

Program designed to produce licensed child-care providers ^[1]

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Excerpts:

Senada Murtic-Hrncic was an elementary school teacher who loved her job before becoming a refugee from the war in Bosnia and coming to Canada in 1996.

Her husband found work as a truck driver, and she worked in daycares and a call centre until they had two children and she stayed home to raise them.

"When they were both little, I thought 'I'm not leaving them with strangers.' I wanted to do that job myself rather than have to pay someone."

Now her kids are school age and she wants to return to work but, with her husband on the road and her kids still young, she doesn't want to pay a stranger to watch them.

"I hope to have my own daycare," said Murtic-Hrncic, who's taking part in a provincially funded pilot project designed to help newcomers and others become licensed child-care providers.

"I want to have more time with my kids and have some income," said Murtic-Hrncic, one of 30 students in the Licensed Family Child Care Self-Employment Project.

On a recent Saturday afternoon, she was in a classroom downtown with a group of men and women from around the world learning about nutritional requirements for kids in daycare.

Participants include teachers and a pediatrician whose foreign credentials are not recognized in Manitoba, said Holly Puckall, executive director of Family Dynamics -- formerly the Family Centre. It's running the program with staff experienced in daycare training and early childhood education.

The requirements for the program are the participant's home has to be ready to be licensed -- with two exits, for example. To be licensed, residents of the home need to pass a number of checks and authorizations such as criminal-record checks. They have to pass a language assessment and be able to speak, listen, read and write in either French or English.

The program is free and provides more than the basics they need to get an in-home daycare licence. It involves 40 hours of training in an introduction to family child-care course at Red River College, a 35-hour positive discipline course, and 40 hours of business training at Supporting Employment and Economic Development (SEED) Winnipeg. There are workshops on licensing requirements, mentoring with a licensed child-care provider, and home visits. The next intake for the program is January, and they will begin taking applications in November.

"I can see where it would be something worthwhile," said Pat Wege, executive director of the Manitoba Child Care Association. The number of licensed home daycares in Manitoba has dropped to 423 in 2012-13 from 590 in 2002-03, she said.

Wege said the decline might be due to a number of factors. With an aging population, it's a job that can be challenging with up to eight children in your home five days a week, she said. There are the "rigours" of accountability the province requires and the fee limit that restricts how much licensed providers are allowed to charge can also discourage people from running a licensed daycare or starting one, she said.

"It's not easy to establish a licensed home daycare," said Wege, especially for someone whose first language isn't English. "The paperwork is arduous and the requirements in terms of modifications to their home can be overwhelming.

"A helping hand with licensing might help to retain (home daycare providers) over the long haul," said Wege.

"This looks to be a win-win-win," said Theresa Oswald, minister of jobs and the economy.

It's giving people with a low income who've expressed an interest in being self-employed and taking on a role of child-care provider an opportunity to raise their income while providing more home-based licensed daycare spots, she said.

The pilot project for 60 participants costs \$280,000. If 48 of them, or 80 per cent, complete the project and become licensed child-care providers, that could translate into 225 quality licensed daycare spaces for people looking for them, Oswald said.

Region: Manitoba ^[3]

Tags: regulated family child care ^[4]

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