

# Child care violations on the rise [US] <sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Duluth News Tribune

**Source:** Duluth News Tribune

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 19 May 2003

## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

**MILWAUKEE** - The number of state sanctions imposed against licensed child care operators in Wisconsin has more than doubled in the past five years, but the number of inspectors isn't keeping up with the number of facilities, a newspaper's review found.

The number of sanctions state inspectors issued grew to 291 in 2002 from just 142 in 1998, the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported Sunday. The sanctions included several cases in which children were molested, abused, abandoned or forgotten.

But the newspaper said others might be missed, as the number of family and home-based care centers balloons.

Gormley said Wisconsin's children in child care appear to be "at greater risk" now than in 1998. Then, 34 percent of the more than 2,500 alleged violations at child care centers ultimately were substantiated. By the end of last year, that percentage had risen to 40 percent.

State statistics show that child-to-staff violations represent about a fifth of all child care violations, which Gormley said can put children at risk.

David Riley, a UW-Madison extension professor and one of the state's best known child care researchers, said it isn't hard to find child care incidents that "make your skin crawl."

Riley said the state's average turnover rate of 40 percent each year among child care staff and the lack of staff development are a big part of the problem.

"Most researchers believe the No. 1 reason for this high rate of turnover is the low wages and lack of benefits for early childhood teachers," he said.

A statewide study in 2001 found the median wages of child care workers in the state were below \$8 an hour. Riley said the wages have remained virtually flat for 20 years when inflation is taken into account.

-Reprinted from The Duluth News Tribune

**Region:** United States <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** quality <sup>[3]</sup>

staff <sup>[4]</sup>

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