

Child-care workers call on government to fund sick days ^[1]

'In the world we're in now, there needs to be a designated, here's your COVID sickness pot of money'

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Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 17 May 2021

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

Government should be doing more to ensure daycare workers can stay home when they're sick, say some who work in P.E.I.'s child-care sector.

Last week, a staff member at Charlottetown's Leaps and Bounds Childcare Centre tested positive for COVID.

According to the chief public health officer, there are indications they went to work while symptomatic. It's not clear what sick leave protocols are in place at Leaps and Bounds. The centre's owner could not be reached for comment.

According to the province, there is no mandated paid sick leave at Island daycares.

Jamie-Lynn Mosher offers her staff five paid days per year at Rainbow Beginnings Early Learning Centre in Kings County. She thinks there should be dedicated funding from the province, so she can afford to offer her staff more.

Money you can 'tap into'

"I feel like in the world we're in now, there needs to be a designated, here's your COVID sickness pot of money. And it doesn't go away. It's just there, and then as you need it, you can tap into it," she said.

"It'd be nice if it was easy, that if they woke up and had a scratchy throat and a runny nose, and they didn't have to hem and haw, 'Can I drag myself to get through the day? Is this really a symptom?'"

A spokesperson for the P.E.I. government said it did receive requests for funding to cover paid sick days at child-care centres.

But those requests stopped when the federal government rolled out its Canada recovery sickness benefit in the fall. It offers workers \$500 for one week if they're off because they're sick, or need to isolate.

'You got to get paid'

Phyllis MacDonald, an early childhood educator at Rainbow Beginnings Early Learning Centre, said it'd be easier if centres were given funds directly, so workers could avoid having to apply for the federal program, or worry about whether they qualify.

"At the end of the day, you got to get paid. And you also fear, you feel you're leaving your work shorthanded. Because sometimes the subs just aren't there," she said.

"At the end of the day, you have to look at, 'Do they have anyone there to cover me off?'"

Region: Prince Edward Island ^[3]

Tags: workforce ^[4]

sick leave ^[5]

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