

Risk perception, regulation, and unlicensed child care: lessons from Ontario, Canada ^[1]

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Abstract

In 2014, the Province of Ontario, Canada undertook a number of legislative changes regarding child care. Part way through the process, a series of tragic focusing events occurred: a number of infants and children died in unlicensed child care over a short period of time. Despite these events, the Province chose to allow a portion of the family child care (FCC) sector to remain unlicensed and essentially unregulated in a sector that is otherwise subject to strict licensing and regulation. Drawing on research on risk regulation, we analyse FCC regulation in comparison to other sectors and find that FCC is surprisingly under-regulated, given the health and safety risks. Legislative debate analysis reveals a number of rationales for non-regulation. In addition to pragmatic political concerns such as costs associated with licensing, analysis reveals concerns about choice and accessibility over quality and safety. We conclude with a call for a research agenda to further examine parents' and policy-makers' perceptions of risk.

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Tags: accessibility ^[4]

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