

Few child-care options for parents who don't work 9-to-5 weekday hours ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

High cost and complicated logistics are the main reasons why licensed child care for parents who don't work regular 9-to-5 weekday hours is almost non-existent in Canada, according to a new report.

"Creating and sustaining non-standard-hours child care requires a publicly funded, publicly managed, universal system . . . that funds programs to meet the needs of all families and children," says the report being released Tuesday.

Such a system "would have a profound impact on the affordability and accessibility of child care for all Canadians, including those engaged in non-standard hours work," says the report, funded by Canada Post and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

The report, which includes case studies of five successful non-standard-hours child care services across the country, shows that programs associated with larger organizations allow both administrative and financial flexibility.

Extra funding — from government, employers or unions — is also crucial in sustaining the more costly service, says the report written by Shani Halfon of the Ontario Association of Early Childhood Educators and Martha Friendly of the Toronto-based Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

But the largest challenge is inconsistent parent need and use, and irregular or rotating shifts, creating a need for part-time or on-call care.

"Inconsistent use patterns make it very difficult to sustain these programs without additional funding," said the report entitled, "Work around the clock: A snapshot of non-standard hours child care in Canada."

The report does not address the current federal election or the NDP's plan to create one million child-care spaces at a cost to parents of no more than \$15 a day. But its authors hope the report provides a roadmap for policy makers should a future federal government launch a national system.

"You need to have a system. But you also need a plan. You can't just expect it to happen," Friendly said in an interview. "And it has to be funded in a way that makes it possible for centres to do it."

One of the first hurdles to serving parents working evenings, weekends, over-night or rotating shifts is to find out how many need it.

National data in this area is more than 20 years old, the report notes. But a recent survey by McMaster University and United Way Toronto found that more than half of parents in precarious employment in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton areas have trouble finding child care.

"Every community's needs will be different, depending on the work people do. And those needs will change," Friendly said. "So the system has to be nimble enough to accommodate needs when they arise."

Workplaces should also be encouraged to consider the child care needs of working parents when setting policies on schedules and shifts, the report says.

-reprinted from The Toronto Star

Region: Canada ^[3]

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[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/15/09/few-child-care-options-parents-who-don%E2%80%99t-work-9-5-weekday-hours> [2]

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