What does AECENL do to support ECEs?

The Association for Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador (AECENL) is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting professionalism in the field of Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC), and to ensuring quality child care and education for young children. The association is governed by a volunteer board who also work full-time in the ELCC field, including frontline ECEs, ELCC professionals, and student representatives. AECENL also employs nine staff members who are responsible for delivering certification, facilitating orientation courses, assessing and processing bursaries and grants, coordinating professional learning opportunities, providing individualized advice and guidance, and advocating for the sector. AECENL is an affiliate member of the Canadian Child Care Federation, enabling the association to support ELCC both provincially and nationally.

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AECENL accesses, processes, and delivers **Child Care Services Certification**. Certification is a key component that identifies Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) as professionals.

AECENL facilitates **Orientation Courses**, which provide a point of entry into the ELCC field and allow individuals to add classifications to their certification. AECENL currently offers courses in infant, preschool, pre-kindergarten, school-age, and family child care, as well as a refresher course, a post-secondary summer student temporary certification course, and a casual caregiver module.

AECENL assesses and processes the **Trainee Bursary, Recruitment and Retention Grant, and the On-Campus Field Placement Bursary** on behalf of the Department of Education. The Recruitment and Retention Grant is linked to certification levels and a commitment to service, while the bursaries support professional growth. Together, these initiatives contribute to the development of an education and career pathway that encourages early childhood educators to advance within their profession.

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In collaboration with Dougan Insurance Group, AECENL has implemented the **ELCC Medical Benefits Program** on behalf of the Department of Education. This program is available to ECEs, ELCC employees, and Family Child Care Providers working in regulated child care services that participate in the Operating Grant Program (OGP).

AECENL offers a wide variety of **professional learning opportunities** for ECEs, including online workshops, orientation courses, an Information Series, a Live Workshop Series, several Community of Practice streams, full-day professional learning events in each region annually, and an annual provincial conference. AECENL also maintains a Professional Learning (PL) Lending Library with resources such as pre-made workshops for group use and books for self-study.

AECENL holds a provincial license that allows ECEs (and all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador) to access free resources from the **Science of Early Childhood Development (SECD)**, which can be used for professional learning and shared with families.

AECENL hosts a **PL Grant Fund**, which administrators can apply for in order to help offset the costs of hosting professional learning events and PL closeout days within their regulated child care services.

AECENL has developed numerous **resources for ECEs**, including Becoming an Early Childhood Educator in NL, a Professional Learning Toolkit for Administrators, a Navigating Virtual Professional Learning Support Document, an AECENL Facilitator List, an Early Learning and Child Care Directory, a Provincial Community Supports Directory, and resources on finding employment as an ECE, including interview tips and strategies.

AECENL created and delivers the annual **Joanne Juteau ECE Scholarship** and the **ECE of the Year Award**, along with annual **Service Recognition Awards** for AECENL members each fall.

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AECENL promotes ongoing and upcoming events, services, resources and sector updates through **social media platforms**, including the Association of Early Childhood Educators of Newfoundland and Labrador Facebook page, four private Facebook groups (Community Outreach and Idea Sharing Page, Early Childhood Learning Framework Idea Sharing, Member Network, and Administrator Support and Networking), @AECENL on Instagram, on **Linktree** https://linktr.ee/aecenl and at and its website at **www.aecenl.ca**.

AECENL's board hosts a **Loose Parts Trading Post** and an **Outdoor Clothing Swap**, where members can donate or collect materials and outdoor clothing to use in their ELCC programs. The Loose Parts Trading Post is currently hosted in St. John's, Corner Brook, and Burin, while the Outdoor Clothing Swap is available at the AECENL office in St. John's.

AECENL also provides **support to member ECEs who wish to lead projects that benefit the broader ELCC community**. This includes initiatives such as the ECE Voices of NL podcast and its corresponding Community of Practice, as well as What a Mess! The Remains of the Play photo exhibit. Through this support, AECENL encourages educators to share their knowledge, experiences, and creativity, contributing to professional learning and strengthening connections within the sector.

AECENL champions the ELCC sector by celebrating the strengths of early learning, upholding the rights of children, and honouring the vital knowledge, skills, and contributions of ECEs in fostering children's learning and well-being. Promotion efforts include radio campaigns, social media outreach, presentations at high schools and colleges, and participation in career fairs and public events. AECENL also coordinates **ECE Week** annually, having it proclaimed by the government and facilitating events that recognize ECEs as professionals.

What does AECENL do to support ECEs?

AECENL advocates for ECEs at both the provincial and national levels. The association has built strong relationships with government departments, post-secondary institutions, organizations, and community partners. Through these relationships, AECENL participates in committees, consultations, roundtable discussions, forums, and symposiums, where it shares recommendations and insights. AECENL also provides written submissions, including position papers, letters to government officials, emails, and phone correspondence. Over the years, AECENL has advocated on issues such as the ECE workforce, certification, quality, inclusion, regulations and legislation, the Operating Grant Program, Junior Kindergarten, the ELCC Supplement, financial supports for professional upgrading, access to professional learning, ratios, Pre-K programs, and challenges related to recruitment and retention. AECENL's primary focus has been advocating for fair compensation and paid benefits for early childhood educators.