

Daycare safety charter unveiled ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The Manitoba government has finally released a safety charter designed to help staff at licensed daycares deal with emergency situations.

The Manitoba Safe Child Care Charter contains safety plans and codes of conduct for 1,105 licensed child-care facilities.

It covers all conceivable situations, from bomb threats to weather crises, instructing staff on how to respond, plan evacuations and get in touch with parents.

"We want fun, healthy and safe places for our children to learn and grow. Today we are introducing safety standards so that all parents can rest assured that reasonable steps have been taken to protect their children," said Family Services Minister Gord Mackintosh.

The safety plans also detail how to keep unwanted people out, how to respond when children have severe allergies, and what action to take when staff or children are threatened.

The codes of conduct deal with, among other things, the inappropriate use of email, computers and the internet, bullying and harassment.

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All child-care facilities must also maintain locked doors to keep out intruders. In places where that is not practical because a child-care centre is in shared space with a school or community centre, other methods of controlling visitor access will be approved, Mackintosh said.

The province will cover reasonable costs for equipment to make that possible, he added.

The new measures must be in place by April 2011.

Idea first raised in 2007

The idea of the charter was first raised in the 2007 throne speech but resurfaced last year after a couple of incidents caused scares in Winnipeg.

In April 2009, a man tried to walk away from Winnipeg's downtown YMCA-YWCA daycare with someone else's 23-month-old child.

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And in March 2009, police were called to a daycare on Gateway Road in East Kildonan when staff noticed a threat scrawled in the facility's log book.

The incidents prompted the Manitoba Child Care Association to

urge the province to get the charter in place.

Parents may view the safety plan and code of conduct resource at the Manitoba government website, by clicking the link at the top right of this page.

- reprinted from CBC News

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