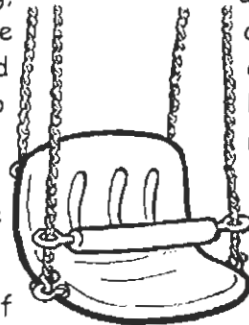


Child Care plus+

+ 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. + CC+

+ In This Issue	
+ In Focus	+ Putting It Into Practice
+ Try It Out	+ Question
+ Connecting with Families	+ Resource Review

+ IN FOCUS

Addressing the individual needs of children in your care involves working with parents to make certain that the program meets each child's health and safety needs. Together you can assess the play environment to ensure that it is individually and developmentally appropriate for the age and abilities of their child. In the process, parents may need to teach you necessary skills, such as administering medication or using adaptive equipment.

In addition to medical records for each child and who to contact in emergencies, you may need to have detailed written instructions to meet children's individual needs. These might include what to do when the child has a prolonged seizure or blood sugar drop, how to use the walker, medication schedule, list of food allergies, or a description of when to use the inhaler or give insulin. These instructions may be written together with the child's parents, therapist, or other specialists.

Many activities and routines offer opportunities to teach healthy and safe practices to individual children. Diapering and toileting are prime times to teach and reinforce good handwashing. Climbing on the climber and swinging on the swing are prime times to teach and reinforce being safe and keeping others safe. Taking advantage of these opportunities will definitely have an impact on children's ability to learn and use safe practices and healthy habits.

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+ 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's 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're helping children learn important lifelong skills. +

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+ CONNECTING WITH FAMILIES

Health and safety policies are a way to partner with parents. Be sure opportunities to comment about individual health and safety issues for their child are provided both at enrollment and throughout the child's involvement in your program. As with any records concerning a child, the health information requested and kept at the child care program must be accessible to parents. Information from the health records may only be released to people outside the child care setting with written permission from the parent or guardian. Remember that parents are not obligated to disclose any information not required by state law and, in fact, may be justifiably reluctant to do so unless you have clear reasons for wanting—and needing—the information. Health and safety policies should be periodically reviewed with parents. A written handbook of program policies is most helpful and ensures that everyone has the same information. Written policies help parents know specific expectations, responsibilities, and practices related to their child's health and safety in your program.

Invite parents to participate in health and safety education whenever possible. A father who is a nurse at a local hospital, a mother who works at the fire department, or the couple who are local pediatricians can be valuable resources for you and your staff. Communicate healthy and safe practices to parents so they can incorporate what their children are learning in your program within routines at home as well. In this way, good habits learned in your program are reinforced and solidified in the home. Parents who participate in program activities may be reminded of valuable health information for their own use! Parents can assist with daily tooth brushing, provide nutritious treats, and play movement games with the children. Health and safety education is another way to build connections with families. +

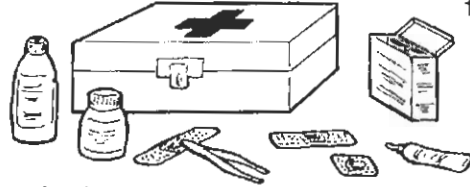
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+ PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

Issues to consider when writing or complying with health and safety policies include daily health and safety practices, maintaining the child's permanent health records, and general practices. The following policies and practices should be included in a program policy guide or handbook.

- Every day you should:

- ✓ Conduct a brief health check when children arrive to give you a good idea of each child's general health and wellness at that time. Providers are not expected to diagnose children (and, in fact, are discouraged from doing so), but informal observations can alert parents to a potential problem. Observations may uncover concerns about a child's health and abilities before an actual screening or professional diagnosis is made
- ✓ Follow standard procedures for administering medications, such as medication is always stored in the original container in a locked cabinet. Maintain a record of all medications given to children in your care. Include the time given, amount given, who gave the medication, and any reactions from the child.
- ✓ Maintain an illness/injury record which describes both the illnesses children have and the injuries (small and large) sustained while they are in your care. Clarify with individual parents when they want to be notified if their child is injured in your program and maintain a written record of communication (phone logs, letters) regarding the child's health.
- ✓ Ensure that health and safety education is embedded in daily activities rather than just a one-day or one-week feature.
- In each child's permanent file, you should include:
 - ✓ Verification of the child's current immunizations.
 - ✓ A developmental health history, including diagnoses that affect the child's participation in the program.
 - ✓ Information concerning relevant screening, developmental assessments, and evaluations, if parents feel it is necessary.
 - ✓ Information concerning allergies, dietary restrictions, chronic illnesses, medications, medical complications, and other special health concerns. This information should be regularly updated.
 - ✓ Written permission and instructions for administer-



ing medication prescribed by the child's physician or over-the-counter medications authorized by the child's parent.

- ✓ Written permission for the release of information from other professionals or agencies who are serving the child and who may have information pertinent to the child care setting.
- ✓ A signed emergency medical authorization for the child.
- ✓ The name(s) and phone number(s) of the child's regular physician(s).
- ✓ A signed permission form parents to allow for emergency medical treatment of their child in case of serious injury and authorization to transport the child in case of emergency (either by the provider or by emergency persons).
- ✓ Telephone numbers where parents can be reached most frequently as well as telephone numbers of alternate persons who can authorize emergency procedures, if needed.
- ✓ Permission from each child's parent/guardian to transport their child in your vehicle for specific purposes (pick up from school, take to/from swimming lessons).
- Health and safety standards are easier to maintain when you understand that most practices can be grouped under the following basic policies:
 - ✓ Participants in the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) if possible, or ensure that the meals and snacks served are well-balanced and of high nutritional quality.
 - ✓ Establish and adhere to a standard sick child exclusion policy.
 - ✓ Comply with infectious disease reporting and containment procedures set out by your local health department, and establish procedures for limiting the spread of infectious diseases in your program (handwashing, disinfection, containment).
 - ✓ Have a clear procedure for reporting suspected incidents of child abuse and neglect.
 - ✓ Keep up-to-date health records for each child and staff member. +

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+ 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 generated 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. + CC+

+ RESOURCE REVIEW

Stepping Stones to Using Caring for Our Children: Protecting Children From Harm, 2nd Edition contains 233 standards selected as a subset of the 659 national health and safety performance standards in *Caring For Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standard: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child-Care Programs, 2nd Edition (CFOC)*. This subset includes the standards that have the greatest impact on disease, disability, and death in out-of-home child care. To keep the document size manageable, *Stepping Stones, 2nd Edition* contains only the unaltered text of the selected standards without the rationale, comments, or references. Download free at <http://nrc.uchsc.edu> or purchase for \$4 from UCHSC Bookstore, 4200 E. 9th Avenue, Mail Stop A057, Denver, CO 80262, 1-800-591-2884.

CHILD CARE plus+ is designed to support inclusion of children with disabilities in early childhood settings by supporting child care providers, parents, and community service providers including social workers, therapists, physicians, teachers, and administrators.

CHILD CARE plus+ is published quarterly. Subscription price is \$10 per year (four issues). Contents may be reproduced without permission; please include reference.

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