

Interview with Kim Hiscott RECE, Executive Director, Andrew Fleck Children's Services



How does your organization define Decent Work?

We define decent work as engaged employees who are appropriately compensated for their work and are provided respectful balance between work and family responsibilities

What is your organization/workplace doing to provide employees with Decent Work?

To keep employees engaged we use a number of different strategies. We provide interesting projects, opportunities to participate on external and internal committees, and we ensure effective communication (agency meetings, team meetings, emails) that demonstrates their value as professionals. We also ensure we have policies for a purpose, non-contact time, stretch assignments, career assignments, transparent hiring process, employee surveys, internal professional learning and employer supported external PD, performance review structure, and a process that supports parent/employee engagement. Through all of this, we try to demonstrate that we value our employees as professionals. We also have a variety of ECEs in many different roles and we value and prioritize opportunities for growth within their career with us.

To ensure our early years staff are appropriately compensated we provide a transparent salary scale, for ECEs in ratio the \$2.00 Wage Enhancement Grant is added to all hours employees are paid by AFCS - including all paid time away on special leave/personal days, 10+ vacation days and sick leave that is less than a two

week consecutive period. These paid away hours not eligible for the funding, but we make a point to ensure our staff have access to these benefits. We've also absorbed the difference between the funded amount for benefits and our actual benefit costs, and made a commitment to a clear job evaluation process through our HR Manager in partnership with CUPE, including regular salary reviews.

To support balancing work and family responsibilities we offer overtime for after work activities, 10 Personal and Special Leave days, sick benefits including long-term disability, and employees start at 20 holidays

How has providing Decent Work impacted your employees' lives?

Our employees report feeling viewed as professionals, which increases their feelings of accomplishment and success. This translates to fewer challenges with recruitment and retention, and more effective employees. At Andrew Fleck, employees are empowered and shown respect to make decisions in their programming with families and the children. Educators have program budgets that they can use for their own classroom needs. This ensures they have responsibility, control, choice and a sense of ownership of their program. And for example when calls for proposals come out we often engage with ECEs about what we should apply- we know they are the experts on their needs and we want to ensure they have decision making power.

We also celebrate ECEs that leave us for further leadership roles, as we feel we have contributed to their abilities

and their success. We do pay close attention to lateral position moves, and try to find out from employees through exit interviews why they would be leaving. For example, is it something that we should be paying attention to, like support to ease their commute for example.

As an employer what do think needs to happen for all ECEs in Ontario to have Decent Work?

The first step is a commitment to building the early learning and care system. The current patchwork market-based approach is not sustainable. ECEs in Ontario need a standardized compensation scale, secure base funding, and the creation of a real system of early learning and care.

The government needs to pay attention to Decent Work. I was surprised to hear that Ontario had the lowest unemployment rates in November, and we need to think about how these figures are connected to decent work. Being a decent work employer and using a decent work lens has helped us to recruit people in to the sector. This needs to happen across the sector and across the province.

As employers, advocates, ECEs, we also need to do more showcasing of what is happening in the sector, in particular the great employers and great jobs that exist. We need to let ECEs know there are options, and they don't have to leave the sector to feel valued.