

Daycare centres break rules [CA-ON]^[1]

Author: Cribb, Robert & Brazao, Dale

Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 1 Sep 2007

AVAILABILITY

See text below.

EXCERPTS

Dozens of daycares in Ontario are operating below minimum standards & staff are poorly trained, playground equipment is unsafe and the daycare is not following health and fire regulations.

Sixty-five daycare centres across the province are currently caring for children despite failing to meet minimum provincial standards, according to information the province has made public following a Star investigation.

The centres, some of which were also cited for issues such as failing to properly supervise children; flush drinking water pipes for lead; or develop anaphylactic policies for serious allergies, continue to operate on provisional licences. The licences permit daycares with substandard conditions to remain open while they attempt to reach minimum standards.

A recent Star investigation into abuse in daycares found the province has permitted some centres to remain open for years without meeting standards.

The provincial ministry responsible said it prefers to work with operators rather than shut them down, but says children are not put at risk by this policy.

"We acknowledge that there are habitual offenders," said Ministry of Children and Youth Services spokesperson Tricia Edgar. "It's frustrating to see centres where it's one (provisional licence) after the other ... But there are some of these things that are rectifiable. The problem is with ones that aren't willing to work and change. I'm sure there's some out there who aren't there to provide the best for kids. We give them an opportunity to change and if they don't, there's consequences."

Since 2000, about 500 of the province's 4,500 child-care centres have operated on provisional licences. The province has shut down only 13 licensed daycares in that time.

Following a recent Star investigation, the ministry began posting licensing infractions on its website. The information is posted at www.children.gov.on.ca^[2] (click on "Licensed Child Care," then "Find Licensed Child Care" and a search engine provides options for finding local child care centres).

The ministry said yesterday that it's planning to make inspection findings even more transparent beginning next year.

It will publish a list of "chronic non-compliers" and "high performers" along with all reported serious occurrences in child-care centres to help parents make better choices, she said. And officials also plan to change the color of provisional licences posted in child-care centres from the current yellow posters to bright red to emphasize problems parents should be aware of. Regular licences will change from plain white to green, she said.

About half of the 65 centres currently holding a provisional licence are in the GTA.

Some daycares, such as the Discovering Minds Montessori Preschool on Bathurst St., have had as many as 19 different infractions listed on their licence, according to a provincial child-care website launched last week in response to the recent Star investigation.

Discovering Minds, which is licensed to care for up to 10 toddlers and 24 preschoolers, currently has four outstanding issues including failing to have adult supervision at all times, not enough staff with proper academic qualifications and not having a qualified supervisor.

The daycare has been operating on two successive provisional licences for about a year, says director Alirio Rengifo, who denies the infractions.

"The (inspectors) come here and because a child was running around, they say the child wasn't supervised. They pick on for-profit daycares. Ninety-nine per cent is not true."

Rengifo says he discovered one staff member didn't have proper qualifications. But he says the woman was accompanied by another staff member who was qualified.

Critics say daycares with chronic problems avoid closure due to a shortage of licensed spaces in Ontario that has produced a waiting list

for subsidized spots of more than 17,000 children.

"When do they shut something down for not meeting the minimum standards?" asks Martha Friendly, a child-care researcher in Toronto. "It seems to me that if a program can't even meet the basic minimum standards for safety and hygiene, it shouldn't be operating."

But shutting centres down is often difficult in a system that is so overburdened, she says.

"Parents don't have many choices so ministry staff are reluctant to close centres down, even if they're very poor quality. It's really time to have a much more publicly managed early childhood education system. We have been relying on Band-Aids for far too long."

...

The Star's investigation turned up a troubling trend &em; daycares with problems but a clean licence. Problems included a series of complaints in some cases, in others a history of repeated serious occurrences.

In one example, the Kids and Company daycare on Wellington St. in Toronto has had problems with mould and sewage backing up into the centre since 2004. The province has received complaints describing the problem.

"Urine is seeping into the tiles and the whole place smells of feces," reads one complaint. "Whenever the toilet is flushed, water goes underneath the tiles ... Staff are also getting sick."

...

Kids and Company president Victoria Sopik says the problems were due to the centre's location above a parking ramp. Because plumbing couldn't be located in the floors, the daycare relies on a pump system that is prone to failure.

She says the problems were repaired in late July when they removed mould discovered in the walls and replaced the plumbing.

"There was no danger to the children, but it's highly stressful for everyone because when the plumbing's backed up, you've got children, you've got to relocate them to another room," she said. "The ministry was supportive of us working with the health department."

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

Related link: NEWS ARTICLE: Website exposes dodgy daycares [3]

Region: Canada [4]

Ontario [5]

Tags: quality [6]

legislation and regulation [7]

Source URL (modified on 27 Jan 2022): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/07/09/daycare-centres-break-rules-ca>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/07/09/daycare-centres-break-rules-ca> [2] <http://www.children.gov.on.ca> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/07/08/website-exposes-dodgy-daycares-ca> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7864> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7856> [6] <https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/quality> [7]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/legislation-and-regulation>