

Child-care centres to start posting serious occurrence reports ^[1]

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Source: Toronto Star

Format: Article

Publication Date: 25 Aug 2011

EXCERPTS

Starting this November, all licensed child-care operators must clearly post serious occurrence reports in centres for all to see - but parents still can't find them online.

The incident notice must be posted in a visible area of the child-care centre for at least 10 days.

The change comes in wake of the Jan. 7 death of Duy-An Nguyen, a 14-month-old Mississauga girl who was cared for in an unlicensed home daycare.

Nearly four years ago, the Ontario government promised to regularly report and publish daycare inspection records online after an in-depth Star investigation in 2007.

Star reporter Rob Cribb waged a two-year battle through freedom of information to obtain daycare incident reports. Those documents showed how kids were hit, kicked, played in dirty conditions and in some cases were fed allergy-triggering food.

A day after the series was published, children's minister Mary Anne Chambers announced licensing requirements would be posted and promised that serious incidents and inspections would soon follow.

Education Minister Leona Dombrowsky told the Star on Wednesday all regulated child-care facilities have their inspection reports posted online. However, they are still working out privacy concerns and logistics regarding posting serious incidents online.

"If there has been a special occurrence with a child in the centre it will now be posted visibly," Dombrowsky said. Special occurrence can entail a serious accident, injury a fire or complaint about a service standard.

The report will be "conspicuously placed" in a spot where parents can view it, she added.

Nguyen's death was top of mind when this change was made, she said. "This did raise an awareness within the parent community and we did listen to parents," she said.

Andrea Calver, the coordinator for the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, called the minister's announcement non-news at a time when the sector is struggling to keep centres open.

"To hear there was an announcement on serious occurrences was so disappointing given the seriousness of the funding crisis," she said. "It is obvious if there is a serious occurrence it should be posted at the centre and on a website."

The government is hoping against hope the childcare crisis will be solved later on in the coming days but the reality is this is a problem that will not go away.

"This seems so run of the mill when our sector is in huge trouble. Every mechanism to stabilize childcare is not happening. They are implementing a full day childcare centre but they are doing nothing here," she said.

The coalition has asked for a coroner's inquiry to investigate the Nguyen's death. Calver said they are still waiting to hear if an inquiry will be held.

While many parents would prefer to have their kids in licensed, regulated environments waiting lists to get into those centres can sometimes be years long and parents are forced to rely on informal options that are not publicly monitored.

- reprinted from the Toronto Star

Region: Ontario ^[2]

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