

Trauma-informed daycare will be first in Canada ^[1]

Young children who have experienced trauma, such as abuse or living in a refugee camp, will receive "wraparound" services at the daycare

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EXCERPTS

Canada's first trauma-informed daycare is expected to be a safe space for young children who have experienced trauma.

The United Way is raising money to complete construction of Little Phoenix Daycare in Victoria, said Mark Breslauer, CEO of United Way Greater Victoria.

Once complete, the child care facility will help young children who have experienced trauma as a result of a variety of difficult situations, including family violence, sexual, psychological, physical and emotional abuse, or living in a refugee camp.

"It's really difficult to get an appointment with a child psychologist," said Jane Taylor Lee, executive director of Family Services of Greater Victoria, one of the groups involved in raising money for the daycare.

She said it could take up to a year for a child to see a psychologist, "and that's a lifetime for a little one."

The daycare will provide "wraparound services" to address immediate needs and provide support. Staff will be equipped to assist children and families, including trauma counsellors, art therapists and other childhood experts, while the curriculum will be tailored to create a sense of safety and belonging.

The design of the daycare is supported through a research partnership with the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria.

"(The daycare) is an opportunity for us to, not only support children who for whatever reason are experiencing stress and trauma in their lives, but also to make a valuable contribution toward supporting the design and delivery of other trauma-informed daycares in B.C. and Canada," said professor Alison Gerlach.

Research has shown that if unresolved, trauma can have lifelong effects on children who experience it in their formative years. There are high correlations between suicide, incarceration, divorce and family violence.

As a result of COVID-19, domestic violence and family breakdown is on the rise, and "children are often caught in the middle," according to the United Way.

Innovative social programs are often the result of organizations working together, said David Lau, executive director of the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre Society, another group involved in the daycare.

Financial support will lead to a "therapeutic daycare that will stop negative cycles before they begin," he said.

Region: British Columbia ^[3]

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