

Boy, 2, unharmed after daycare forgot him in north-end park ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A local daycare that left behind a toddler at a north-end Halifax park yesterday says it will no longer be allowing children under its care to leave its site.

Two teachers at Kids and Company daycare on Barrington Street took a group of 10 toddlers out for a walk off-site yesterday morning to Fort Needham Memorial Park, and left one behind.

Police were called and the two-year-old boy was located, unharmed, by several neighbours around 10:45 a.m. Halifax Regional Police spokesman Const. Brian Palmetier estimated the child was alone for 10 to 15 minutes.

Victoria Sopik, CEO of the Toronto-based Kids and Company, said yesterday because of this incident, the company is stopping the practice of daycare workers taking kids off-site for walks to parks or playgrounds. She said it was "unbeknownst to us" the practice was even happening in Halifax, adding it goes against Kids and Company's corporate policy.

"It's well accepted in Halifax, but it is a contravene of our policy," she said.

"They must remain in their fenced-in area."

Sopik said the toddler was left behind after the two teachers improperly counted the number of children as they were leaving the park. She said the teachers - who "have been disciplined" for their actions - realized they left the child behind as they were walking back to the daycare.

"Well, when you're walking with a group of children, what can you do. It's not like you can rush everybody back. So they had to call police, which was the right thing to do," Sopik said.

"(But) that's the problem," she later added. "It's not like I can get in my car and drive. I have these children I'm looking after and you can't leave one teacher with a whole group of children. That's the reason we feel it's not a good plan."

Sopik said the parents of the lost boy were made aware of the situation and "have been very good about it and understanding." She also said an email was sent to parents with children at the Halifax location advising them of what took place.

- reprinted from the Metro Halifax

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