

# Nurseries now required to admit three-month-olds [VN] <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Author:** Van, Kieu

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Working mothers may find their lives getting easier due to a new regulation allowing the placement of infants as young as three months of age in day care.

Announced in early April by the Ministry of Education and Training, the regulation places new responsibilities on day cares (lowering attendees' ages from 18 to three months), but the capability of both private and public institutions to meet these requirements remains in doubt.

The regulation now stipulates that day cares must organise classes for three month olds with updated facilities and no more than 15 children per class.

Deputy director of the Ministry's Kindergarten Education Department, Ngo Thi Hop said the regulation is based on 2005's education law, which set out guidelines for day care education over the next 10-15 years.

"The ministry organised many seminars to gather the ideas of educational experts, scientists and principals from the city's day care centres before issuing the regulation," Hop said.

"The foundation necessary for the regulation is there," she said. "It's meeting the rights of children."

However, the regulation partly arose, not so much for the children, but for the mothers, as part of the Labour Law. It aims to help meet the needs of working city families, particularly working women who need help caring for their children after their four-month maternity leave draws to a close, according to Hop.

According to the Labour Law, pregnant women can leave work one month before delivery. This means many mothers must return to work when their children are only three months old.

Some working city mothers have to send their children to nurseries that lack professionally skilled staff, and many rely on their own parents to help with childcare.

One example, in Ha Noi, Nguyen Minh Nga has employed four different women from the countryside to help her raise her 17-month-old son since her leave time ran out.

"There is no way for me to do it, so I have to employ a home helper to take care of my baby. I'm nervous about food safety and the overall safety of my baby," Nga said.

"The regulation is good news. I plan to have my second child next year. I will definitely send the baby to a day care centre with professional caregivers when I have to return to work."

Nga said the regulation confirmed the State policy to support women.

Similar to Nga, Nguyen Thu Lan said she had to send her 6-month-old daughter to a nursery by her house though she knew that both the caregiver and place were unsuitable.

"I don't employ a home helper because the house is narrow, and a sick grandmother cannot care for a baby," Lan said. "I will immediately send the child to day care."

## School protests

Le Thanh Huong, principal of Thien Than Nho (Little Angel) private day care located at Ha Noi's Ngo Tat To Street said the regulation wasn't suitable for the school's facilities at present.

Huong has 40 years of experience in day care and affirmed the regulation would face two serious difficulties: poor school equipment and a trained teacher shortage.

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Dong Da District's Minh Hai private nursery school principal said the regulation would be impossible for both State-owned and private schools because of the high required investment.

"To be able to care for children at that age, facilities must be upgraded. Air conditioners, heaters, cribs, baby carriages, bottles and bottle-warmers are all necessary," principal Minh Hai said.

"We don't even have enough caregivers to meet the standard: one teacher per every three children."

According to the principal, the investment must be taken from school fees, yet there are few students as mothers prefer to care for their own children unless it becomes impossible.

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Finally, a trained health worker shortage also poses problems for the regulation's implementation.

"At this age, children face many health risks, even fatal ones, if timely first aid is not at hand," she explained.

State assistance

Deputy director of the Kindergarten Education Department Ngo Thi Hop agreed that State-owned day cares would need State subsidies to enact the regulation.

Presently, the provincial and city budgets must spend at least 10 per cent of the education budget on day care, according to the Government decree.

However, the budget allocated to day care education is still very low.

Hop said this was "because day care is not compulsory according to State policy."

Due to the lack of space for schools, the State still prioritises facilities for children aged 5 and above.

- reprinted from Viet Nam News

**Region: International** [2]

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