

Punjabi Information Sheet

Background Information

- India is located in Southern Asia, bordering the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, between Burma and Pakistan. Its land mass is 2,973,190 sq km and New Delhi is the Capital city of India.
- Its climate varies from tropical monsoon in the south to temperate in the north. The main industries in India are: textiles, chemicals, food processing, steel, transportation equipment, cement, mining, petroleum, machinery, and software. Indian agricultural products include: rice, wheat, oilseed, cotton, jute, tea, sugarcane, potatoes, cattle, water buffalo, sheep, goats, poultry, and fish. The currency of India is the Indian rupee.
- Families from the India have come from one of the most highly populated areas of the world with a population of 1.065 billion (July 2004).
- Children are cared for in India within extended families and as a result some children bond with an extended family member and may live with them in their home for a period of time.
- Personal hygiene is very important to Punjabi families. Babies do not wear diapers and in the villages they are trained from an early age to use the outdoors and wash themselves after. This is an extremely important cultural practice. Things are changing now in the villages where there are toilets - but not every house has a toilet.
- Some families that come to Canada from India are aware of child care programs. This is because more young families are moving from Punjab villages to larger cities and child care centres and pre-schools have opened to meet the needs of these families.
- Public schools in the Punjab are poorly regulated therefore more parents are choosing private and more academic programs for their children as they become more affluent.
- As a general rule, families from India are very trusting of child care providers, thinking of them as revered teachers. They only leave their children with people they trust. For this reason they readily hand over parental authority to the child care provider, leading some to believe that they can be too trusting. They are pleased to have the child care provider discipline their child thinking that if it waits until they pick up their child it is too late.

As a child care provider, you have an important role to play in not only helping newcomers to Canada feel welcome, but also assisting them to understand Canadian culture.

The following information has been gathered as part of the YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral Multicultural Awareness Project in partnership with the United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society (S.U.C.C.E.S.S.). This information should be viewed as a brief introduction to the Punjabi community, rather than a comprehensive report.

This information sheet has been developed to help enhance a child care provider's ability to provide culturally sensitive services by increasing awareness of the backgrounds, issues and challenges that families coming to Canada from other countries face. The facts and advice offered below were derived from multicultural advisory groups and S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Early Childhood Development staff.



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Challenges for Families Needing Child Care in Canada:

- The language barrier will likely be the biggest challenge facing families from the Punjab. Families that don't speak or understand English will need someone to translate the information required. Even families that can speak and understand English will need help with the following: finding out how and where to access child care information and available child care vacancies; how to choose child care; understanding how the Canadian system works, as well as the Child Care Regulations and finding out about available subsidies to assist with child care costs. Many families will not know where to turn for support and will likely lack the ability or confidence to conduct a telephone or face to face interview with a prospective child care provider without assistance.
- The parents tendency to readily hand over parental authority may present unique challenges for child care providers. For example, families will be unlikely to ask a lot of questions so the child care provider will need to be very proactive in communicating information about the services provided.
- Newly immigrated families from the Punjab generally have had very little experience with child care programs and as a result may need more support than other families in understanding how they can participate in their child care arrangement.

Culturally Relevant Information for Child Care Providers

- It is common in Punjabi families for grandparents, or uncles or aunties to care for the child when child care is needed.
- Parents prefer that their children eat Indian food.
- Personal hygiene is very important in the Punjabi culture.
- Parents indicated a strong desire for child care providers to understand the Punjabi culture, acceptable behavior in the Punjabi culture and discipline practices.
- In India, child behavior is managed with a lot of freedom unless the child is in a dangerous situation. The child's environment is usually adapted to ensure it is safe. Families from India may not be aware of methods of discipline such as time outs.
- Because the system of caring for children is so different in India, parents may not realize that it is appropriate to be in close contact with the child care provider when their child is first enrolled. It would be helpful for the child care provider to let families know that they can call anytime to see how their child is doing.



Ways Child Care Providers Can Assist Families from India:

- If you determine that a parent can speak and understand a little English try communicating in short sentences and speak slowly. A patient attitude and a friendly smile of encouragement will go a long way in putting a parent at ease.
- If a parent requests an interview and is able to bring someone to translate for them, it will be easier to explain how your program runs and your expectations. It will also be easier for you to ensure that they understand the information you are providing.
- Explain to the parent how you introduce a new child to the program and ask them to teach you some words or phrases in the child's language that will make the child feel safe and comfortable.
- If possible ask another parent that speaks Punjabi to help you communicate important information.

Resources for Child Care Providers:

Currently there is a need to develop more resources that support newcomers and child care providers to make successful child care placements. You can help us add to this information sheet by telling us about how you have successfully overcome some of the challenges listed on this information sheet. Please contact the Child Care Resource and Referral Program at 604-521-3342.

S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Multicultural Early Childhood Development Project

#2058 Henderson Place
1163 Pinetree Way, Coquitlam, B.C.
www.success.bc.ca
Phone: 604-468-6000

Settlement Agencies

Immigrant Services Society of BC (ISS)
www.issbc.org

ELSA Tri-Cities & Settlement Services

Phone: 604-942-1777
Vancouver Office: 604-684-7498
Burnaby location opening in late February 2006!
Call other offices for more information.

MOSIAC Multilingual Orientation Services Association for Immigrant Communities

Burnaby co-location office:
Ph: 604-292-1275 or 604-877-8606
New Westminster office:
604-522-3722
Vancouver office: 604-254-9626
www.mosaicbc.com

SUCCESS Settlement Services

Burnaby-Coquitlam Service Centre:
604-936-5900
Tri-City Service Centre: 604-468-6000
Burnaby Settlement Service:
604-430-1899 (Chinese)
604-430-4199 (Korean)
Vancouver Social Service Centre:
604-684-1628
www.success.bc.ca

YMCA Child Care Resource & Referral

Tri-Cities
"Fernwood Lodge", 2601 Lougheed Highway
Coquitlam, BC V3C 4J2
Ph: 604-521-3342 Fax: 604-521-4833
Email: tricrr@vanymca.org
Burnaby/New Westminster
#33-250 Willingdon Avenue
Burnaby, B.C. V5C 5E9
Ph: 604-294-1109 Fax: 604-294-1109
Email: bnwccrr@vanymca.org
www.vanymca.org