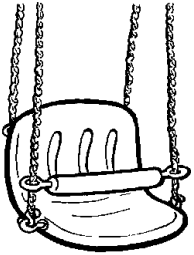


# Health and Safety: A Commitment



Clearly written and consistently implemented health and safety policies are part of a dynamic process that includes ongoing a) education and review to keep policies current with evolving state and national standards and b) planning, reflection, and evaluation to ensure that policies are appropriately implemented in day-to-day routines and activities. Well-developed policies can be used to train and orient staff members as well as inform parents about what to expect from you and your program. Uniform program policies protect the provider, children, and parents.

Health and safety policies address a broad range of practices in an early childhood program, from staff hiring and orientation, facility maintenance that reduces safety hazards, and emergency plans to sick child policies, food handling, and basic hygiene. In each of these areas, well-developed health and safety policies provide answers to the following questions:

- WHAT is the procedure? What is the routine? What training do I (or my staff) need?
- WHO is responsible for implementing the policy?
- WHEN do specific routines take place? When are the policies to be implemented?
- WHERE is resource information located? Where can additional information be found?
- WHY should procedures be done a certain way? Why is a certain procedure important?
- HOW do policies relate to me (and/or my staff)? How do I best implement the procedure?

Using these questions to clearly define responsibilities prevents confusion and errors in implementing health and safety policies. These questions can be used to survey staff most affected by these responsibilities for implementation strategies that fit the realities of their daily jobs.

Staff members are not the only information source for using good health and safety practices in your program. Parents provide invaluable information concerning specific healthy and safe management issues that pertain to their child. Parents can tell you how they address Joshua's allergies. Parents can tell you that Mara, who has Down syndrome, is especially susceptible to upper respiratory infections and how to support her around her waist when she is in the swing.

Very often, early childhood professionals focus on educating children about health and safety while their own or staff's health education remains at a standstill. Current CPR certification and first aid training should be standard practice. Notices should be posted for community activities, such as preschool or kindergarten screenings or workshops about immunizations. It is important to build in time to discuss general health education topics and/or specialized procedures needed by a child in the program, such as colostomy care or emergency exit plans. Encourage parents to speak to you and your staff about their child's special needs.

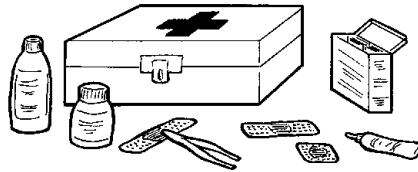
Ensuring the health and safety of children in your care is an awesome responsibility. By consistently using preventive measures and remaining firm in your commitment to establish and follow health and safety practices, you are providing the best possible environment for the care and education of the young children in your program.



## Try It Out

Your behavior and positive attitude towards healthy and safe practices are major factors. When children see you eating the healthy snack you offer them, they are more likely to eat it, too. When you arrive in the morning with your bike helmet on or wear goggles when you show them how to use the hammer and nails, they learn to do these things, too. Every activity seems to have a health and safety component. You put a belt on the baby in the high chair and an appropriate play surface under the climber and the swings. You watch for sharp objects and make nutritious snacks. Much of your conversation with children is instruction and guidance for maintaining their safety and well-being.

Effective teachers both plan activities that help children learn to be healthy and safe and take advantage of unexpected events. A child's visit to the dentist provides an opportune time to read a story about dentists and facilitate children's "playing" dentist with suitable props. Children asking "will I catch that" or "how did she get it," when another child has the flu, a broken arm, or a hearing aid provides an immediate teaching opportunity. Providers who engage children in learning about and using good health and safety practices are not only making their day-to-day job easier, they are helping children learn important lifelong skills.



## A Child Care Provider's Question

**QUESTION:** *I would like to know more about how to maintain confidentiality and how to reassure parents who are concerned about this issue.*

**ANSWER:** Parents have the legal right to expect that records concerning their child are kept confidential. This right includes health records. Confidentiality means respecting the distinction between information that is "interesting" and information that you need to know in order to provide appropriate quality care. You have no legal right to ask for information that does not directly affect your provision of care for a particular child. For this reason, the child care provider has the responsibility of establishing a policy for confidentiality.

Guidelines for confidentiality are as follows:

- Parents have the right to review any and all contents of their child's file.
- Children's records are kept in locked files and can be looked at only by staff, parents, and people who have written permission from the parents.
- Providers can only share information they have gener-

ated in their program (portfolios, observations, developmental checklists). They may not pass on the records, documents, or files of other professionals.

- Information from a child's records cannot be shared with anyone until parents give written consent.
- Any information from professionals which is sent to you with the consent of a parent becomes part of the child's permanent file.
- Any time you release information about a child with permission of the parent or guardian, you note that release of information in the child's file.
- Parents are aware of how you plan to use information in the child's file.

