

# The Student Advocacy Toolkit

An ECE students' guide to advocacy



COALITION ONTARIENNE POUR  
*de meilleurs services  
éducatifs à l'enfance*



ONTARIO COALITION FOR  
*Better Child Care*

# Thank you

This toolkit is dedicated to the students.

To the students who go above and beyond in their studies and their work in the ECEC sector.

To the students who spend time using their voice, standing up, and advocating for what they believe is right.

Thank you for all of your hard work and dedication.



Thank you to the authors, brave students that shared their stories and to the others that made this toolkit possible:

Rachel Neville  
Courtney Pusnik  
Candace Cook  
Carolyn Ferns  
Kim Mantulak



# Table of Contents

<b>Glossary of Abbreviations A to Z</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>What is advocacy?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Why should we advocate?</li><li>• Who can advocate?</li></ul>	<b>2</b>
<b>Why is it important for students to be advocates?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student experiences</li><li>• Sharing stories</li></ul>	<b>3</b>
<b>What could I advocate for?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The basis of the child care advocacy movement</li><li>• 3 big ideas</li><li>• How do I figure out what I'm passionate about?</li><li>• Different roles and ways to be an advocate</li></ul>	<b>14</b>
<b>What can I do?</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What can I do in 15 minutes or less?</li><li>• A note on the politics of child care</li><li>• Ways to make a difference with little to no financial resources</li></ul>	<b>18</b>
<b>For the New Advocate</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fears to dispel</li><li>• General pointers for student advocates</li><li>• Ideas for student led advocacy actions</li><li>• What to consider when planning events for students</li></ul>	<b>21</b>
<b>Webinars</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Empowering Early Childhood Education Workers</li><li>• Reimagining Our Relationships To Land</li><li>• Play/Grounding and Pedagogy</li><li>• Meeting Rural Child Care Needs</li></ul>	<b>26</b>

## Community Partnerships → 28

- How to create community partnerships

## I graduated and I am no longer a student, now what? → 30

- How can I find a community of practice?
- Where can I find people to join me?

## Financial Aid Resources → 32

- OSAP
- ECE Grants Ontario

## ECEC Support → 37

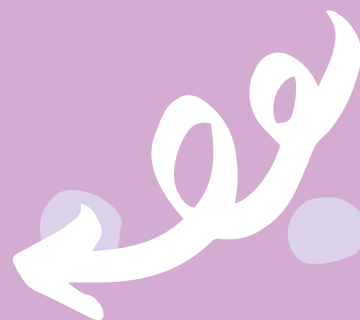
- A note on burnout
- Defining Decent Work

## Mental Health Resources → 42

## Become a Member of the OCBCC → 44

## Connect with Us → 45

## References → 46



# Glossary of Abbreviations A to Z



**AECEO** - Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario

**CECE** - College of Early Childhood Educators

**CoP** - Community of Practice

**ECA** - Early Childhood Assistant

**ECE** - Early Childhood Educator

**ECEC** - Early Childhood Education and Care

**MP** - Member of Parliament

**MPP** - Member of Provincial Parliament

**OCBCC** - Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care

**RECE** - Registered Early Childhood Educator

**TCBCC** - Toronto Community for Better Child Care

# What is advocacy?

The definition of advocacy is, “the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal” (Mariam Webster, 2022).

Practically, advocacy is “pleading or arguing in favor of something, such as a cause, idea, or policy; active support” (Your Dictionary, n.d).

## Why should we advocate?

The College of Early Childhood Educators requires that all RECEs “advocate for the well-being of children and families” (College of Early Childhood Educators, 2017, p. 7). RECE’s are bound by their responsibilities to their colleagues, the profession, the community, and the public. In order for RECEs to be able to advocate for children and families, it is also important that they advocate for themselves.

The ECEC sector is fraught with many challenges and inequities. As an important and trusted member of the community, RECEs have the power to influence decision making and advance important issues. Educators are called to advocate not only for children and families, but also for other issues that are personal and important to their own lives.

## Who can advocate?

RECEs and ECAs

Organizations

Community members

Students

Families

Children

Unions

Everyone!

# Why is it important for students to be advocates?

As pre-service educators you have a unique perspective and have much to share with the ECEC sector. It is important that students share their experiences and participate in affecting positive change. This can be done through sharing your experiences and stories.

## Student Experiences

Student experiences are important because students are connected to the most recent information about the sector, giving them a unique and important perspective. With the ever-changing practices and updated knowledge and policies, our sector relies on students as an important resource. Experience in the field is important, but students also have a unique expertise that must be valued.

The pre-service education of Early Childhood Educators is an emotionally, physically, and intellectually exhausting experience. Students are put through trials and challenges in order to complete their education that can sometimes feel draining and diminish our sense of confidence. It may feel disempowering and trigger doubts. If this has been your experience, you are not alone.





In school, students are taught to look up to child care experts and rely on their research and knowledge as the foundation of practice. This is an important aspect of our sector, but it should not outweigh the wisdom and instincts of individuals. You have valuable experiences that make you a child care expert too.

Advocacy can be a positive outlet for all kinds of feelings. We can use those feelings and experiences in our stories to discover common values and gain support. Advocacy provides the opportunity for community, connection, and shared understanding.

### Sharing Stories

Sharing stories is a powerful way to connect with one another. When we stay silent, we do not affect change. When we speak our truths we can connect with others who have similar experiences, and find strength and comfort in solidarity. Your story matters, your experiences are important, and your feelings are valid.

Read on to learn about how some students have engaged in advocacy and what this did for them.



**Rachel MacDougall Faussett** - When I graduated from my ECE diploma, I got a job at a child care centre working a split shift. I was so thrilled and excited to begin doing the work I loved. I could not justify the \$13 cost of taking transit to work each day because of my low pay. So, I would bike four times back and forth to work. By the end of the day the last bike ride felt almost impossible. There was a large hill on my route home from the centre. I would bike up the hill thinking about all the wonderful moments I had shared with the children. I used this as my strength to propel me up the hill. Then COVID happened and the demands of my work and the daily pressures increased. I no longer got to spend one-on-one time with children and spent most of my day sanitizing. In the afternoon at pick up, when I was outside with the children, things almost felt normal. At this point I had decided to leave the centre to go back to school and get my degree so I could hopefully make more money. This glimmer of normalcy made me doubt my decision to leave. I wanted to be in the child care centre, not back in school. Leaving my job felt like I was betraying myself and the children and families I cared for. I desperately wanted to keep that part of myself alive and stay in the field, but the low wages left me with this impossible decision. I am privileged to have been able to return to school, many of my colleagues do not have the choices that I had. Despite my privilege, I was making a choice I did not want to make. I knew that the problem was with the system and not with me personally, and it gave me an important perspective, but it did not change the fact that on my last day of work I had to tell the children I was not coming back. I could see the confusion on their faces, and I felt so much guilt. I left the job that I loved because I did not make enough money. I never thought I was a person who cared about money until I did not have enough. I was making \$18/hour. In the provincial/federal child care agreement, the government has proposed this is enough money for ECEs to survive. This wage was not enough for me to pay my bills or to stay in the field. If I had been paid better, I would still be at my job living my values as the ECE I know I could be. ECEs do not deserve to be so exhausted at the end of the day that they cannot climb the hill to get home. If we want to build an equitable child care system in Ontario, we must pay ECEs what they are worth.

**Courtney** - When I was nineteen, I had someone very close to me pass away. I decided to quit media school due to the stress I was under. At the same time, I had just landed a part-time job at a child care center to open the preschool room in the mornings. I loved being at the center, the smile on the children's faces lifted my mood when I was in a sad place. The bond that I made with families and co-workers was so special to me.



After a few months I was offered a full-time position. At the time, I thought it was great. I was considered an ECA because I did not have my RECE diploma, so I was making close to minimum wage. After three years of working that full-time position, the sparkle started to disappear. I would go home exhausted with my back in pain from standing, bending, and constantly lifting. I never had time for my own personal life, and I was only twenty-two years old! I was working a full-time job and in full-time school online for RECE just so I could get paid a couple more dollars an hour. When I finished my online RECE program, I decided to leave child care and continue my studies in social work. Leaving child care was one of the saddest decisions I have ever had to make because it is such a rewarding job. However, the financial and physical tolls that working in child care took on me no longer seemed worth it.

**Amber Straker** - I kind of became an advocate without even knowing it. It all started on my very first day as an eager ECE college student. I sat at orientation, beside my soon-to-be class bestie, as the heads of the program stood before us and explained all of the incredible opportunities this program would offer; school blocks interspersed with field placements to learn on the floor, special placements working with teen parents, children with disabilities, or with ECE advocacy and research organizations, and even international experiences. You could sense the ripple of excitement and nerves that went through us all. The next day we began classes. I went through the first year of my program switching between school and field placements, waiting for the chance to apply for one of those special opportunities mentioned at orientation.

In our second year, we received the usual form to fill out with placement info; where you lived and which age groups you've already worked with, if you have children in care, etc. But this time it was different.

Amber's story, continued... On the back there it was, the list of the special placements we could apply for with space to write a paragraph about why we were interested. When the placement time drew closer, we received the forms again, however, when I turned my page over, it was blank. We were furious. Now there's something you need to know; in this college ECE program, my classmates and I were in a new cohort of students. We thought the only difference was the schedule of our program compared to the others; but apparently this was affecting us being able to access any of those special opportunities mentioned at orientation. With the guidance of an incredibly supportive teacher we decided to write a letter to the chair of the program. We started with ideas of a letter that would explain how unfair it was that we did not get what the others had, but, it was already too late in the term for changes for our group. What we realized is that what we really wanted was for those who came after us in the program to have better. That was the point; not just making change for us, but for all. On behalf of my class, I wrote a letter, shared it with everyone and added their feedback and edits, and everyone hand-signed it. We gave the letter to the chair. She was grateful for our message and promised it would be under consideration.

Shortly after, we were notified that we were in fact going to be able to apply for special placements. I was so excited to be able to spend my time with the Child Care Resource and Research Unit. My field liaison for this placement was Lisa who is also the lead of the Early Years Professionals Rise Up TO! advocacy group, supported by the AECEO. I was welcomed to this group as a student, and it was the perfect bridge between the student advocacy group at my college and working in the field. It was here, as a part of the community of practice, that I began to develop relationships with other professionals in the field, where I could hear stories of what was happening with others, share my own, and see how related and interconnected we all are. I continued (and still am today) to be involved with the EYP group; taking steps back when life is too overwhelming, and becoming more involved when my capacity allows. What I felt and continue to feel in that group is acceptance, is a power of community, and it's what I felt writing that letter with my classmates. When we come together, we empower each other, and through that comes change.





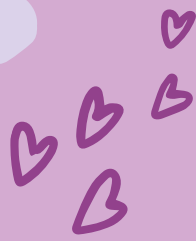
**Jessie Donnell** - I began working at a licensed child care centre in 2018 after graduating from university with an Honours Bachelor in Social Work. I quickly realized that I felt more at home working with children in the early years setting, and those around me often say that I have found my passion – and I agree! I applied to the Early Childhood Education program at St. Clair College in 2021 and attended a class dedicated to learning about advocacy in the early years. We discussed the lack of recognition for our dedication and hard work, the low wages, lack of paid sick days, constantly being short staffed... I know that this field is difficult, I know that it's going to get the better of me some days... but I also know that I want to be part of the change. I want to be the educator that children are so excited to see every day; I want to be there to cheer them on during their best days, and be their supportive person on their worst days. I am quite a newbie to the field of Early Childhood Education but it didn't take me long to realize just how important early years educators are – we teach the future! We help children to realize just how important and valuable they are to our society. I know working in this field as a Registered Early Childhood Educator will not be easy but I cannot wait to give it my all and advocate for what we deserve.

**Candy Cook** - I have known since I was a teenager that my dream was to work in child care and early learning. I knew that I had something to offer children, their families and the sector. In April 2014 I got my first full time job in licensed child care. I was only making 15 dollars an hour, but I felt lucky because my employer provided benefits which many positions were not offering. I live with multiple sclerosis and therefore benefits are needed to support my day to day well being. Without benefits I would have the added stress of seeking special approval for aid from Ontario's Trillium Drug Program. I would have to depend on this approval or I could not afford my treatment leaving me at great risk of quicker disease progression and relapse.

I truly loved being part of this childcare team because I could feel the collective commitment to children and families from the whole staff. But making 15 dollars an hour I was living paycheck to paycheck.

The story continues on the next page.

Candy's story, continued... This reality had me feeling a helpless sense of panic when my bank account would dip below 20 dollars between pays. Although I was living this way, I carried on because of my love of the work even in spite of the close to unlivable pay. For me, the connections made through my relationships with children, families and colleagues were powerful and meaningful. I could feel that we were making a difference to these families. One Friday night at 9pm I received an email. It stated that I no longer had a job. The centre was filing for bankruptcy and would not reopen on Monday morning. I felt panic as my stomach dropped. Questions raced in my mind. How am I going to pay my bills when I haven't been able to build any savings? How are we going to say goodbye to the children and families we had built relationships with? Where are those children going to go on Monday so their parents can attend work? It was a nightmare affecting all involved. After this experience I had to take a good hard look at what my future was going to look like. I wanted to be independent and confident that I could provide for myself and I just didn't see that happening in the child care setting. I made the heartbreaking decision to leave child care and move to a public school board RECE position instead. As an RECE with a school board I am able to provide for myself and I have job security, benefits and a pension, but what I do not have is the same level of passion for my work. My ability to truly connect in this role is limited. Instead of supporting families with a sense of community and having opportunities to connect with the children throughout each day, I find myself feeling like my new role is to monitor children during recess, nutrition breaks and when they are being led through academic activities by the kindergarten teachers as well as dealing with the behavioral challenges that disrupt the classroom. I have now gone back to school, yet again, to get my degree in early learning and community development to see what doors that could open for my future. Ideally, I would love to return to a child care and early learning setting one day, however unless better pay, benefits, and pensions/ RRSP's become a priority for this sector I do not see how that could happen. I am learning about advocacy in the ELCC sector and looking to find a role that works for me so that I can contribute to a push for change that would prevent other talented, high quality educators from leaving the sector as I truly understand the invaluable role they play in supporting children, families and the community as a whole.



**Anonymous** - \*Trigger warning: this story contains mention of racism\*

It was the first day of my first placement as an early childhood educator. I was excited to take my first step as an early childhood educator in a toddler classroom at a distinguished not-for-profit childcare. The excitement of interacting with children, the idea of getting one more step closer to my dream job as an early childhood educator, and the opportunities to learn from some of the best professionals in the field took me over the moon. The excitement soon ended; it wasn't long until I felt that the centre director/my mentor disapproved of everything I did in the classroom. I convinced myself that the best relationship would only form over time and that I was overthinking. During naptime that day, she pulled out her phone and showed me a newspaper article about a dog eating festival back home. Baffled, frustrated, embarrassed, ashamed, and an ocean of other emotions swam in my brain for the next two seconds. She continued to ask, "have you ever eaten dogs before?" I quietly said no. For the next few weeks, she continued to ask me the same questions, as if I would give in and "admit" I had done this horrendous act that everyone else seemed to be doing back home. I didn't know what to do, and I didn't know what to say. I couldn't process all the sadness and disappointment I now have for this field, which I thought would be full of happiness and opportunities. I knew that I could've spoken up for myself and that I should've told her how I felt; however, growing up being taught to obey and not to resist authority stopped me. Years have passed, and this experience lingers around me. Despite the challenges and knowing this field is not full of butterflies and rainbows, this experience made me stronger as an early childhood educator—and understand the importance of advocating for ourselves, our profession, and beyond.

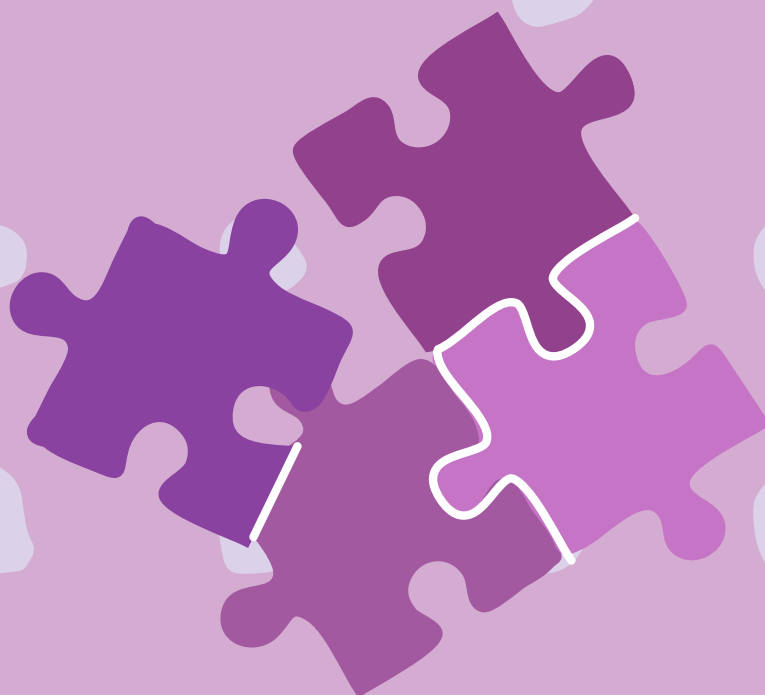
Please see the following resources on Anti-Asian hate and harassment:

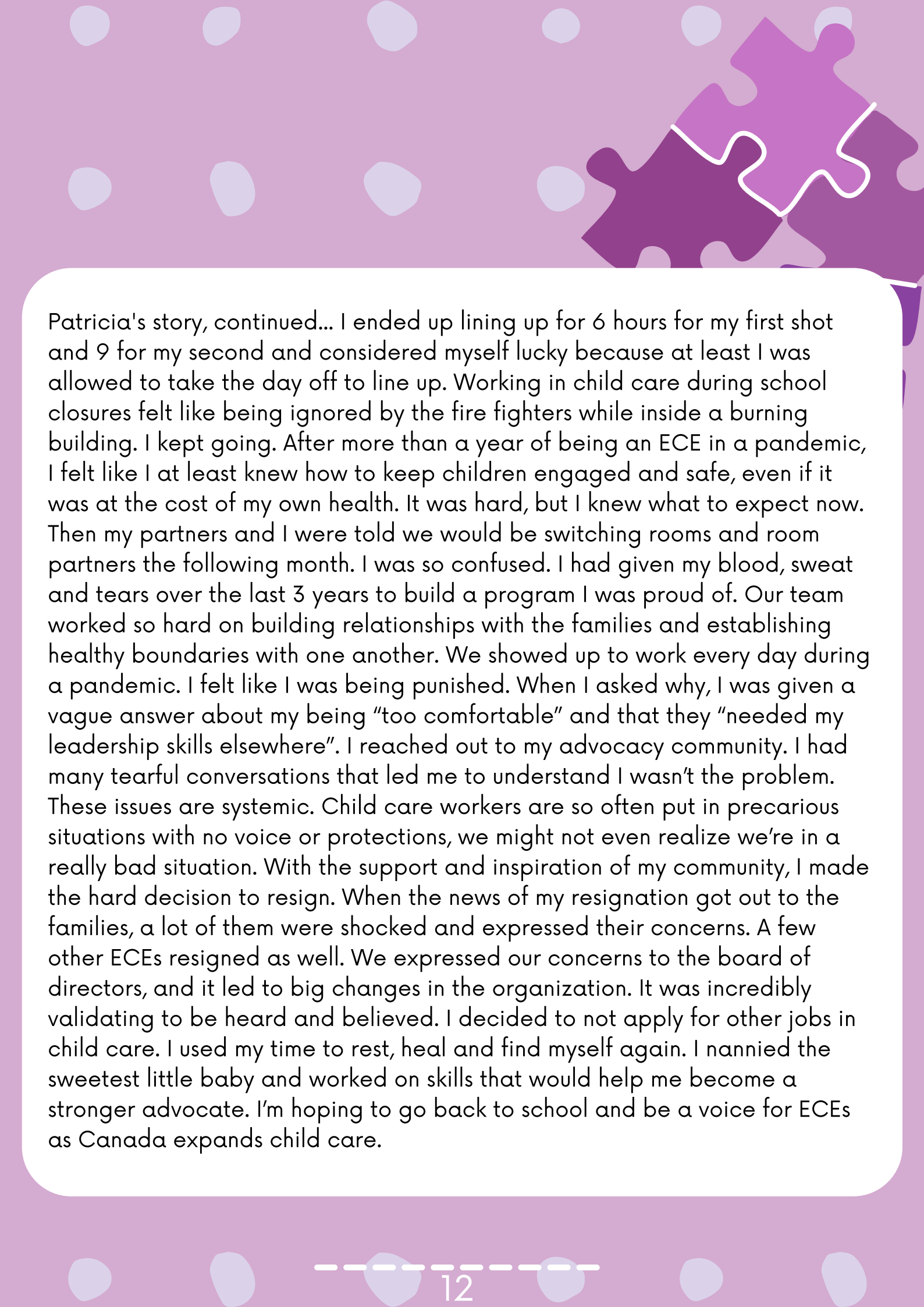
<https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/asian-heritage-month/anti-asian-racism.html>

<https://www.asiapacific.ca/education/anti-racism-resources>

**Patricia** - I constantly heard from friends who worked at other centres that they faced similar issues (xenophobia, racism, ableism in the work place, to mention a few) but their situations were aggravated by low wages, lack of planning time and paid sick leave. "It could be worse" was a common phrase exchanged between myself and my colleagues. I had a "good job", so at least the toxic work environment, abuse from management and questionable HR practices were "worth it". Right? Covid made a bad situation much worse. When we came back from the 1st wave of the pandemic, the joy and excitement over being back with the children wore off quickly. By the end of the first week, I felt incapable and incompetent for having a hard time adjusting. I constantly felt like the worst ECE ever. My mantra quickly became "I just have to do this until I'm a permanent resident". I repeated this in my head hundreds of times a day and felt so guilty every time I did. My mind played tricks on me: If I loved the children so much, how could I want to leave so badly? It got harder and harder to keep my spirits up. I had no energy for any kind of social life, plus I was terrified of bringing covid into the centre. All I did was work. Every time case numbers went up, and schools closed - but child care stayed open - I kept hoping the government would prioritize child care workers for vaccinations. I encouraged families to sign petitions and write to their MPPs. A lot of them did. But nothing.

The story continues on the next page.





Patricia's story, continued... I ended up lining up for 6 hours for my first shot and 9 for my second and considered myself lucky because at least I was allowed to take the day off to line up. Working in child care during school closures felt like being ignored by the fire fighters while inside a burning building. I kept going. After more than a year of being an ECE in a pandemic, I felt like I at least knew how to keep children engaged and safe, even if it was at the cost of my own health. It was hard, but I knew what to expect now. Then my partners and I were told we would be switching rooms and room partners the following month. I was so confused. I had given my blood, sweat and tears over the last 3 years to build a program I was proud of. Our team worked so hard on building relationships with the families and establishing healthy boundaries with one another. We showed up to work every day during a pandemic. I felt like I was being punished. When I asked why, I was given a vague answer about my being "too comfortable" and that they "needed my leadership skills elsewhere". I reached out to my advocacy community. I had many tearful conversations that led me to understand I wasn't the problem. These issues are systemic. Child care workers are so often put in precarious situations with no voice or protections, we might not even realize we're in a really bad situation. With the support and inspiration of my community, I made the hard decision to resign. When the news of my resignation got out to the families, a lot of them were shocked and expressed their concerns. A few other ECEs resigned as well. We expressed our concerns to the board of directors, and it led to big changes in the organization. It was incredibly validating to be heard and believed. I decided to not apply for other jobs in child care. I used my time to rest, heal and find myself again. I nannied the sweetest little baby and worked on skills that would help me become a stronger advocate. I'm hoping to go back to school and be a voice for ECEs as Canada expands child care.

**Savitri Sinanan (Savi)** - I am a RECE with years of experience and I love my job. I looked forward to going to work with School Aged children even with their attitudes and sassiness. I created an atmosphere of endless love, belonging, and learning experiences which made them look forward to another day. I was good at my job and I made a difference in the lives of all the children and families I've worked with but I had to leave the sector. RECEs like me with years of experience are leaving the sector because we are paid extremely low wages, do not have paid programming time, no access to paid sick days or mental health days. I remembered working for \$18 per hour in 2017 and struggling to make ends meet. In fact, I left a permanent position and kids I loved to make a few dollars more with a temp agency. Neither the permanent position nor the temp agency position had benefits, or a pension plan. Neither had paid sick days or mental health days therefore I could not afford to get sick or stay away. For me this was the determining factor that made me leave the sector and I know many other RECEs feel the same way. We are fed up with being exploited and we know we are worth more. On March 27th 2022, Premier Ford finally signed the Federal Child Care agreement after all other provinces had signed on leaving Ontario for the very last. When I heard Premier Ford announced a wage floor of \$18 per hour I felt angry and disrespected. \$18 was my wage in 2017 and I struggled back then and \$18 is not a living wage today. We need a government that will meet with RECEs and address the workforce crisis and implement a living wage and benefits for child care workers. Then, RECEs can re-enter the sector knowing that they have benefits such as pensions, paid programming time and a wage grid, not a wage floor. There is no childcare without a workforce.



# What could I advocate for?

**High Quality** – Child care services should reflect the best current practices and knowledge about early childhood development and the varied cultural backgrounds of Canadian families.

**Universal Accessibility** – Child care must be a comprehensive program that is available, affordable, and open to all children regardless of their parents' employment status, their background, or their abilities.

**Family and Workplace Policies** – Adequate parental leave, flexible work hours, and other policies to promote work-family balance must be in place to assist parents in the important role they play in raising children.

The basis of the child care advocacy movement is built upon these shared principles.

**Public Funding** – Public funding must be sufficient to ensure all of these elements are in place.

**Decent Work** – Everyone working in early learning and care programs deserves decent wages, benefits, and decent working conditions. ECE's and child care staff need decent work to ensure recruitment and retention of the best professionals to the field.

**Public Accountability** – A system of regulation and enforcement must be in place to ensure that early learning and care is of high quality. Public governance also allows for sensible public planning, to ensure that there are child care programs where they are needed most. Child care should be viewed as a public good, not a private commodity. All new programs should be non-profit to ensure that all public funding goes to the provision of service and not into operator's profits.

The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care has summarized these principles into **3 Big Ideas**:


1. Low fees or no fees for parents,

2. Decent work and pay for educators,

3. Enough public and non-profit spaces for all that need them.


## **3 BIG IDEAS** **TO TRANSFORM CHILD CARE IN ONTARIO**

### **AFFORDABLE FEES FOR EVERY FAMILY**




Ontario has the highest child care fees in Canada and long waiting lists for fee subsidy. It's time for something better. The solution to the challenge of affordability is to provide funds to child care programs instead of individuals and to set low fees or no fees for every family regardless of age of child, location or income.

### **DECENT WORK & PROFESSIONAL PAY FOR EDUCATORS**



Educators are the key to quality programs for our children. Recruiting and retaining qualified staff requires professional pay and decent work. To achieve this, a provincial wage scale recognizing the level of education and experience must start at \$25/hour for all Registered Early Childhood Educators. Operational funding for programs based on fair wages for educators will help us build good, stable programs for our children.

### **EXPANSION OF PUBLIC & NON-PROFIT CHILD CARE**



Ontario must limit for-profit child care and expand only in public and non-profit sectors to ensure quality, stability and accountability. Every dollar must go to our children, not into corporate pockets. The government of Ontario must ensure that all new child care spaces will be in not for profit programs.

It is important that you feel connected to what you are advocating for.

## How do I figure out what I am passionate about?

Passions can evolve from our personal experiences. Take some time to reflect upon your own life experiences, your intersectional identities, and your communities. Think about your story and the events that led you to where you are today. Many issues overlap and we must remember that advocacy does not exist in silos. We can approach advocacy from an intersectional perspective, and create safe and inclusive spaces for all. Your identity as an advocate can be complex and multifaceted. Whether you only have ten minutes, or hours to dedicate, all kinds of child care advocacy make a meaningful difference. Do not be afraid to get creative and bring along your friends and family to join in the advocacy fun!

Child care policy

Affordable  
housing

Food access

International  
student issues

Children's rights

**Are you passionate about...**

Indigenous issues  
and decolonization

LGBTQ2+ issues

Anti-Black racism

Inclusivity and  
disability rights

**What else can  
you think of?**

## Different roles and ways to be an advocate

Sometimes students and Early Childhood Educators see themselves and their profession separately from the child care advocacy movement. A study conducted by Macdonald, Richardson, and Langford (2015) investigated how ECEs can advocate for the sector.

The authors conceptualized three overlapping and interacting levels of advocacy:

Scope	Description	Example/Quote
<b>Micro</b> ("silent")	Conducting oneself ethically and professionally in one's day-to-day work (e.g., establishing positive and collaborative relationships with colleagues, children, and families)	"If you're working in an ethical manner you are promoting quality in every decision that you make then you are advocating for quality and to me they're one in the same."
<b>Meso</b> ("small a")	Actively speaking up for children and families at the centre level (e.g., helping families navigate the subsidy system, securing additional services, fundraising for the centre/program)	"I would say, am I working within a code of ethics? Values? Do I advocate on behalf of the families and children that I work with?"
<b>Macro</b> ("big A")	Actively seeking out opportunities to challenge the prevailing social-political order that negates the value of ECEs and early childhood education (e.g., participating in / organizing rallies, writing to politicians)	"Some of our long-time AECEO members ... they would say, 'absolutely, I can advocate,' you know, they're the ones who on their own will write letters to their politicians and so on."

Source: Macdonald, I. Richardson, B. Langford, R. (2015). ECEs as Childcare Advocates: Examining the Scope of Childcare Advocacy Carried Out by ECEs from the Perspective of Childcare Movement Actors in Ontario and Manitoba. *Canadian Children* 40(1), 100-110.

The micro, meso, and macro scopes of advocacy illustrate that there is a role for everyone within advocacy. No role is more important than the other and they all contribute meaningfully.

Your role within advocacy may change throughout your career, which is to be expected. We cannot realistically all contribute "big A advocacy" all of the time. If we all do what we can, when we can, the sector will keep momentum moving forward toward our goals. Consider your capacity and the amount of time you wish to commit to advocacy. Anything you can do to support advocacy efforts makes a positive difference.

# What can I do?

## What can I do in 15 minutes or less?

Advocacy activities do not need to take up all of your time, especially as a busy student. There is plenty that you can do in just a few minutes. You may also find that through these activities, new communities, friends, and professional contacts emerge.

- **Share a Facebook or Instagram post.** Engaging people in conversation and building awareness is important. This could be something you write yourself or share from a reputable source such as @ocbcc81 Instagram post about Ontario child care advocates call on Premier Doug Ford to cooperate with the federal government on child care: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQzHDxgNyy0/>
- **Join a Twitter conversation or use hashtags.** For example: #ChildCare #ECEPower #EarlyLearning #CareWork #RisingUpForChildCare #DecentWork
- **Send an email to your city councilor, mayor, or local MPP.** This is a great way to get answers to your questions and gain support.  
Find your MP here <https://www.ourcommons.ca/members/en>  
Find your MPP here <https://www.ola.org/en/members>
- **Download a fact sheet or an interesting article.** Circulate to your peers and discuss your ideas.
- **Brainstorm and discuss.** Have a face-to-face conversation with a friend, family member, professor, or co-worker.
- **Join a local organization.** Add your name to their mailing list and visit their blog or website for updates. Contact local organizations to ask questions or raise an issue or concern. Check out some organizations here:  
OCBCC <https://www.childcareontario.org>  
AECEO <https://www.aeceo.ca>  
TCBCC <https://childcaretoronto.org>  
CRRU <https://childcarecanada.org>

## A note on the politics of child care

Public policy and government regulations significantly impact the lived experiences of the ECEC sector. This may feel like an uncomfortable concept, but the ECEC sector is political. It is important to see advocacy as a positive avenue for influencing the policies that affect child care. Some people will not be sympathetic to your cause, but do not be discouraged. There will always be people there to support you and your work!



## Ways to make a difference with little to no financial resources

It does not take a big organization or lots of money to create change. Remember, advocating for the ECEC sector can take place in many forms. There is an advocacy action for everyone! Here are six things that you can do to advocate with little to no financial resources:

- ➔ **Engage your community.** Get the conversation going. Building awareness and helping others find their voice is the most important form of advocacy.
- ➔ **Research your community.** Get to know what free or low cost events are happening in your community. Share this with friends, families, and children.
- ➔ **Volunteer.** Volunteering costs no money and makes a substantial impact. Most advocacy organizations will always welcome volunteers, especially if you have a special skill. For example, if you are a strong writer, volunteer your writing skills to apply for grants or to write publications. If you are a musician, volunteer your skills by offering to host a fundraising concert or workshop. Engaging and giving back to the community is a great way to build allies and make connections while creating a positive impact.

- ➔ **Host a roundtable discussion.** Invite co-workers, friends, parents, and acquaintances to join you at a café to talk about a specific subject or cause. These types of small community dialogues are very powerful to support the building of a group or committee.
  - ➔ **Bring your voice to City Hall.** Most municipalities have opportunities to give deputations (short speeches to a Council or Committee). This is a powerful way to bring the public voice to politicians and decision makers.
  - ➔ **Fundraising.** Fundraising is a great way to secure extra financial support for your cause. Some simple and inexpensive fundraising options are crowdfunding, bake sales, raffles with donations from local businesses, and arts-based community events (especially children's art).
  - ➔ **Student Advocacy Groups.** Consider creating or joining an advocacy group at your college or university. Gather periodically to discuss issues you have experienced on placement and brainstorm advocacy actions you can take together. Check out some student advocacy groups here:
- George Brown College: [https://www.instagram.com/gbc\\_advocates/](https://www.instagram.com/gbc_advocates/)  
Sheridan College: <https://www.instagram.com/sheridaneceadvocates/>  
Fanshawe College: [https://www.instagram.com/fanshawec\\_advocates/](https://www.instagram.com/fanshawec_advocates/)
- ➔ **Communities of Practice.** Seek out local CoPs to find other like-minded advocates, get up to date information about the sector, and find a community to keep in touch with once you graduate from school. Check out some CoPs here:

Community of Black ECEs: [https://www.instagram.com/communityofblack\\_eces/](https://www.instagram.com/communityofblack_eces/)  
EYP Toronto: <https://m.facebook.com/groups/540693746299024/>  
CoPs in Ontario: [https://www.aeceo.ca/communities\\_of\\_practice](https://www.aeceo.ca/communities_of_practice)



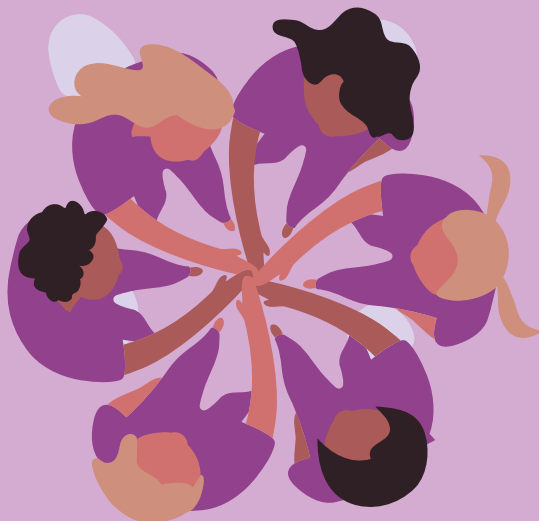
# For the New Advocate

## Fears to dispel

- **We feel intimidated to meet politicians.** Experienced advocates will tell you that once you start a meeting with a politician the “mystery” that surrounds them quickly disappears. They are just ordinary people doing their job. They are often very responsive to the voters because voters are the people that can affect whether they are re-elected.
- **When speaking to leaders or politicians, sometimes we fear that they will know more than we do.** Politicians are in decision-making positions in part because they have the interest, luck, money, and connections to get elected. Many politicians ran for office because they were looking for support on an issue. Politicians are elected to listen to and represent the concerns of constituents like you. Remember that you are the expert on your experiences and likely know more than the politician about ECEC. See this as an opportunity to share your knowledge.
- **We fear that we are not articulate enough or that we will freeze.** Most people, that are passionate about an issue, find it surprisingly easy to talk about it. Once you start talking, it can be hard to stop! Try practicing with a friend or family member ahead of time to gain confidence.
- **We fear they will ask questions that we cannot answer.** That’s okay. You’re allowed to be unsure of some things. Just be honest. Tell them you will get back to them, and then be sure to follow up. They will appreciate your honesty, and sometimes information that comes after a meeting is easier to digest. Remember that you can ask questions of them as well.
- **We fear that we cannot make a difference or impact change alone.** You are not alone. The Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, along with other advocacy organizations and trade unions, are with you and will provide support and resources for advocacy. They may also be able to connect you with other concerned citizens and local organizations. Do not forget, one voice can make a difference.

## General Pointers for student advocates

- Work through existing organizations, groups, and networks.
- Take your message directly to potential advocacy partners.
- Provide information and materials that others can use.
- Sometimes a quick email or phone call can help you connect with the right type of support.
- Make it easy for others to participate!
- Think of what people can do and what resources are available.
- Meet people where they are. This is a very important act in advocacy and humanity.
- We often talk about setting achievable challenges for children in our care, but we need to remember that all people deserve opportunities where they can succeed.
- Celebrate your victories! No matter how small, people are empowered when they see that they can make a difference! Celebrate online by starting a social media group, using documentation, and inviting parents and community members to see the impact of high quality care and programming.



## Ideas for student led advocacy actions

- Invite your peers to a sharing stories event. Share why you love child care, what challenges you have had, and why you are engaging in advocacy work.
- Host an information session for your peers and invite them to join you in advocating for child care.
- Meet your local MP or MPP to talk about child care issues.
- Invite a speaker from the OCBCC or AECEO to do a presentation for your group so that you can learn more about advocacy and why it is important for ECEC.
- Speak to your professors or student advisor about ways that you can connect with your peers that share your concerns and want to get involved.



## What to consider when planning events for students

When planning to host a gathering of people, please consider the following.

- **Location.** Is the location of the event accessible by transit and is there parking available?
- **Time.** Is the time of the event accommodating to the schedules of the people you hope will attend?
- **Food.** If you can, consider serving food! This is a great way to attract people to your event and also makes it more accessible. Be mindful of allergies and food preferences when selecting items.
- **Schedule.** Plan a schedule and stick to a time frame. Peoples' time is valuable and should be respected in this way.
- **Purpose.** Make sure the content of your meeting is useful, purposeful, and meaningful to those attending.
- **Follow up.** Try getting everyone's contact information so you can follow up afterwards and invite them to your next event.



- **Land acknowledgement.** Begin your event with a land acknowledgement to reflect about the importance of Truth and Reconciliation in the ECEC sector.

Find the Territory you occupy at <https://native-land.ca>

Please see a sample land acknowledgement for Toronto here:

Toronto is in the 'Dish With One Spoon Territory'. The Dish With One Spoon is a treaty between the Anishinaabe, Mississaugas and Haudenosaunee that bound them to share the territory and protect the land. Subsequent Indigenous Nations and peoples, Europeans and all newcomers have been invited into this treaty in the spirit of peace, friendship and respect." The "Dish", or sometimes it is called the "Bowl", represents what is now southern Ontario, from the Great Lakes to Quebec and from Lake Simcoe into the United States. \*We all eat out of the Dish, all of us that share this territory, with only one spoon. That means we have to share the responsibility of ensuring the dish is never empty, which includes taking care of the land and the creatures we share it with. Importantly, there are no knives at the table, representing that we must keep the peace.

This was a treaty made between the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee after the French and Indian War. Newcomers were then incorporated into it over the years, notably in 1764 with The Royal Proclamation/The Treaty of Niagara

We suggest brainstorming with your group to come up with other ideas of important things to include that may be specific to your purpose and peer group.

# Webinars

Webinars related to Early Childhood Education are a great way to meet peers that work within your field of practice. They are also a great tool to learn more about advocacy and interesting topics. Participating in webinars allows you to share your views and to learn from others.

The OCBCC and AECEO host and participate in many webinars related to ECEC. As members of these organizations, you will receive notifications about upcoming webinars and access to recordings if you are unable to attend live. The organizations plan the webinars around usual work shifts, making it easier for everyone to attend and participate. Through breakout groups, large group discussion, and information from guest speakers, participants are able to gain more knowledge and spark new ideas that can be used within our profession. Here are some examples of webinars that have been hosted in the past:

## **Empowering Early Childhood Education Workers in the GTA - Via. Institute for Change Leaders**

This eight week webinar dedicated two hours a week to learning about how to craft and use your own story to create positive change. Sub topics included designing a strategy to achieve the desired change, how to structure your team to avoid burnout and facilitate growth, how to recruit and keep volunteers, and how to choose a strategy and tactics that move decision-makers.

## **Reimagining Our Relationships To Land Through Natural Curiosity & Reimagining Relationships with Land**

This two-part webinar focused on how educators can model and incorporate their relationship to the natural world within their work. Topics included land-based inquiry, encouraging children to learn about their world, finding our own relationship to the natural world, how we can work with the natural world within our child programs, and the connection to Indigenous perspectives.

## **Play/Grounding and Pedagogy: Unraveling Relationships with ECE Playgrounds & (Re)Conceptualizing Relationships with Playgrounds**

This two-part webinar focused on our relationship with playgrounds and how we feel about them as educators. Topics discussed in this webinar were theories/assumptions we have on playgrounds and a walk-through of the decisions made when creating a new preschool playground at a child care centre in Sarnia. Images, sounds, stories, and questions that were inspired to rethink relationships with playgrounds were shown as demonstrations.



## **Meeting Rural Child Care Needs**

This webinar focused on child care centers based in rural areas of Ontario. Topics discussed in this webinar included challenges for child care within small communities and exploring what supports are needed.

## **Roundtable on the Child Care Workforce Crisis**

This emergency roundtable webinar highlighted how child care programs were left behind throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Lack of COVID-19 testing, appropriate personal protective equipment, lack of funding, and other issues that required government action were topics of conversation.



To find out more, check out upcoming webinars, and to register, please visit [https://www.aeceo.ca/professional\\_learning](https://www.aeceo.ca/professional_learning) or go to [www.childcareontario.org](http://www.childcareontario.org) to sign up for email communications so invitations come right to your inbox.



# Community Partnerships

Community partnerships are partnerships between a person or group and a community-based program or organization. An example of a community partnership is students from a specific school volunteering at a local food bank. The students and the organization mutually benefit; the student gains experience in the field and the organization gains volunteer support. Community partnerships tend to have the same goal and/or interest. This makes the partnership beneficial to everyone involved.

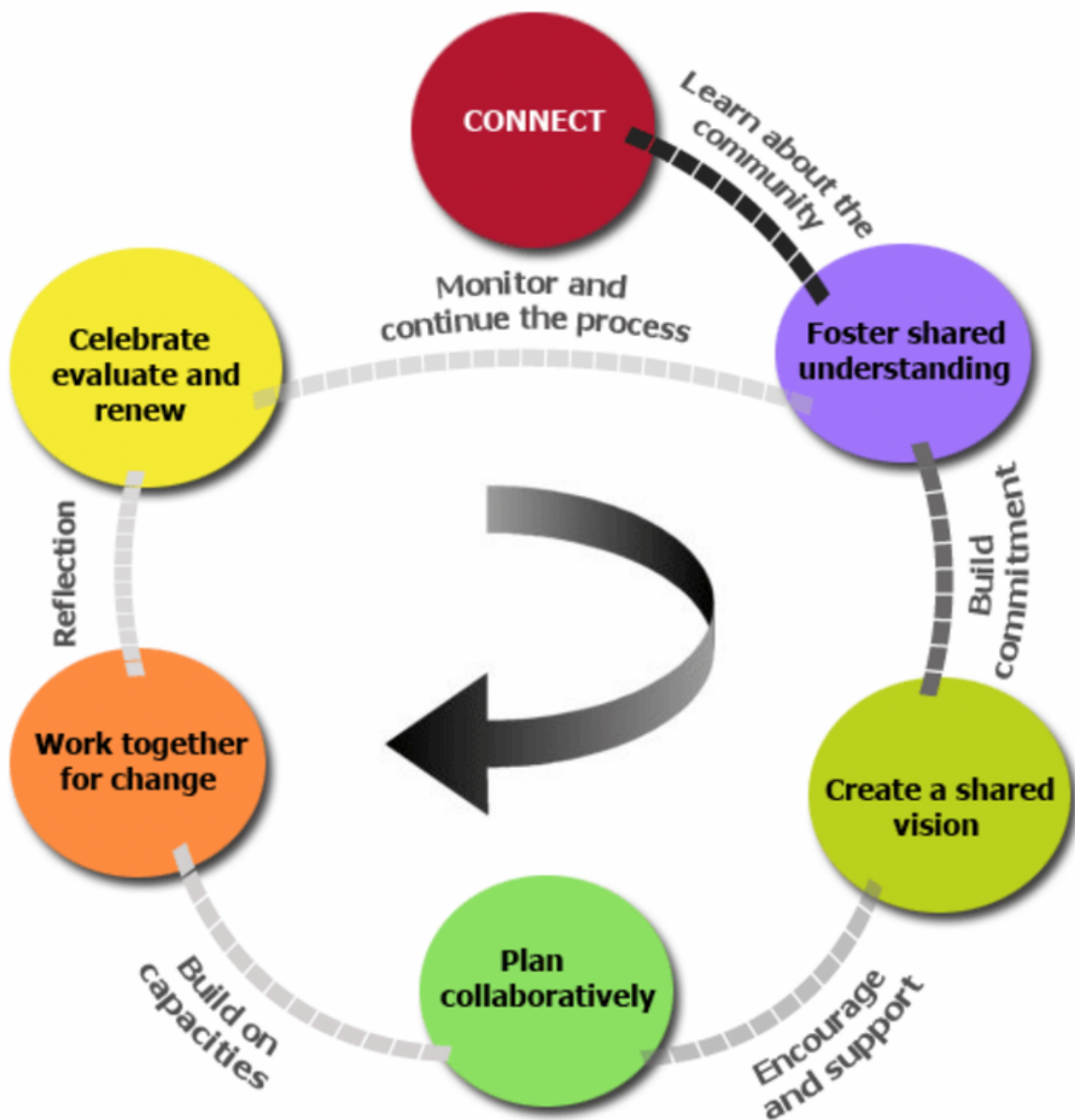
---

## How to create community partnerships

1. The first step in finding a community partnership is to connect with others who share your goal. For example, if you are interested in advocacy, investigate extracurricular activities that involve your advocacy passion. You could also reach out to an organization to see if they have any advocacy efforts that you could support.
2. The second step of creating a community partnership is to make sure that you and the organization have the same understanding about how you will both benefit from the partnership.
3. The third step is to create a shared vision or desired outcome of the collaboration.
4. The fourth step is to collaboratively plan how you will realize desired outcomes. This includes planning exact steps and brainstorming the tasks you will undertake collaboratively.
5. The fifth step is to put your plan into action to create the desired outcomes.
6. The sixth step is to review and evaluate how the community partnership worked. This is a good time to reflect on whether the partnership went well, what could have gone better, and what you would change next time.

(Quality Improvement and Innovation Partnership, 2010)

The flow of how community partnerships are formed and maintained:



# I graduated and am no longer a student, now what?

✦ ✦ ✦ Congratulations, you graduated! ✦ ✦ ✦

If you enjoyed being a student advocate, there is no need for the journey to end. Continuing your advocacy journey throughout your career as an ECE is an important part of your practice.



## How can I find a community of practice?

The AECEO facilitates CoPs where educators can learn, discuss, and connect about child care advocacy. These small groups meet periodically to collaboratively advocate and unite the ECEC workforce. The groups are organized according to different regions, so people can meet other educators in their geographical area.

To get involved and reach out to your local group, visit:  
[https://www.aeceo.ca/communities\\_of\\_practice](https://www.aeceo.ca/communities_of_practice)

Making connections before you leave school is a great way to sustain advocacy into your career. Many schools have extracurricular opportunities that are connected to communities of practice. If you are unsure where to look, go to your student hub or ask a professor or academic advisor to point you in the direction of your interest. If you are interested in advocacy for early childhood educators, express that so they can point you in the right direction. If you cannot find anything that suits your needs, find something similar and suggest your ideas on adding a community of practice.

## Where can I find people to join me?

To get (and keep) others involved, they must have the same goals and interests. If you are looking for others to join you on your advocacy journey, look to where you share similar interests. For example, if you wanted to advocate for lower child care fees you could look to who you know that is affected by this. You may ask students that are parents to join your efforts, as they may have the same passion and goals as you.



# Financial Aid Resources

## Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP)

What is OSAP?

OSAP is a student financial aid program that provides funding for post secondary education for residents of Ontario. It is run by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, and funds are provided by the federal and provincial governments. OSAP is available for both full-time and part-time studies at approved post secondary institutions. Funding consists of a combination of loans and grants. You are only required to pay back the loan portion of the funding when you finish school.

Who can receive OSAP? Ontario residents of any age who are:

- Canadian citizens
- Permanent residents
- Protected Persons



You can not receive OSAP if you:

- Do not meet the academic progress requirements.
- Have enough financial resources, including other forms of government aid, to cover your expenses.
- Report income on your OSAP application that is significantly different from what you reported to the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).
- Have defaulted on a student loan.
- Have grant or bursary overpayments or multiple outstanding loan overpayments.
- Failed a credit check.
- Declared bankruptcy or consumer proposal, or consolidation orders.
- Have reached your lifetime limit of student loan funding (340 weeks of funding, 400 weeks of funding for doctoral studies, 520 weeks of funding for students with disabilities).
- Are an international student.
- Are not a resident of Ontario.

(Learn about OSAP, 2017)

You can learn more about OSAP at:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/learn-about-osap>

Find out how to apply for OSAP at:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/how-apply-osap#section-0>.



## ECE Grants Ontario

What is a grant?

Grants are a kind of financial aid offered based on a student's ability to pay for their education or how much demand there is in the workforce for professionals with a certain skill set. Funds awarded through grants can be used for expenses necessary for school, such as paying for your rent, food, buying textbooks, or paying your tuition fees. Grants are never required to be paid back, so it is money given to you so that you can complete your education with practically no strings attached (Griffiths, 2020).

ECE Grants Ontario is a grant program that will help cover costs for students taking Early Childhood Education programs as well as Applied Arts and Technology programs. This grant program may be a great resource for people looking to get their ECE diploma.

There are multiple types of grants that the program offers, mostly covering all expenses towards school fees.

To learn more, visit <https://ecegrants.on.ca>

## Education Grant

The education grant is directed to covering all fees related to studies within a recognized Early Childhood Education program. The fees covered within this grant are tuition, travel, and textbook fees. The education grant applies to someone who has been working in an early learning setting and is looking to complete their diploma.



### **The requirements:**

- Be an employee of Early ON Child and Family Centre or employed in a child care and family program funded under any Indigenous-led Child & Family Centres. Required 6 months of employment is exempted.
- Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) agencies providing ongoing support to children with special needs attending licensed child care or Early ON settings. Required 6 months of employment is exempted.
- Applicants who have completed the Skills Ontario Pilot for employment in child care are exempt from the required 6 months of employment.

**OR**

- Individuals must work for 6 months past or present within: Licensed child care centres, licensed home child care, unlicensed home child care, formal early learning settings, which include: school boards, head start programs, private schools, or other formal early learning child care, child and family programs, special needs resourcing agencies or school curriculum-linked programs.

### **Applicants must:**

- Be enrolled in or accepted to a recognized community college in Ontario for full-time or part-time studies towards an Early Childhood Education diploma.
- Disclose if the applicant is receiving bursaries/grants or awards from other sources (excluding loans).
- Be living and/or working in Ontario.

### **Training allowance**

When accepted for the education grant, students will also receive a training allowance. Training allowance is money that is given to recipients to assist with living costs and other costs during the duration of their studies.

- Full-time students who have left their employment to pursue full-time studies will receive the full training allowance in the amount of \$5,000.00 per semester.
- Full time students who remain employed will receive a \$300.00 training allowance for each course taken per semester.
- Part time students will receive a \$300.00 training allowance for each course taken for a minimum of \$500 per semester.

(Information taken directly from ECE Grants Ontario)

## Leadership Grant

The leadership grant is directed to covering all the fees related to studies within applied arts and technology. This grant is specifically geared towards individuals in a supervisor role or someone looking to obtain a supervisor role within the early learning sector.

### The requirements:

Be an existing employee of a licensed home or centre-based agency, EarlyON Child and Family Centres, Head Start Programs or of a publicly funded school in Ontario including, First Nation Education Authorities for at least 2 years as a Registered Early Childhood Educator and currently employed as a:

- Supervisor or be in a designated supervisory position with Director/Ministry approval if less than 2 years.
- Front line registered Early Childhood Educator who has been designated to a leadership position and or has leadership/supervisory responsibilities.
- Registered Early Childhood Educator aspiring to become a Supervisor in the field of Early Childhood Educations.
- The two-year employment eligibility requirement is waived for Francophone and Indigenous applicants.

Be enrolled to pursue courses through a recognized Ontario College for Applied Arts and Technology for part-time studies in an eligible field of study, which include:

- Pedagogical leadership in Early Childhood Education.
- Early Childhood Education administration and management.
- Facilities management.
- Financial management, responsibility and child care governance.
- Human resources, employment standards and labour relations.
- Disclose if he/she is receiving funding from other sources (excluding OSAP Provincial Student Loans).
- Be legally entitled to live and work in Canada.



(Information taken directly from ECE Grants Ontario)

# ECEC Support

COALITION ONTARIENNE POUR  
de meilleurs services  
éducatifs à l'enfance



ONTARIO COALITION FOR  
**Better Child Care**

The **Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care** is Ontario's central advocacy group for a universal, affordable, high quality, public and non-profit system of Early Childhood Education and Care. Our members are ECEs, child care workers, parents, grandparents, centre directors and trade unionists - most importantly we are people who care about child care. Please visit <https://www.childcareontario.org> for helpful tools and resources to get you started on your advocacy journey. Check out the "take action" tab for ways you can get involved in campaigns.

The **Child Care Resource and Research Unit (CRRU)** is a non-profit, non-partisan policy research institute with a mandate to work towards an equitable, high quality, publicly funded, inclusive ECEC system for all Canadians. CRRU works with other researchers, non-governmental organizations, advocacy groups, government policy makers across multiple levels of government, and the early childhood education community.



Visit <https://childcarecanada.org>



**Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario (AECEO)** is the professional association for ECEs in Ontario. The mission of the AECEO is to serve and act on behalf of early childhood educators in Ontario. Their website is a great place to learn about professional pay and decent work, and to sign up for professional learning opportunities.

Visit <https://www.aeceo.ca>

**Child Care Now** is dedicated to advocating for a publicly funded, inclusive, quality, non-profit child care system. Their organization is non-profit, membership-based and regionally representative.



Visit <https://allforchildcare.ca>



**Toronto Community for Better Child Care (TCBCC)** is a broadly based non-profit organization working to establish a comprehensive, high quality, universally accessible, non-profit, publicly funded child care system.

Visit <https://childcaretoronto.org/>



People in the ECEC sector may need support if they experience burnout. How burnout may manifest in the ECEC sector:

- Educators lose interest in their work.
- They feel lethargic, cut corners, or are unenthusiastic.
- They lack passion when it comes to activity planning, repeating the same activities often, or not feeling creative.
- May start to use their phone on the floor.
- May gossip in the break room with colleagues or student ECEs.
- Difficulty sleeping, anxiety, physical aches and pains.
- Feelings of cynicism, pessimism, angry outbursts, lack of patience, crying.
- Mental health challenges.

### **A note on burnout**

Advocacy, working in the centre, and student life are all very challenging. Burnout can happen as a result of these experiences. Burnout is a state of fatigue that occurs because of prolonged and repeated stress (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2022). This can manifest as physical, emotional, and/or mental exhaustion that can make you feel hopeless and disinterested in your work (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 2022).



Student ECEs and RECEs in the field may both feel burnout due to the demands of their workload and working conditions of the sector. This is not a moral failing or an individual problem. Burnout manifests and thrives in a child care system that does not adequately support students and educators. The AECEO's Decent Work Charter promotes a vision for decent work within organizational cultures in the early childhood sector (Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, 2022). Invite your workplace or placement site to sign on to the charter to foster a positive and healthy culture in the ECEC sector. While the Four Foundations for Learning in Ontario's pedagogical document, "How Does Learning Happen?" is aimed to guide the work of professionals in their work with children and families, we believe that these four foundations are also aligned with the value of the workforce itself.

## Defining Decent Work

**Belonging:** Recognition of staff as valued professionals. Commitment to establish and maintain structures and resources internally and externally that recognize the critical role early childhood staff perform in the delivery of quality programs. For example, paid planning time and policies that recognize and support educators in fulfilling the CECE Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

**Well being:** Commitment to establish and maintain strategies to provide professional pay for professional work. For example, benefit packages and annual salary increases to account for the cost of living.

**Engagement:** Commitment to establish and maintain structures and resources to support early childhood professionals in all aspects of ongoing professional learning. For example, paid professional development days to recognize accomplishments and to identify and support career development aspirations.

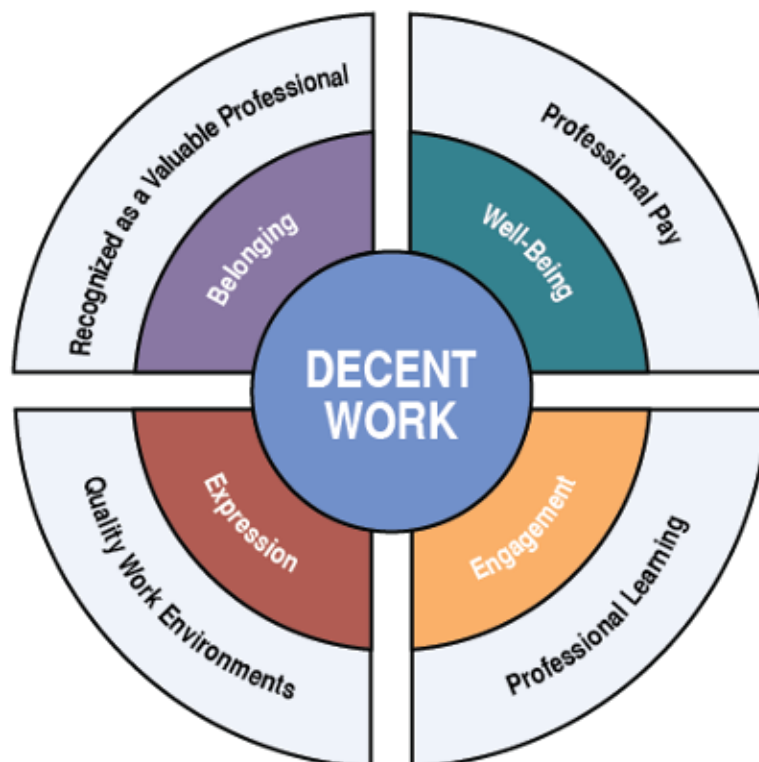
**Expression:** Commitment to establish and maintain structures and resources that promote belonging, inclusion, diversity, well-being, engagement, and expression in the work environment. For example, accessible, inclusive, collaborative, responsive, respectful, and safe work cultures. This includes fair and transparent policies and procedures.

(Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, 2022)

These four elements of decent work may look and feel different for everyone. Reflect on what belonging, well being, engagement, and expression feel like for you.

Consider:

- What was your best placement or workplace experience?
- Think of a time that you really felt committed to your work, when you felt like you really 'owned' what you were doing and felt effective and engaged.
- What are a few things about the organization or its structure that you feel made this possible?



***BELONGING:*** Recognition of staff as valued professionals

***WELL BEING:*** Professional Pay/Compensation

***ENGAGEMENT:*** Professional Learning

***EXPRESSION:*** Quality work environments

(Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario, 2022)

# Mental Health Resources

The ECEC sector and student experience can be challenging. Caring for your mental health and prioritizing self-care must come first. You are not alone. You deserve to feel your best and receive support. Please take some time to review the following free resources.

- **Couch MD** provides quick, convenient, and confidential access to doctors by phone who can help with mental health. Call 647-365-4870 or visit <https://www.couchmd.ca>
- **Wellness Together Canada** is a free mental health and substance use website to support people across Canada. They offer coaching, monitored communities of support and individual phone, video, and text counseling. Call 1-866-585-0445 or visit <https://www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA>
- **Canada Suicide Prevention Service** offers 24/7/365 bilingual support to people in Canada who have concerns about suicide. Phone line available 24/7. Call 1-833-456-4566 or visit [www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/](http://www.crisisservicescanada.ca/en/)
- **Distress and Crisis Ontario** offers support and a variety of services to their communities. Visit <http://www.dcontario.org/>
- **LGBT Youthline Ontario** offers Ontario-wide peer-support for lesbian, gay bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirited, queer and questioning young people. Call 647-694-4275 or visit <https://www.youthline.ca/>



- **Indigenous Peoples Hope for Wellness Helpline** offers immediate mental health counseling and crisis intervention for all Indigenous peoples across Canada (available in some Indigenous languages). Call 1-855-242-3310 or visit <https://hopeforwellness.ca/home.html>
- **Yoga with Adrienne** has free yoga and meditation videos to support your mental and physical health. Check them out on YouTube. Consider trying the video called "Meditation for Learning". Find it here: <https://youtu.be/8YDd8Wgjj28>
- **Universities and colleges** have free counseling services available to their students. Check out your school's website for more information.

Your mental well-being  
must come first!



# Become an OCBCC Member

Becoming a member means that you are contributing to change. Your membership allows the OCBCC to continue working towards positive changes in the sector. Your membership will also connect you to support in the form of information, materials, publications, guidance, strategic planning, and local initiatives. Membership benefits also include:

- Regular email newsletters to members containing news about policy and advocacy.
- Community events and workshops throughout the province.
- Class talks and lectures. If you would like us to visit your community, please reach out.
- Centre visits. Talks about advocacy and the importance of advocacy in the sector.
- Employee benefits plans are available for centre members with our partners the Community Services Benefits Trust.
- We organize Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day every October to recognize the importance of the work ECEs and Child Care Workers do for our communities. On this day, and every day, we call for better working conditions, wages and support for workers in the sector.



## Connect with Us

Please feel free to reach out to us anytime.  
We would be happy to hear from you!



Visit our website: [childcareontario.org](http://childcareontario.org)

Follow us on Twitter: [twitter.com/ChildCareON](https://twitter.com/ChildCareON)

Follow us on Instagram: [@ocbcc81](https://www.instagram.com/ocbcc81)

Like and follow us on Facebook: [facebook.com/OCBCC/](https://facebook.com/OCBCC/)

Email us: [info@childcareontario.org](mailto:info@childcareontario.org)

Call us at: 416-538-0628



Carolyn Ferns  
Public Policy and Government  
Relations Coordinator



Kim Mantulak, RECE  
Membership and  
Administration Coordinator



Adebola Adefioye, RECE  
Project Officer

# References

Advocacy Meaning. (n.d.). Your Dictionary.  
<https://www.yourdictionary.com/advocacy>

Advocate. (2022). Marriam- Webster. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/advocate>

Association of Early Childhood Educators Ontario. (2022). Ontario early childhood sector decent work charter. [https://www.aeceo.ca/decent\\_work\\_charter](https://www.aeceo.ca/decent_work_charter)

Centre for addiction and mental health. (2022). Career burnout. CAMH.  
<https://www.camh.ca/en/camh-news-and-stories/career-burnout>

College of Early Childhood Educators. (2017). Code of ethics and standards of practice. [https://www.college-ece.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Code\\_and\\_Standards\\_2017-4.pdf](https://www.college-ece.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Code_and_Standards_2017-4.pdf)

Griffiths, A. (2020). What are student grants. Grantme. <https://grantme.ca/what-are-student-grants/#:~:text=Wondering%2C%20E2%80%9Cwhat%2are%20student%20grant,s,professionals%20with%20a%20certain%20skillset>

Learn about OSAP. (2017). Ontario.ca. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/learn-about-osap>

Macdonald, L., Richardson, B., & Langford, R. (2015). ECEs as childcare advocates: Examining the scope of childcare advocacy carried out by ECEs from the perspective of childcare movement actors in Ontario and Manitoba. *Canadian Children*, 40(1), 100-110.

Quality Improvement and Innovation Partnership. (2010). Community partnerships resource guide. <http://www.hqontario.ca/portals/0/Documents/qi/qi-rg-community-partnerships-1012-en.pdf>