

A third of childcare facilities not equipped to meet needs of children with disabilities: U of A study ^[1]

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EXCERPTS: Researchers from the University of Alberta believe it may be more difficult for parents to find childcare facilities with the training required to properly handle children with disabilities, and behavioural issues.

The results of the study were published in the International Journal of Inclusive Education - lead author Lesley Wiart said nearly 350 facilities in Alberta, 318 childcare centres, and 25 day homes, were surveyed as part of the study.

"Over a third of the respondents in our study told us they had actually refused care to children who have special needs," Wiart said.

Results showed 36 percent of childcare centres, and 29 percent of day homes had turned children with special needs away, because of a lack of resources.

In addition, results showed 36 percent of centres and 40 percent of day homes didn't know how to access specialized training or support.

As a result, a new pilot program called Access, Supports and Participation or ASaP, offered by 'Getting Ready for Inclusion Today' or GRIT with funding from Alberta Education, was born.

"Our ASaP project really begins to provide direct training and onsite training in very specific areas to support early learning and care skills," GRIT Executive Director Barb Reid said.

In its first year alone, ASaP trained about 100 childcare workers, with a focus on targeting social and emotional development, in five care centres in Edmonton.

"We have seen some exciting changes, it has really slowed down our process, so we're not sending children for an assessment or diagnosis, we're trying to provide support prior to a diagnosis," Reid said.

It's hoped ASaP will eventually expand to 10 facilities.

The findings of the study will be passed on to the provincial government.

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