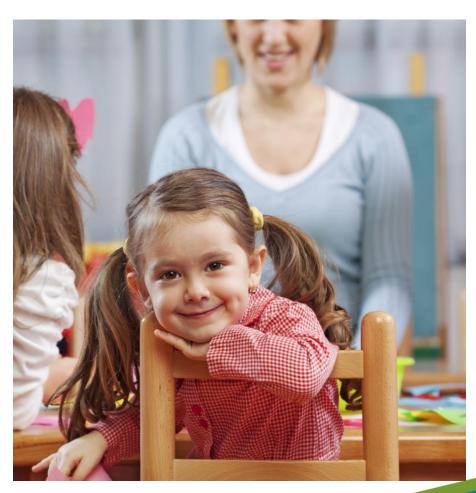
2016 Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Unlicensed Home Child Care Providers: Survey Findings





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Special thanks to: Local early childhood education centres.

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Executive Summary

Background and Methodology

While over a third of parents in the Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (WDG) area rely on Unlicensed Home Child Care Providers (UHCCP) to care for their young children, little is known about the support and training needs of this unique group of care givers. In order to determine the training and support needs of UHCCPs in WDG and to inform program planning, Wellington-Dufferin-Public Health (WDGPH) administered a survey to a total of 43 local UHCCPs.

Key Findings

The key findings from the survey analyses are as follows:

- Most local UHCCPs felt they were knowledgeable of child care best practices, but still felt they could benefit from training opportunities.
- Local UHCCPs prefer accessing Ontario Early Year Centres & libraries for child care information.
- Most local UHCCPs prefer receiving child care information through online mediums.
- Timing of training opportunities is the most prominent barrier for local UHCCP participation.

Recommendations

Based on the key findings from this survey and supportive literature, three recommendations have been developed to help support the learning and training needs of UHCCPs in WDG:

- Share the findings and recommendations of this report with child care agencies within WDG.
- Consider collaborating with local child care agencies to create a WDG child care inventory of evidence-based programs and resources.
- Explore ways to use WDGPH's website and social media platforms to expand reach of child care information to the UHCCP audience.

1.0 Introduction

From UNICEF to the Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), it is acknowledged that the early years of childhood form the basis of personality, intelligence, social behavior, and capacity to learn and nurture oneself as an adult.⁵ Good nutrition, health, consistent loving care and encouragement to learn in the early years of life help children to perform better in school, be healthier and participate more in society.¹ The Hanen Centre reports that over 70% of children in Canada are in some kind of child care arrangement. With so many Canadian children in child care, child care providers play an important role in the development of the children in their care.

The decision of which type of child care families choose is based on a number of factors, such as cost, availability, quality of program, hours of operation, location, flexibility and the relationship between parent and provider. Parents can choose licensed child care centres or home-based care. Two types of home-based child care providers exist in Ontario – licensed and unlicensed (or informal care). Licensed home child care providers (LHCCPs) are private home child care providers who normally work for a county or region and offer licensed home child care. These child care providers follow policies and procedures set by the province, whereas unlicensed home child care providers (UHCCPs) are not required to follow the same policies and procedures. As of August 2015, UHCCPs can care for no more than five children, including their own, under the age of six and may not operate at multiple premises. Other than this regulation, UHCCPs do not have to meet provincial standards, nor are they inspected by the Ministry of Education.⁶

Access to Licensed Child Care Providers

Access to licensed child care can be difficult in Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph (WDG). There are only 120 infant spaces in licensed centre-based care in WDG, compared to 615 toddler spaces and 1,579 preschooler spaces. Furthermore, in 2008 there were only 14%, 11% and 7% of licensed center-based child care spaces available for children 0-6 years-old in Guelph, Dufferin and Wellington, respectively.⁸ The largest under-served area is rural Dufferin County. The above situation can leave parents who return to work after parental leaves with limited options in the type of child care they access for their young child.

Use of Unlicensed Home Child Care Providers

The use of UHCCPs varies between Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph (Table 1). In each area, the combined percent of parents using UHCCPs or relatives ranges from approximately 37-43% for children 2-4 years old and 37% to 40% for ages 4 to 6.8

	2-4 years old			4-6 years old		
	Unlicensed	Relative	Total	Unlicensed	Relative	Total
Guelph	22%	15%	37%	22%	15%	37%
Wellington	32%	11%	43%	29%	11%	40%
Dufferin	30%	11%	41%	27%	10%	37%

Table 1: WDG Use of Unlicensed Child Care

Satisfaction with Child Care Arrangements

Local parents indicate that after cost, the greatest barrier experienced when looking for child care was lack of available spaces and concern regarding the quality of the child care arrangement.⁸ At the same time, parents are, in most instances, more satisfied with care provided by a relative, compared to either licensed or unlicensed care.⁸

Training Needs of Home Child Care Providers

There is little data on the training needs of home child care provider in general. There are some considerations that should be taken into account when designing training opportunities for this unique group. Training should acknowledge that home child care providers often care for different ages of children at one time and that training focusing on a single age group is not as relevant. Furthermore, home child care providers look after children in their homes, which typically do not have the same space or facilities that a licensed child care centre would have. Other considerations include the isolating and time consuming nature of this work, small operating budgets, as well as the multiple roles home child care providers often play such as administrator, child care provider and parent.⁹

A study examining the training needs of home child care providers indicated that local workshops held in evenings or weekends were of greatest interest to this group.¹⁰ Participants were most interested in behaviour, stress management and curriculum type education/training.¹¹ In terms of how to offer education and training opportunities, evidence shows that a single, two-hour, Train-the-Trainer led physical activity workshop resulted in increased physical activity in child care centres.¹² It is possible that this type of training model would be effective in training child care providers in other relevant topic areas.

Survey Purpose

While over a third of parents in the WDG area rely on UHCCPs to care for their young children, little is known about the support and training needs of this unique group. Furthermore, data that does exist on the quality of home child care is mostly from the United States, where the home child care system may differ from Canada. Nevertheless, the literature does provide some considerations when planning education or training for home child care providers to addresses their unique needs.

Before creating any training or educational tools for UHCCP in our area, it is important to better understand their needs. Feedback from UHCCPs will likely increase the relevance of the tools and uptake by this group. Thus, the following survey was developed and delivered by Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health (WDGPH) to determine the training and support needs of local UHCCPs. The survey and results are described below.

2.0 Methodology

Between November 2015 and January 2016, WDGPH administered a short survey to interested UHCCP in Wellington and Dufferin Counties and the City of Guelph.

Data was collected using an online survey on FluidSurveys (Appendix A). The survey asked participants about their knowledge on several child care related topics, in addition to preferred avenues and methods for receiving, and barriers to obtaining, child care information. An online version was used to increase convenience and efficiency of survey completion for this busy and difficult to contact group, with hopes of increasing the uptake of this survey.

The survey was promoted to UHCCPs through a variety of means including the WDGPH website, the WDGPH Twitter account, targeted newspaper advertisements and purchased Facebook accounts. The survey was also administered using electronic tablets at local child care centres in WDG. Additionally, a promotional business card (Appendix B) and flyer (Appendix C) were developed to promote the survey through various agencies in WDG that have contact with UHCCPs. To attract as many UHCCPs as possible to complete the survey, an incentive draw for one of three \$100.00 gift certificates was included.

Since contacting local UHCCPs can be challenging, the goal was to obtain a minimum of 50 completed surveys. At the end of collection, 43 completed surveys were available for analysis.

3.0 Key Findings

Demographic Information

Sixty-one individuals were successfully recruited across WDG to complete the UHCCP survey; however, 18 respondents were terminated due to lack of consent or not meeting inclusion criteria. Of the remaining 43 completed surveys, two respondents failed to identify themselves as UHCCP, but were still included in the analysis. Respondents heard about the survey through the Ontario Early Years Centres (OEYCs; 42%), Facebook (26%) and e-mail (16%).

The majority of respondents reported providing care in the City of Guelph (44%), followed by Wellington County and Dufferin County (both 16.3%). Additionally, one respondent

identified providing home child care outside of WDG and one respondent preferred not to answer the question. Due to the small sample size, each question's responses were combined and reported as WDG to allow for sufficient reporting numbers.

Child Care Providers Knowledge and Interests

Respondents were asked about their knowledge level of, and interest in more information about, specific home child care best practice topics. Almost all survey respondents (95% or higher) agreed or strongly agreed that they are knowledgeable about specified best practices for the following child care relevant areas: healthy eating and food preparation; physical activity; dental care; injury prevention; infection control; growth and development; and positive discipline.

More than half of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that more information on certain child care topics would make them a better provider (Figure 1). The top rated topics of interest were: stopping the spread of germs and disease (74%), having difficult conversations with parents (72%), new government rules on home childcare (71%) and meeting with other home child care providers (71%).

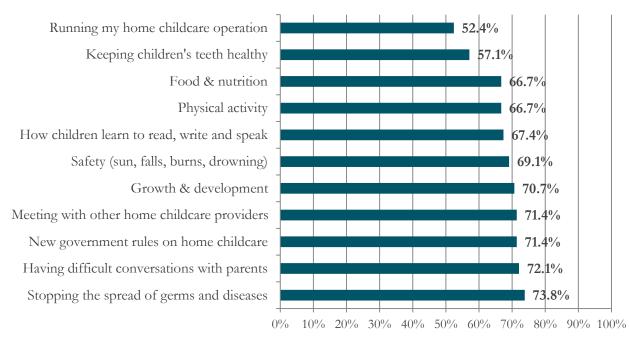


Figure 1: Interest in Additional Child Care Information by Topic

Note. Percentages represent a combined total of agree and strongly agree responses.

Preferred Agency Support

Respondents were asked about previous and future preferred agency support for home child care information. In the past year, the majority of respondents used OEYCs (72%) and local

libraries (61%) to seek supportive home child care information. Only 2 % indicated use of WDGPH as a child care resource in the past year.

As shown in Figure 2, the most preferred agencies for future access to information were Wellington County (70%), OEYCs (61%) and local libraries (51%). WDGPH and KIDS LINE were also identified as choices for additional child care information (30% and 16%, respectively).

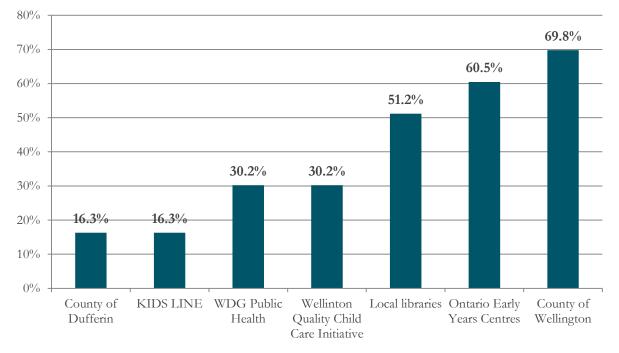


Figure 2: Preferred Agencies for Future Access to Additional Information

Note. Percentages represent a combined total of agree and strongly agree responses.

Preferred Methods of Receiving Child Care Information

Respondents were also asked about preferred methods for receiving home child care information. As depicted in Figure 3, nine out of ten respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they prefer to receive child care information from websites, closely followed by reading (87%) and online learning modules (84%). More traditional group learning methods, such as group education and/or workshops, were less popular at 71%.

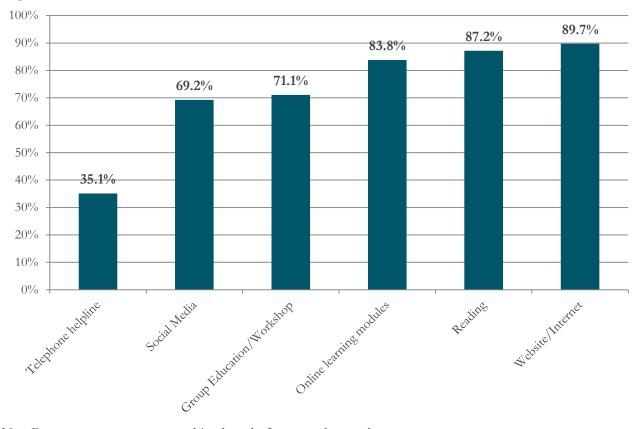


Figure 3: Preferred Methods to Receive Additional Information

Note. Percentages represent a combined total of agree and strongly agree responses.

Barriers to Receiving Child Care Information

Finally, respondents were asked about perceived barriers to obtaining new home child care information or training. As shown in Figure 4, the most prominent barrier agreed or strongly agreed upon by respondents was timing of programs (63%), followed by lack of interest and lack of time (both 54%), with lack of transportation as the least prominent barrier (19%).

4.0 Discussion

The following section discusses the key findings that emerged from the results and the importance of these findings.

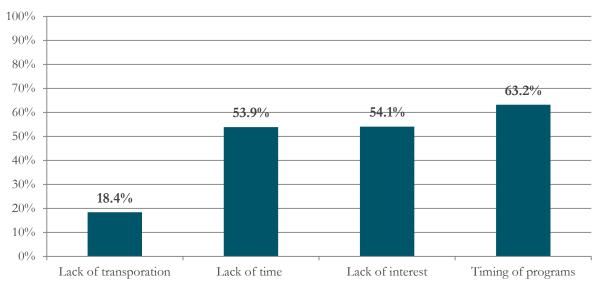


Figure 4: Barriers to Receiving Additional Training

Note. Percentages represent a combined total of agree and strongly agree responses.

Most local UHCCPs felt they were knowledgeable of child care best practices, but still felt they could benefit from training opportunities.

Local UHCCPs reported being very knowledgeable on a wide variety of child care topics. However, the majority of respondents also expressed an interest for more information on topics such as communicable diseases and preventing the spread of infection, having difficult conversations with parents, as well as government rules on child care issues and opportunities to meet with other home child care providers.

This information is somewhat contradictory as the majority of respondents felt very knowable about most child care topics, while at the same time, expressing a strong desire for additional information on most of the same topics they expressed high knowledge in. To help explain this apparent contradiction, it is possible that placing the knowledge question first in the survey may have been interpreted as testing the participants' knowledge. Survey respondents may have felt judged and rated their knowledge higher than had the question been asked later when greater survey familiarity had been established.¹³ Moreover, the timing of the survey may have corresponded with the introduction of new child care legislation, which some may perceive as more restrictive and having higher demands on the provider.¹⁴ Respondents may have perceived WDGPH as being associated with the Ministry of Education who is delivering the new legislation. Knowledge levels may have been rated artificially high to correspond with what was perceived as being expected of them. Finally, WDGPH distributing the survey may have led to response bias. Respondents may have scored themselves higher in the knowledge section to demonstrate a score that may be perceived as adequate by WDGPH. ¹⁵

Nonetheless, there was clearly an interest by many UHCCPs for additional information on a wide variety of child care topics, regardless of their expressed knowledge level.

Local UHCCPs prefer accessing Ontario Early Year Centres & libraries for child care information.

Preference for OEYCs and local libraries, both in the past and in the future, as sources of child care information was high. This is not surprising as both agencies are conveniently found and easily accessed in both Counties and the City of Guelph. The two agencies equally welcome both LHCCPs and UHCCPs, and support them with resources and children's programs.^{16, 17}

Survey results indicated that the County of Wellington was the preferred agency for child care information. When considering child care agencies that were used in the past year and preferred for additional information, two important factors should be taken into account. First, through the Guelph Wellington Quality Child Care Initiative, unlicensed child care providers are welcome to partake in workshops and drop-in programs. Second, it should be noted that the response rate from Dufferin County was quite low compared to other locations. These notable differences must be considered when comparing the interest of UHCCPs using County-level agencies for child care information.

Most local UHCCPs prefer receiving child care information through online mediums.

UHCCPs clearly want to receive new child care information and learning via online mediums, such as the internet and websites. Although not specifically asked why they prefer internet learning, identified barriers may provide clues as to the popularity of electronic learning. Timing of agency-run programs, as well as lack of time by the child care provider, were identified as common barriers to receiving new information. Online mediums may allow UHCCPs to learn at a time of their choosing and from the comfort of their own home. This is supported by other literature about the increasing popularity of online learning for its flexibility and convenience.¹⁸

Timing of training opportunities is the most prominent barrier for local UHCCP participation.

The greatest barrier to UHCCPs' training opportunity participation was the timing of the training. This is consistent with the literature, which indicates most UHCCPs as women and/or mothers leading busy lives outside of their work, similar to other mothers who work outside the home. In addition to having a long workday five days a week, UHCCPs tend to offer flexible, and sometimes personalized, scheduling to the families they provide care for.¹⁹

This leaves limited time for their own family and household responsibilities, before having adequate time to pursue additional education or training.

As discussed above, the time barrier supports the previous finding that most UHCCPs prefer to receive child care information through online mediums. The convenience and flexibility of the internet can help overcome barriers to additional learning, such as the timing of programs.¹⁸

5.0 Limitations and Challenges

The limitations and challenges for this study are related to small sample size, a disproportionate survey uptake and the difficulty in reaching and recruiting the target population.

Due to small sample size, each question's responses were combined and reported geographically as WDG to allow for sufficient reporting numbers. As well, the UHCCP sample was not large enough to be considered representative of UHCCPs across WDG. Therefore, data should be interpreted with caution and not generalized to all UHCCPs across the area. It should be highlighted that the primary purpose of this survey, and its results, was to inform program planning at WDGPH in order to advance our mandate and respond to community need.

An additional challenge related to sample size was the disproportionate survey uptake in Dufferin County compared to Wellington County and the City of Guelph. Completed survey answers from Dufferin County were often insufficient to be representative of Dufferin County alone. This supported the need to combine question responses and report as WDG.

Reaching and recruiting candidates from this target audience to complete the survey was an ongoing challenge. Local UHCCPs are loosely connected to each other and have limited affiliation with associations that represent or speak for them. Success in contacting local UHCCPs was obtained by partnering with OEYCs and the Wellington Quality Child Care Initiative.

6.0 Recommendations

1) Share the findings and recommendations of this report with agencies whom WDGPH collaborates with to support UHCCPs.

As recommended in the literature, sharing information and best practices is a beneficial way to improve performance by replicating successes throughout agencies or communities. Other benefits include raising the overall quality of services, avoiding duplication of effort or "reinventing the wheel", and cost savings through increased productivity and efficiency.²⁰ It is recommended that WDGPH share the findings of this survey with agencies who support UHCCPs in order for the local child care community to profit from the survey findings and many of the benefits listed above from the literature.

2) Consider collaborating with local child care agencies to create a WDG child care inventory of evidence-based programs and resources.

Since most UHCCPs indicated they could benefit from additional training, WDGPH should consider collaborating with local child care agencies, particularly ones preferred by UHCCPs, such as Ontario Early Years, local libraries and the County of Wellington, to create and share a WDG-wide child care inventory of programs and resources. The inventory could assess what child care information exists, how current resources and programs are developed and implemented, and if it is evidence-based. The collaboration could also look for increased opportunities to share this information with UHCCPs across WDG. This collaboration would raise the overall quality of services, avoid duplication of effort and cost savings through increased productivity and efficiency.²⁰

3) Explore ways to use WDGPH's website and social media platforms to expand reach of child care information to the UHCCP audience.

Another opportunity for WDGPH to collaborate with the local child care community is to electronically promote child care information to the UHCCP audience and link viewers to other child care agencies. This recommendation combines three interests of UHCCPs: to receive more training, to receive the training through online mediums and to receive it through agencies of their preference, such as OEYCs, local libraries and the County of Wellington.

7.0 Conclusions

In the study described above, WDGPH surveyed local UHCCPs to determine their unique training and support needs. These findings were intended to inform program planning and it is recognized the small survey sample size is a limitation and caution must be exercised when making any conclusions or interpreting the listed recommendations. Feedback from the 43 respondents indicated that there is an interest of this group for more information on topics that support their home child care businesses.

Possibly, the most prudent and efficient way for WDGPH to support the training and educational needs of UHCCPs in WDG is to closely collaborate with local agencies who already provide these services to UHCCPs. Agencies, such as the OEYCs, local libraries and the County of Wellington, already have existing relationships and have built trust with local UHCCPs. WDGPH can contribute to this collaboration by supporting the co-ordination and distribution of current and consistent evidence-based, best practice information on child care topics of interest and relevance to UHCCPs throughout WDG.

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Appendix A: Unlicensed Home Child Care Provider Survey

You are invited to complete a survey for Unlicensed Home Child Care Providers. The purpose of this survey is to ask Unlicensed Home Child Care Providers of Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph (WDG) about the help you may wish to get in order to be the best child care provider you can be. Your responses are important and will help to shape the support that community agencies give to you.

This survey should take about 5 minutes to complete. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You may stop the survey at any time without consequence.

At the end of the survey you will be asked if you would like to have a chance to win a prize or help with any future work we do related to home child care providers. If you respond "yes", you will be asked to provide personal contact information. Your contact information will never be connected with your survey responses. It will be stored on a secure server in a password protected folder and not used for any other reason than those outlined above.

Risks: There are no known risks associated with this survey. Your answers will be anonymous and kept private. If you don't want to fill out this survey there will be no consequences. Your answers will be put together with other people's answers in a written public report. If you want a copy of the results or have any questions about the survey, you can contact Brad de St. Aubyn at brad.destaubyn@wdgpublichealth.ca or 1-800-265-7293 ex. 2680.

The information on this form is collected under the authority of the Health Protection and Promotion Act in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act. This information will be used for the delivery of public health programs and services; the administration of the agency; and the maintenance of healthcare databases, registries and related research, in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Any questions about the collection of this information should be addressed to the Chief Privacy Officer at 1-800-265-7293 ext 4354.

By selecting "I agree to participate" below you agree that you:

- 1. Understand what is asked of you based on the information above
- 2. Understand that your participation is your choice and you are free to stop at any time
- 3. Understand that your answers will be kept private.

I agree to participate I do not agree to participate

- 1. I provide child care to children other than my own, in my own home, for a fee. Yes/No (no skip to end of survey)
- I am an unlicensed or independent home child care provider. I do not work for a licensed home child care agency, such as the County of Wellington or Creative Kids in Dufferin County.

Yes/No (no-skip to end of survey)

- 3. I provide care in:
 - a. City of Guelph
 - b. Centre Wellington
 - c. East Wellington
 - d. North Wellington
 - e. Grand Valley and area
 - f. Orangeville and area
 - g. Shelburne and area
 - h. Prefer not to answer
 - i. Other
- 4. To be the best home care provider I can be, I feel I have the knowledge to: Strongly disagree – disagree – agree – strongly agree
 - a. Cook healthy meals and snacks that include fruit and vegetables.
 - b. Cook meals for children with allergies or special diets.
 - c. Cook and store food safely.
 - d. Keep children's teeth healthy (brushing, limiting sugar and juice, napping without bottles).
 - e. Use positive discipline for different ages.
 - f. Plan activities that help children learn how to run, jump, throw, balance.
 - g. Plan activities that help children learn how to cut, draw, stack, pick-up small objects.
 - h. Plan activities that help children learn how to read, write and speak.
 - i. Identify if a child has difficulty learning, moving, playing or talking.
 - j. Help children be safe in the sun.
 - k. Child proof my house and prevent injury (falls, burns, drowning).
 - 1. Choose safe toys for each age.
 - m. Limit TV and computer time.
 - n. Make sure children are getting enough physical activity for good health.

- o. Clean toys and household items to stop the spread of germs.
- p. Make decisions about when a sick child should stay home from child care.
- q. Help children learn how to wash their hands properly.
- r. Other
- 5. Information on the following topics would help me to be the best home child care provider I can be:

Strongly disagree - disagree - agree - strongly agree

- Information on running my home child care operation
- Information on new government rules for home child care
- Chances to meet with other home child care providers
- Ideas about how to have difficult conversations with parents
- Information on physical activity
- Information on food and nutrition
- Information on growth and development
- Information on safety (sun, falls, burns, drowning)
- Information on how to stop the spread of germs and diseases
- Information on keeping children's teeth healthy (brushing, limiting sugar and juice, napping without bottles
- Information on how children learn to read, write and speak
- Other
- 6. In the past year, which of the agencies have you used as part of your home child care operation:

(Please select all that apply)

- County of Dufferin
- County of Wellington
- Libraries
- OEYCs
- Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health
- Wellington Quality Child Care Initiative
- Other
- At the "County of Dufferin", I used their: (Please select all that apply)
 - website

- publication
- training
- other program

(use skip-patterns in the survey format for each source chosen in Q6)

- 8. I would like to get information about my home child care operation from: check all that apply
 - County of Dufferin
 - County of Wellington
 - Local Libraries
 - OEYCs
 - KIDSLINE
 - Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health
 - Wellington Quality Child Care Initiative
 - Other
- I would like to get information about my home child care operation: Strongly disagree – disagree – agree – strongly agree
 - By a telephone helpline
 - As part of group education or workshops
 - By reading (pamphlets, fact sheets etc.)
 - From online learning modules
 - From websites or internet searches
 - From social media (facebook, twitter, blogs etc.)
 - I don't want any information
 - Other (please specify)
- 10. It is hard for me to get new information or training about my home child care operation because of:
 - Strongly disagree disagree agree strongly agree
 - Lack of time
 - Lack of Transportation
 - Lack of Interest
 - Timing of programs
 - I do not have any challenges

• Other (please specify)

11. I heard about the survey from (please select all that apply): (use check box format)

- Church
- Email
- Facebook
- Immigrant Services Guelph-Wellington
- KIDS LINE
- Library
- Newspaper
- OEYCs
- Poster
- School
- Twitter
- Wellington Dufferin Guelph Public Health website
- Wellington Quality Child Care Initiative
- Other?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Thank-you for completing this survey about Unlicensed Home Child Care in Wellington, Dufferin and Guelph. Please click yes, if you would like to:

- a. enter a draw to win one of three \$100 gift cards, or
- b. help with any future work we do related to home child care providers. Yes/No

Appendix B: Promotional Business Card

Your feedback is important and will help shape future resources.

Find our survey online at: wdgpublichealth.fluidsurveys.com/s/homechildcareprovider



Are you an unlicensed home childcare provider?



You could win a gift certificate for \$100 for

completing the survey!

Appendix C: Promotional Poster

Are you an unlicensed home childcare provider?

Your feedback is important and will help shape future resources.



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Appendix D: Incentive Survey

If you want to be entered into a draw to win one of three \$100 gift cards or help with any future work we do related to home child care providers, please provide your name and contact information.

The information on this form is collected under the authority of the Health Protection and Promotion Act in accordance with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act. This information will be used for the delivery of public health programs and services; the administration of the agency; and the maintenance of healthcare databases, registries and related research, in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements. Any questions about the collection of this information should be addressed to the Chief Privacy Officer at 1-800-265-7293 ext 4354.

Name

Phone number

E-mail address

- 1. Do you want to be entered into a draw to win one of three \$100 gift cards? Yes/No
- Do you want to help with any future work we do related to home child care providers?
 Von /No.

Yes/No

Fergus Office 474 Wellington Road #18, Suite 100

Guelph Offices

160 Chancellors Way 20 Shelldale Crescent (Shelldale Centre)

Mount Forest Office

311 Foster St.

Orangeville Office

180 Broadway

Shelburne Office (Mel Lloyd Centre)

167 Centre St.



519-846-2715 or 1-800-265-7293 info@wdgpublichealth.ca www.wdgpublichealth.ca