

Dozens of children with autism being dismissed from N.L. daycares due to staff shortages, advocates say ^[1]

Cancellation of inclusion programs forcing parents to decide between leaving their jobs or the province

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Excerpts

In January, Kristen Parsons-La Montagne's family was told their three-year-old son, William, would be losing his spot at a St. John's daycare due to a shortage of early childhood educators, leaving them with just a week to find an alternative.

Parsons-La Montagne says they were blindsided.

"We thought everything was going great," Parsons-La Montagne said from her home in Paradise, "and then one day my husband went to pick him up at the daycare and we were advised that he was being discharged due to lack of staffing and resources."

It would be a hurdle for any family: searching for a new daycare amid a child-care crisis in which spots are sparse and wait-lists stretch up to two years.

But for Parsons-La Montagne, the dismissal poses an even bigger challenge.

William has autism, and he sometimes needed help from an inclusion worker at daycare, which makes it even harder to find a daycare to accommodate him, she says.

"We were told that that inclusion worker was going to fill another spot and that they would have to look and recruit for an [early childhood educator]," Parsons-La Montagne said, who added her son previously attended the daycare without help from an inclusion worker.

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