECD systems' change

This review identified the following areas for future research:

- Vulnerabilities and resilience of children below the age of six
- Race, ethnicity and SES in ECD
- Changing landscape of British Columbia's ECD service systems

How can you use this research?

This review provides a synthesis of diverse ECD data and literature which will help ECD practitioners, stakeholders and policymakers develop programs, services and policies to support quality ECD services for children from before birth to age six and their families.

About the researchers

Star Gale is a University of Victoria (UVic) graduate student supervised by Dr. Kimberly Speers. The researchers conducted this research as part of a partnership facilitated by [Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization](#) between the [Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island](#) and UVic.

Keywords

Early childhood development; child development; early years; and before birth to six (0-6).

Citation

Gale, S. & Speers, K. (2020). Literature review: Early childhood development. In K. Speers (Ed.), *Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island: Literature Review Study* (pp. 43-75). Victoria, BC: University of Victoria.

Content for this Research Snapshot was co-created by [UVic's Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization unit](#), Dr. Kimberly Speers and Star Gale.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Children's Health Foundation of Vancouver Island.