

Fernie daycare struggling to find qualified staff ^[1]

Author: Obre, Nicole

Source: The Free Press

Format: Article

Publication Date: 18 Mar 2014

EXCERPTS:

It's an issue many Fernie parents, and even soon to be parents, are familiar with. Finding an open spot for your child in daycare is not easy. With only one registered daycare facility in town, parents who aren't able to secure their child a spot are forced to turn to private childcare, or consider staying out of the workforce longer than they had planned, both of which can be a financial strain.

Fernie Child Care Society Daycare is Fernie's only registered daycare facility and is licensed for 12 infants/toddlers and 16 three to five year-olds. Due to a shortage of staff, they are unable to offer all of their 28 childcare spots. The wait list for the infant toddler program currently sits at 32 children.

"People place themselves on our wait list a year prior to needing childcare and still cannot get in due to lack of staff," commented Sandy Van Vlack, manager, Fernie Child Care Society Daycare.

Van Vlack explained that finding and attracting qualified staff is an ongoing concern and is the biggest contributing factor to the daycare's long wait list.

"The situation in Fernie is that there are not enough qualified people in the childcare field. We have been advertising for one and a half years now for qualified staff," said Van Vlack. "One of the issues is that the B.C. Early Childhood Educator (ECE) Registry does not recognize all educational institutions from other provinces and countries. This has meant that some applicants with certificates, diplomas, and degrees have been told they must take a course to become licensed with B.C. ECE Registry in order to work at an entry-level position."

She added, "This is a strong deterrent for people who have already completed education in the field."

As a licensed facility, all staff are required to hold a License to Practice as an Early Childhood Educator/Assistant or Infant Toddler Educator, have first aid, and pass a criminal record check. To become an assistant at least one post-secondary course is required. Early Childhood Educators must have a diploma, and further education and a diploma is required to become an Infant Toddler Educator.

For people from out of country, they must meet all of the same requirements, on top of having a specific Visa that allows them to work with young children and a Labour Market Opinion.

"It's important to increase awareness in the community regarding the educational requirements for childcare staff," said Van Vlack. "They are not baby-sitters, but rather teachers and educators of young children."

"We are a non-profit organization, attempting to keep childcare costs reasonable in a community where cost of living is high."

-reprinted from the Free Press

Region: British Columbia ^[2]

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