

Pilot program expected to bring child care to Sydney nursing home ^[1]

'I'm hopeful that if it's as positive as it appears to be initially,' says deputy minister

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EXCERPTS

A Sydney nursing home is expected to soon offer an on-site daycare with early morning drop-off and lunch-time visits with children.

The program is planned for the Cove Guest Home later this year. The details haven't been finalized.

"We're looking at the financials right now," said Dr. Kevin Orrell, deputy minister and CEO of the Office of Health Care Professionals Recruitment.

"It's been approved in principle to proceed with the evaluation of the cost and the hiring of the appropriate people. I'm hopeful that if it's as positive as it appears to be initially ... that [we] will transfer the project into a permanent type of provision for these workers."

The goal of the project is to draw more people to the continuing care assistant profession. Orrell did not elaborate on costs for parents who will use the program.

Seniors may have role to play

The new office is looking at daycare regulations to ensure the Cove Guest Home fits within its requirements.

Orrell said the program will also look at having seniors and children sharing some time together.

He said there may be an opportunity "for some of the residents to be involved, perhaps as storytellers or people who might contribute to the well-being of the child, that will be looked into, that will be one of the questions that we're going to have to ask of this pilot."

About 10-12 spaces are being offered to accommodate long-term care employees at the Sydney facility.

Shortage of workers to cover shifts

Cheryl Deveau, chief executive officer of the Cove, said the pandemic has made it challenging to find people to cover shifts, which has led to cancelled vacations.

"People are turning away from health care and picking another employer that is not mandating overtime, that they're able to get away from work when they want that time away from work," said Deveau, who has worked at the home for 18 years.

"It's really hard to recruit and replace those folks that are also leaving the workforce."

Child care difficult to find

Deveau said that a lack of child care is also related to changing family dynamics with many children having both parents or single parents working outside the home.

She said finding affordable child care is a problem for her staff due to their early morning start time.

"There's many barriers," she said. "So that is something that I'm hoping this pilot will show loud and clear to everyone that we really need to focus on child care in Nova Scotia."

Deveau said she hopes the daycare program will be rolled out at both long-term and acute care settings across the province.

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