

# Open day-care spots remain hard to find [CA] <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

See text below.

## EXCERPTS

Traditional family-based child care has changed over the years as families have moved across the country to pursue different work and lifestyle opportunities.

Parents need to find quality child care, but in a country that has no national standards, no structure and no national accountability for the caregivers who look after the children, the search can be a very stressful process.

Nanaimo's child care crunch has babies on waiting lists even before they are born. PacificCare, the non-profit group that helps parents find child care, is worried without more licensed caregivers, parents will feel pressured to leave their children with anyone who has space.

Carmen Barclay, co-ordinator of programs and services at PacificCare, encourages parents to take advantage of their free services to help find a reputable, licensed child-care provider in their neighbourhood. Dale Fillmore has been in the business for more than 35 years and after successfully helping to raise hundreds of children in Nanaimo, she has some of the best tips on how to research and track down the perfect care provider.

PacificCare has a free list of child-care providers for newborns to 12-year-olds, reaching from Powell River to Ladysmith and across to the West Coast of Vancouver Island. With the help of a consultant, parents can specify certain requirements they want. The consultant punches the info into their database and the computer will generate a list of child care providers who meet the requirements. All the providers on the registry are licensed and have met the provincial requirements for a licence or have met PacificCare's standards for registered licence-not-required child-care providers.

"Parents still need to do their research. We are here to supply them with step one to child care. We only refer parents to caregivers. We don't make any recommendations because that's a very personal choice. All child-care providers are independent," said Barclay.

Parents can't start looking too soon. Barclay knows of women who started their search while they were pregnant.

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It's a rare day when Fillmore's phone doesn't ring with a call from a parent who is looking for a day-care space for their child. The youthful, active grandmother is already at her maximum capacity with seven children under the age of seven at her home-based business on Departure Bay Road. Her heart goes out to all the parents who call, but the most comfort she can give them is to put them on her waiting list and encourage them to call back every few months to see if there have been any changes.

Fillmore was first licensed as a child-care provider back in 1972. It became her passion and more than three decades later she is known as Auntie Dale to scores of children and others who used to be in her care, who have since grown up and started their own families. In that time, Fillmore says the needs of children haven't changed.

"They still need boundaries, security, love. The main thing with child care is to help parents give their children the care they need and want," said Fillmore.

Parents should do extensive research before making any final decisions on who they leave their child with. Get reference letters from parents who are already in the door, check out the business in person, don't be afraid to ask questions and leave ideologies at home. Fillmore laughs as she explains the astonishment some prospective clients express when they ask over the phone how old she is, and her reply is a truthful 60.

"Ageism is such a funny thing," she said as she bounces her grandson Robbie on her knee. "Parents need to get out and meet who their talking to in person. That's the only way they'll be able to tell if the fit is right or not."

- reprinted from Canada.com

**Region:** Canada <sup>[2]</sup>

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

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