

CF Military Family Child Care Research Initiative

October 2006

**By: Anne Maxwell and
Gillian Doherty**

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Executive Summary

The Directorate of Quality of Life (DQOL) and the Directorate of Military Family Services (DMFS) contracted with the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF) to conduct Phase I of the Child Care Research Initiative (CCRI). The goal of this phase was to plan and lead a two-day focus group session: to review the current status of child care for Canadian Forces (CF) military families; to discuss the issues and needs being met (or unmet); and to identify what research would be necessary to inform recommendations for a comprehensive child care strategy that would build on current services to better meet the needs of CF military families. For the purpose of the CCRI, child care refers only to services offered for children (0-12) when the parent is not present due to demands of military service.

An Advisory Committee, selected to bring family and service provider perspectives from all environmental commands and from bases, formations and wings in various geographic regions within Canada (urban and rural; east, west and central), met in Ottawa on September 21-22, 2006. This report resulting from this consultation, is presented in two sections.

Part A: Current Status of Policies, Programs and Research

The consultation began with an overview of: Quality of Life Reports (1998 and 2001); current CF child care policies and programs; and available current research that relates to child care and family demographics.

The Advisory Committee discussed reasons why the requirements of military employment make the needs of military families different from those of most civilian families and what the issues are in current child care services for CF families. The Committee then formulated a vision for a comprehensive child care strategy for military families and enumerated the benefits of such a strategy for the Canadian Forces.

Part B: Next Steps: Research Recommendations

This section discusses and identifies:

- data required to confirm the Advisory Committee's perceptions;
- potential data sources;
- recommended data collection methodology;
- use of a phased approach in the research; and
- conclusions.

Phase I of the Child Care Research Initiative lays out the next steps in the development of a comprehensive policy for CF military families that is informed by: identification of the successful elements of the current range of programs; the needs that are not being met; and the modifications/additions that will allow the CF to meet the vision of high quality, available and consistent child care services for CF military families.

PART A: Current Status of Policies, Programs and Research

A. 1.0. Introduction

The Directorate of Quality of Life (DQOL) and the Directorate of Military Family Services (DMFS) contracted with the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCCF) to conduct Phase I of the Child Care Research Initiative (CCRI). The goal of this phase was to plan and lead a two-day focus group session: to review the current status of child care for Canadian Forces (CF) military families; to discuss the issues and needs being met (or unmet); and to identify what research would be necessary to inform recommendations for a comprehensive child care strategy that would build on current services to better meet the needs of CF military families.

MFRCs offer a range of child care services. The term “child care” may be defined in a holistic sense to refer to a broad range of services that support parents in caring for their young and school-age children including: parent/tot programs; preschool playgroups; nursery schools; emergency and emergency respite care; casual care; child care registries; regulated centre-based care and regulated and unregulated family child care. For the purpose of the CCRI, child care refers only to services offered for children (0-12) when the parent is not present due to the demands of military service.

An Advisory Committee was established by DQOL and DMFS and brought together for a two-day consultation on September 21-22, 2006 in Ottawa. The members of the Advisory Committee were a diverse group of individuals including DQOL and DMFS co-chairpersons, spouses of military members involved in decisions regarding the care of their children, Military Family Resource Centre staff and DMFS field operations staff. Members of the Advisory Committee were selected to bring perspectives from all environmental commands and from bases, formations and wings in various geographic regions within Canada (urban and rural; east, west and central).

The Advisory Committee meeting was facilitated by Anne Maxwell, Senior Director of Projects, Programs and Services, Canadian Child Care Federation. Dr. Gillian Doherty, adjunct professor of the Department of Family Relations and Applied Nutrition and Family Studies at the University of Guelph and leading Canadian expert on quality child care was contracted to guide the discussions on research needed to inform a strategy for meeting the child care needs of CF military families. Major Cheryl Baldwin, Acting Family Policy Team Leader, Director of Quality of Life 7 and Alla Ivask Senior Manager – Research, Policy and Program Development, Director Military Family Services represented their respective organizations.

A. 2.0. The Context

2.0.1. Quality of Life Reports (1998 and 2001)

The 1998 Quality of Life Report prepared by the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (SCONDVA) identified the link between military readiness and child care:

“Military readiness is usually associated with the level of training of personnel in combat units and the state of their equipment, but many other factors influence it, including the availability of child care services.”¹

The report also notes that there are significant differences between the needs of military families and those of civilian families.

The SCONDVA report made two recommendations specific to meeting the child care needs of military families:

- #64 “That all military personnel with children be required to prepare a plan according to predetermined criteria to ensure that, whenever they deploy, their child care needs will be met.”
- #65 “That the Department develop a plan to ensure emergency child care when military members must deploy with less notice than provided for in their child care plan submitted to their commanders. That the Department’s Plan take into account the need for access to services in both official languages for military personnel and their families.”²

The need for meeting the special education and official language needs of CF families was identified in Recommendation #66.

The 2001 SCONDVA Quality of Life Report listed 16 recommendations to support the Family Life Pillar, one of the five Quality of Life Pillars. These recommendations reinforced the recommendations for a family care plan and an emergency child care program as well as for services in both official languages for military personnel and their families.

¹ SCONDVA. (1999). *Interim Report on the Quality of Life in the Canadian Forces, Section 5*. Ottawa: Author.

² SCONDVA. (1999). *Interim Report on the Quality of Life in the Canadian Forces, Annex A, p. 1-18*. Ottawa: Author.

2.0.2. Current CF Child Care Programs

The SCONDVA reports led to the development of the following current child care programs that support CF families “in times of long or frequent periods of family separation for reasons of training or deployment.”³

The foundation of these programs is the Family Care Plan (FCP). The FCP identifies the plan of each military member to “care for their family in the event of either an emergency callout or a planned deployment.” The plan must cover all people for whom the military member has responsibility. The plan must be reviewed and updated when the military member reports to a new unit, the family situation changes or during a deployment preparation process.⁴

There are three types of family assistance in deployment situations:

- Family Care Assistance (FCA) is a non-taxable benefit for single military members or married service couples of the Regular Force and Primary Reserve on Class B (over 180 days) or Class C service. It provides financial assistance for eligible service personnel who are required to be absent from their home for 24 hours or more (up to \$75/day for caregiving expenses that exceed the normal family care cost).⁵
- The Emergency Child Care Service (ECS) funding provides support for military members whose Family Care Plan fails. The program provides up to 72 consecutive hours of emergency care in specific circumstances that might affect the member’s availability for duty. ECS also maintains a registry of regulated or approved local child care providers.⁶
- Emergency Respite Child Care Services (ERCS) provides funding for up to 72 hours of child care support for the spouse when the service member is away on duty. The support must be deemed “absolutely essential for the family’s continued health and well-being.” In exceptional circumstances, an additional 96 hours may be provided on a sliding scale of subsidization based on total family income and the number of children requiring care.⁷

2.0.3. Director Military Family Services Programs

The Director Military Family Services (DMFS) funds military family resource centres (MFRCs) at the 32 locations in Canada. MFRCs are third party, independent, not-for-profit, community organizations espousing the principles of community development and family support. MFRCs are governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Through a

³ Military Family Services Program (n.d.). *Family Care Plan. Family Care Assistance. Emergency Child Care Service. Emergency Respite Child Care Service.* Ottawa: Author.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) DMF's contracts MFRCs to deliver mandated services based on community needs, using a prevention- and asset-based approach. Child care services fall under the Child and Youth Development and Parenting Support Policy. "This policy guides the design and delivery of services that enhance family well-being by fostering positive parenting and providing support for the optimal care and development of children and youth up to age 18."⁸

2.0.4. Child Care Centres on Base

On some bases, there are child care centres that operate with support from the local commander who may provide space and cover other facility related costs. However, since the CF has no specific policy for the provision of these services, such centres are supported at the pleasure of the base commander. They are most frequently available on large bases. On smaller bases, military families are more likely to access community services outside the base for centre-based care. For smaller locations, the availability of suitable child care services varies by type and accessibility.

A. 3.0. Research on Children and Child Care Services for CF Military Families

Three recent surveys provide some information on the need for and issues surrounding child care services for CF military families.

3.0.1. An Assessment of the Need for Regulated Group Child Care for CF Families

This environmental scan conducted by the Centre for Research and Education in Human Services in the fall of 2004 identified the following areas of need:

- MFRC-provided child care services that are flexible in terms of evening, weekend and overnight care
- Higher quality care (comparable to the standard of care provided by the MFRCs)
- Bilingual or French-speaking providers and services
- Services that are accessible for low-income and single parent families.⁹

The principles identified for effective group child care for CF families were identified as:

- Affordability
- Availability
- Services that are treated as part of the whole picture of CF community life.¹⁰

⁸ Military Family Service Program (2004). *Parameters for Practice*, p. 36. Ottawa: Author.

⁹ Centre for Research and Education in Human Services. *An Assessment of the Need for Licensed Group Child Care for Canadian Forces Families*, p. 5. Ottawa: Military Family Resource Centres.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 6.

The report included the following recommendations:

- CF families should be surveyed (respondents for this survey were primarily MFRC personnel) to confirm the findings of the scan.
- Action must be taken quickly to reduce the gap between need for and availability of child care services.
- Government (provincial and federal) must participate in addressing the need for child care of CF families.
- Collaboration among a variety of child care service providers, users and other stakeholders is the preferred method for the delivery of child care services for CF families.¹¹

3.0.2. Continuous Attitude Survey

This survey conducted by the CF Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation (now referred to as Director Personnel Applied Research) between June and August 2004 provides some data on the number of children in CF families and their child care participation.

- 19.7 % of respondent families (n=1,279) had one child living in the household; 25.4% had two children; 10.3% had three or more children; while 44.6% never had children;
- Children's distribution by age were (n=641): 30.0% five years or less; 31.9% six to eleven years; 38.3% twelve years or more;
- 39.5.3% of parents with children living at home (n=645) agreed that making arrangements for children while the parent worked involves a lot of effort; while 51.7% of single parents identified this as an issue.

3.0.3. Human Dimensions of Deployment Study: Demands of Military Service

This study is based on a spousal survey in June 2005 and the data analysis is still underway. Preliminary results indicate:

- 63% of respondents (n=1,661) have children full-time in the household;
- 20% of these full-time children were in the 0-5 age group; and 32% in the 6-11 age group.

Subsequent data analysis may inform the Child Care Research Initiative.

¹¹ Ibid.

A. 4.0. Unique Child Care Needs of Military Families

The CCRI Advisory Committee discussed reasons why the requirements of military employment make the needs of military families different from those of most civilian families. These military employment requirements include:

- Frequent and/or extended absences of the military family member: Military personnel are frequently required to be away from their homes for operational reasons such as emergency callouts, training or deployment. The operational tempo varies from one environmental command to another. For example, army or navy personnel may be deployed for several months at a time while air force personnel are away for shorter periods of time but absent from their families for up to two weeks in each month.
- Short notice scheduling changes: For example, emergency callouts, search and rescue operations and some training programs operate on very short notice.
- Training: Training frequently includes overnight and weekend absence from home. Recruits and trainees early in their qualification development have an additional challenge in caring for their families as pay is very low during this time period.
- Frequent postings: Military families are frequently posted to new locations with limited opportunities to decline.
- Postings to bases in smaller or more remote communities: These postings often result in greater difficulty in readily finding available child care services if they are available.

These requirements of military employment lead to higher stress levels on military families.

- Stress on the military family increases when schedules are unpredictable.
- Stress on the military family is higher when deployment brings an increased possibility of injury or death.
- Frequent postings put additional stress on the family due to the need to find new medical and support services, especially when posted away from extended families and established community support services.
- Frequent postings often have financial implications for the family if the non-military spouse is unable to find employment or is underemployed in a new posting.

These issues can be intensified for a variety of reasons, including:

- single CF members with children who have no spousal back-up;
- married service couples who are both subject to the requirements of military employment;
- CF members with spouses who are also employed in jobs which require shift work or being on call;
- military families geographically separated from their families of origin which may be in a position to provide trusted child care assistance.

A. 5.0. Issues in Current Child Care Services for CF Families

The Advisory Committee elaborated on the issues identified by the 2004 Survey. They offered the following observations based on their personal and observed experiences:

- Existing services such as Emergency Child Care Services and Emergency Respite Child Care Services do not appear to be well known to military families and thus may not be used as often as they could be.
- Emergency care services are difficult to arrange for large families.
- Finding services during short-term deployment is challenging.
- There are long waiting lists for centre-based child care with the greatest shortages in care for infants, school-age children and children with special needs.
- Child care centre hours of operation do not meet the needs of military families for overnight and weekend care.
- There are often difficulties finding someone to provide care for a child whose official language is other than that used on the base.
- Recruitment and retention of qualified child care centre staff is a challenge due to poor wages and frequent postings of military family members who may be staffing the services.
- Advisory Committee members indicated that Child care costs and provincial subsidy programs vary substantially in different postings and that few military members are eligible for provincial child care subsidies.¹²

¹² Post Living Differential (PLD) as it relates to child care is was not understood by AC members and that it may, as designed, address some of the issues with respect to variations in child care costs. However it will require more indepth discussion with Director Compensation and Benefits.

- Availability of services and transportation to any existing services is an issue in rural or large urban settings.
- Child care centres and in-home providers in the surrounding community may not be as familiar with challenges of military family life as are services on the base. Advisory Committee members living in these types of areas where use of community child care is common indicated that it is necessary to “ease into the community” by participating in local events and activities in order to build closer relationships and better understanding.
- There is a perception that the quality of centre-based child care is higher in on-base services, leading to a preference for these services.

A. 6.0. A Vision for a Comprehensive Child Strategy for Military Families

The Advisory Committee concluded that a child care strategy that provides a range of services for CF military families such as parent/tot programs, nursery schools and child care centres should be based on three principles: quality, accessibility and consistency.

6.0.1. Quality

Child care services are provided by adults with appropriate knowledge and skills. Remuneration levels facilitate recruitment and retention, which are key elements of quality. Service providers build respectful collaborative relationships with children and families. Facilities offering programming for children provide healthy and stimulating indoor and outdoor environments and a purposeful learning environment.

6.0.2. Accessibility

A range of child care services are accessible: for all ages – infant, toddler, preschool and school-age; for children with special needs; in either or both of Canada’s official languages where needed; with flexible hours that can cover overnight and weekend care when military demands result in the need for such services. Child care services are geographically convenient to the homes of military members and are affordable by the families who use them.

6.0.3. Consistency

The quality of care, the availability of care and the costs of care are consistent in all posting locations. Moves are as “seamless” as possible. All bases have sufficient child care services to meet the broad range of needs of the military families living there so that new arrivals are assured of having immediate and appropriate space for their children. There are mechanisms in place that evaluate the quality of services.¹³

¹³ Although the AC did not specifically identify issues associated specifically with licensing and the learning component of child care, discussions throughout the two day session favoured the benefits of regulated child care as it

A. 7.0. Benefits for the Canadian Forces of a Comprehensive Child Care Strategy

Accessible, high quality child care services that are consistent across bases will provide substantial benefits to the Canadian Forces:

- Canadian Forces will have highly deployable units.
- Flexibility for scheduling will be enhanced.
- Military personnel will know that child care services are available for children of various ages and various needs thus making postings and deployments easier.
- The need for returning to base from deployment for family reasons will be reduced.
- With less family concerns, military personnel will perform at a higher level.
- Attendance of military personnel will be increased due to fewer family responsibility issues.
- Morale will be higher.
- Quality child care services will be an incentive in recruitment programs.
- Retention rates will be higher, providing a more experienced force and a better return on investment for training costs.
- Units will be more able to move personnel to the locations where they are most needed.
- A clear policy will reduce the “grey areas” that muddle the child care services currently offered.
- Canadian Forces will be fulfilling an element of community outreach goals articulated by the Chief of Defence staff.
- Canadian Forces will be seen nationally and globally as leaders on family policy.

“The importance of maintaining the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of our sailors, soldiers and air personnel and their families has long been recognized as essential in the success of the military mission...

supports the principles of quality and consistency and, that learning is an essential component of any child care program.

Complementing this operational focus is the commitment to ensure that, wherever they are required to serve, CF members and their families have access to an adequate range of support programs and services¹⁴

¹⁴ CDS Guidance - *Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Program*, 26 January 2004, p. 1.

PART B: Next Steps: Research Recommendations

B. 1.0. Introduction

In 1998, the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (SCONDVA) tabled a report in the House of Commons based on several months of consultation with members from across the Canadian Forces and their families. This report directly linked military readiness with the availability of non-parental care for CF children.¹⁵ Subsequently, the need for child care services for military families in addition to what is available through the Military Family Services Program (MFSP) was identified by:

- The Military Family National Advisory Board (MFNAB) in discussions at both its November 2002 and November 2004 meetings;
- A 2004 survey commissioned by the Director Military Family Services (DMFS)¹⁶; and
- The two-day consultation with CF spouses and staff from Military Family Resource Centres (MFRCs) and MFRC-sponsored child care centres in 2006, the deliberations of which are reported in this document.

The MFNAB discussions, 2004 survey and the 2006 consultation provide rich anecdotal information and perceptions of availability and need, but little quantitative data. This raises the concern of a possible gap between perceptions and the reality of the availability and accessibility of services related to child care.

Some quantitative data related to military child care service needs is available in the 2004 Continuous Attitude Survey (CAS) and the 2005 Human Dimensions of Deployment (HDDS): Demands of Military Service Spousal Survey. For example, numbers and age distribution of children living at home and child care arrangements while the spouse works or studies. However, neither of these two data sources focus on or were designed to provide specific information about child care services availability or usage. As a result, while some required data can be accessed through existing data sources, other specific-to-the issue data will have to be sought. New data needs to be qualitative to the extent possible, including quantifying data obtained through key informant interviews and focus groups. Consideration must also be given to the extent to which reliance on available 2004 and 2005 data is appropriate for identifying what exists in 2007, how it is delivered, what may need to be modified and whether new components are required to meet CF family and operational needs.

¹⁵ SCONDVA. (1998). *Moving Forward: A Strategic Plan for Quality of Life Improvements in the Canadian Forces*, Section V. Ottawa: Author.

¹⁶ Centre for Research and Education in Human Services. (2004). *An Assessment of the Need for Licensed Group Child Care for Canadian Forces Families*. Ottawa: DMFS.

The remainder of Part B discusses and identifies:

- The data required to confirm the Advisory Committee’s perceptions;
- Potential data sources;
- The recommended data collection methodology;
- Use of a phased approach in the research; and
- Conclusions.

B. 2.0. Data required to confirm the Committee’s perceptions

Identification of the required information is based on the desirability of building on what exists. Doing so requires timely and accurate information about parental needs, existing child care services and their accessibility, utilization and quality, and the contribution of child care services to operational readiness.

2.0.1. General demographic information

Collection of the following information is recommended to provide a background for the analysis of the current needs of military families.

- For each of: (a) existing military personnel, and (b) recruits and reservists transferring to the regular forces within a 12-month period:
 - Number of single parent families, two-parent families where both are or are becoming military personnel and two-parent families with one civilian parent.
 - For each of the three family types: (a) number of children in age groups 0 – 5, 6 – 11 and 12 – 17, (b) whether the child lives in the family full or part-time, and (c) official language spoken by the child.
- Incidence of parents by family type with children age 0 – 5, 6 – 11 and 12 – 17 living on-base, living off-base but within 15 minute drive and living off-base at a greater distance.
- Number of children age 0 – 5, 6 – 11 and 12 – 17 who: (a) have Aboriginal ancestry, and/or (b) are another visible minority.
- Number of families with a child who has special needs by age of child. *Note:* The term ‘special need’ must be specifically defined in a way that enables identification of the likelihood of requiring access to therapy services or special supports when being cared for outside the home, e.g. in emergency care or child care.

2.0.2. Extent of needs unique to or more likely to be an issue for military families

Collection of the following information is recommended to identify the unique needs of military families:

- Current incidence of evening, overnight and weekend work among families where single parent or both parents are military personnel by children age 0 – 5, 6 – 11 and 12 – 17.
- Type of deployments, including off-base training, within the past 12 months for each of single parent families, families where one spouse is civilian and families where both parents are in the military with children age 0 – 5, 6 – 11 and 12 – 17.

2.0.3. Availability

Collection of the following information is recommended to determine what child care services exist and to identify gaps in service availability.

- Extent to which parents are aware of the assistance available through and parameters of:
 - Family Care Assistance
 - Emergency Child Care Service, and
 - Emergency Respite Care Service.
- Extent to which parents are aware of non-mandated MFRC services pertaining to child care and the extent of their usage of each and, if not used, why, e.g. not offered by their MFRC.
- Extent to which non-mandated child care related MFRC services are available on-base and, if not, the extent to which they are available in the local community.
- Number of MFRC-sponsored child care centres and, for each:
 - Province;
 - Number of spaces for children 0 – 5 and 6 – 11;
 - Hours of operation for regular child care;
 - Location on or off-base;
 - Number of children age 0 – 5 and 6 – 11 living at home on the base;
 - Number of children age 0 – 5 and 6 – 11 living at home off-base.
- Number and location of MFRC-sponsored family child care agencies and number of spaces currently used for children 0 – 5 and 6 – 11.

- MFRC-sponsored child care waiting lists by:
 - Number of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and children age 6-11:
 - Number of children with a special needs:
 - Number of children who use an official language other than that used in the program, and current length of wait for children in each category.
- Availability of community child care spaces within reasonable distance to families' home by age group served and official language used in the program.
- Incidence of families where the single or both parents are in the military and where one parent is civilian reporting a child on a community child care service waiting list by age group of child, special need if applicable and anticipated length of wait. *Note: Need to ask about use of multiple waiting lists.*
- Incidence of families stating that available child care services are not accessible due to distance, lack of transportation or location for each of families living on- and off-base and by whether the single parent/both parents are military or one parent is civilian.
- Incidence of parents who speak one of Canada's official languages at home while the other official language is the primary language of the base and who identify that child care services are not available in the home language.
- Proportion of civilian parents indicating that they would like to engage in paid employment outside the home or further their education by reasons for not doing so, e.g. can't obtain child care for hours required, cost of child care, no work available in area. Follow-up question to determine what hours are required if hours cited as a problem.

2.0.4. Usage

Collection of the following information is recommended to identify the extent of current usage of existing CF and community child care services and reasons for parental choices.

- Use by total CF forces within a recent 12-month period of:
 - Emergency child care for children age 0 – 5, 6 – 11, 12 – 17 and for a family with 2 or more children by number of children: and
 - Emergency respite child care for children age 0 – 5, 6 – 11, 12 – 17 and for a family with 2 or more children by number of children.

- Use of Family Care Assistance for a recent 12-month period by total CF forces.
- Extent to which MFRC-sponsored child care is used for:
 - Regular child care;
 - Emergency care;
 - Emergency respite care; and
 - Casual care.
- Use of regulated and non-regulated home-based child care providers for regular child care, emergency care and emergency respite care.
- Current child care arrangements while at work by each of single parents, dual military families, and civilian spouses and reason for their choice(s), e.g. cost, civilian child care closer to home, by age of child and by whether family lives on- or off-base.
- Proportion of military and of civilian users of MFRC-sponsored child care and reasons for allowing civilian users, e.g. municipality requires a proportion of spaces to be available for civilian use as a condition of it providing a grant.
- Examples of how MFRCs currently manage a difficult situation such as a need for emergency care for a blended family with 5 children.

2.0.5. Funding and Affordability

Collection of the following information is recommended to identify sources of child care operating funds and in-kind donations such as rent-free space and the affordability of the non-mandated services:

- Percentage of MFRC-sponsored child care operating funds by source, e.g. parent fees, provincial grant and/or fee subsidization, municipal grant, base commander's supplementary funding, etc.
- Actual value of each local commander's funding and in-kind contributions in support of MFRC-sponsored child care operations in the current fiscal year, e.g. utilities and/or space provided free of charge.
- Fee levels for full-time infant, toddler and preschooler care and for before- and after-school care.
- Percentage of families using full- and part-day child care receiving provincial fee subsidization.
- Incidence of single military parents or families where both parents are military personnel giving cost as a reason for not using regulated child care.

- Extent, if at all, the Post Living Differential covers the differences in the cost of child care across provinces and between rural and large metropolitan areas such as the GTA.

2.0.6. Quality

Collection of the following information from MFRC-sponsored services is recommended to identify current levels of components known to influence child care quality:

- Information about the MFRC child care information and referral services:
 - Type of information provided.
 - Inclusion of unregulated child care providers.
 - Whether and how centres and home-based providers listed in their registries are screened.
- For each MFRC-sponsored child care centre:
 - Total number of full- and part-time staff who work directly with children by level of training in early childhood education.
 - Number of staff working directly with children who left in the previous 12 months.
 - Primary reason cited by staff for leaving, e.g. spouse has new posting, wage level.
 - Length of time required to fill the most recent vacant position by position and perceived reason for length of time, e.g. shortage of trained staff.
 - Extent of difficulty hiring trained substitute staff, regular staff.
 - Availability of centre funds for professional development.
- For each MFRC-sponsored home-based child care agency:
 - Educational and experiential qualification of home visitors.
 - Availability of training for affiliated providers.

2.0.7. Contribution of child care to operational readiness

Collection of the following information is recommended to identify the effects of the current child care situation on operational readiness:

- Extent to which lack of emergency care or regular child care or concerns about possible lack of regular child care is cited as a reason for:
 - Being unable to accept short-notice or other deployment;
 - Seeking permission to return to base during training or deployment:
 - Seeking permission to remain at current posting or be exempt from training:
 - Seeking posting to another base; and
 - Imposed restrictions, i.e. military member moves to a new post but leaves family behind.
- Extent to which absenteeism is linked to lack of child care or problems arising with current child care arrangement.
- Incidence of military personnel whose stated reason for leaving the military is directly related to lack of affordable child care or of child care at the hours required by the individual's work.
- Extent to which seeking assistance from a helping professional such as a padre or social worker results at least in part from stress related to lack of or affordability of child care.
- Unit commander's general assessment of how operations are affected by child care issues and which issues are particularly problematic.
- Unit commander's perception of child care needs on his/her base.

2.0.8. Other services

Collection of the following information is recommended to identify services provided by other CF stakeholders and to seek information from foreign military services that could assist in the development of a CF policy on child care.

- Other CF stakeholders that deliver family services or impact families.
 - What services do they deliver that are related to child care?

- How do these services interface with (formal and informal methods) and impact on DMFS and CF Personnel Support Agency services?
- Do they, by virtue of the clientele that they serve, have a need for child care services?
- Foreign military services that currently provide and/or fund child care and other child services.
 - What services and/or financial assistance do they provide and/or fund related to child care?
 - What are the operational benefits associated with providing each of the child care services (statistical data when possible, e.g. decrease in deferred deployment)?
 - Data on approximate size of each military force and the percentage of operating budget used for family support.
 - What would each service do differently knowing what it now knows?
 - US Military specifically:
 - Additional information about its nation-wide child care standards, staff training requirements and mandatory annual PD requirements.
 - Issues related to serving a high proportion of Hispanic families, i.e. language, and how addressed.

B. 3. 0. Methodology

The data collected must reflect the operational needs of the three environmental commands, different operational tempos and parents on large urban, rural, and remote bases. Maximum use must be made of already available data while recognizing the need for data that is reasonably current and covers a comparable period of time. New data must be collected in the most cost-effective fashion. In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, the size and complexity of the data required results in the need for multiple sources, multiple data collection methods and a phased approach.

3.0.1. Data sources

The Advisory Committee recommends the following data sources:

3.0.1. a. *Corporate military agencies and personnel*

- Director Personnel Applied Research (D Pers AR)

- Director Military Family Services, including Field Operations Managers
- Directorate of Quality of Life
- Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency
- Military Family National Advisory Board
- Defence Womens' Advisory Organization (DWAO)
- Defence Aboriginal Advisory Group (DAAG)
- Chief of Military Personnel
- Each of the Environmental Commanders and ADMs

3.0.1.b. *Bases*

- Base Commander
- Unit commanders
- Key Chief Warrant Officer positions
- MFRC and MFRC-sponsored child care services
- Helping professionals – padre, social worker, MFRC prevention and intervention coordinator
- Parents – single parent, couples where both partners are in the military and couples where the spouse is a civilian. The issues are different in the two types of two-parent families.

3.0.1.c. *Foreign military services*

- Foreign military services that provide and/or fund child care services as delineated in local Supplemental Agreements. Those of comparable size to CF would be particularly relevant.

3.0.2. Data collection and analyses

Some data may be available through existing databases. For example, demographic data on CF and recruits, utilization of Family Care Assistance benefits, emergency child care and emergency respite care by total CF forces for a recent 12-month period and proportion of families with children living on- and off-base. The Advisory Committee perceives the need for new data to be obtained through a mix of collection approaches to allow selection of the most appropriate approach for each data source and recommends the following:

- Surveys, possibly web-based, completed by the family member responsible for child care, MFRCs, MFRC-sponsored child care services, chief warrant officers

and other helping professionals. The Advisory Committee believes that the bulk of required new information could be obtained this way;

- Focus groups;
- Key informant interviews, either by telephone or in person; and
- Review of documentation from other relevant foreign military services.

As illustrated in the following figure, it is anticipated that the data collection undertaken in the focus groups would be informed by the data obtained in surveys; the CF key informant interviews would be informed by data obtained from all of the other three sources. Since the surveys and CF focus groups are collecting information about what is and what is desired, there is no need to complete data collection from foreign military services before undertaking them.

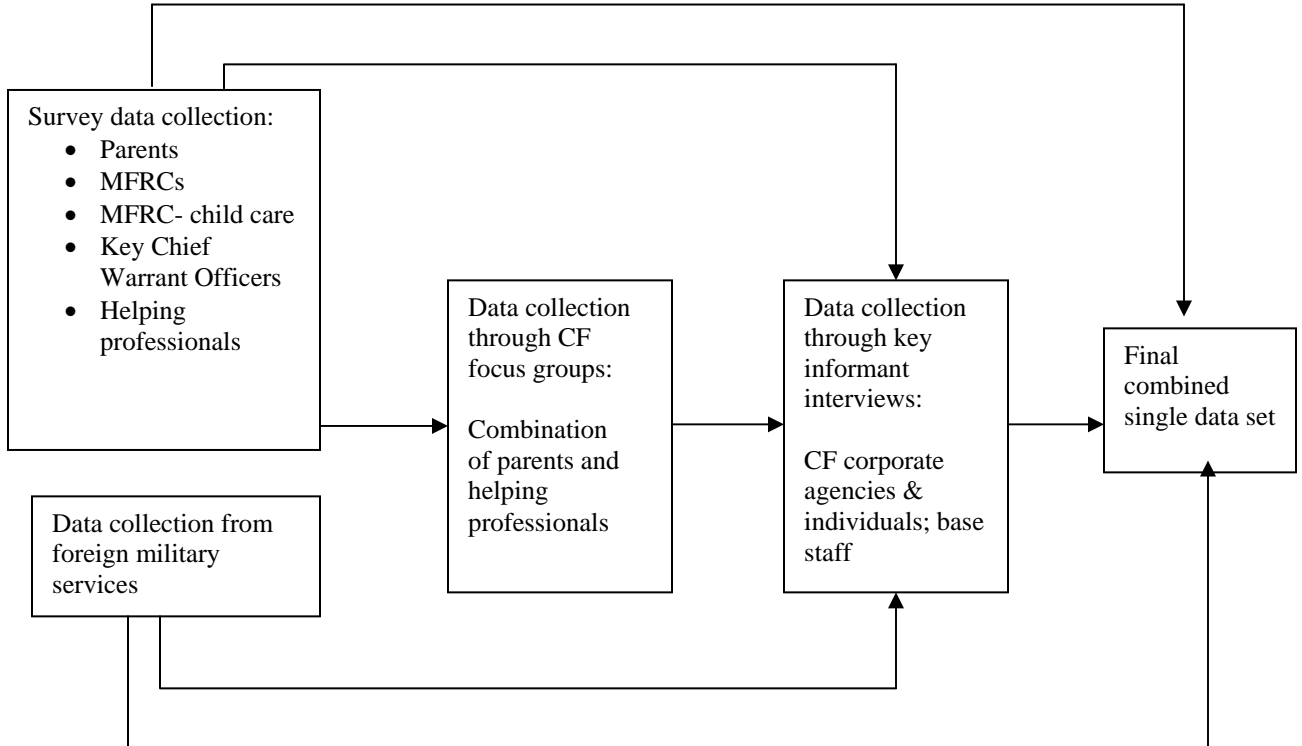


Table 1 illustrates the data by the source that the Advisory Group anticipates could be collected by surveys. Table 2 provides similar information in regard to focus groups and key informants.

3.0.2.a. *Surveys*

Surveys are a cost-effective method of obtaining information from a large group of people; information that would identify the perceptions and issues that require additional follow-up through focus groups and key informant interviews. The Advisory Committee recognizes the expertise and skill required to develop survey questions that are unambiguous regarding the data being sought and effective in obtaining the required data and minimizing the amount of time required by the respondent. It strongly recommends that the Director Personnel Applied Research or DQOL Research Team members be involved from the beginning in the development of the content and wording for each survey. The issue of timing will also have to be considered to avoid sending out surveys during the summer months or when other surveys are being completed by the same people.

3.0.2.b. *Focus groups*

The Advisory Committee recommends that focus groups be conducted at a cross-section of CF locations with provision for smaller bases, especially rural and remote ones, to send participants to one of the focus groups. For example, the base at Wainwright might send participants to a focus group in Edmonton.

3.0.2.c. *Key informant interviews*

In the opinion of the Advisory Committee, key informant interviews:

- Are especially useful for focusing on a specific issue, such as the impact of child care issues on operational readiness;
- Better enable clarification of the information provided than is the case with surveys and focus groups; and
- May be better accepted by certain sources than surveys or focus groups.

3.0.2.d. *Review of documentation from other military services*

Some other military services, such as that of the United States, are known to fund and/or operate a large range of child care services, including child care. Identifying the reasons for and benefits of such investment and the lessons learned by other military services might assist the CF to identify what, if any, changes are desirable to its current child care services.

Table 1: Examples of data that could be collected by surveys

| Source | Type of information |
|---|--|
| Parents | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent and type of needs unique to or likely to be an issue for military families. • Awareness and use of mandatory child care services, e.g. respite care. • Current child care arrangement while military parent(s) at work and reason for type(s) of arrangement by age of child and family residence on- or off-base. • Number of children by age on a waiting list at a MFRC-sponsored and/or community child care service by single, dual military family and by two-parent family where one spouse is civilian. • Incidence of parents unable to access child care by reason, age of child and family residence on- or off-base by type of family. • Incidence of civilian spouses wishing to work or further their education but unable to do so because of child care issue(s) by age of child and issue. |
| MFRC | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent to which MFRC mandated and non-mandated services are provided by MFRC; extent to which available in the off-base community. • Information on mandated services provided by MFRC, e.g. child care information and referral. • Ways in which mandated services manage in difficult situations, e.g. emergency child care for 5 or 6 children in same family. |
| MFRC-sponsored child care | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available spaces and waiting lists by age group, special need, official language other than that used on the base and hours of operation. • Extent of use for child care, emergency care, emergency respite care and casual care. • Use by civilians and reasons for such use. • Financial issues – fees, extent to which CF families receive government fee subsidy, sources of operating funds, extent of in-kind support such as space. • Proportion of centre staff working with children who have specialized training in early childhood education by level of training. • Centre staff turnover – rates, most prevalent reasons for staff leaving, difficulties recruiting new staff, time required to fill positions in the past 12 months by position. • Training and experience of MFRC-sponsored child care agency home visitors. |
| Chief Warrant Officers, helping professionals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care issues faced by parents, by type, age of child and frequency. • Military parent stress associated with child care service issues. • Impact of difficulties with child care service availability on operational readiness, e.g. changes in posting, training, short- and longer-term deployment. |

Table 2: Data that could be collected by focus groups and key informant interviews

| Method | Sources | Type of information |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Focus group | Combination of parents and helping professionals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extent and type of needs unique to or likely to be an issue for military families. • Child care issues faced by military parents by family type, single, dual military, spouse is a civilian. • Needs by priority and reason for priority rating. |
| Key informant interviews | Foreign military services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What child care services are provided or funded. • Reasons for supporting child care. • Operational benefits of supporting child care. • Approximate size of force and percent of operating budget used for family support. • Lessons learned. |
| | DMFS, DQOL, MNFAB CF Personnel Support Agency, DWAO, DAAG, Field Operations Managers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs of military families. • Issues related to child care. • What they would like to see available for CF families. |
| | Chief of Military Personnel, Environmental Commanders, Base/Wing/Formation Commanders, Unit Commanders, Chief Warrant Officers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of child care issues on operational readiness. • What they would like to see available for CF families. • Perception of priority child care needs and reasons for their priority. |

Notes:

1. All families with children should be asked to complete a survey. The rationale is that focus groups would involve only a small percentage of families. Also, focus groups perhaps could be more focused if participating parents knew that parent survey data had already been collected.
2. The presence of Chief Warrant Officers in focus groups may inhibit parents' expression of their opinions. Chief Warrant Officers on bases where focus groups have been conducted would have a key informant interview to seek their opinion on the perceptions and needs identified during the focus group on their base.

3.0.2.e. *Data analysis*

The Advisory Committee notes the need for data to be analyzed on a regional, urban/rural, Environmental Command base and/or family lives on- or off-base perspective as appropriate

B. 4.0. The use of a phased approach in the research

The Advisory Committee recommends a phased approach with each phase preparing for and leading into the next one.

4.0.1. Phase 1: Collect data from other military forces, develop survey instruments

1. Identification and retrieval of the reasonably current quantitative data available through existing sources such as the CF personnel data base, the *Continuous Attitude Survey* (2004) and *HDDS: Demands of Military Service – Spousal Survey*. The survey currently being conducted by Mount St Vincent University, and sponsored by DQOL, on the impact of deployment and training on the well-being of military members who are responsible for care may also have relevant data. Analysis of the available data will clarify the need for new data and inform the content and design of the data collection instruments.
2. Collection of information from foreign military forces:
 - Obtain a summary of mandatory and non-mandatory child care services offered by the four other members of the Technical Cooperation Program (TTCP), i.e. U.S., UK, NZ and Australia, to identify those providing such supports, the size of each country's military forces, its operating budget for the military and the proportion of operating funds used to fund and/or provide child care.
 - Obtain similar information for the Swedish and Dutch military forces.
 - Conduct a literature review of available documents related to the provision of mandatory and non-mandatory child care services in the TTCP, Swedish and Dutch military services.
 - Obtain additional information, if required, from the relevant military forces.
 - Obtain additional information from the U.S. Military in regard to child care service provision for Spanish-speaking military families to determine how the bilingualism issue is addressed and also information about its integrated child care system, especially its nation-wide uniform child care certification standards and mandatory training for people working in them.

3. Develop, translate and pilot test the survey instruments for parents, MFRCs, MFRC-sponsored child care services, Chief Warrant Officers and base helping professionals.

Development of protocols for the focus groups and key informant interviews, both of which should be informed by the results of the survey data collection, cannot be done until the survey results have been analyzed.

4.0.2. Phase 2: Distribute surveys, analyze data, develop protocols for focus groups and CF key informant interviews

1. Amend the survey instruments on the basis of the pilot tests done on them.
2. Develop and circulate information about the up-coming research, e.g. purpose, expectations on CF forces and their families, through the web and/or other means and covering letters to go with each survey. Circulate the surveys.
3. Collate and analyze the data from foreign military services and obtain any missing or other data indicated.
4. Identify findings from the foreign military services that should inform the CF key informant interviews.
5. Analyze the survey data. Identify findings that require follow-up through focus groups or CF key informant interviews.
6. Develop the protocols for the focus groups and base key informant interviews, translate.

4.0.3. Phase 3: Conduct focus groups and key informant interviews

1. Conduct focus groups on bases selected to represent a variety of Command Environments, tempos and locations. Include smaller bases in focus groups on larger bases, e.g. the base at Wainwright might send participants to a focus group in Edmonton.
2. Meet with the Base and Unit Commanders and Chief Warrant Officers in a joint meeting while on the base to introduce the researchers, give basic feedback about the focus group, and alert the Commanders and Chiefs to their up-coming key informant interviews.
3. Conduct the base key informant interviews by telephone after having quantified and analyzed the data from the base focus group.
4. Analyze all the data from the base key informant interviews to determine if anything emerges that should be explored through the other CF interviews.

5. Conduct the other CF interviews and analyze the data.

4.0.4. Phase 4: Combine and analyze the data sets, write the report

1. Combine the survey, focus groups, base key informant and other CF key informant data bases into a single data base.
2. Write the report using the single data base and information from the other military services.

B. 5.0. Conclusions

- Obtaining the data required to determine the availability and accessibility of current child care services, the need, if any, for amendments to them, and the need, if any, for additional components will require the collection and analysis of new data.
- Although collecting the necessary new data would address concerns expressed by members of the CF, it would also require the collaboration and time of CF staff and families.
- Conducting the research will require the services of a research team that:
 - is fully aware of child care services in the civilian community, including the variations in regulations and funding approaches across the jurisdictions in which CF have bases and the research on the elements required for quality child care;
 - has a basic understanding of current CF child care services;
 - has experience in and the skills required to design data collection instruments;
 - has the ability to conduct focus groups and key informant interviews and to do so in both official languages;
 - has an excellent track record in using quantitative and non-quantitative data to identify service needs and make recommendations and for completing work within the agreed-to timeframe.

In summarizing its reviews of early childhood services including child care in 20 countries, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) emphasizes the need for evidence-based policy-making based on current and comprehensive data including user demographics and the demand, supply, utilization,

staffing and funding of services.¹⁷ The development of a comprehensive policy for CF military families must be informed by identification of the successful elements of the current range of programs, the needs that are not being met and the modifications/additions that will allow the CF to meet the vision of high quality, available and consistent child care services for CF military families.

¹⁷ OECD (2006). *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Brussels: Directorate for Education, OECD>