

Slipshod child-care providers may lose Sault Social Services funding^[1]

Author: Helwig, David

Source: SooToday

Format: Article

Publication Date: 26 Apr 2019

AVAILABILITY

Access online^[2]

EXCERPTS

District of Sault Ste. Marie Social Services Assistance Board (DSSMSSAB) is nothing if not ambitious.

It's determined to deliver the best child-care system in Ontario, at every level.

But DSSMSSAB chief administrative officer Mike Nadeau says many local licensed child-care locations are falling badly short of the mark.

This week, Nadeau served notice that he's prepared to recommend pulling DSSMSSAB funding from providers that don't shape up, turning the money over instead to providers that actually meet standards, to expand their operations.

"If we're going to be sincere with our vision, we can't tolerate inadequacy," he said.

"If we're going to have truly the highest quality system in Ontario, we need to make sure that we're also funding the highest-quality child-care programs across the community and expand those."

"I'm prepared, if the quality doesn't pick up in some of the providers, that we would transfer public money to providers to expand."

"We fully intend that if there are programs that do not keep increasing quality based on the investments that we have made, that we will be coming to the board with some recommendations in the future," Nadeau told his board on Thursday night.

Carla Fairbrother, DSSMSSAB director of early-years services, displayed the graph shown at the top of this article, showing how local licensed child care providers did in a 2017 quality evaluation.

The red line drawn across the graph is what DSSMSSAB considers the minimum acceptable standard for licensed child care providers.

"You can clearly see, we're far from that mark," Nadeau remarked.

Neither Nadeau nor Fairbrother got into finger-pointing at the meeting, declining to provide identities of even the top-ranked local providers.

They similarly didn't describe the local conditions that resulted in poor evaluations.

Nadeau said he wanted to keep the focus on improving overall system quality, not on individual locations.

The 2017 snapshot of local licensed child-care providers is based on the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, a widely respected standard that evaluates 43 items in seven categories:

- spacing and furnishings
- personal-care routines
- language-reasoning
- activities
- interactions
- program structure
- parents and staff

Included in the scoresheets are staff-child interactions, child-child interactions and disciplinary interactions as well as nature, science and numerical curricula and health and safety issues.

"We're not there yet. This is the first snapshot," said Fairbrother, who added that a second evaluation is planned for later this year.

This time, she's expecting better results.

To assist low-scoring providers, DSSMSSAB has invested in a tiered mentoring program that provides monthly training, mentoring and

curriculum development for one person from each child-care location.

Participants are then expected to return to their locations to provide in-house training and sharing.

Nadeau believes DSSMSSAB is the only service provider in Ontario that has written mandatory attendance at professional development (p.d.) days, into its service contracts and funding agreements.

"Rather than try to encourage them, we put it right in the service contract that they have to close, that they have to make their staff available [for p.d. days]," he said

"With respect to quality, one of our biggest barriers is the lack of qualified, registered early-childhood educators," Fairbrother said.

Nadeau's remarks at this week's meeting addressed only licensed child-care centres, not licensed home child-care locations, where Child Care Algoma is responsible for monitoring quality.

Speaking about DSSMSSAB's overall work in early-years services, Fairbrother said: "Our internal goal is to reduce or streamline contracts as much as possible."

Existing child-care locations tend to be clustered in the centre and east parts of DSSMSSAB's service area, she said.

"We're definitely looking at where we can provide more in the west end, should opportunities present themselves."

There are currently 1,531 DSSMSSAB licensed, not-for-profit child-care spaces, which doesn't include about 125 licensed home child-care spaces.

In recent years, the province has pushed to have more locations in schools and eight of the 12 local providers have school-based sites.

The following, as compiled by DSSMSSAB, are average market rates for local licensed child care:

- \$45.54 - infant
- \$40.45 - toddler
- \$38.06 - preschool
- \$36.48 - full-day JK/SK/SA
- \$19.71 - before and after school

Related link:

Region: Ontario ^[3]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/05/slipshod-child-care-providers-may-lose-sault-social-services-funding>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/19/05/slipshod-child-care-providers-may-lose-sault-social-services-funding> [2]

<https://www.sootoday.com/local-news/slipshod-child-care-providers-may-lose-sault-social-services-funding-1392093> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856>