

# B.C. boy with diabetes, autism kept out of preschool, parents say

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## EXCERPTS:

The parents of a Maple Ridge boy living with diabetes and autism have filed a Human Rights Tribunal complaint, claiming that a Montessori school denied their son a spot because of his conditions.

The parents of three-year-old Jesse Weiser tried to enrol him at Webster's Corner preschool, about a five minute drive from their home in Maple Ridge.

Websters' has a strict no-nut policy, which they thought might be a problem because Jesse often carries an emergency pack containing peanut butter, among other items, to help him in the case of a low-sugar attack.

"We asked if that is going to be an issue and they said no, as a matter of fact there are only five kids in the class and as far as they knew, none had nut allergies," says Jesse's mother Tanja Weiser.

Despite the preschool's assurances, the Weisers removed the peanut butter from Jesse's emergency pack, and informed Webster's they did so to eliminate any chance of a conflict.

When they called the preschool back to confirm Jesse's spot in the class, however, staff at Webster's told them the class was full and the promised opening was gone, the Weisers say.

"I actually had my mom call the next day and inquire about any availability, and they offered her the class my son was going to be in," says Tanja.

Webster's Corner staff was unavailable to comment to CBC News on Sunday.

Mark Weiser, Jesse's father, worries that his son's diabetes and mild autism will preclude him from many other preschools.

"Everything we have done with both our kids always seems like a battle. You are always fighting for something here and there," he says.

"My little boy really wants to go to preschool and he asks every day. It's heart breaking," says Tanja.

The Weisers have little recourse, however. Private preschools such as Webster's Corner are not regulated by the province or health authorities and they have the right to turn down anyone who applies.

The province says they can file a complaint through its consumer protection branch, but that option offers little comfort to the Weisers.

"This is more about education and hopefully the province can step up and put more legislation out there," says Mark.

The Weisers say they hope their story will push the province to establish clearer enrolment guidelines for preschools.

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