CHILD CARE AND EARLY YEARS SERVICE SYSTEM PLAN

2025-2029

Algoma District Services Administration Board
Conseil d'administration des services du district d'Algoma



Algoma District Services Administration Board
Conseil d'administration des services du district d'Algoma

ACORN
INFORMATION SOLUTIONS

This report was created for the Algoma District Services Administration Board in partnership with the Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre - Acorn Information Solutions.

We would like to sincerely thank everyone who participated in the development of this plan. Your contributions have been vital to ensuring that the voices of our communities are heard and that our strategies are aligned with the needs of children, families, and educators in the Algoma District.

DISCLAIMER: *Please note that the data represented/used in this report might not add up to the given totals. This is due to the random rounding done by Statistics Canada to preserve data anonymity; this is especially apparent in smaller/rural communities. Additionally, we would like to note that although most of our programming, and the language in the context of this plan, is directed at children aged 0-12, maps and charts represent children aged 0-14. This is a standard age group used by Statistics Canada and has been chosen for this report for consistency purposes and to lessen the influence of random rounding.*



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LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT



We respectfully acknowledge that the work of the Algoma District Services Administration Board takes place on the traditional lands of the Robinson-Huron Treaty, the traditional lands of the Robinson-Superior Treaty and the Treaty 9 Territories, as well as the Huron Superior Regional Métis Community including the North Channel Métis Council and the Historic Saut Ste. Marie Métis Council.

We thank the indigenous people for their care of this land and for their teachings about earth and our relations with one another. It is our responsibility to honor and respect those teachings through our interactions today and in the days moving forward.

Algoma District Social Services
Services Sociaux du district d'Algoma

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND EARLY LEARNING

I am pleased to share the Algoma District Services Administration Board's (ADSAB) Child Care and Early Learning Service System Plan 2025 to 2029. This plan supports ADSAB's vision, mission and principles while setting a clear path forward to enhance the Child Care and Early Learning system over the next five years.

It is an exciting time for the child care and early learning sector as we align with the launch of the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care system (CWELCC). This new vision commits to reduce the cost of child care and increasing available spaces. It also provides us with the opportunity to look at our existing service system to ensure we are effectively meeting the needs of all families within our district.

This Service System Plan builds upon the work we have accomplished to date and reflects the voices of families, caregivers, service providers, educators and the ongoing work we do with our community partners. Through a combination of research and community engagement and collaboration we have developed a plan that prioritizes goals designed to have meaningful and lasting impacts on the lives of children and families.

I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the development of this plan. Your insights, time taken to complete the surveys and ongoing collaboration have been instrumental in creating a plan where goals align with the needs of children, families and educators.

Over the next five years, we will monitor our progress, collect feedback and implement adjustments to ensure we are continuing to work towards our goals. We recognize that success relies on strong collaboration and partnerships. We look forward to working together to build a future where every child has the opportunity to thrive.



Nancy MacLean
Director of Children's Services and Early Learning
Algoma District Services Administration Board



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Child Care and Early Years (CCEY) Service System Plan sets out a strategic direction to strengthen early years services across the Algoma district, with a focus on equity, access, and culturally responsive programming. This plan reflects the commitment to support children and families through high-quality, inclusive environments that foster belonging, identity, and community connection.

Informed by recent analysis of EDI Cycle 6 results, the Census 2021 profile for the Algoma District Services Administration Board (ADSAB) service area, and local program and service metrics, the plan identifies areas of strengths and challenges that are addressed through the strategic priorities that are given actional direction over the course of the next five years. These insights, combined with ongoing engagement with families, service providers, and community partners, shape the priorities and actions within this plan.

Key priorities include:

- Expanding Access to Child Care
  Increasing availability and affordability of licensed child care spaces, with a focus on underserved areas and populations.
- Enhancing Program Quality and Cultural Responsiveness
  Supporting retention, recruitment, professional learning and inclusive practices that reflect diverse identities.
- Strengthening Community Engagement and Partnerships
  Fostering collaborative relationships across sectors to deliver integrated supports and promote seamless transitions for children and families.
- Leveraging Data for Continuous Improvement
  Using local data to monitor progress, inform planning, and ensure accountability while strengthening the service system.
- Promoting Equity and Inclusion
  Embedding equity principles throughout service delivery, with attention to Indigenous, Francophone, newcomer, and low-income families.

This plan aligns with provincial priorities and local strategic goals, positioning the ADSAB as a leader across the district in advancing early years outcomes through evidence-based, community-driven approaches. Through ongoing collaboration and innovation, ADSAB aims to ensure that every child in the district has the opportunity to thrive.



INTRODUCTION

The Algoma District Services Administration Board (ADSAB) is committed to fostering a responsive, inclusive and high-quality child care and early years system that meets the diverse needs of families across the district. Through legislation, the Province of Ontario mandates that District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) develop and maintain a Child Care and Early Years (CCEY) Service System Plan for their service areas that must be updated every five years.[1] Under this mandate, DSSABs are responsible for planning, funding, and coordinating licensed child care and early years programs locally. This includes engaging with school boards and community partners, assessing service viability, and ensuring alignment with other human services.[1] The mandate also identifies four core outcome areas that service system plans should address through their strategic priorities which include focus on accessibility, responsiveness, affordability, and quality.[1]

ADSAB's CCEY 2025 to 2029 Service System Plan outlines our strategic priorities, community partnerships, and data-informed approaches to support children's optimal development and family well-being. These priorities align with provincial policy and local context but also reflects our commitment in ensuring equitable access to programs that nurture every child's potential.

ALGOMA DISTRICT SERVICES ADMINISTRATION BOARD

ADSAB was created by the Province of Ontario through the District Social Services Administrations Boards Act[2] to deliver provincially mandated services within the Algoma area, including:

- Children's Services (Child Care and Early Years Act[3])
- Housing Services (Housing Services Act[4])
- Ontario Works (Ontario Works Act[5])
- Paramedic Services (Ambulance Act[6])
- Land Ambulance (Ambulance Act[6])

ADSAB is governed by a 12-member board representing 20 local municipalities and the Territory Without Municipal Organization (TWOMO). The ADSAB service area includes the Algoma District census divisions (CDs) except for areas covered by the Sault Ste. Marie DSSAB which includes Sault Ste. Marie census subdivision (CSD), Prince

1 *Ministry of Education. Ontario Child Care and Early Years Service System Plan Resource. Toronto: Government of Ontario, 2017. Retrieved from https://efis.fma.csc.gov.on.ca/faab/Memos/CC2017/Memo1_attach_EN.PDF.*

2 *District Social Services Administration Boards Act, R.S.O. 1990, c D.15. Available at: https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90d15.*

3 *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, S.O. 2014, c. 11, Sched. 1, as amended by 2024, c. 17, s. 35. Available at: https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/14c11.*

4 *Housing Services Act, 2014, S.O. 2014, c. 6. Available at: https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/11h06*

5 *Ontario Works Act, 1997, S.O. 1997, c. 25, Sched. A, as amended by 2024, c. 28, Sched. 25, s. 8. Available at: https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/97o25a*

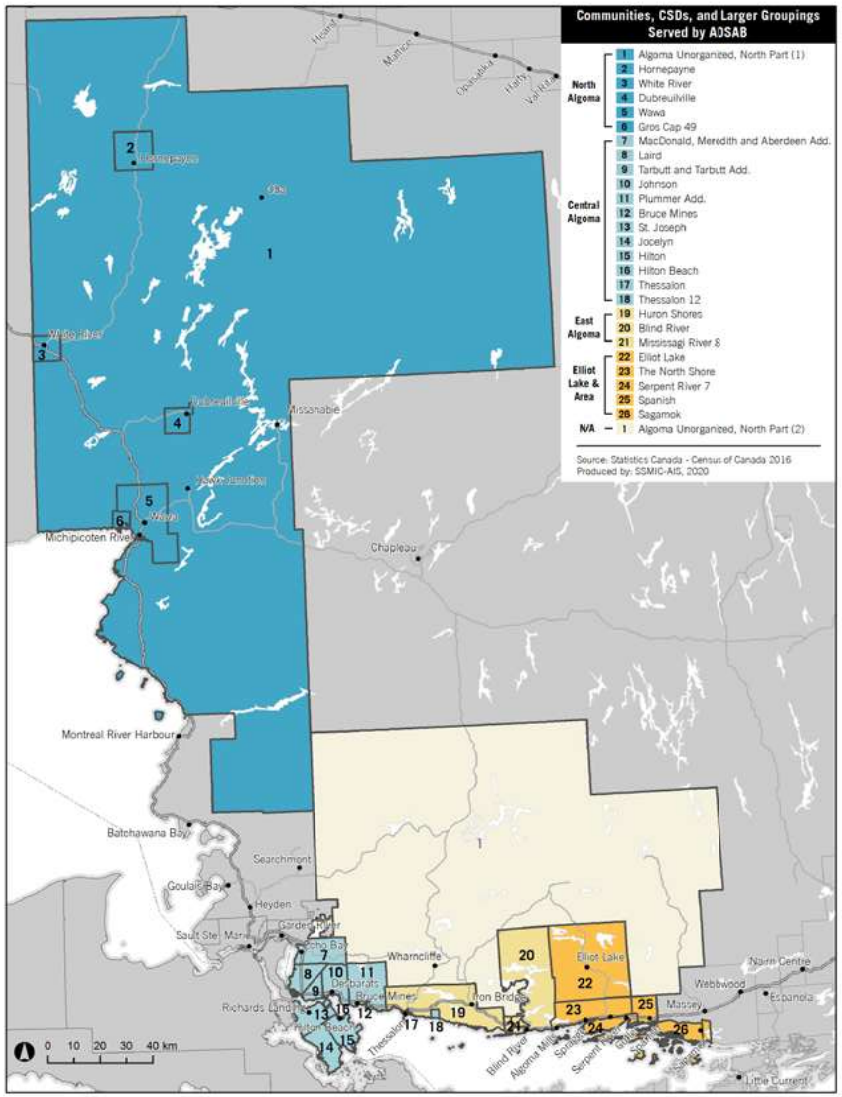
6 *Ambulance Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. A.19. Available at: https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90a19.*



CSD, Rankin Location 15D CSD, Garden River CSD as well as some dissemination areas (DAs) within the Algoma Unorganized area.

ADSAB funding is provided from the province and the member municipalities. The provincial contribution is provided through service agreements or legislation for all programs, while municipal funding is allocated among member municipalities based on a pre-approved methodology.

Figure 1: ADSAB Area, Communities, CSDs and Neighbourhoods



ADSAB manages and delivers social programs through a combination of direct delivery and contracted services in Children's Services, Housing Services, Ontario Works and Paramedic Services. To support the geographic area that covers ADSAB service area, offices are located in Elliot Lake, Blind River, Thessalon and Wawa.

Elliot Lake Office
2 Elizabeth Walk
Elliot Lake
P5A 1Z3

Blind River Office
15 Hanes Street
Blind River
P0R 1B0

Thessalon Office
135 Dawson Street
Thessalon
P0R 1L0

Wawa Office
50 Broadway Avenue
Wawa
P0S 1K0

Algoma District Social Services
Services Sociaux du district d'Algoma

VISION, MISSION AND PRINCIPLES

The ADSAB's vision is rooted in strengthening the social, health and economic well-being of the citizens it serves to support sustainable, healthy communities in the District of Algoma.

The ADSAB's mission is to provide effective and efficient social and paramedic services that are responsive to the diverse individual and community needs.

The ADSAB's core principles include:

- Believing the services and supports provided are integral to health and quality of life in the Algoma communities.
- Valuing the importance of developing and delivering services that recognize the diverse needs of the communities and citizens it serves.
- Recognizing employees as the organization's most valuable resource.
- Operating within a philosophy that balances client needs with accountability and integrity.
- Utilizing a people-focused, results-based approach to planning, implementation and delivery of services.
- Understanding the importance of collaboration and communication within and beyond the organization.
- Striving to achieve integration through our service delivery model.
- Committing to achieving excellence through continuous learning and improvement.



SERVICE SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

As Service System Manager for child care and early learning in the Algoma District, we play a central role for the planning, funding, administration, and oversight of Ministry of Education-funded child care and early years programs and services for children 0 to 12 years old which includes licensed child care services and EarlyON / On y va Child and Family Centres across the district. Children's Services is responsible for:

- **Local Relationships and Expertise**
  Building and maintaining strong partnerships with service providers and community organizations to understand the unique social, economic, and demographic factors influencing communities within the district, thereby ensuring the delivery of appropriate services to children and families.
- **Accountability and Oversight**
  Planning, negotiating, and maintaining service agreements with local child care and EarlyON / On y va Child and Family Centre service providers to ensure the delivery of services is efficient, effective, and consistently meets high standards of quality and safety.
- **System Planning**
  Developing and implementing a Service System Plan aligned with provincial priorities, while also identifying and addressing the needs of communities through collaboration with families, early learning service providers and community partners, as well as using relevant data.
- **Workforce and Capacity Building**
  Providing support to child care and EarlyON / On y va Child and Family Centre service providers to enhance capacity, increase knowledge, and strengthen recruitment and retention efforts.
- **Funding Allocation**
  Managing the allocation of funding for child care and EarlyON / On y va Child and Family Centre programs in accordance with Provincial guidelines.
- **Child Care Fee Subsidy**
  Coordinating and overseeing the administration of the child care fee subsidy program for families within the district.
- **Special Needs Resourcing (SNR)**
  Coordinating and administering special needs resourcing (SNR) program to support the inclusion of children who require extra support to participate fully in child care and EarlyON / ON y va Child and Family Centres.



The overall vision is a system of services that empower children, families and service providers to thrive with independence, responsibility, and success. Through ongoing collaboration and strong partnerships, the ADSAB aims to foster resilience and a readiness for change, with high-quality programming laying the foundation for a strong future for everyone.



Algoma District Social Services
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DIRECTED GROWTH PLAN

ADSAB's directed growth plan aligns with the CWELCC vision of ensuring that more families in Ontario have access to high quality inclusive early learning and child care no matter where they live.

The plan has been developed by examining the latest data, including current child care capacity, waitlists, demographics and consultations with community partners. Revisions may be made as the plan is implemented and re-evaluated.

On March 27, 2022, the Government of Ontario and Canada signed the CWELCC Agreement. Funding under the CWELCC Agreement has and will be used to build on and leverage the success of existing child care funding and associated initiatives. The goals for the CWELCC system include:

a. Providing a reduction in average child care fees for licensed child care for children under the age of 6
b. Creating more high-quality, affordable licensed child care spaces
c. Addressing barriers to provide inclusive and flexible licensed child care
d. Strengthening the early childhood workforce through enhanced compensation, training, and professional learning opportunities

The overall focus of the CWELCC Directed Growth Plan is to improve access to inclusive licensed child care services. Access to care refers to the number of licensed child care spaces available to children from 0 – 5 years of age in proportion to the total number of children 0-5 years who live in the district.

In May 2023, space creation targets were released to Service System Managers under the Directed Growth Plan supporting Ontario's commitment to create 86,000 new child care spaces by December 31, 2026. This provided Service System Managers across the province with a notional space allocation for the expansion of licensed child care services within schools as well as community-based services for 2022-2026.

In early 2025, the Ministry of Education completed a recalibration exercise. The recalibration was based on information submitted by Service System Managers in October 2024. This exercise resulted in adjusted auspice targets for many Service System Managers to support Ontario in achieving the overall space creation target of 86,000 spaces.



Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	Total
Expansion Targets	5	18	54	40	131	**248**
Community Based	5	18	54	40	67	**184**
School Based					64	**64**

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025 (Projected)	2026 (Projected)	Total
Infant			10		20	**30**
Toddler		10	15		30	**55**
Preschool		8	16	8	48	**80**
Kindergarten	5		13	26		**44**
School Age					15	**15**
Home Child Care				6	18	**24**
Total	**5**	**18**	**54**	**40**	**131**	**248**

SPACES CREATED (2022 – 2024)

City of Elliot Lake - Community Based

An increase of 77 licensed child care spaces were created within the City of Elliot Lake.

- 36 new spaces created at All Star Children Services, and
- 41 new spaces at Claire Dimock Children's Centre



This plan adheres to the expectations outlined in Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023, developed by the Ministry of Education. The vision for the CWELCC System is to enable children of all abilities and social-economic backgrounds in Ontario to actively and meaningfully participate in child care, fostering authentic and caring relationships with peers and educators. The plan has been developed through the lens of supporting access for:

- children living in low-income families
- children with special needs and children needing enhanced or individual supports
- Indigenous children, Black and other racialized children
- children of newcomers to Canada and official language minorities.

Providing high-quality child care staffed by qualified early childhood professionals is vital to both economic stability and family well-being. It is widely recognized that there is a shortage of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs), not only within the Algoma District but across Ontario and throughout the country. To accommodate future growth, the current childcare workforce will need to expand. Children's Services remains dedicated to supporting and strengthening our local childcare workforce.

FUTURE DIRECTION

ADSAB has made significant progress in the implementation of the Directed Growth Plan to date.

Over the course of 2025 and 2026, we plan to add additional child care spaces throughout the district including school-based and Home Child Care. Children's Services remains committed to expanding access and availability to child care services throughout the district. We continue to monitor the implementation of our plan to ensure it aligns with community needs, promotes equitable service delivery, and provides ongoing support for families and service providers.



ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN HIGHLIGHTS

The following section provides some key demographic statistics relevant for the Algoma District service area. For a more detailed look and description of the current landscape of the service delivery, please refer to the 2025 Update of the CCEY Environmental Scan report.

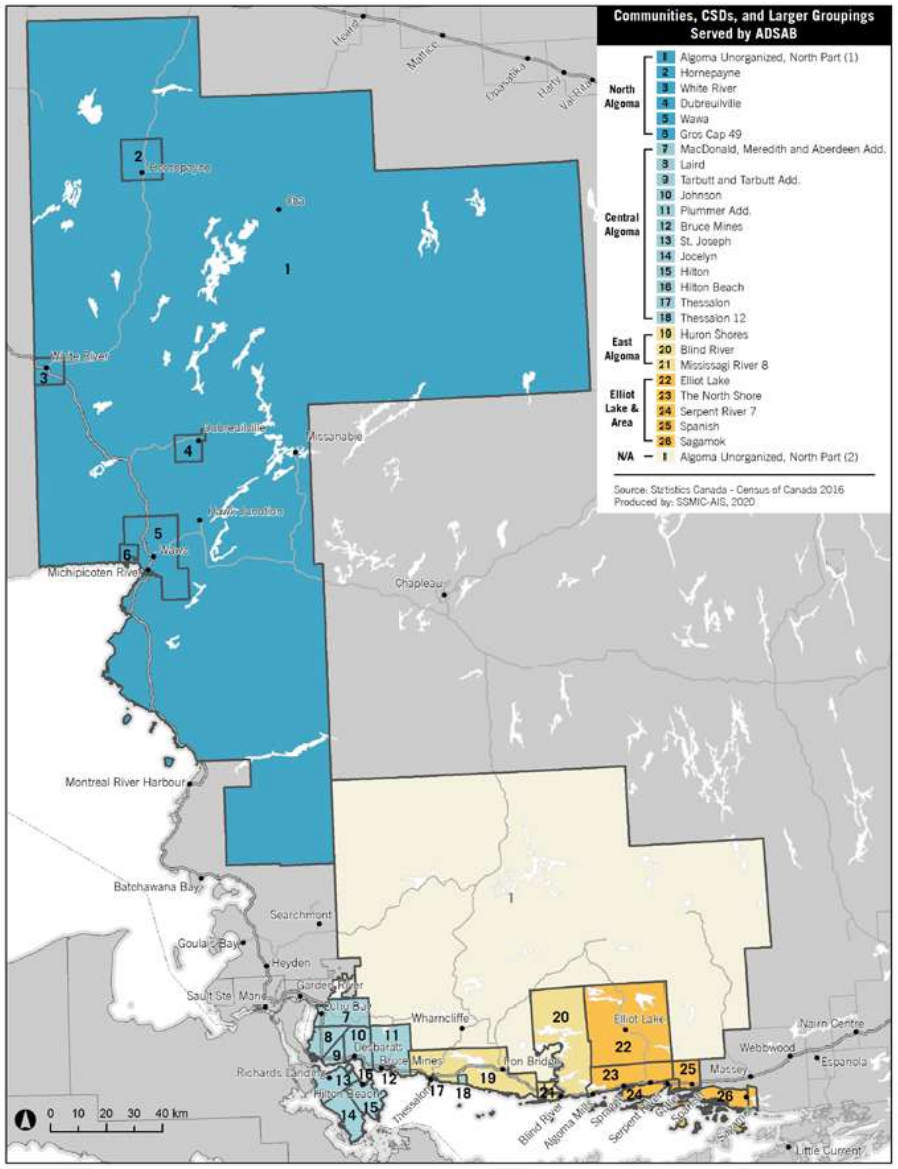
These demographic summaries highlight the importance of aligning strategic goals with the diversity that exists within the Algoma District to ensure that we accommodate the range of backgrounds that make up the families and children of the area.

The ADSAB area can be divided into four Larger Groupings, or neighbourhoods, which allows for further analysis into what the distribution of service delivery and program participation looks like across the district. The four main groupings include North Algoma, Central Algoma, East Algoma and Elliot Lake & Area.



The Algoma District has been identified as one of the 27 French Designated Areas, which means Francophones living in the district have a right to local French services from the provincial government. Approximately 12% of the total population identifies as Francophone, and almost 12% of the total population also identifies as Indigenous.

Figure 2: ADSAB Area, Communities, CSDs and Neighbourhoods



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POPULATION CHANGE

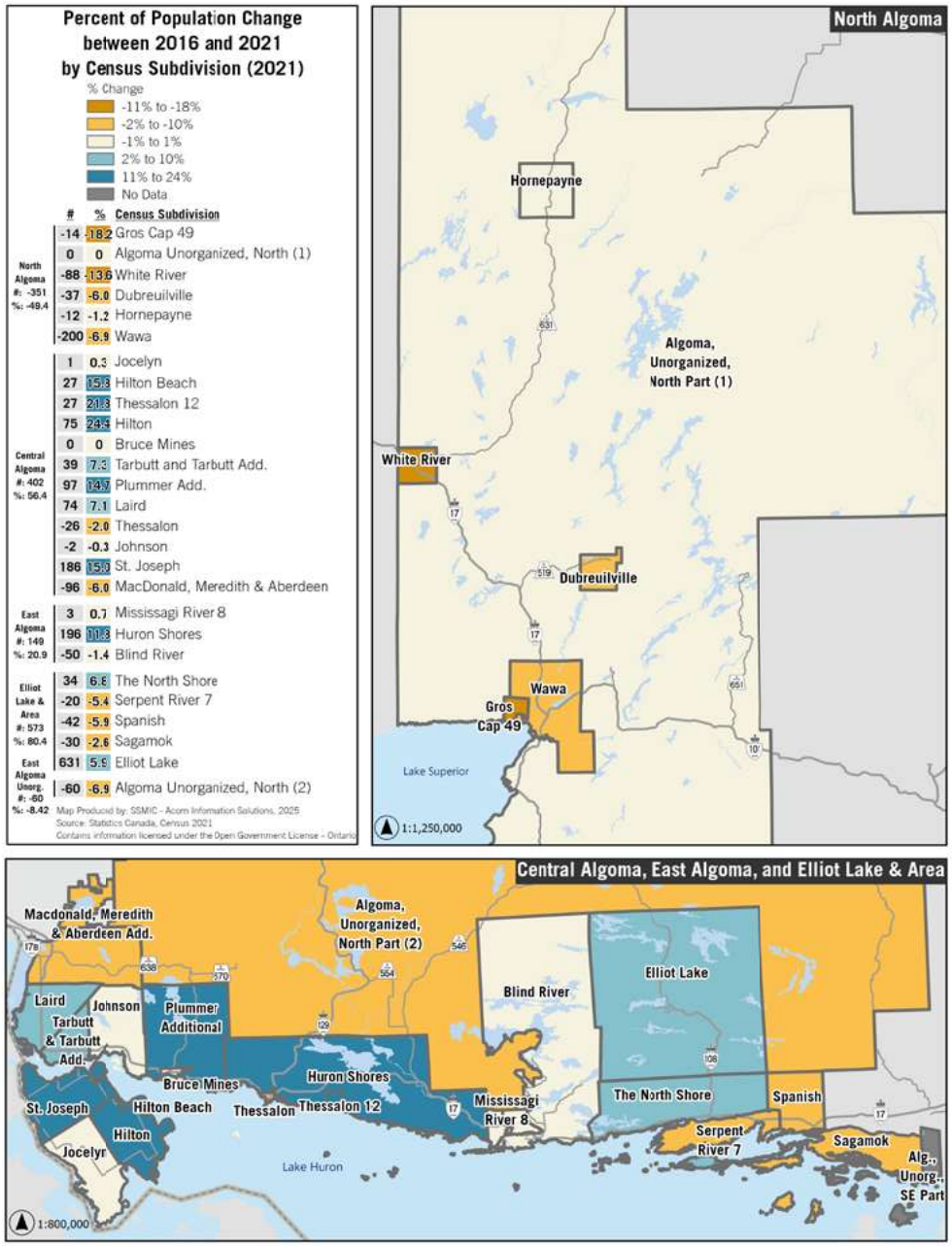
The ADSAB population has increased by 2.4% from 2016. Gros Cap 49 Reserve saw the largest decrease in population of 18.2% and Hilton Township saw the largest increase of 24.4%.

Table 1: Population Change for the Algoma Region

	ADSAB Area	Ontario
Population 2021	32,342	14,223,942
Population 2016	31,595	13,448,494
Pop. Change 2016-2021 (%)	2.4	5.8

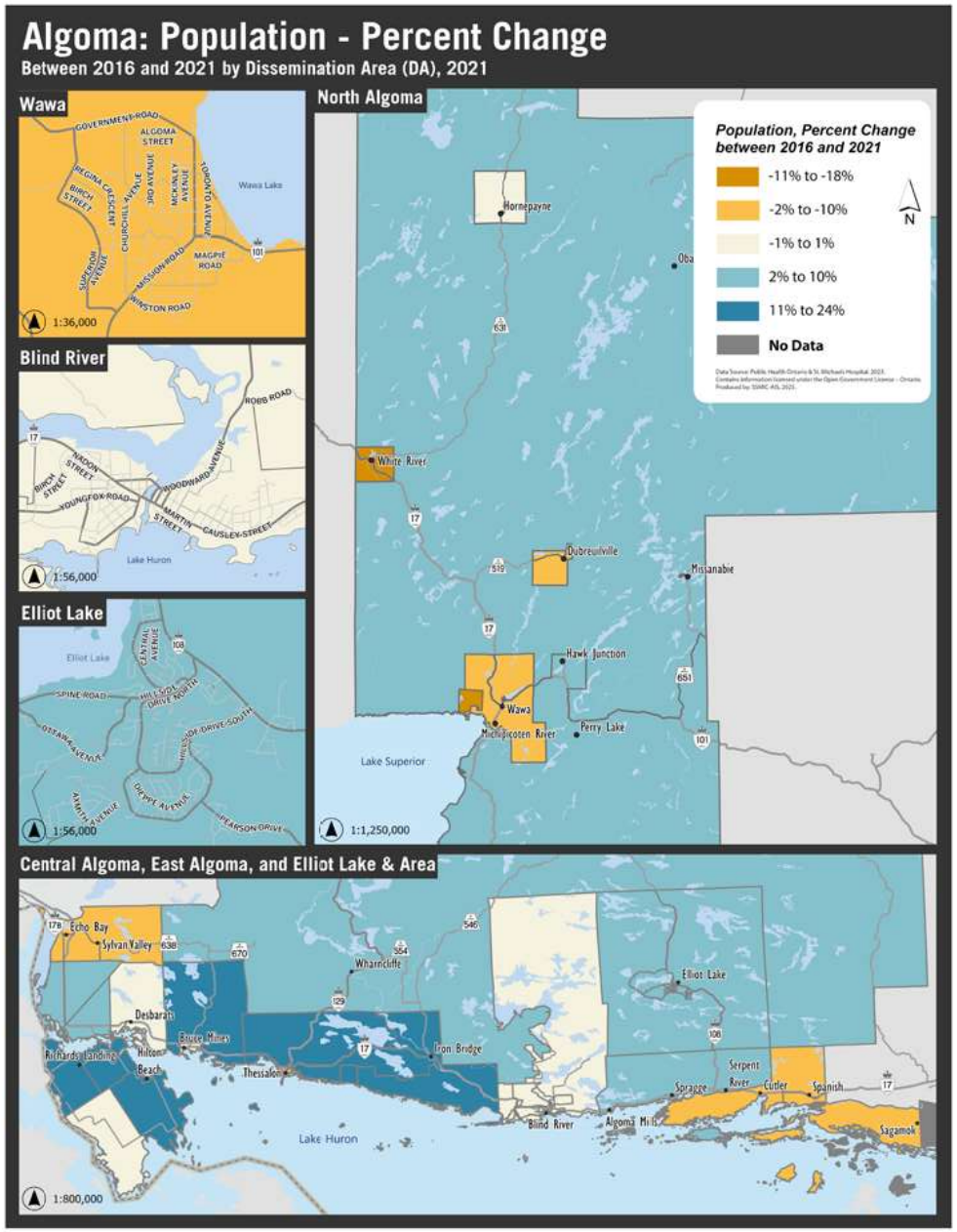


Figure 3: Population Change for Census Subdivisions in Algoma



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Figure 4: Population Change by Dissemination Areas in Algoma



Current data trends predict that the population is expected to increase from 124, 942 in 2023 to 140, 929 by 2051. This projection does include the DSSMSSAB area in addition to the Algoma district.



Figure 5: Population Projections by Broad Age Groups (2023 – 2051)

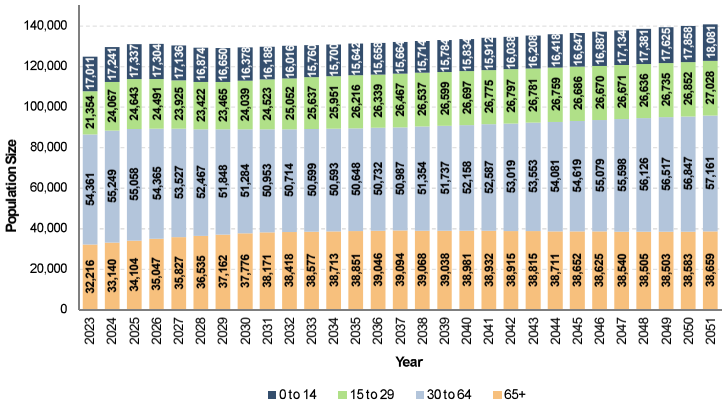


Table 2: Population Projection for Child Groups in Algoma

	0 to 4	5 to 9	10 to 14
Population 2021	4,765	5,675	5,500
Pop. Projection 2031	4,624	5,503	6,061
Pop. Projection 2041	5,081	5,310	5,521
Pop. Change 2021-2031 (%)	-3.0	-3.0	10.2
Pop. Change 2031-2041 (%)	9.9	-3.5	-8.9
Pop. Change 2021-2041 (%)	6.6	-6.4	0.4

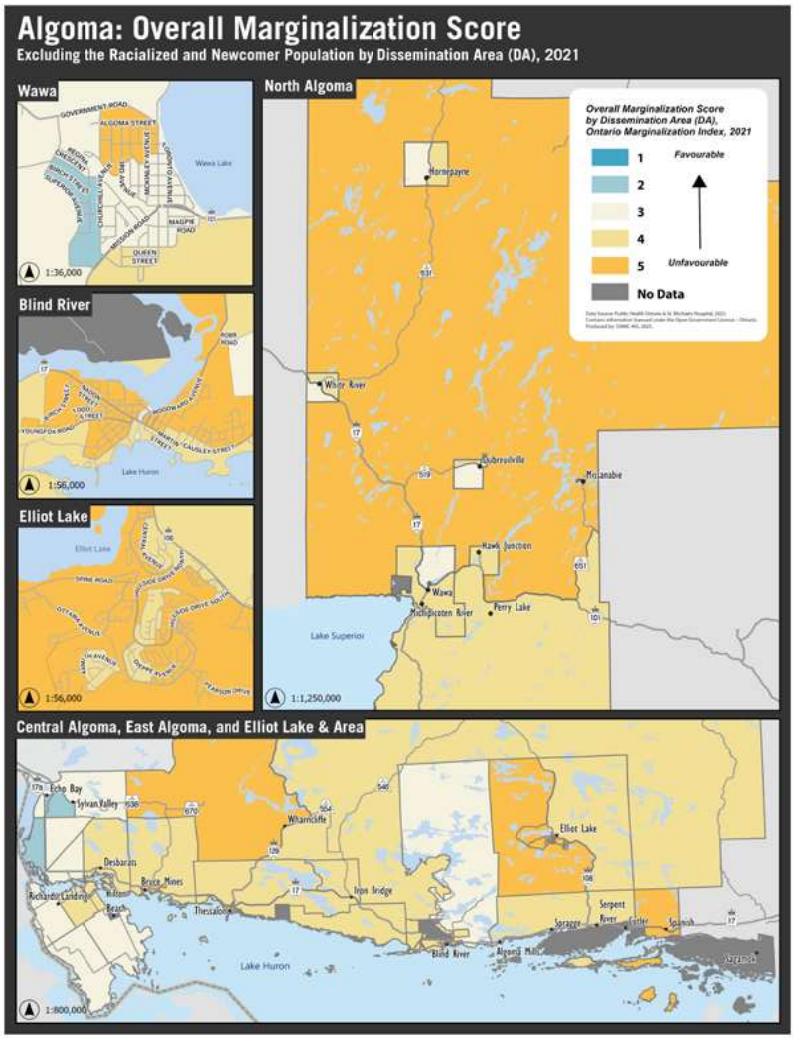
SOCIO-ECONOMIC DATA

The distribution of marginalization and difference in family income depending on family type, provide context on the diverse challenges that exist across the ADSAB service area. Examining the various trends assists in identifying where more support is needed and how to provide equitable opportunities for all children.

Ontario Marginalization Index

The overall level of marginalization is generally higher in Algoma than in Ontario as a whole.

Figure 6: Overall Marginalization Index (excluding the racialized and Newcomer Populations Dimension), 2021



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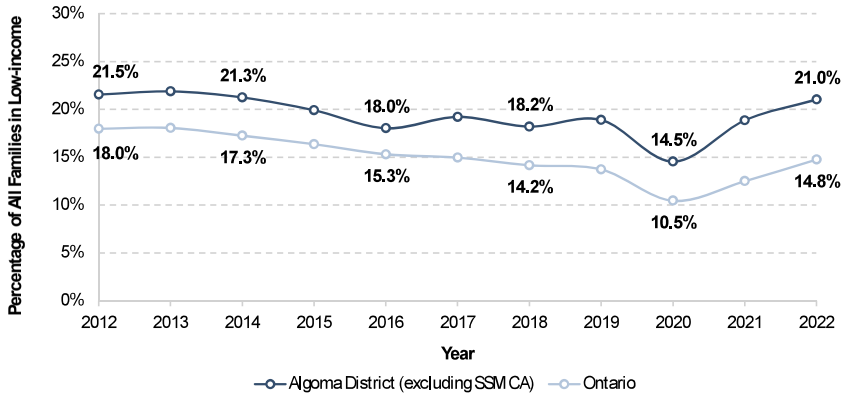
Lone-parent Families

The ADSAB area saw an increase in the number of lone-parent families of almost 6% with a total of 36.4% of total families with children being lone-parent families.

Families in Low-Income

The overall number of families living in low-income has been consistently higher in the Algoma District (excluding the SSM census agglomeration) compared to the province.

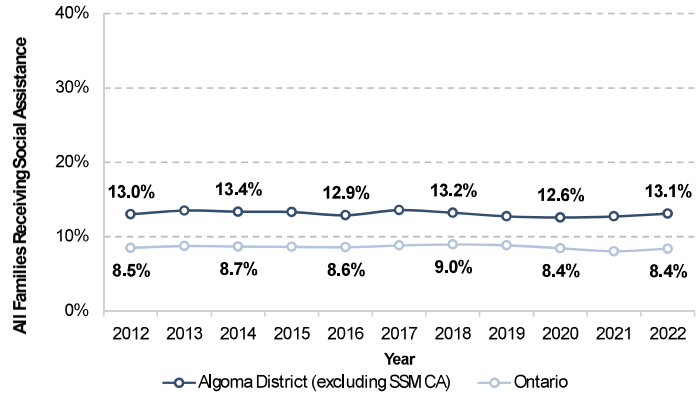
Figure 7: Percentage of Families Living in Low-income, 2012 – 2022



Families Receiving Social Assistance

The number of families receiving social assistance has remained relatively consistent for both the Algoma District (excluding the SSM census agglomeration) and Ontario, with Algoma having a higher proportion compared to the province.

Figure 8: All Families Receiving Social Assistance, 2012 – 2022



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Median Family Income

The Algoma District (which includes the DSSMSAB area as well), has a lower median income for lone-parent families and a higher median income for couple-parent families compared to Ontario.

Figure 9: Median Family Income by Family Type for Select Communities, 2021

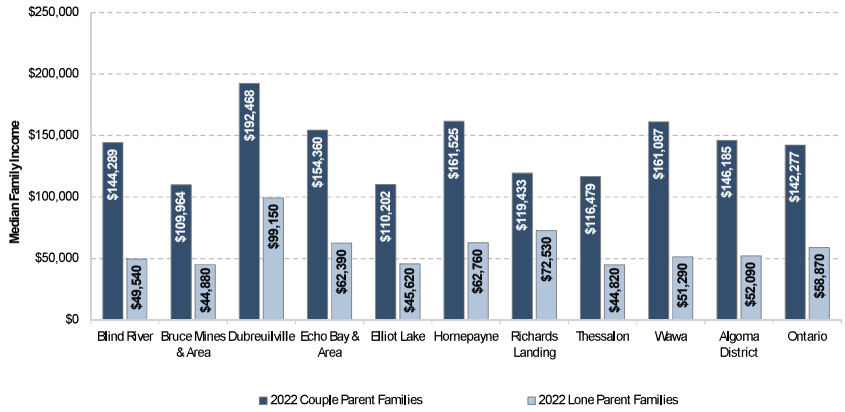
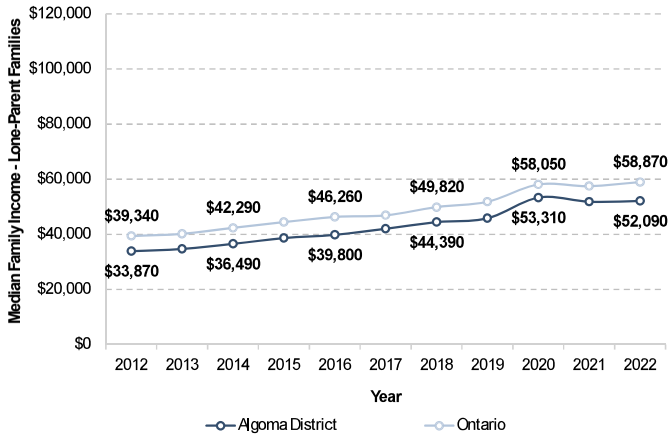
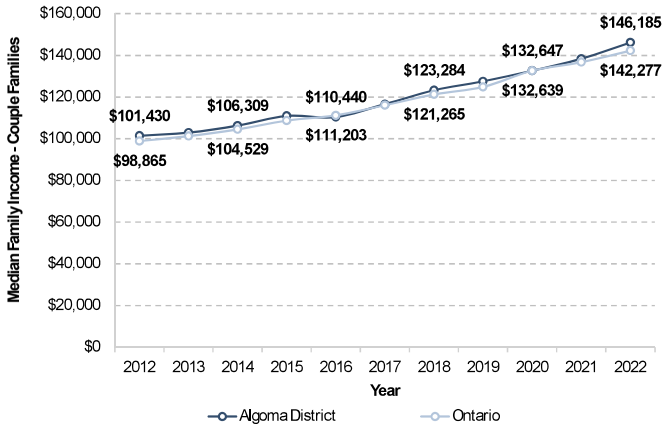


Figure 10: Median Family Income for Lone-Parent Families, 2012 - 2022



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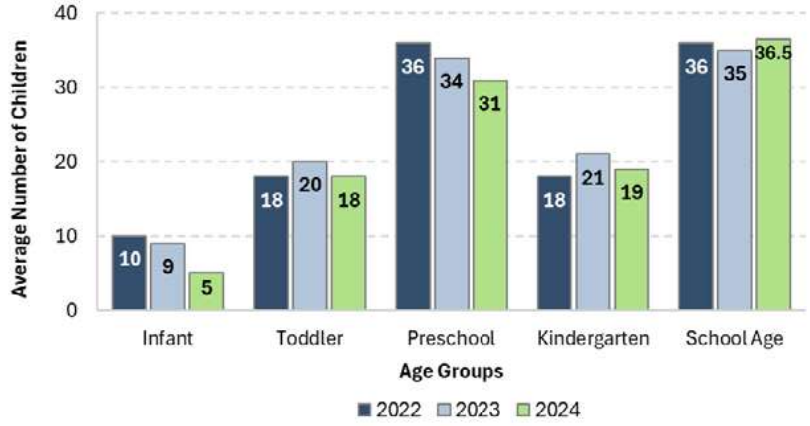
Figure 11: Median Family Income for Couple-Parent Families, 2012 – 2022



Children Receiving Fee Subsidy

Figure 12 summarizes the average number of children receiving fee subsidy by age group between 2022 and 2024. Most children receiving fee subsidy are either of preschool age or school age. Overall, in 2022 there was an average of 118 children receiving subsidy, 119 children in 2023 and 109.5 children in 2024.

Figure 12: Average Number of Children Receiving Fee Subsidy in Algoma, 2022 – 2024



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EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT

The Early Development Instrument (EDI) measures if children are meeting age-appropriate developmental milestones as they enter school. The EDI is comprised of a questionnaire completed by senior kindergarten teachers and covers five key domains of child development: Physical Health and Well-Being, Social Competence, Emotional Maturity, Language and Cognitive Development and Communication Skills and General Knowledge.



Physical Health & Well-being (PHWB): Includes gross and fine motor skills (e.g., holding a pencil, running on the playground, motor coordination), adequate energy levels for classroom activities, independence in looking after own needs, and daily living skills.



Social Competence (SOC): Includes curiosity about the world, eagerness to try new experiences, knowledge of standards of acceptable public behaviour, ability to control own behaviour, appropriate respect for adult authority, cooperation with others, following rules, and ability to play and work with other children.



Emotional Maturity (EMOT): Includes the ability to think before acting, a balance between too fearful and too impulsive, an ability to deal with feelings at the age-appropriate level, and empathetic response to other people's feelings.



Language & Cognitive Development (LANG): Includes reading awareness, age-appropriate reading and writing skills, age-appropriate numeracy skills, ability to understand similarities and differences, and ability to recite back specific pieces of information from memory.



Communication Skills & General Knowledge (COMG): Includes skills to communicate needs and wants in socially appropriate ways, symbolic use of language, storytelling, and age-appropriate knowledge about the life and world around.

EDI
EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT
a population-based measure for communities

The EDI identifies children with vulnerabilities across these domains and reflects the quality of environment children experience in their early years, from birth to age 5. EDI data can help identify areas of strength and weakness across the district and inform decision-making and planning for early development services.

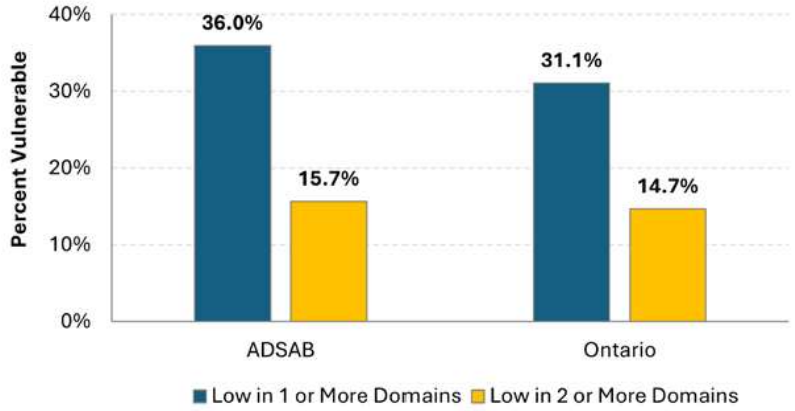
EDI Results Summary

The six major ADSAB EDI implementations took place during the 2004/05 (Cycle 1), 2008/2009 (Cycle 2), 2011/12 (Cycle 3), 2014/15 (Cycle 4), 2017/18 (Cycle 5), and 2022/23 (Cycle 6) school years. The most recent Cycle 6 included a total of 261 valid EDI records for children without special needs. Please note that Cycle 6 was completed later in the school year compared to previous EDI cycles. The average age of participating children was 5.9 years for Cycle 6, compared to 5.7 years for Cycle 5 (2017/18). It is also important to acknowledge the potential impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on children with respect to socialization and learning and their school readiness and cognitive development.

The critical difference methodology was utilized to evaluate statistic change in vulnerability rates compared to the Cycle 5 results. This tool was developed by the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) based out of the University of British Columbia. The critical difference is the amount of change in a neighbourhood's EDI vulnerability rate that is large enough to be considered meaningful change, that is, whether the change observed is statistically meaningful and therefore, unlikely due to chance.[7]

The Cycle 6 results show that 36.0% of children in the ADSAB service area show vulnerability in at least 1 domain, compared to 31.1% observed in Ontario overall. This is an increase from the previous EDI cycle implemented in 2017/18, where 29.6% of children were vulnerable in at least 1 domain.

Figure 13: EDI Cycle VI Vulnerability Rate





[7] *The Human Early Leaning Partnership (2024). Critical Difference, What is a Meaningful Change in Our Data?* https://earlylearning.ubc.ca/critical-difference/

Overall, 45.6% of children were on track with respect to developmental expectations with 18.4% considered in flux. Children in flux were not considered vulnerable, but they were not on track across all five domains of development.

ADSAB	% Vulnerable			Diff. from 2017/18	
	2017/18	2022/23	Ontario 2022/23		
PHWB	18.3%	26.4%	17.6%	■	8.1
SOC	9.1%	11.1%	10.1%	■	2.0
EMOT	10.7%	14.6%	13.1%	▲	3.9
LANG	7.1%	5.7%	6.7%	■	1.4
COMG	7.9%	6.9%	10.5%	■	1.0
Low in 1 or More Domains	32.9%	36.0%	31.1%	■	3.1
Low in 2 or More Domains	13.1%	15.7%	14.7%	-	-

▲ Increase in Vulnerability ▼ Decrease in Vulnerability ■ No Meaningful Change
*Statistically meaningful change based on the Critical Difference Calculation
**Critical Difference not available for Low in 2 Domains

Detailed vulnerability rates across each domain and sub-domains by the neighbourhood that make up the ADSAB service area can be found in the CCEY Environmental Scan 2025 update. EDI Cycle 7 data collection is planned for the 2025/26 school year.



CHILD CARE & EARLY YEARS IN THE ALGOMA DISTRICT

ADSAB Children's Services' local service system planning reflects current child care legislation, regulations, policies, directives and engagement with local service providers. We are committed to providing quality child care and early years experiences and enhancing system integration. Through strategic leadership, Children's Services initiates, sustains and monitors local planning and development.

Service providers are governed by the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA). The CCEYA legislation and accompanying regulations support Ontario's vision for the early years.

Licensed child care and EarlyON / On y va providers use How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for Early Year's (HDLH) as their framework to guide programming and pedagogy within their learning environments. HDLH is built on an understanding of children as competent, curious, capable of complex thinking and rich in potential. It is organized around four foundational conditions for children to grow and flourish: belonging, well-being, engagement and expression.[8] Service providers in the Algoma District continue to work on creating environments that welcome families and community into the space, inviting their perspectives and providing opportunities for them to participate.

In keeping with the provincial government's schools- first policy, there are 14 licensed child care and 7 EarlyON / On y va sites located in schools across the Algoma District.

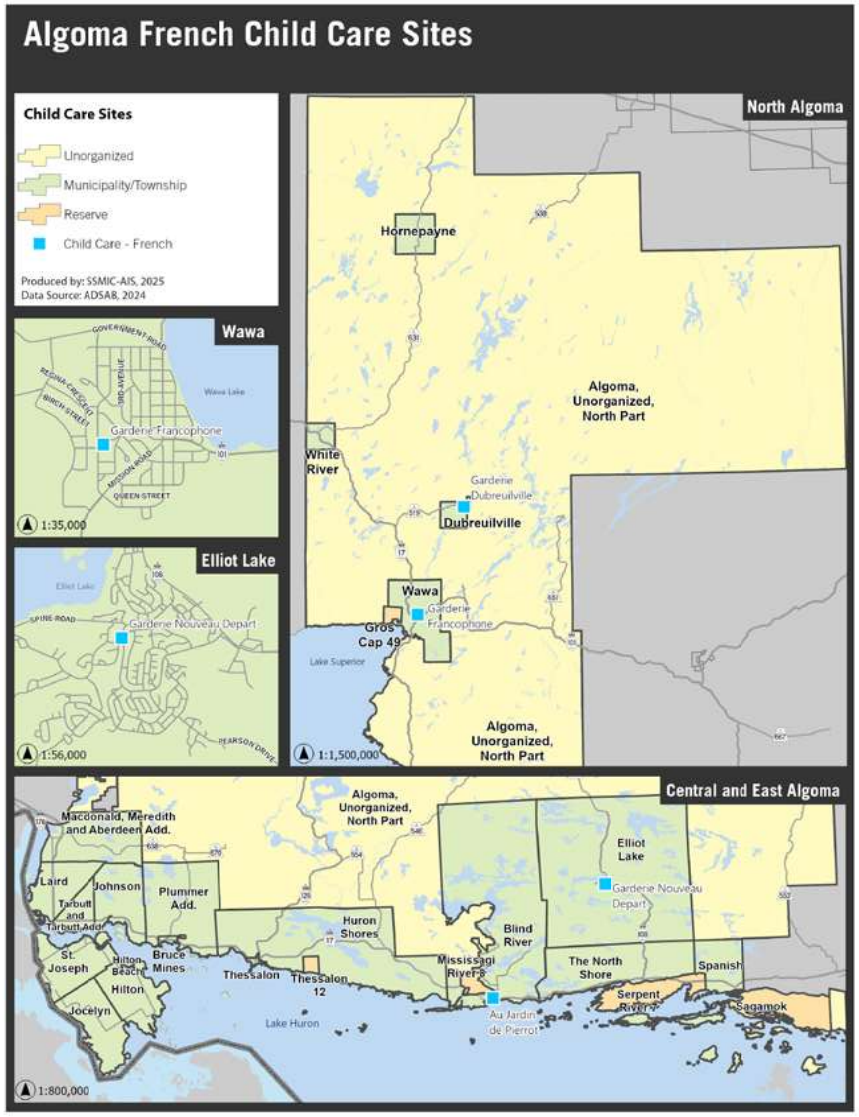


[8] *Government of Ontario (2014). How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years. Queen's Printer for Ontario, Retrieved from: https://files.ontario.ca/edu-how-does-learning-happen-en-2021-03-23.pdf.*

FRENCH LANGUAGE EARLY YEARS SERVICES

The Algoma District has been identified as one of the 27 French Designated Areas, which means Francophones living in the district have a right to local French services from the provincial government. The Algoma area has French language options for schools, licensed child care, and EarlyON / On y va centres.

Figure 14: French Language Child Care Site Locations, 2024



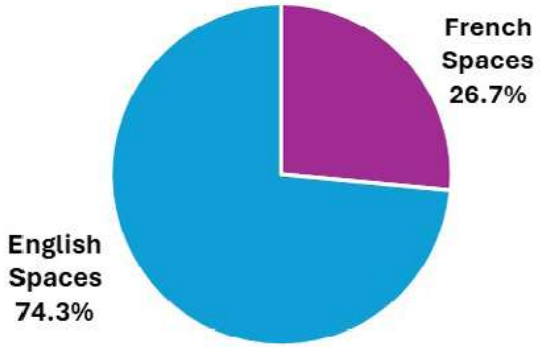
Child Care Sites

Of the 17 licensed child care sites in Algoma, 4 of them provide their services in French. There is one site in Elliot Lake (Garderie Nouveau Départ), one in Blind River (Au Jardin de Pierrot), one in Wawa (Garderie Francophone), and one in Dubreuilville (Garderie Dubreuilville).

Table 3: Licensed Child Care Spaces by Language Of Service, 2024

Name	Total Licensed Spaces
	2024
French Language Licensed Spaces	260
English Language Licensed Spaces	752
Total Licensed Child Care Spaces	1,012

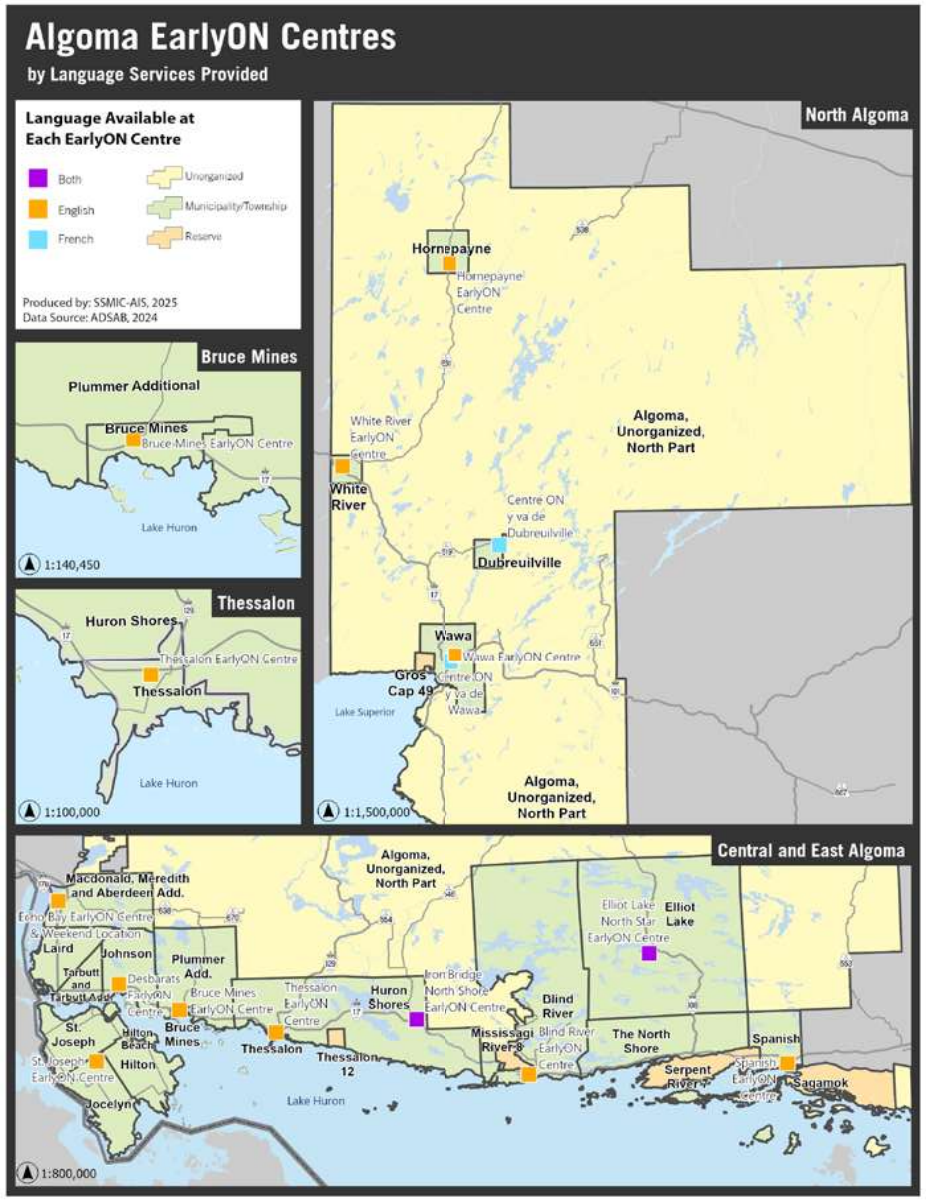
Figure 15: Licensed Spaces by Language of Service, 2024



EarlyON / On y va (ON y va) Sites

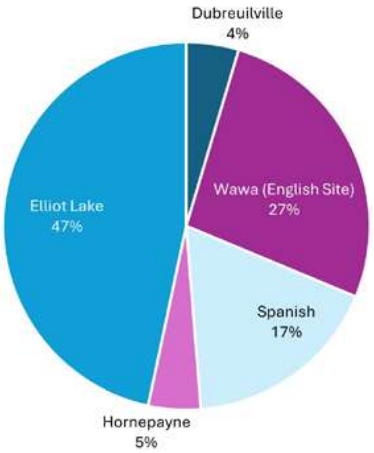
Wawa has one English EarlyON / On y va Centre and one French EarlyON / On y va Centre. Dubreuilville has a French only EarlyON / On y va Centre, while Blind River and Elliot Lake provide services in both English and French. All other sites provide services in English only.

Figure 16: French Language EarlyON / On y va Locations, 2024



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Figure 17: Total Visits made by French-Speaking Children and Adults in Algoma, 2024



INDIGENOUS FAMILIES

Licensed child care and EarlyON Centres continue to work towards providing culturally responsive, inclusive environments that aim to support children's identities, advance equity and strengthen community engagement. Fostering cultural awareness and understanding is an essential and ongoing component of our commitment to supporting Indigenous families.



LICENSED CHILD CARE

Licensed child care is regulated by the Ministry of Education, which sets the overall policy, legislation, and regulations for the Child Care and Early Years sector. This includes overseeing licensing and inspections of child care facilities to ensure compliance with provincial health, safety, and developmental standards as outlined in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014. Licensed child care services in Algoma are provided by not-for-profit organizations.

ADSAB has agreements with 5 service providers to deliver licensed child care in Algoma. All service providers have enrolled in the CWELCC system. Licensed child care programs are available at school-based and community-based locations throughout the district. These programs provide families with flexible options for children from birth to 13 years, including full-time and part-time care, before and after school programs, as well as full-day services for school age children during school closures.

Licensed child care supports the developmental needs of children and families. Children can interact with peers of similar age and participate in activities tailored to various stages of their development.

A competent and committed workforce is essential to delivering high-quality early childhood education and care. These professionals foster children's development through engaging play and inquiry-based activities, promoting the acquisition of lifelong learning skills. Elements such as group size and composition, staff qualifications and ongoing training, working conditions, and the physical environment all contribute to creating a supportive and enriching setting that encourages growth and development.

Professionals working with children in licensed child care centres have qualification and training requirements, specifically Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs). All staff, volunteers and students must undergo a criminal reference check, including a vulnerable sector screening.

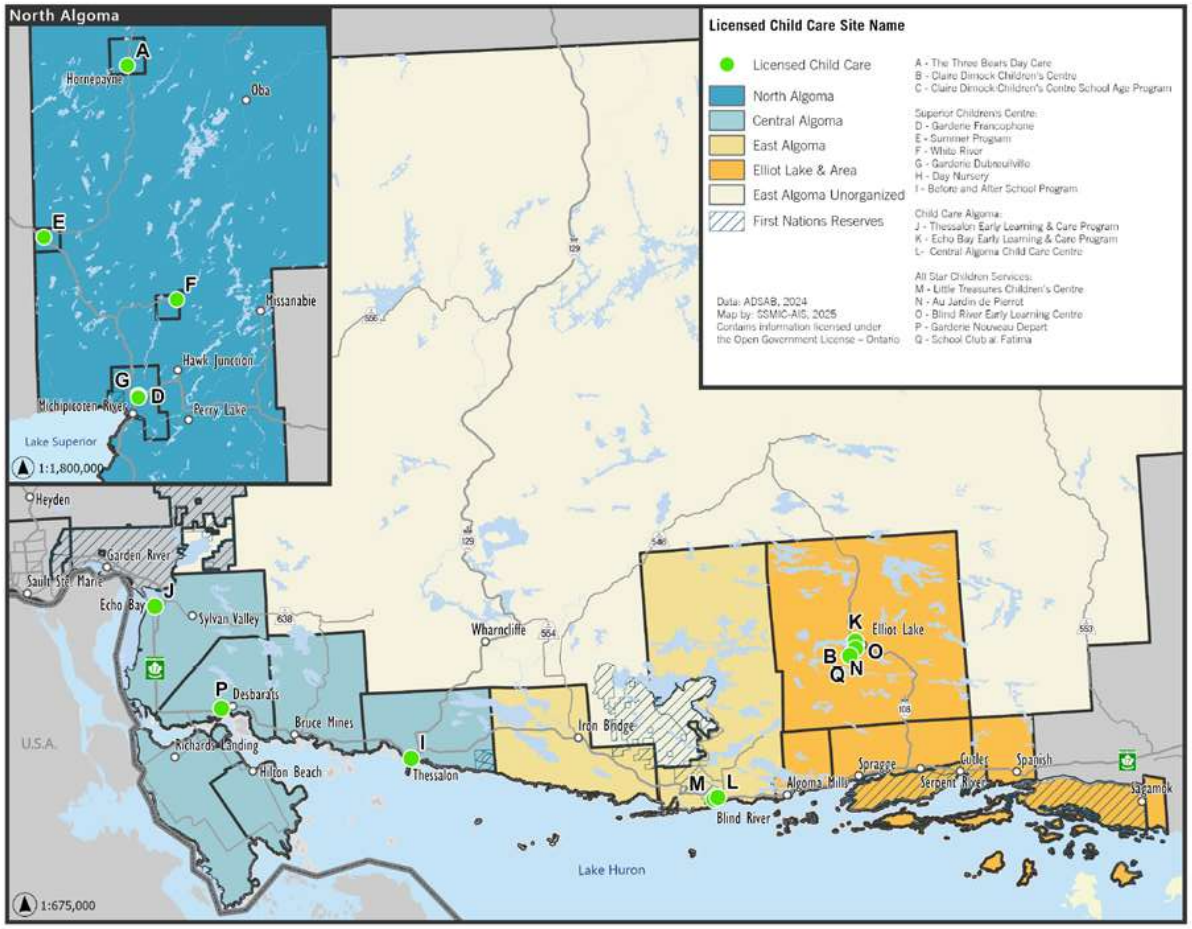


There are five agencies that operate 17 licensed child care programs in the ADSAB area (Licensed Child Care Locations in Algoma, 2024 and Figure 18).

Table 4: Licensed Child Care Locations in Algoma, 2024

	Agency	Legend	Name	Total Licensed Spaces 2024
	The Three Bears Day Care	A	The Three Bears Day Care	39
	Claire Dimock Children's Centre	B	Claire Dimock Children's Centre	175
		C	Claire Dimock Children's Centre School Age Program	23
	Superior Children's Centre	D	Before and After School Program	24
		E	Day Nursery	48
		F	Garderie Dubreuilville	44
		G	Garderie Francophone	88
		H	Summer School Age Program	24
		I	White River Child Care	41
	Child Care Algoma	J	Central Algoma Child Care Centre	79
		K	Echo Bay Early Learning & Care Program	72
		L	Thessalon Child Care	56
	All Star Children Services Inc.	M	Au Jardin de Pierrot	69
		N	Blind River Early Learning Centre	63
		O	Garderie Nouveau Départ	59
		P	Little Treasures Children's Centre	80
		Q	School Club at Fatima	28

Figure 18: Licensed Child Care Locations in Algoma, 2024



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Canada-Wide Early Years and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC)

In March 2022, the Ontario government reached an agreement with the federal government to implement the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) system. CWELCC is a multi-year plan focused on making child care more affordable, accessible, high-quality, inclusive and data informed. ADSAB's Children's Services is working directly with the Ministry of Education to support the phased-in CWELCC system implementation across the district.

The CWELCC system is designed to strengthen early learning and child care by:

- Enhancing access to affordable, high-quality child care for families
- Reducing child care fees for parents and guardians of children under the age of 6 years
- Expanding the availability of licensed child care spaces
- Supporting the recruitment, retention and professional development of the child care workforce
- Promoting inclusive practices to ensure equitable access for all children

This plan includes phased fee reductions for children under 6 in CWELCC-enrolled licensed child care that started with a reduction in April 2022 of up to 25%. By the end of December 2022, fees were further reduced by up to another 37%. As of January 2025, rates were capped at $22 per day and the target is that by March 2026, the average rate will be at $10 per day. The plan also includes a new cost-based funding approach implemented in January 2025. Cost-based funding provides an allocation that service providers can use flexibly across eligible costs, with year-end reconciliation based on actual costs incurred.

The ADSAB plays a key role in the local implementation by identifying priority areas for space creation, supporting inclusive service planning and collaborating with providers to ensure CWELCC participation and workforce stability.[9]



EARLYON / ON Y VA CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRES

Four service providers deliver EarlyON / On y va Child and Family Centre (EarlyON / On y va) programs throughout the Algoma district: All Stars Children Services Inc., Child Care Algoma, Elliot Lake Child and Family and Superior Children's Centre.

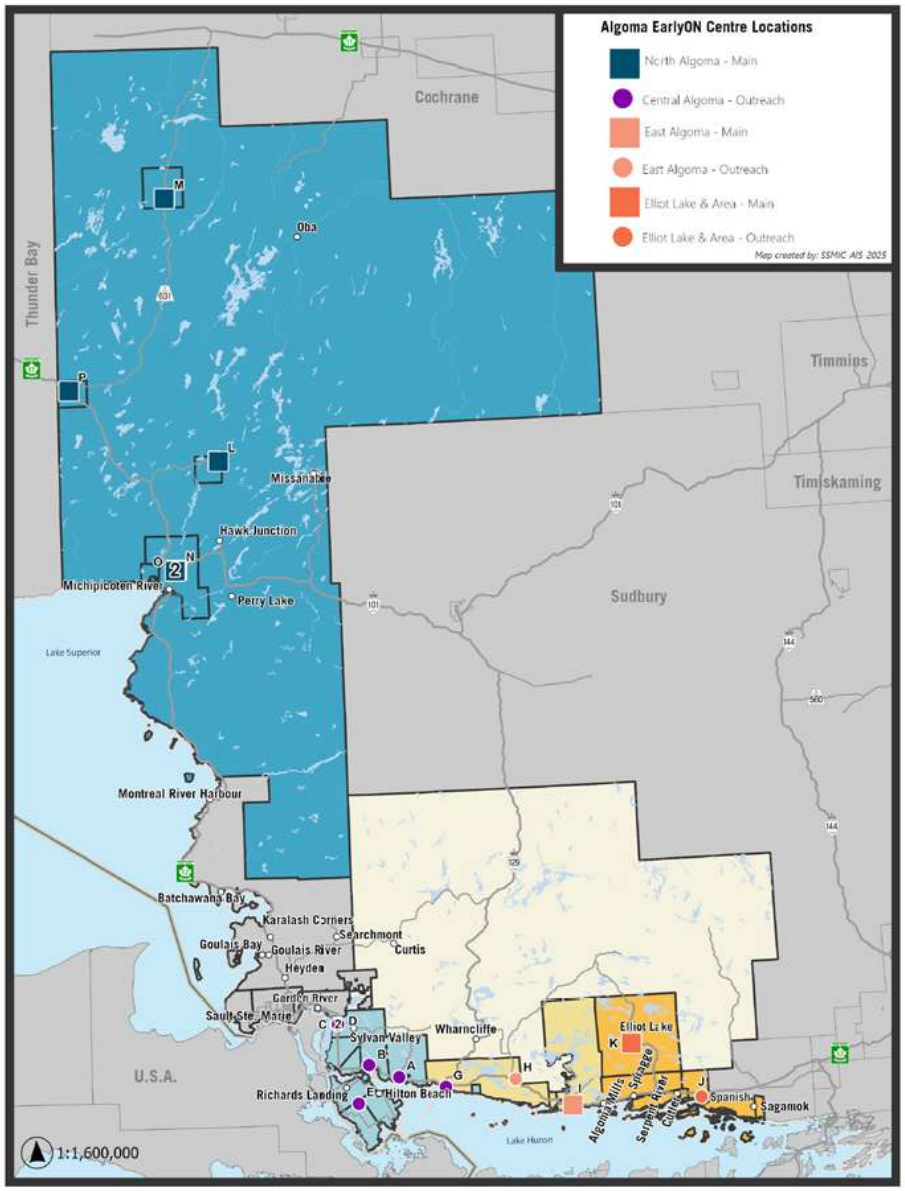
As of the end of 2024, ADSAB has a total of 16 EarlyON / On y va Centre locations (Table 5 and Figure 19).

Table 5: EarlyON / On y va Child and Family Centres in Algoma, 2024

Legend	Neighborhood	EarlyON / On y va Centre
A	Central Algoma	Bruce Mines EarlyON / On y va (Outreach)
B		Desbarats EarlyON / On y va (Outreach)
C		Echo Bay EarlyON / On y va (Outreach)
D		Echo Bay EarlyON / On y va (Weekend Location)
E		St. Joseph EarlyON / On y va
F		Central Algoma Virtual EarlyON / On y va
G		Thessalon EarlyON / On y va (Outreach)
H	East Algoma	Iron Bridge EarlyON / On y va
I		Blind River EarlyON / On y va
J	Elliot Lake & Area	Elliot Lake EarlyON / On y va
K		
L	North Algoma	ON y va de Dubreuilville
M		Hornepayne EarlyON / On y va
N		Wawa EarlyON / On y va
O		ON y va de Wawa
P		White River EarlyON / On y va

Please note, as of the end of 2025 the Echo Bay Weekend Location and Central Algoma Virtual locations were no longer operating.

Figure 19: EarlyON / On y va Centre locations by Neighbourhoods



EarlyON / On y va centres offer free, high-quality programs for children 0 to 6 years and their parents or caregivers. Services are available in various formats, including in-person, virtual, outdoor, mobile, and outreach programming. Extended hours, such as evenings and weekends, are available to ensure accessible services for all families.

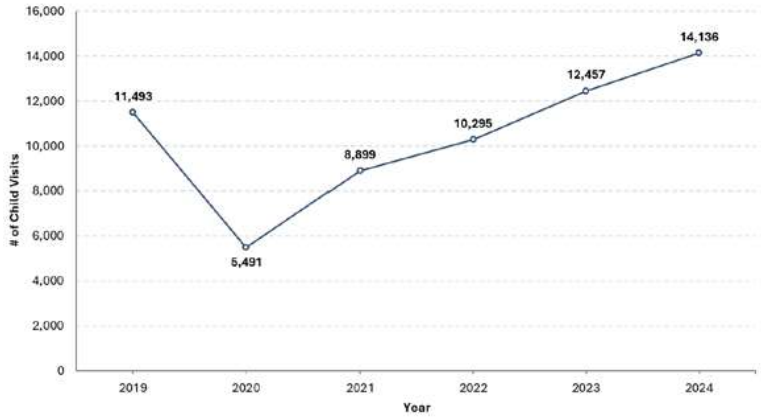
Age-related data collected through EarlyON / On y va visits can be categorized into two groups: children aged 0 to 6 years and those aged 7 years and older. This provides valuable context to support analysis of programming focused on early childhood development, as well as services designed for families with older children.

The primary goal of EarlyON / On y va is to support healthy child development and to enhance the capacity of parents and caregivers by increasing their understanding of early learning and development. The programs focus not only on skill development during early childhood but also on fostering positive parent-child relationships through interactive play and learning experiences.

Additionally, EarlyON / On y va programming reflects the diverse populations of Algoma. EarlyON / On y va centres serve as community hubs, providing families with updated information and referrals to specialized services.

Families are offered the ability to register with KEyON, a digital sign-in system that provides parents and caregivers a quick and simple way to sign in at EarlyON / On y va Centers across the Algoma District. The data collected through KEyON provides the ADSAB with additional metrics that are used for planning purposes to ensure that EarlyON / On y va centers are serving the needs of families in the community. While the COVID-19 pandemic caused disruptions in program delivery and participation, EarlyON / On y va centres adjusted service offerings to ensure that families and children remained supported throughout the pandemic. An increase in utilization of EarlyON / On y va services post COVID-19 has been noted.

Figure 20: Number of Visits to EarlyON / On y va by Children, 2019 - 2024





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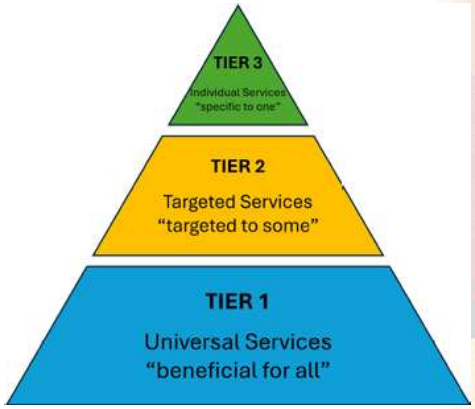
INCLUSION

Children's Services believes all children benefit from being in inclusive environments where they can participate and collaborate in meaningful ways and form authentic, caring relationships. Special Needs Resourcing (SNR) provides funding to support the inclusion of children with special needs in child care and early years settings.

Many programs provide services for children with special needs, including Early Learning Resources (ELR) and No Wrong Door. The ELR is a specialized program delivered through a purchase of service agreement with THRIVE Child Development Centre. This program provides Early Childhood Education Resource Consultant support for children with developmental differences who are enrolled in licensed child care or attending EarlyON / On y va programs. The No Wrong Door Digital Referral System manages child referrals for specialized services in the Algoma District.

Tiered Service Pathway

In 2025, a Tiered Service Pathway for Early Childhood Special Needs Resourcing was introduced through collaboration with THRIVE Child Development Centre. This proactive approach promotes more efficient resource use, enhances the capacity of educators and empowers families to implement strategies and interventions effectively. It helps avoid over-identification of children needing more intensive services, according to School Mental Health Ontario. By providing early and targeted interventions, a tiered model can help reduce the need for lengthy assessments and waitlists for more intensive services. This allows children to receive the support they need sooner, potentially leading to better developmental outcomes. Throughout the implementation of the Tiered Service Pathway, inclusion remains the guiding principle.



Tier 1: Focuses on universal supports and strategies for all children, building capacity within the early learning environment.

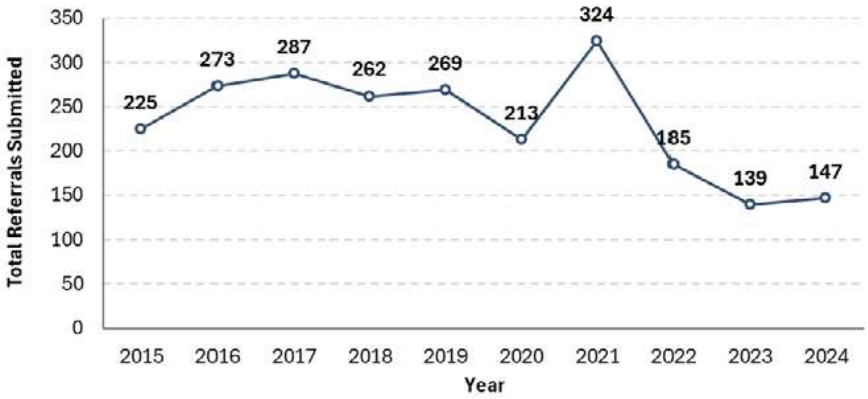
Tier 2: Provides targeted interventions for children who require more focused support, such as small group interventions or short-term consultations.

Tier 3: Offers intensive, individualized support for children with more significant needs, often involving specialized interventions and assessments.

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No Wrong Door System Algoma

Figure 21: Total Referrals Submitted Through No Wrong Door, 2015 - 2024



The No Wrong Door Digital Referral System manages child referrals in Sault Ste. Marie and the Algoma District to Algoma Family Services, Community Living Algoma, and THRIVE Child Development Centre. The concept of "No Wrong Door" represents service providers working collaboratively to ensure that the needs of children and families are addressed.

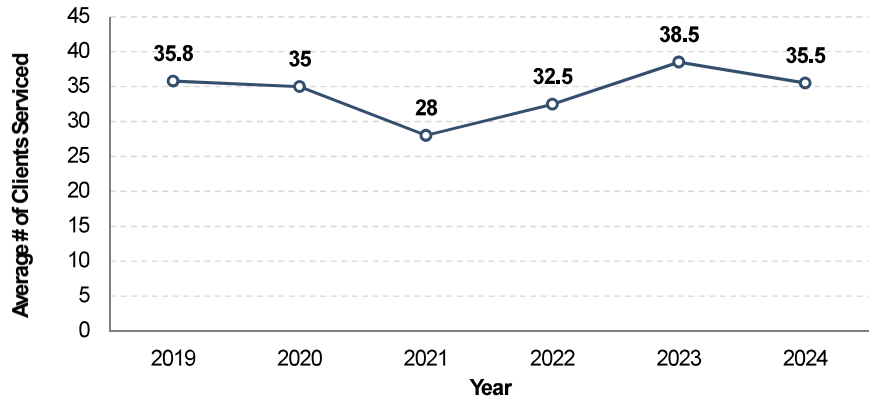
Figure 21 shows the number of referrals sent through the No Wrong Door system by year between 2015 and 2024. This information includes referrals sent in Sault Ste. Marie and the Algoma District.

THRIVE Child Development Centre

ADSAB has a purchase of service agreement with THRIVE Child Development Centre to support children and families across the district, including supporting children with physical, verbal and cognitive development differences through a number of services including occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech-language pathology.

Figure 22 shows the average number of children supported monthly from 2019 to 2024. The lowest average was observed in 2021 (28 clients), and the highest average was observed in 2023 (38.5 clients).

Figure 22: Average Number of Clients Serviced through THRIVE, 2019 – 2024



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QUALITY

Children's Services is committed to supporting child care and early years professionals through a continuous journey of reflection, collaboration, and growth. Fostering a culture of reflective practice plays a central role in driving quality initiatives and supports the ongoing improvement of early learning experiences. Child care and early years professionals explore, reflect on, and implement research-based practices and best practices, ultimately leading to improved learning environments and experiences for children and families.

We recently updated the district's Quality Assurance program tool. The new tool, GOALS, is a strength-based framework designed to initiate discussions about quality within the childcare sector and encourages self-reflection and meaningful dialogue. The tool offers opportunities to engage in purposeful conversations and set informed goals that align with Ontario's pedagogical documents.



GOALS focuses on strategies, skills, and concepts that promote ongoing communication, inquiry, and critical thinking. It highlights the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives and shared understandings, while considering the interconnected roles of early childhood professionals, children, and families. Our collaborative approach serves as the foundation for delivering high-quality child care.

The six guiding principles outlined in Canada's "Early Learning for Every Child Today" document are widely recognized and are central to early childhood education. These principles ensure a supportive and equitable environment for children's development and lifelong well-being.

It's our intent that Children's Services serve as trusted partners in fostering practices that promote a sense of connection throughout the district. Together, we celebrate accomplishments while creating opportunities for new approaches and innovative ideas.

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE (CoPS)

Planning for Professional Learning is informed by the results of surveys, ongoing service provider feedback, quality assurance observations, and community engagement. We are committed to professional learning opportunities aimed at strengthening professional capacity and designed to support all professionals working within the early years and licensed child care sector by enhancing their knowledge and skills.

For several years, Children's Services has supported professional learning to administrative staff, program leads, supervisors, and program staff, all working collaboratively to support one another. As a result, several new Communities of Practice (CoPs) have been established, including groups consisting of service provider leadership and administrative staff, equipped with the essential knowledge to manage programs effectively. Child care and early years professionals have been engaged in CoPs, based on reflective practice, to develop skills and mindsets that enhance their performance. New CoPs have been identified and are currently being implemented as part of our five-year plan. They include promoting Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) as a valued profession, and enhanced strategies designed to support anti-bias initiatives that foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive workplace.



WORKFORCE RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) play an essential role in developing a high-quality, inclusive early learning and child care system. The challenges related to recruiting and retaining RECEs pose significant barriers to ensuring high-quality, accessible and affordable child care across the district, both in English and French programs. Prior to COVID-19, there was a notable child care staffing crisis. The cumulative impacts of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic have intensified the early years and child care workforce leading to higher educator turnover, labor shortages, difficulties in recruiting qualified educators, and an increase in educators leaving the sector.

Figure 23: Total Early Years and Child Care Staffing in 2024 compared to 2025

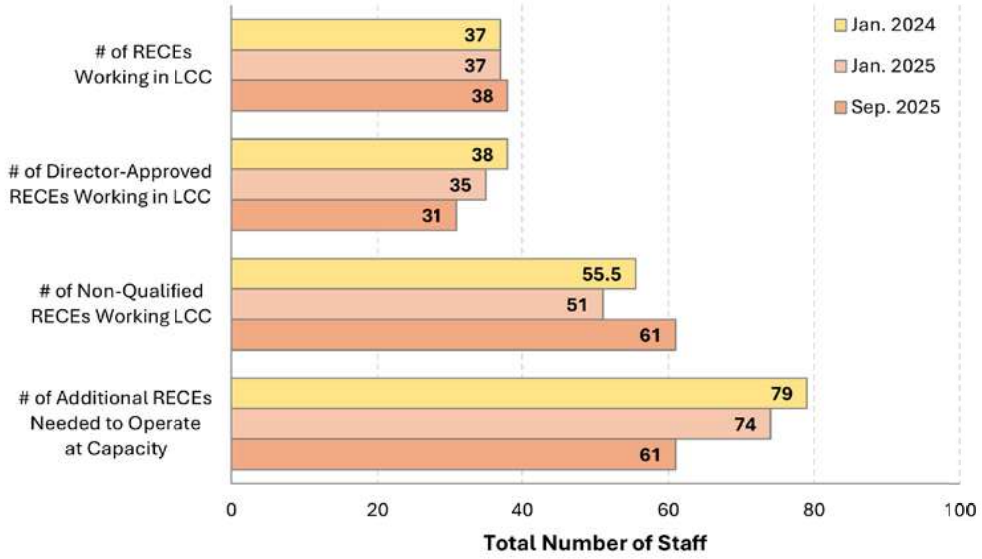


Figure 23 shows the number of RECEs working in licensed child care (LCC). As of September 2025, a total of 61 RECEs are needed to allow service providers to operate at full licensed capacity. Even more RECEs will be needed to support expansion through the Directed Growth Plan.

Child care providers foster an environment where all staff members feel a sense of belonging and are valued. New employees often benefit from additional mentorship to develop key skills in child development and related areas, while also respecting and acknowledging the diverse backgrounds and cultural perspectives of all team members. As we expand licensed child care throughout the district, the need to recruit and retain a diverse and qualified workforce becomes even more critical.

To support the recruitment, attraction and retention of RECEs, ADSAB has incorporated workforce development and recruitment and retention strategies into our plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PLAN FOR ENGAGEMENT

Our communities have much to celebrate regarding successful relationship building and decreased fragmentation in service delivery. As the Service System Manager, our objective is to ensure a consistent approach across the Algoma District while addressing the unique needs of individual communities. Community engagement and transparency are fundamental to our planning process. Strong partnerships form the foundation of the child care and early years service system, and meaningful collaboration with families, service providers, and stakeholders is essential to the success of this plan.

Collaboration with community partners, planning tables, and committees continues to be a key element in developing responsive services. Children's Services is dedicated to maintaining these partnerships, which have been instrumental in shaping the priorities and goals outlined in this Service System Plan.

Parents and caregivers throughout the Algoma District have provided valuable insights through online surveys, alongside contributions from service providers, administrators, and staff. These surveys have helped identify the strengths, challenges, and opportunities within the early years and childcare sectors, including perspectives on the future of program delivery.

SAULT STE. MARIE & ALGOMA CHILD AND FAMILY NETWORK

The goal of the Sault Ste. Marie & Algoma Child and Family Network is to recognize and celebrate successes, while collaboratively identifying issues and concerns that impact children and families across both the Algoma District and the District of Sault Ste. Marie. By aligning resources and efforts, the Network aims to ensure that service delivery throughout Algoma is integrated, coordinated and responsive to community needs. An important part of this approach is the active involvement of parents and guardians in the planning process, with their input regularly sought out to guide decision-making and ensure services reflect the lived experiences of families.

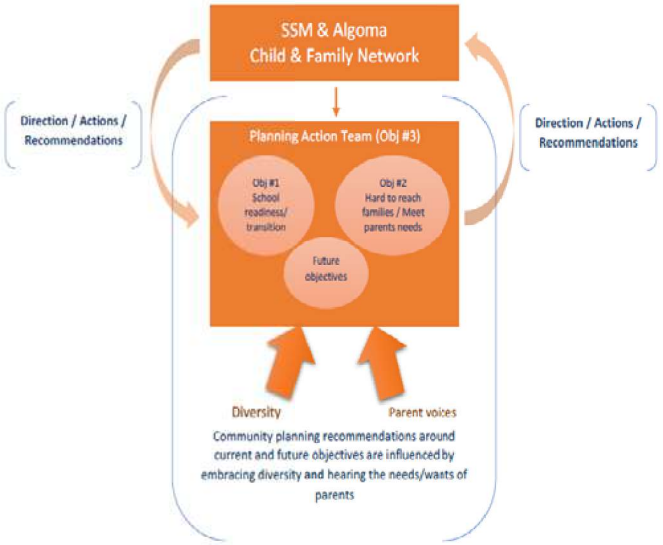
In 2019, the Network participated in a strategic planning session, incorporating feedback from community consultations to inform the development of the Network's planning and data analysis processes. Through this session, the Network identified three priority areas for strategic direction for the next two years

1. Improve transition into school for children and families
2. Understand and respond to the diverse needs of families, including those who are traditionally harder to reach, and
3. Create a unified approach to early years planning across Sault Ste. Marie and the Algoma District



To better meet the needs of the community and develop measurable outcomes for these three objectives, the Planning Action Team (PAT) was created in 2020. Specifically, the PAT was created to meet objective three – to amalgamate the various committees into one table and in doing so provide support for the two other objectives and guide the Networks decision and policy making.

The overriding philosophy between the Network and the PAT is to prioritize diversity and inclusivity and ensure that parent voices remain central to the process.



Within the lens of Social Equity, the Network strives to improve the Early Development Instrument (EDI) outcomes in all domains for children in the community. Early years services across the system provide the forum to support this goal and aligning early years planning with local community direction is strategically important to expanding and improving services for children and families.

The Network is in the process of developing a new Children's Report. Through the continued collaborative efforts of the Network, the PAT, and community engagement, the information collected for the report will inform and strengthen early years services

It is important to acknowledge the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on service delivery and the strategies employed to limit service disruption. COVID-19 naturally disrupted and delayed the work that the Network identified as part of their strategic plan, but this does not diminish the efforts already achieved, and work continues to progress. In response to the pandemic, ADSAB recognizes and celebrates that every member organization prioritized the needs of children and families and ensured that service and program delivery continued to support the varied needs of the community despite ongoing pandemic-related restrictions and changing public health measures.

Planning Action Team

The Planning Action Team (PAT) is comprised of over 20 dedicated members representing various partnering agencies across the Algoma District and District of Sault Ste. Marie, who participate in monthly meetings. The vision of the PAT is "*Children born and raised in the district of Algoma will achieve their highest potential.*" The purpose of this group is "*with direction from the Child & Family Network (CFN), (as applies to their mandate), the PAT will collaborate to support and foster optimal child development through strategic planning and implementation of district-wide initiatives.*" As a group, the PAT assists the CFN in achieving their objectives that align with their guiding principles. Presently,

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the PAT is focused on two key objectives: Improving transitions into school for children and families and inclusive community engagement. There is a designated subgroup for each objective who also convenes monthly to engage in strategic planning.

Nurturing Algoma

The Nurturing Algoma project is supported by the Sault Ste. Marie and Algoma Child and Family Network, a community-wide partnership of organizations committed to supporting families and promoting early childhood development throughout the district. This initiative assists families by connecting them to free developmental screenings for children 0 to 6 years old, resources, educational programs, and local support services at over 30 locations, serving diverse communities from Spanish to Hornepayne.

The screenings take place in October and April and emphasize the importance of developmental screening, helping parents and caregivers gain insight into their child's growth, learning progress, and milestone achievements. Utilizing the reputable Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), families can better understand their child's strengths in areas such as communication, motor skills, problem-solving, and social interaction.

Early childhood professionals guide families through the process, review assessment results, provide personalized feedback, and offer recommendations or referrals for additional support. Participating families also have the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing development of early childhood services in Algoma. With caregiver consent, a child's anonymized results may be included in the Canadian Database of Development in Infancy to Six (CanDDIS), a national research initiative led by SickKids and Queen's University. CanDDIS houses data from the ASQs along with sociodemographic information collected through the completed screening forms. This data helps identify gaps and informs future funding and program development both locally and across Ontario.

Three screening sessions have been conducted. The October 2024 session recorded 119 screens entered into the database, while the April 2025 session resulted in 494 screens being added. The most recent intake session was conducted in October 2025; however, the results are not yet available as the data has not been entered or processed.



SURVEYS AND RESPONSES



To support the development of the ADSAB's strategic priorities, three surveys were developed and distributed across the Algoma District between July 18 and August 8, 2025. One survey targeted parents and caregivers of children, another was intended for early years and child care professionals working in licensed child care and EarlyON / On y va Centres, and the third was designed for child care and early years service providers.

Parent and Caregiver Surveys

The Parent and Caregiver survey was promoted throughout EarlyON / On y va Child and Family Centres, licensed child care programs, and through social media and poster advertisements. To encourage participation, ADSAB offered an optional entry into a raffle for a grocery gift card upon completing the survey. In total, 215 surveys were completed, 196 in English and 19 in French.

Table 6: Summary of Parent and Caregiver Surveys completed in Algoma

Total Surveys Completed	**215**	
English	196	
French	19	
Central Algoma	7	3.3%
East Algoma	33	15.3%
Elliot Lake & Area	56	26.0%
North Algoma	73	34.0%
No Location Indicated	46	21.4%

Algoma District Social Services
Services Sociaux du district d'Algoma

Licensed Child Care

Parent and caregiver feedback on licensed childcare in Algoma showed strong appreciation for child care staff. Staff were frequently described as caring, compassionate, and particularly supportive and understanding of children with special needs. Many responses expressed overall satisfaction with the childcare experience and the positive developmental and social benefits their children receive.

Operational concerns were raised. The most common cited issues were staffing challenges, including high turnover rates, staffing shortages resulting in room closures, and inconsistency among caregivers. Additionally, communication gaps such as inconsistent updates, limited developmental feedback, and a lack of responsiveness to parent inquiries were noted. Parents and caregivers expressed concerns about limited operating hours and a lack of flexibility, particularly for shift-based workers. High child care fees for children aged 6 and older who are not covered under CWELCC make child care less accessible and affordable. Additionally, as programs adapt their policies, parents and children have seen a decrease in the allocated number of absent days at no fee with some providers. Menu food options and expanded outdoor play opportunities are areas that need improvement. Other issues include staff conduct and professional standards in some programs.

> "Staff go above and beyond for my children. Very understanding."

> "The staff are very friendly and treat my child with empathy and compassion."

> "[Child] has some unique needs and the staff are pretty good at understanding them."

Despite these challenges, families valued access to child care, the dedication of most staff and relationships their children have. Improvements in staffing stability, communication, professional standards and cleanliness, while expanding flexible and affordable options, were the clearest opportunities for improvement identified across all responses.

EarlyON / On y va Centres

Parent and caregiver feedback regarding the EarlyON / On y va Centres in Algoma highlights strong appreciation for staff, who were frequently described as knowledgeable, caring, and supportive. Families emphasized the role of EarlyON / On y va in fostering social connections, building community, and providing children with positive developmental and learning experiences through a variety of programs and activities. Many parents valued the centres as essential support, particularly new parents or caregivers seeking connection, support and learning opportunities.

Consistent challenges were identified. Working parents reported that limited program hours made it difficult for them to attend. Additionally, participants mentioned programming limitations such as repetitive activities and a desire for program options better suited for older children or those with developmental differences. Issues related to maintenance deficiencies, as well as a perceived lack of responsiveness to parental feedback, were also noted.

Overall, EarlyON / On y va Centres are highly valued by the community. However, improvements in staff quality and professionalism at some locations, flexible operating hours, inclusive programming, and facility maintenance are recommended to better serve community needs.



Educator Surveys

The Educator surveys were distributed to child care and early learning professionals working in licensed child care and EarlyON / On y va Centres throughout the Algoma District. A total of 45 surveys were completed, with 6 surveys submitted partially completed.

Most respondents indicated confidence in utilizing the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, to ensure children's safety and well-being. Participants strongly agreed that reflective practice and collaborative inquiry are essential components of high-quality programming. However, there was less certainty among respondents about where to find resources to enhance their practice, and many did not believe that the early years profession is sufficiently respected within the community.

Overall, several educators expressed concerns regarding workplace culture and low staff morale. There is a recognized need for increased support, particularly when working with children with complex needs, and many indicated that current staffing ratios present challenges to providing equitable support for all children. There was also a desire for more professional development opportunities. Despite these challenges, respondents expressed appreciation for the support provided and the opportunities for professional growth.

> "More support is important for the classrooms that are struggling daily with supporting all of the children and their independent needs and not just the children with behavioral/special needs."

> "The institution where I work is wonderful. Its director opened the doors to me despite my lack of training and/or experience as an educator."



> Our management team feels that we get a lot of wonderful support from our contacts with ADSAB, whether its regarding training, finances or general information.
>
> Thank you!

Service Provider Surveys

The Service Provider surveys were made available to licensed child care and EarlyON / On y va Executive Directors and Program Managers. The survey consisted of a series of questions that focused on strengths, challenges and opportunities for improvement with respect to program delivery and family engagement.

Overall, service provider responses showed a strong commitment to family engagement and creating a welcoming environment for families.

The most common challenges identified by service providers included staffing shortages and high staff turnover which in turn led to inconsistent support for families. Licensed child care providers also reported challenges with appropriately supporting children with more complex or diverse needs, as well as challenges related to inadequate staff-to-child ratios in rooms with high individual needs. Additional concerns included limited planning time and gaps in training. Overall, the primary challenge centered around staffing capacity relative to the program's needs.

Providers were generally receptive and optimistic about the new Tiered Service Pathway; while they have a clear understanding of its potential, providers are looking forward to its implementation. It was noted that developing communication and relationship-building skills with children, families, and colleagues are essential areas for growth. The importance of leadership and management training was also emphasized.

> Our biggest challenge has been ensuring we have enough staff to support children.

Some providers expressed interest in increased networking opportunities with other service providers, and in greater transparency regarding the interpretation of funding data. Additionally, there is a desire for greater involvement in the development of the Quality Initiative and for more consistent language regarding quality standards across the district.

Many providers highlighted the importance of increased recognition and incentives to enhance workplace satisfaction. Additionally, it was noted that wage and benefit disparities compared to other agencies remain a significant challenge in attracting and retaining staff.

> Staff go over and beyond to help parents. We may not be perfect, but we sure do our best.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 2025 – 2029

The ADSAB has identified six high-priority goals to pursue over the next five years, aligning closely with the Ontario Government's child care vision outlined in the Access and Inclusion Framework 2023. This vision is cantered on five key pillars and include[10]:



Each of the goals corresponds to specific focus areas and priorities within these six objectives, along with defined actions that ADSAB is committed to implementing.

10 *Ontario Ministry of Education, Ontario's Access and Inclusion Framework 2023, (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2023). Available at: https://files.ontario.ca/edu-access-and-inclusion-framework-en-2023-07-07.pdf*

GOAL 1

Support recruitment and retention of the Early Years and Child Care workforce.

QUALITY	Inclusion	Affordability	ACCESS	Data and Reporting

Action Item	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Advocate for early childhood educators as a respected and vital profession by highlighting the variety of career opportunities available within the field and actively involving community partners in this initiative.					
Create a district marketing strategy that will foster greater awareness and interest in the sector, with the goal of increasing the number of qualified staff in the Early Years and Child Care workforce.					
Renew mentorship programs to enhance capacity to support the retention of educators.					
Promote fair compensation and working conditions for all early childhood educators.					
Provide funding to expand professional development opportunities to support and strengthen the capacity of the Early Learning and Child Care workforce, subject to funding availability.					

GOAL 2

Improve communication, foster engagement and strengthen partnerships.				
QUALITY	INCLUSION	Affordability	Access	Data and Reporting

Action Item	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Renew community advisory groups and planning tables focused on the Early Years and Child Care sector.					
Cultivate strong relationships with service providers through individual discussions about quality assurance and key updates, and regular meetings will all agencies to share best practices.					
Facilitate a community of practice for educators and leaders as a forum for idea exchange and sharing of best practices to enrich communications with parents and caregivers.					
Foster and uphold a culture of reflective practice that emphasizes relationship-building and promotes respectful communication with colleagues, children, and families.					

GOAL 3

Enhance the quality of programs in the Early Years and Child Care system.				
QUALITY	INCLUSION	Affordability	Access	Data and Reporting

Action Item	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Elevate quality service standards through continuous professional learning, pedagogical leadership and communities of practice that build capacity within the sector.	■	■	■	■	■
Implement a renewed quality program that is grounded in reflective practices.	■	■			
Collaborate with post-secondary institutions on the delivery of early childhood education courses that support efforts in increasing the Early Childhood workforce.		■			
Engage with families and community partners through surveys, planning tables and community sessions to plan for continuous improvement.	■	■	■	■	■
Evaluate and address gaps in services.	■		■		■
Adopt quality standards and implement a monitoring framework within the child care and early years system.		■	■	■	

GOAL 4

Foster inclusion and diversity within the Early Years and Child Care system.				
Quality	**INCLUSION**	Affordability	**ACCESS**	Data and Reporting

Action Item	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Renew strategies that promote a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce by advancing anti-bias initiatives, celebrating cultural diversity and fostering strong relationships.					
Support early years and child care programs to ensure they are welcoming and inclusive environments for all individuals, regardless of identity or background.					
Ensure families and children with special needs have access to early years and child care services regardless of their abilities.					
Ensure educators and families have the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to implement effective strategies and early interventions that support the development of all children.					
Use research and data to inform best practices and access to programs and services.					
Collaborate with THRIVE Child Development Centre and other community partners to monitor, evaluate and refine special needs services and staff training as needed.					
Collaborate with Indigenous community partners to enhance programs and services.					

GOAL 5

Strengthen service system administration and program delivery.

Quality	Inclusion	AFFORDABILITY	Access	DATA AND REPORTING

Action Item	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Reduce Service Provider administrative burden in the reporting and collection of data.	■	■			
Provide continued training opportunities on funding components and financial management systems.	■	■	■	■	■
Leverage collected data and information effectively to support informed decision-making and improve program delivery.	■	■	■	■	■
Continue to foster relationships with and among Service Providers through communities of practice.	■	■	■	■	■
Implement and sustain a new cost-based funding approach as a foundational model for sustainable child care funding.	■	■	■		

GOAL 6

Increase equitable access to licensed child care.				
Quality	Inclusion	AFFORDABILITY	ACCESS	Data and Reporting

Action Item	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Monitor the demand for child care through waitlists.	■	■	■	■	■
Refine fee subsidy policies and procedures to ensure equitable and affordable access to all families.		■	■		
Enhance recruitment initiatives to attract francophone, Indigenous, and early years and child care professionals from diverse cultural backgrounds, ensuring an inclusive environment where all individuals feel welcome and a sense of belonging.	■	■			
Collaborate with service providers to expand child care options and early years services that are responsive to the needs of families in their communities.	■	■			
Advocate for an equitable system that includes all children from birth to 12 years, for example reduced rates for school-age children.	■	■	■	■	■
Improve access to licensed programs in underserviced areas through the Directed Growth plan.	■	■			

THE FUTURE OF ALGOMA'S EARLY YEARS SYSTEM

The ADSAB remains dedicated to building a resilient, inclusive, and responsive child care and early years system that reflects the unique needs of families across our diverse communities. This Service System Plan serves as a roadmap for strategic investment, collaborative partnerships, and continuous improvement in service delivery. By leveraging data, engaging stakeholders, and aligning with provincial priorities, we aim to ensure that every child in Algoma has access to high-quality early learning experiences that support their development and well-being. As we move forward, ADSAB is committed to being accountable to these goals and will regularly review our progress, consider new challenges and adjust as we work through our proposed plan. At the forefront of this strategic initiative, we believe that equity, innovation, and community engagement will guide our efforts to create a system where all children and families can thrive.



