



# **BCACDI Specialized Sitter Training Program Report & Recommendations**



# Agenda

- Introduction and Key Questions
- Research Approach
  - Analysis of Survey Findings
  - Analysis of Literary Research Findings
- Summary of Recommendations
- Proposed Next Steps
- Appendix:
  - Acknowledgements



# Introduction & Key Questions

- There are no occupations or careers with the same level of challenge and responsibility as being a parent. The hours are long, the duties complex, and the demands are large. When raising a child or youth with special needs the duties and demands are even more challenging. It is important for parents to have opportunities to refresh and recharge to avoid burnout and effectively meet the demands of raising children with developmental challenges.
- Parents should have access to a range of support services within their communities that provide such opportunities to refresh, typically referred to as respite services. In British Columbia, eligible families can access formal longer term (e.g. - a day or weekend) respite opportunities staffed by workers with experience and training specific to the needs of their children. However, the opportunities for casual short-term breaks (e.g. –less than six hours) can be challenging to find.
- The objective of the BCACDI is to develop a training program for agencies to leverage in order to train qualifying members of their community as Specialized Sitters. The Specialized Sitters will then provide the required short-term break services to parents hence increasing the opportunities for parents to refresh and recharge.
- As a first step to designing the Specialized Sitter Training Program, BCACDI executed a survey and research to address the following key questions:
  - Do the families and/or existing stakeholders agree that Specialized Sitters could address the need for short-term break care providers?
  - What needs do the children have?
  - What specific skills will the Specialized Sitters need in order to support short-term breaks for the parents?
  - What is the optimal format for delivering and maintaining the knowledge of the Specialized Sitter Program

# Research Approach

BCACDI executed a two-prong approach to gather information addressing the key questions and providing insights for the recommended next steps:

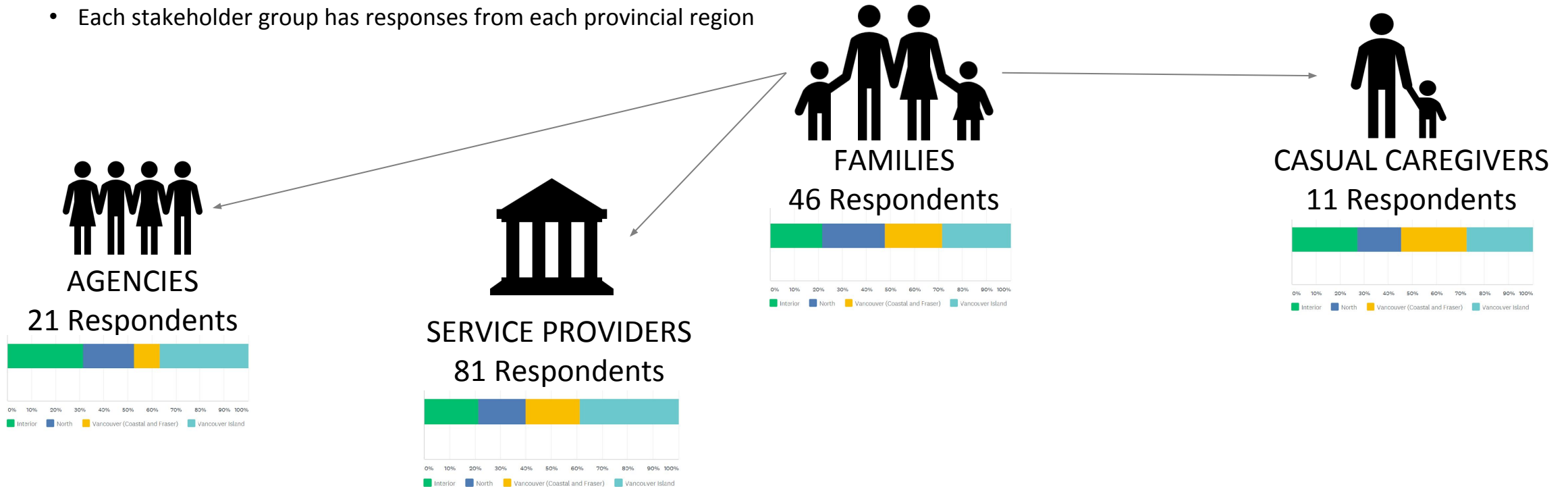
1. Survey families and stakeholders to gather information on needs and potential challenges
2. Execute literary research to identify:
  - What training delivery methods are most effective
  - What specialized care training programs exist today in the marketplace and evaluate how these programs may be leveraged when designing and developing the Specialized Sitter Program





# Survey Overview & Respondents

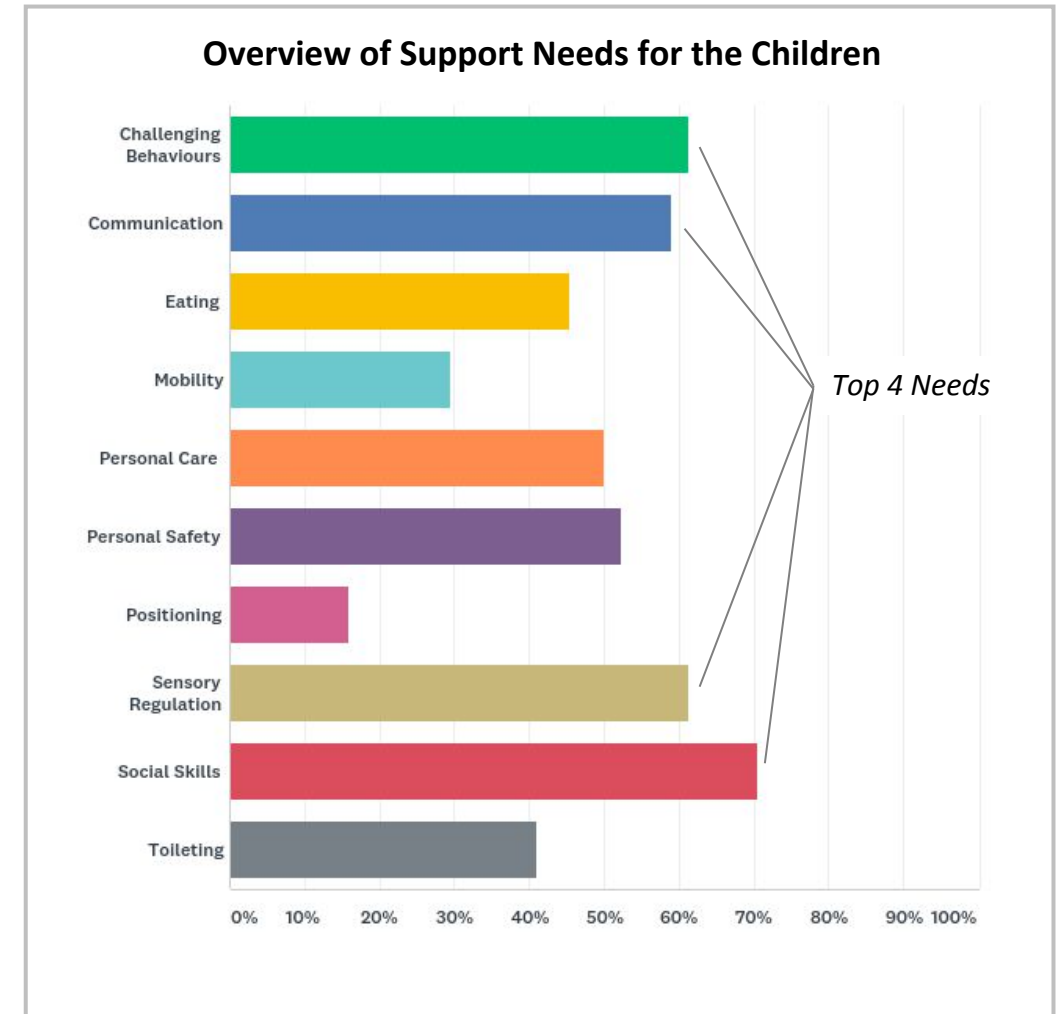
- Four surveys, averaging 10 questions each, were developed and distributed to the target stakeholder groups through a BCACDI email distribution list, by posting of the links on the BCACDI home page with supporting communication and by various Stakeholders distributing the links through their professional networks
- The responses are anonymous and respondents were able to skip questions and/or leave free text comments which have provided more specific feedback to key questions
- Each stakeholder group has responses from each provincial region





# Overview of Family Needs

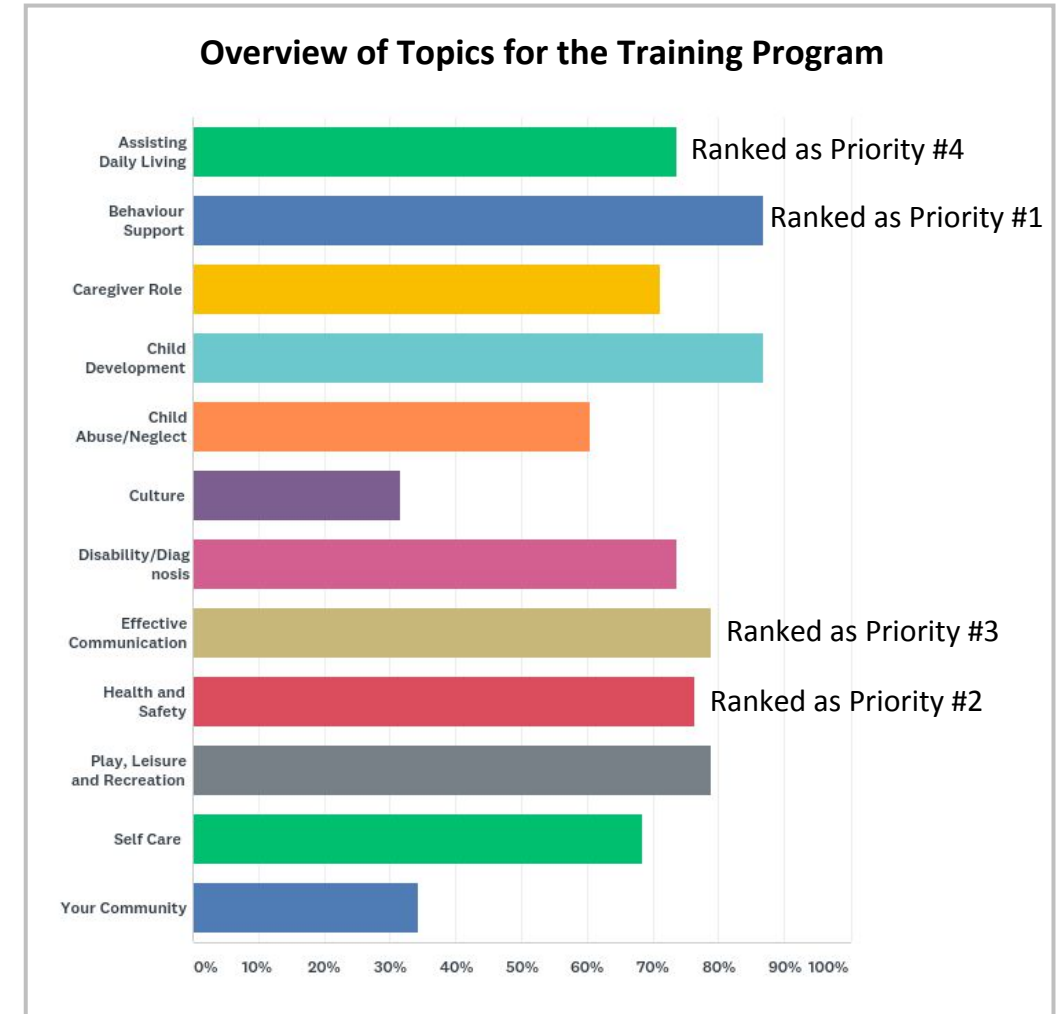
- The survey results conclude the majority of parents surveyed either use, or plan to use, caregiver support for their children thus confirming the need to provide the services in the communities
- 50% of the parents surveyed have no current experience with using caregivers to care for their children and 48% of this group indicated interest to leverage caregiver support in the future for the following top three needs:
  - In home care and supervision while the parents are out
  - Supervising or assisting with play, leisure and/or recreational activities
  - Support in inclusive community activities and programs
- While the needs of the children cover a broad spectrum the core needs appear to be:
  - Challenging Behavior
  - Communication
  - Sensory Regulation
  - Social Skills





# Family Training Requirements

- Parents were then asked to review a proposed list of topics for the Specialized Sitter Training Program and to indicate which topics would be relevant and rank the top four topics
- The top four topics of priority are:
  - Behavioural Support
  - Health and Safety
  - Effective Communication
  - Assisting Daily Living
- While these four topics are the priority for the content of the training they are recommended to be designed with the understanding of stimulating child development through play, leisure and recreational activities
- 71% of parents prefer a training approach that combines online/web based training with in person classroom training
- Multiple parents also added the suggestion to include the parents in the training process, or practicum evaluation, to discuss specific scenarios and practice applying the training knowledge hands-on with a child under the supervision of the parent in the home

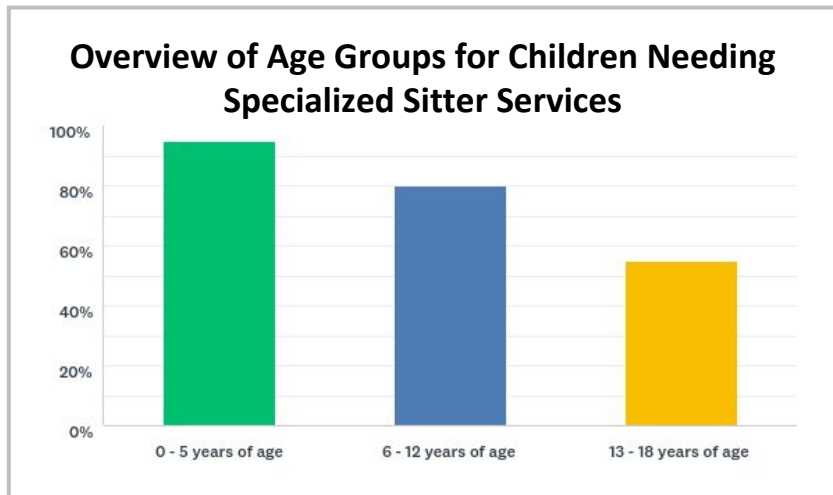




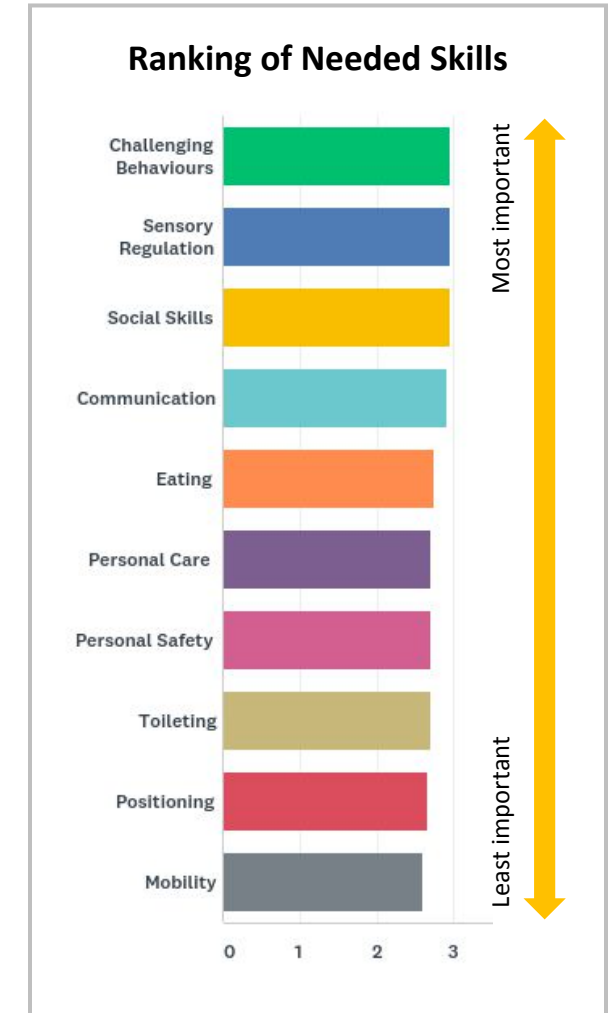


# What Agencies Identified as Needs

- Individuals responding to the Agency survey held positions ranging from Board Members, Executive Directors through to Program Coordinators and Child Development Support Specialists
- The primary focus of the Agencies is Child Development & Intervention (83%), followed by Family Support (50%) and lastly general community advocacy (27%)
- 65% of the Agencies responding to the survey did not currently provide Caregiver services. Those Agencies who do extend services provide a range from support workers for children through to specific programs (i.e.: Parent Support Groups)
- The age range of children needing Specialized Sitters is evenly distributed between infant to 18 years of age however there appears to be a larger future need for the 0 - 5 years of age



- The chart to the right outlines how the Agency respondents rank a pre-defined set of skills from most to least important
- The top four most important needs as seen by the Agency respondents are identical to the top four needs as identified by the Family respondents (see page 7)

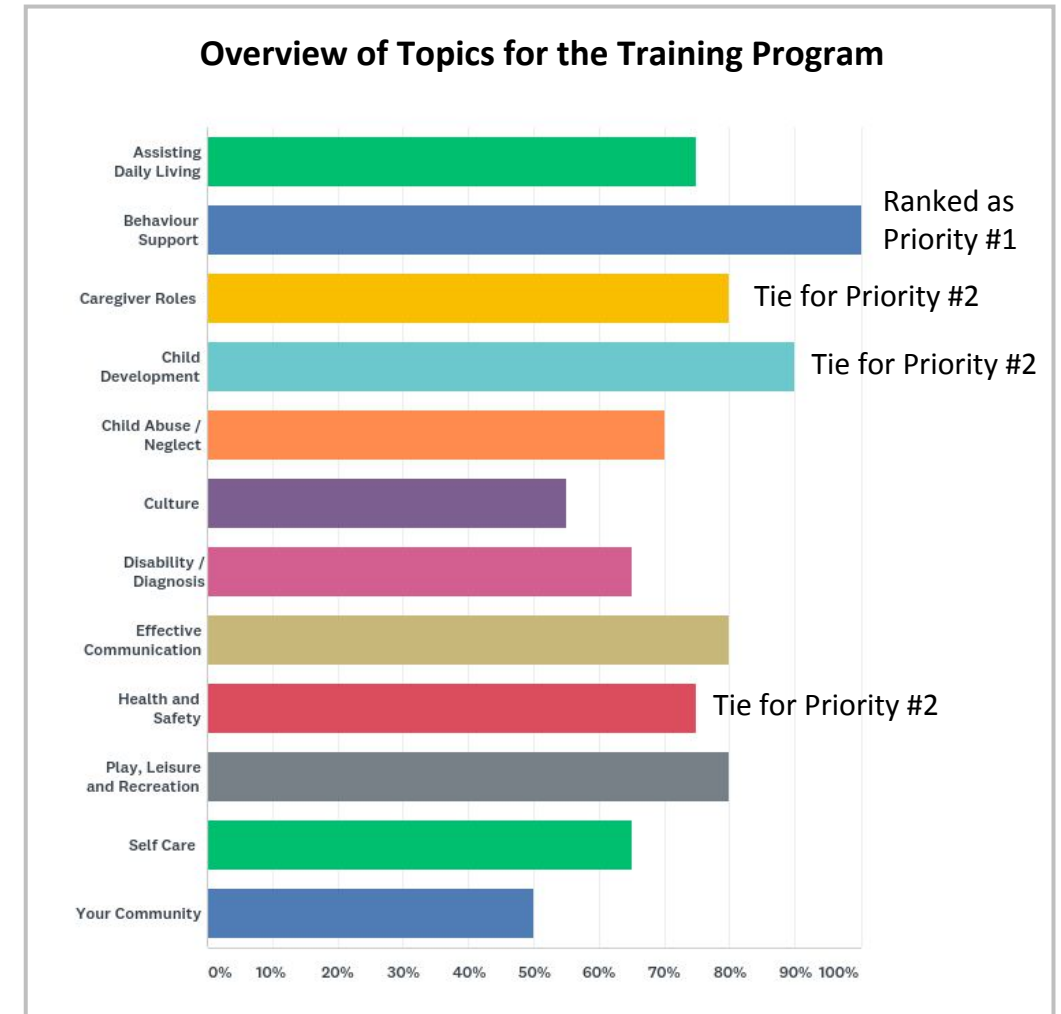






# Agency Training Requirements

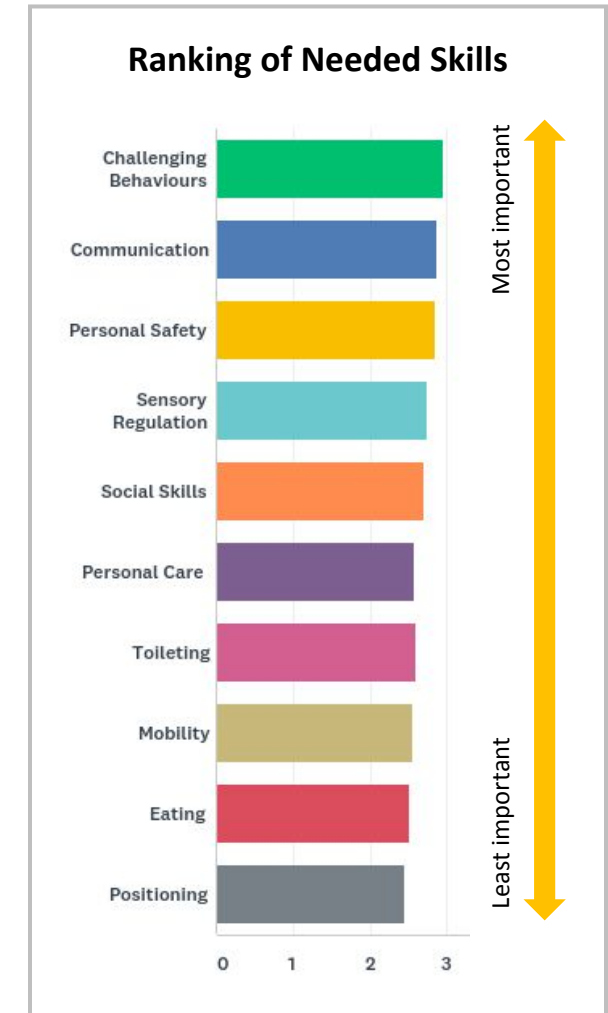
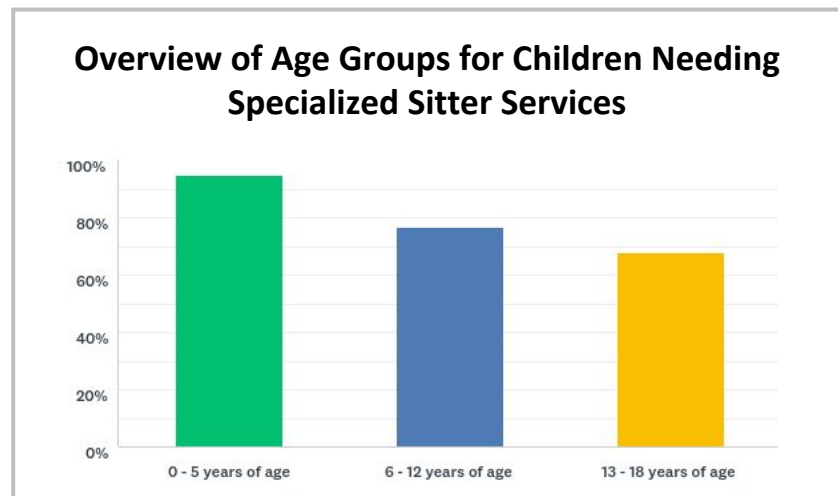
- Agency respondents were then asked to review a proposed list of topics for the Specialized Sitter Training Program and to indicate which topics would be relevant and rank the top four topics
- The top four topics of priority are:
  - Behavioural Support
  - Caregiver Roles & Responsibilities
  - Child Development
  - Health & Safety
- The Agency respondents ranked high the need to include content in the training to cover the roles and responsibilities of the caregiver (i.e.: Specialized Sitter) along with content to support child development
- 65% of Agencies prefer a training approach that combines online/web based training with in person classroom training
- Additional suggestions were to ensure a Handbook is available for future reference by the trainee, leveraging Skype (video conferencing) for coaching/follow up discussions, online support forums and check-ins/evaluations and/or on-demand support from professional Caregivers





# What Service Providers Identified as Needs

- Half of the individuals responding to the Service Provider survey were Social Workers and the remaining respondents held a range of positions such as: Child Development Consultants, Behavioural Consultants, Occupational Therapists, Physio Therapists and Speech Therapists
- Service Providers were asked to indicate the average age of the children in the families they currently work with showing an even distribution across the three age categories with infants again being the highest
- The chart to the right outlines how the Service Provider respondents ranked a pre-defined set of skills Caregivers need from most to least important
- Three of the top four most important needs as seen by the Service Providers respondents are the same as those identified by the Family respondents (see page 7) and the Agencies (see page 9)





# Service Provider Training Requirements

- Service Providers were then asked to review a proposed list of topics for the Specialized Sitter Training Program and to indicate which topics would be relevant and rank the top four topics
- The top four topics of priority are:
  - Behavioural Support
  - Effective Communication
  - Health & Safety
  - Child Development
- The top ranked topics are closely aligned to those identified by Family and Agency respondents
- 78% of Service Providers prefer a training approach that combines online/web based training with in person classroom training
- Additional suggestions were to offer classes throughout the week and on weekends, to host sessions at Agency locations with support from Agency staff and working with a Mentorship Program so the trainee has ongoing support for any difficult situations they may occur when working as a Specialized Sitter

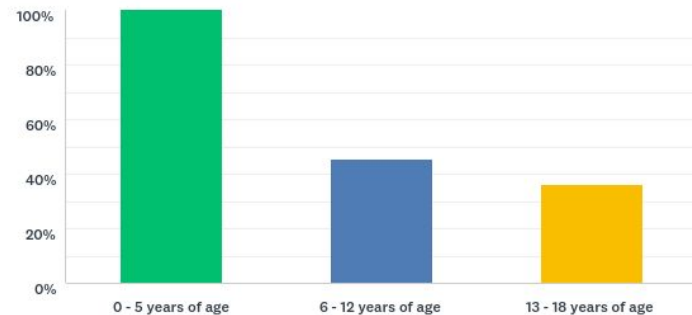




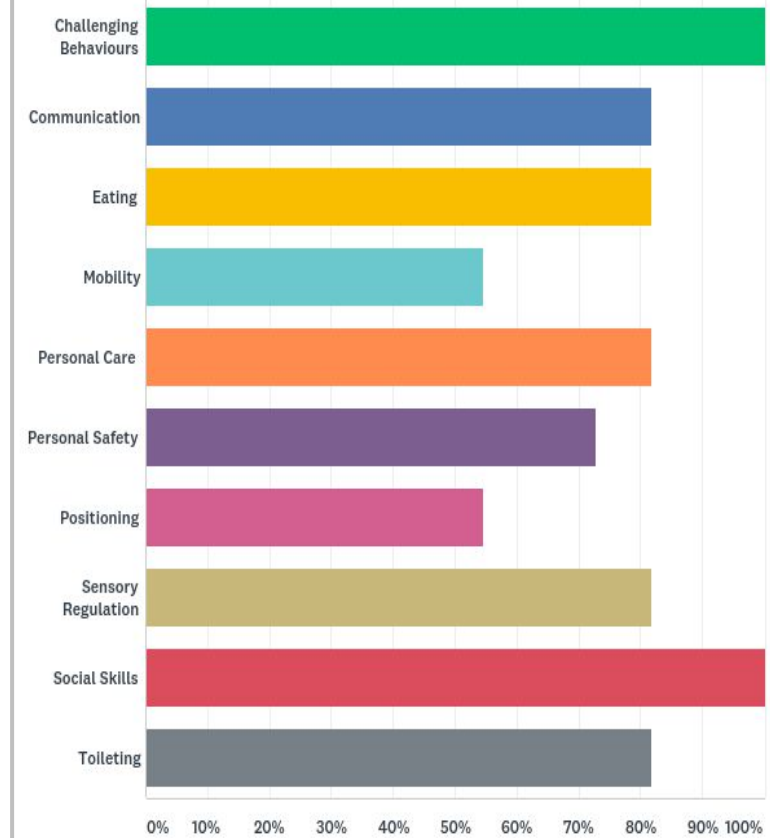
# What Caregivers Identified as Needs

- 73% of the Caregiver respondents have more than ten years experience providing care; 100% of the respondents had received formal training(s) ranging from relevant University degrees through to Early Childhood Education Certificate
- All Caregiver respondents had experience with children under the age of 5, and 82% of the Caregivers sometimes provide care for siblings as well as the child with special needs
- The table to the right outlines the activities Caregivers have the most experience with providing - Challenging Behavior and Social Skills being the most common
- The respondents indicated the children have various support needs ranging from reminders, partial support to full support

**Overview of Age Groups for Children Needing Specialized Sitter Services**



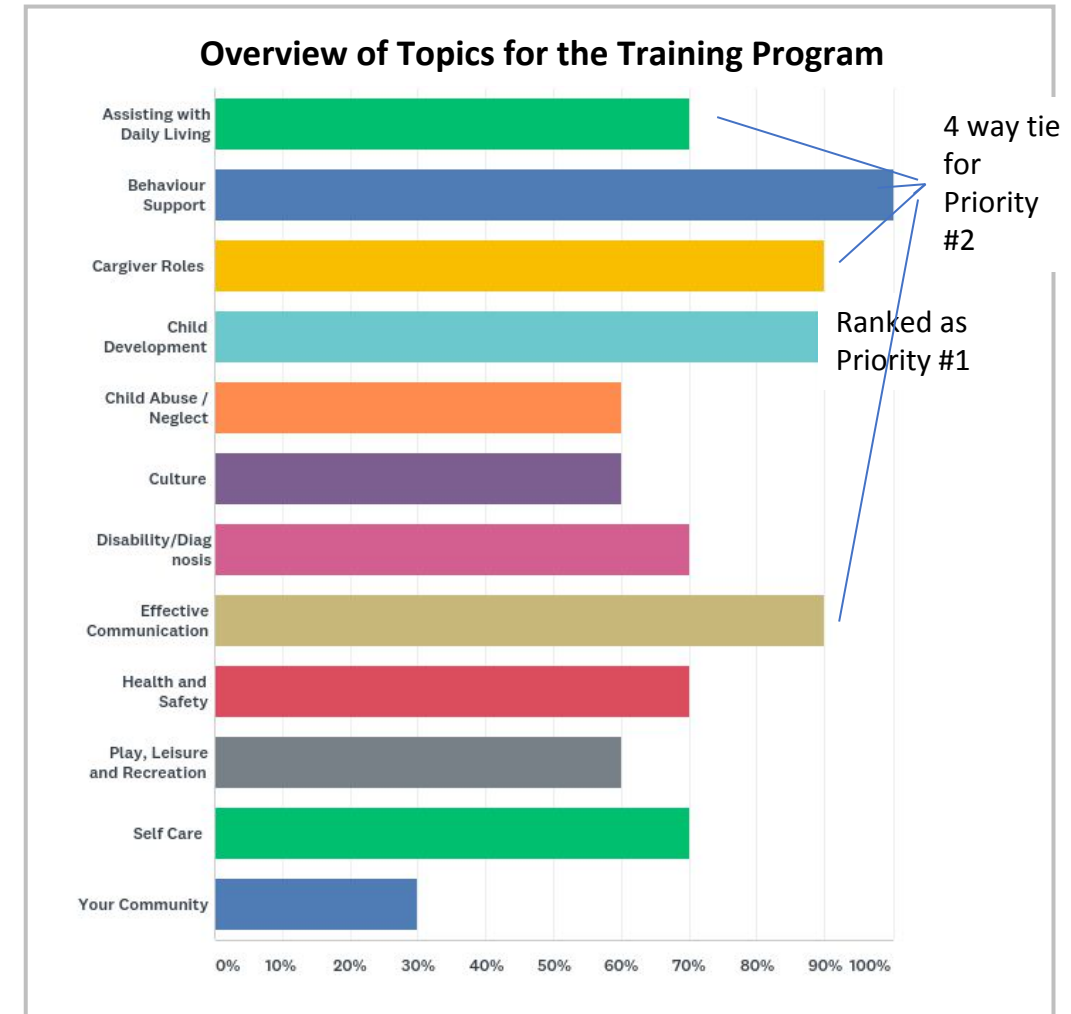
**Caregiver Experience in Providing Support**





# Caregiver Training Requirements

- Caregiver respondents were then asked to review a proposed list of topics for the Specialized Sitter Training Program and to indicate which topics would be relevant and then rank the top four topics
- The top four topics of priority are:
  - Child Development
  - Assisting with Daily Living
  - Behaviour Support
  - Caregiver Roles & Responsibilities
  - Effective Communication
- The top ranked topics from Caregivers are aligned with the priorities provided by Families, Agency and Service Provider respondents
- 90% of Caregivers prefer a training approach that combines online/web based training with in person classroom training
- Additional suggestions were to allow the training to be in short segments rather than longer sessions, leverage workshops or group discussions to discuss and share experiences within the group of trained Specialized Sitters and to spend time explaining the various professional roles and the link between them required to provide care to the child





# Key Conclusions from the Survey

- The survey was an effective tool to identify, compare and conclude the key needs of families along with the key topics to be included in the Specialized Sitter Training Program

Top Ranked Needs	Prioritized Training Topics
Sensory Regulation	Child Development
Social Skills	Assisting with Daily Living
Challenging Behaviour	Behavioural Support
Communication	Effective Communication
Personal Safety	Health & Safety
	Caregiver (i.e.: Specialized Sitter) Roles & Responsibilities

- The recommended list of topics for the individual modules should include at a minimum the above table
- It is recommended to have a training approach which combines computer based learning with in-person discussions to reinforce the knowledge and allow the trainee to practice with the knowledge in a supervised environment



# Literary Research: Training Delivery Topics

- Major medical and educational databases were searched for information on respite care training programs to identify what already may exist and can be leveraged by the BCACDI for the Specialized Sitter Training Program
- The various searches were unable to uncover a few relevant sources of information – mainly the training curriculums of CMS and ARCH summarized as follows:

Centres for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS)	ARCH and Easter Seals
Communication	Volunteer Roles and Responsibilities
Person-Centered Practices	Family Caregiving 101
Evaluation and Observation	Disability and Chronic Care Issues
Crisis Prevention and Intervention	Community Integration and Person-Centered Planning
Safety	The Aging Process and Related Health Changes
Professionalism and Ethics	The Volunteer's Routine Caregiving Responsibilities
Empowerment and Advocacy	Diversity and Cultural Competency
Health and Wellness	Basic Medical Training
Community Living Skills and Supports	Communication and Interaction
Community Inclusion and Networking	Maintaining Confidentiality
Cultural Competency	Ethical Issues
Education, Training and Self-Development	Documentation and Reporting Expectations
	Policy and Procedure Review for Volunteers

- When comparing the survey prioritized training topics with the examples to the left – key differences are the inclusion of information in the training for ethics, adherence to policy and procedures and documentation expectations





# Literary Research: Training Delivery Methods

- Training for caregivers providing casual, short-breaks for parents raising children with special needs started in the 1980's with programs such as Special Sitters (Reid & Fitch 1988) which provided in-person workshop style trainings with printed manuals for post-training reference
- The literary research evaluated multiple articles for effective methods to deliver training to respite caregivers and the key conclusions are as follows:
  - Pre-recorded video combined with individualized remedial training is as effective as printed materials
  - Pre-recorded video is as effective as in-person training when followed up with on-the-job training support
  - Video conferencing is a viable alternative to in-person discussions
  - Video conferencing is as effective as live presentations when followed up with an on-site visit for demonstrating key aspects of the training content
  - Online and workshop delivery of training content is equally effective making online delivery a preferred format for distance learning
  - The combination of pre-recorded video followed by a one-to-one video conference with an expert allows for self-paced learning and an active dialogue to solidify any open questions



# Summary of Recommendations

## **Disclaimer**

- The Specialized Sitter Training Program does not replace formal caregiver trainings/certifications and as such the content covered in the program will focus on a general understanding and strategies for supervising children with special needs
- Parents and Caregivers will need to be involved in the decision making process to confirm whether their Childs' need requirements can be safely executed by a Specialized Sitter

## **Objectives of the Specialized Sitter Training Program**

- To increase the number of Specialized Sitters in local communities available to provide casual/short-term care for families rising children and youth with special needs
- To train potential Specialized Sitters developing their knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes so they are better prepared to provide safe and fun care for children and youth with special needs

## **Definition of Casual/Short-term Care (for discussion)**

- Casual or short-term care is defined as six hours or less of care for a child with special needs and/or their siblings occurring with a maximum frequency of two times per week



# Summary of Recommendations

*Continued*

## **Delivery Approach & Key Roles**

- Total number of hours to complete the Specialized Sitter Training Program is 10-16
- The training will be facilitated at least twice per year (i.e.: one spring session and one winter session) and provide the trainee with an adequate duration to complete the training
- Throughout the duration of each training session, trainees will have access to an on-line forum to post questions and participate in discussions. This forum will be moderated
- Web Hosting for Training Program: the Specialized Sitter Training Program will be hosted as a separate page on the BCACDI website and all technical issues and queries will be answered by the Third Party hosting provider



# Summary of Recommendations

*Continued*

## **Proposed Contributors to the Content of the Individual Modules**

- When possible links to other existing trainings in the market should be incorporated to ensure relevant and recent content is leveraged (for example: the Health & Safety section may link to a First Aid training program in the market)
- Each module in the training program could have a Content Sponsor who is a professional working in British Columbia with relevant education and work experience and can provide the specific content (i.e.: both the initial version and assist with annual quality reviews to ensure all content is relevant and up to date). All content approved by the Advisory Committee

## **Proposed Requirements for the Web-Based Training Program**

- Knowledge exams after each module to evaluate retention of knowledge and identify areas where the trainee needs to improve their understanding
- A printable version of the training program (all modules) and a workbook with quizzes should be available by download for those individuals who wish to complete the training offline (note: the trainee will need to complete the final test online)
- The web-based program must be compatible with multiple operating systems (i.e.: mac, Microsoft) and support multiple browser versions (i.e.: Chrome, Internet Explorer, etc.)
- The web-based program must be compatible with multiple devices (i.e.: desktop, tablet, mobile)



# Appendix: Acknowledgements

- The BC Association for Child Development and Intervention (BCACDI) is a non-profit society that provides networking, support and advocacy for agencies delivering services to children and youth with special needs. Through constructive collaboration and interaction with their colleagues, BC agencies enhance their ability to deliver effective services to the communities they serve. BCACDI also provides a unified voice for dialogue with Government regarding policies and resources for service delivery in this sector. The Association's vision is for all children and youth requiring extra supports and their families to have timely access to the most effective services that help them achieve their true potential.
- The work of BCACDI is guided by the following values:
  - Family centred practice
  - Evidence informed interventions
  - Respectful and collaborative engagement with our Government partners
  - Consensus building approach to Association decision making
  - Inclusion and meaningful participation
- BCACDI would like to recognize the funding providing by the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development to develop the Specialized Sitter Program. The Association is grateful for the opportunity and responsibility to create this resource. BCACDI would also like to acknowledge Dawn Grunert, and thank her for her work leading this project.