

Shortage of early childhood educators creating long waitlists for child care ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

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EXCERPTS



PARIS, ONT. - Local childcare centres are facing a shortage of early childhood educators, leaving some families needing child care on long waitlists.

Victoria Aybout put her career on hold earlier this year to take care of her three children at home.

"All my friends and family live in the G.T.A. (Greater Toronto Area), so I rely a lot on childcare," said the Paris resident.

Her children, Veronica, Vanessa and Gabriel, were waitlisted for child care about six months before they secured a spot at Paris Childcare.

But other families haven't been so lucky.

Debbie Gamble, operations director of Paris Childcare, said they can't keep up with demand as they deal with a shortage of early childhood educators.

"I'm still trying to hire now for September that's just passed," said Gamble.

She has been forced to reduce operating hours at her two full day centres and four before and after school facilities due to being short 10 staff members. Paris Childcare is only offering 75 per cent of their services.

"We're not running at capacity or even close to capacity with any of them because we can't find staffing to do so," said Gamble. "Our staff right now is already working longer days than they should be and we can't ask them for more."

The pressures on these educators are not unique to Paris Childcare. The Y.M.C.A Brantford Region's childcare manager, Yolanda Slater, said they are also short-staffed.

She sits on a committee alongside Gamble that works at retaining and recruiting ECEs in Brant County and said it's an industry wide problem.

"We're lucky that we have the number of quality educators that we do but we are always looking for more," said Slater.

She said they service more than 13,000 families already and the waitlist continues to grow as they search for about 75 more workers. Slater adds that their current educators have shown a lot of resiliency during the pandemic.

"They're showing up everyday with smiles hidden under the masks," said Slater.

She is encouraging more people with a passion for childcare to consider ECE as a career, looking to get more families like Aybout's off the waitlist.

Region: Ontario ^[4]

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