

Please help us: Canadian childcare providers' calls for aid during the COVID-19 pandemic ^[1]

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AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

Abstract

COVID-19 poses serious challenges to the health and safety of childcare providers, and these challenges were particularly acute in early 2022 during the first Omicron wave when vaccines were not available for children. Childcare providers work in environments where the recommended methods to minimize COVID-19 infection were often not possible to implement: children could not wear masks for extended periods and were not able to maintain physical distance. Under these pressures, Canada's already-fragile childcare sector was strained, caregivers struggled, and existing deficiencies were exacerbated. As part of a larger quality assurance and improvement project examining the impacts of the pandemic on childcare in the Canadian prairie province of Manitoba, this paper reports on qualitative findings to make public health and policy recommendations for the childcare sector. Data were voluntarily provided by a sample of childcare providers between January 6–13, 2022. A thematic analysis of open-text responses was performed, finding: an urgent need for health and safety resources; a need for sustained support and guidelines; and an absence of value and respect. We also identified an emergent theme of gratitude, which was reflected by an overwhelming number of thanks to the project team for listening to the voices of childcare providers. We draw on our qualitative analysis to propose measures to improve public health and safety, funding, and infrastructure, as well as to underscore the importance of systematic data collection and evaluation to protect and support the essential childcare workforce through the COVID-19 pandemic and into the future.

Region: Manitoba ^[3]

Tags: public funding ^[4]

health and safety ^[5]

wages ^[6]

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