

Outbreaks in Ontario's child-care system rise as parents look ahead to September ^[1]

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EXCERPTS



TORONTO -- The number of COVID-19 cases involving children in licensed child-care settings in Ontario is edging up and parents and child-care providers say they're surprised at how quickly the new variant can take hold.

Published listings show Ontario's largest outbreak in months at a licensed child-care setting — 12 cases — was at an Etobicoke Montessori school last week, as observers wonder if this is a preview of what to expect in the school year.

Parents said they felt the school, Grand Avenue Montessori, did everything it could and did manage to keep the outbreak to one of their two buildings.

"They've been on top of it if a kid even has a sniffle," Daniel Bear, a parent at the school, said from outside the school on Monday.

"It's representative of the challenge we face. When you look at the broader provincial government's plans to protect students across Ontario, it makes you realize how little they've done and how at risk the population is."

Provincial data show that the seven-day average of new cases related to licensed child-care centres across Ontario is about 11. That's down from the high of 121 in mid-April, but up from a low of about four in July.

And the population at these centres is a lot like those in early grades: a group that is under 12-years-old, so is not eligible for vaccinations and needs protections another way.

The provincial government's plan has been to mandate masks for grades one to 12 but not to require vaccinations for staff.

Doris Grinspun of the Registered Nurses of Ontario called for all educators and health workers to have mandatory vaccinations to reduce the risks the children might face, as well as any family members they might spread it to.

"The daycare cases are going up because we are relaxing public health-care measures," she said.

Grinspun added that the daycares in some cases may even be better positioned than schools to handle an outbreak.

"The daycares are doing some things right: smaller class sizes," she said.

Another child-care centre, Wee Watch in Milton, faced an outbreak of eight cases and is reopening Tuesday. Manager Sonya Jaura credits her staff's quick thinking and full vaccination status.

She said as soon as the daycare got word that a parent had received a positive test, the home was shut down, but by then COVID-19 had

spread to every child.

"It definitely does spread very fast. As soon as you see something you have to take action immediately," she said.

"We have multiple homes. We were able to contain it to one home. We're proud of how we have taken care of it."

Parent Bronwen Alsop says she hopes that Ontario is prepared for outbreaks to be seen in school settings.

"We are going to be seeing this. We are going to be seeing outbreaks in daycare. We are going to be seeing outbreaks in restaurants. We have to go in expecting this and handle it when it does happen," she said.

Alsop added that she hopes the broader school system can stay open anyway to avoid lost instruction that is hitting poorer families hardest.

A vaccine passport system is one way that could reduce the risk, Western University's Prachi Srivastava said, adding that schools should also focus on curriculum changes so that they can adapt to what is now the third school year of disruptions.

"There is minimal planning in place," she said. "We want to look at an integrated approach, with curricular and safety aspects, and we're not seeing that."

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Source URL (modified on 16 Aug 2021): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/08/outbreaks-ontarios-child-care-system-rise-parents-look-ahead>

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<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/video?clipId=2256964&jwsourc=cl> [4] <http://TORONTO> -- The number of COVID-19 cases involving children in licensed child-care settings in Ontario is edging up and parents and child-care providers say they're surprised at how quickly the new variant can take hold. Published listings show Ontario's largest outbreak in months at a licensed child-care setting — 12 cases — was at an Etobicoke Montessori school last week, as observers wonder if this is a preview of what to expect in the school year. Parents said they felt the school, Grand Avenue Montessori, did everything it could and did manage to keep the outbreak to one of their two buildings. "They've been on top of it if a kid even has a sniffle," Daniel Bear, a parent at the school, said from outside the school on Monday. "It's representative of the challenge we face. When you look at the broader provincial government's plans to protect students across Ontario, it makes you realize how little they've done and how at risk the population is." Provincial data show that the seven-day average of new cases related to licensed child-care centres across Ontario is about 11. That's down from the high of 121 in mid-April, but up from a low of about four in July. And the population at these centres is a lot like those in early grades: a group that is under 12-years-old, so is not eligible for vaccinations and needs protections another way. The provincial government's plan has been to mandate masks for grades one to 12 but not to require vaccinations for staff. Doris Grinspun of the Registered Nurses of Ontario called for all educators and health workers to have mandatory vaccinations to reduce the risks the children might face, as well as any family members they might spread it to. "The daycare cases are going up because we are relaxing public health-care measures," she said. Grinspun added that the daycares in some cases may even be better positioned than schools to handle an outbreak. "The daycares are doing some things right: smaller class sizes," she said. Another child-care centre, Wee Watch in Milton, faced an outbreak of eight cases and is reopening Tuesday. Manager Sonya Jaura credits her staff's quick thinking and full vaccination status. She said as soon as the daycare got word that a parent had received a positive test, the home was shut down, but by then COVID-19 had spread to every child. "It definitely does spread very fast. As soon as you see something you have to take action immediately," she said. "We have multiple homes. We were able to contain it to one home. We're proud of how we have taken care of it." Parent Bronwen Alsop says she hopes that Ontario is prepared for outbreaks to be seen in school settings. "We are going to be seeing this. We are going to be seeing outbreaks in daycare. We are going to be seeing outbreaks in restaurants. We have to go in expecting this and handle it when it does happen," she said. Alsop added that she hopes the broader school system can stay open anyway to avoid lost instruction that is hitting poorer families hardest. A vaccine passport system is one way that could reduce the risk, Western University's Prachi Srivastava said, adding that schools should also focus on curriculum changes so that they can adapt to what is now the third school year of disruptions. "There is minimal planning in place," she said. "We want to look at an integrated approach, with curricular and safety aspects, and we're not seeing that." [5] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/health-and-safety> [7] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9152> [8] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9040> [9] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/school-system>