

Changes proposed for P.E.I. child care registry ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The group that runs P.E.I.'s child care registry is proposing changes that it hopes will result in more daycares actually following it.

The Early Childhood Development Association says it's working on a funding proposal for the provincial government for money to make the registry more user-friendly, and to help pay for more training opportunities for daycare directors on how to navigate the online tool.

"We know there does need to be an increase in usage across the board," said Sonya Hooper, the association's Executive Director. "We do know that some of that is due to a high level of uncertainty with using the computer over the paper waiting lists they've been using for so many years."

Parents say registry not working

The online registry was set up by the P.E.I. government six years ago, in an effort to make the process of finding a child care centre more efficient. Hooper said through the registry, parents can quickly get their name on a digital waiting list for any daycare across the island. Child-care centre directors are expected to consult that online list as spaces open up, and to call parents at the top of that list.

But several parents CBC have spoken to said based on their experience with the registry, it's clear some daycares are not using it.

"I didn't get any response from any centre. And then I was told through a mutual friend that you should actually just call the places you want to get in. The registry really didn't get you anywhere," said Tracey Barrett. "In the end, [my daughter] was 10 months when I found one. But it was only because I called, not because I was registered."

Sarah Ashby has had a similar experience with the registry this year, ultimately finding a spot for her daughter by calling a centre herself, after months of waiting.

"It seems like some daycares have the paper registry separate from their online registry..And others say no, they only do the online registry," said Ashby. "So it's really difficult to know what's what, especially when you're panicked about getting back to work."

Hooper said while she doesn't have statistics on the percentage of child care centres using the registry, she regularly hears those same complaints from island parents.

She maintains with more provincial government funding, her association can devote more resources to getting daycares on board with the registry.

"Whether it's staff changes or just varying degrees of confidence with the internet and these kinds of databases, we would like to be able to provide that support more consistently to centres," said Hooper. "It affects the success of the registry when we don't have 100 per cent of centres using it. We need to have 100 per cent of centres using it."

Hooper said the association hopes to have its funding proposal into government later this week.

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