

# Deadly day cares: State doesn't require home-based day cares to report injury – unless it results in death <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

Lawnmower. Lana. Hurt. Hospital.

Those were some of the only words that Emily Aronis could understand in a phone call from Christina Hunt, her 18-month-old daughter's day care provider.

"I need to know where my daughter is," Aronis told her.

"St. Francis."

Aronis and her husband, Austin, rushed to the hospital.

They were met by the chaplain. Hospital employees wouldn't let them see their daughter.

"The chaplain asked us if we wanted to pray together, so that's when we knew it was pretty serious," Emily Aronis said.

Lana's left leg had been run over by a lawnmower that morning. Doctors told the Aronises she might lose the leg.

The first surgery was mostly to clean the wound because the biggest immediate risk was infection.

Initially, Emily and Austin were told by Hunt that children at the day care had figured out how to turn on the mower, and that's how Lana was hurt.

Then family members told Emily and Austin details from media reports: It was a pull-start, push lawnmower.

How could young children have started it?

Hunt was arrested that night after speaking with police, and Lana was flown to Children's Mercy in Kansas City.

She had seven surgeries, three blood transfusions and multiple MRIs. She was given several antibiotics every few hours.

Doctors amputated just slightly above the ankle on Sept. 5, 2014.

The state does not know how many children are injured each year in Kansas day cares because home-based day cares are not required to report injuries.

If the injury leads to death, it has to be reported to authorities by the next working day.

For older children in school-age programs, such as preschool, injuries that require medical attention must be reported to the state and county.

The Aronises might never know exactly what happened to their daughter or who started the mower.

Hunt did not respond to calls or messages seeking comment for this story.

She pleaded no contest to five misdemeanor counts of endangering a child, received three years of probation and signed a lifetime consent agreement with the state health department that she would never operate or work in another child care facility. Hunt settled with the family for \$300,000 from her insurance company.

Lana's medical bills far exceed \$300,000, but that was the policy limit.

Basic prosthetics cost \$6,000, and Lana outgrows them every six months.

"As she gets older, it's going to be a fight with the insurance company," said Austin Aronis.

"It's something I'm not looking forward to. But it's a fight that's going to be had."

Child care law in Kansas does not require day care providers to have insurance, said Lori Steelman, child care licensing program director for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Only preschools and child care centers have to have it, according to state regulations.

The Aronises say all Kansas day cares should be required to have insurance, or at least be required to tell parents if they don't.

Most states do not require insurance for day care providers. However, in about 10 states that do not require insurance, providers must disclose that information to parents, according to Hutton and Hutton, the law firm that represents the family.

About 10 states require day care providers to have insurance. Tennessee and Texas mandate the highest amount of liability insurance - \$300,000.

Lana is now an active and energetic 3-year-old.

"You think you're doing the right thing when it's a licensed provider," Emily Aronis said. "You think you've done all you can to protect your child, and at the end of the day, your kid's there eight hours while you're at work, and you have no idea what's happening there."

"It's kind of scary when you stop and think about it: You put your trust in a provider and you hope they're doing everything they possibly can to protect your child. It just takes one second for a lapse in judgment, and it can result in a serious injury."

-reprinted from The Wichita Eagle

**Region:** United States <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** unregulated child care <sup>[4]</sup>

child safety <sup>[5]</sup>

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