

Sask. mother calls for action to address daycare shortage for neurodivergent children ^[1]

Many parents struggling to find spots for kids with complex needs, says specialized dayhome

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Excerpts

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Alicia Mann said she was "bogged down with worry" for four months searching for child care for her eldest son after his previous daycare terminated his spot. When they found out four-year-old Felix has autism, they would tell her they couldn't accommodate him, she said.

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But the daycare has a long waitlist, and Dodd and Mann say the province needs to do more to expand child care spaces for children with complex needs.

Dodd said the Ministry of Education's grants for specialized or one-on-one child care for children with complex needs should be increased, because the current maximum of \$2,000 per month doesn't cover minimum wage for a full-time staff member to provide that care.

In a statement, the ministry did not respond to questions from CBC News about whether it was considering increasing the levels of funding available, but stressed that it has several initiatives to help early childhood educators meet the needs of children with complex needs.

"Government is committed to providing access to quality early learning and child care opportunities that support positive child development, provide access to early education and support parents' ability to work," a spokesperson wrote in an email Thursday.

Dodd and Mann also encouraged other daycare providers to take advantage of the grants available to train staff to care for these children, and be more flexible with the children they accept and how they set-up their spaces to support them.

"If we are saying that there should be inclusion in education, then it should be from the very get go. It should be with our daycares and the government should be putting their money behind that," said Mann.

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