

Change to daycare hours leaves some health-care workers in a bind ^[1]

Willowbrae Academy informed parents change is due to lack of financial support

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EXCERPTS

Some health-care workers who live in the Timberlea, N.S., area are upset over the changes being made at their daycare.

Willowbrae Academy informed parents on June 24 that it will be changing business hours to 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. starting Sept. 1. The current hours of operation are 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Chris Rodgers, a parent of a two-year-old child, said the change to 7 a.m. makes for an "untenable situation."

Rodgers works in Halifax as an X-ray technologist and has shifts that start at 7 a.m. "Patients depend on us and we have responsibilities to the hospital."

Rodgers and his wife both work in hospitals in Halifax and aren't sure what they'll do. Other daycares in their area operate from 7 a.m.-5:30 p.m.

"We thought we had a good child-care solution in place at that daycare, but having that pulled away from us has put a lot of stress on us as a health-care family," he said.

Several families will be impacted by the tweak to daycare hours.

Nicole Applin, also an X-ray tech who lives in Timberlea, has two children that go to the daycare.

"There are so many of us that are going to be impacted by this change," said Applin, whose husband works in the military.

"It's a crisis right now for so many young families. What are we supposed to do if we don't have an 8 to 4:30 job?"

Daycare says it has no financial support

The administration at the daycare notified parents of the change.

"Due to not having the ability to increase our fees, the acute shortage in Early Childhood Educators across the province, as well as no additional financial support from government to offset our significant increases in operational costs, we will be adjusting our operating hours," the email stated.

CBC reached out to the director of the daycare for comment but has not heard back.

Earlier this year, the Nova Scotia government offered annual funding agreements to all licensed operators as well as a one-time grant to help offset cost pressures.

Staffing challenge

"Finding qualified staff is a challenge in all sectors and we are actively supporting the growth and professionalization of this important workforce," wrote Lynette MacLeod, a spokesperson for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

"This fall, the province will release a compensation package for Early Childhood Educators that will see more money and more benefits in the pockets of ECEs."

Parents working in health care with children at the daycare are looking for solutions.

"I often wonder why there isn't a daycare at the hospital for health-care families," said Rodgers. "That would certainly seem like a solution."

Region: Nova Scotia ^[3]

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