



Child Care Center ALERT! 2010

The purpose of this Alert is to highlight areas where we see injury or harm to children and to offer suggestions on prevention. The suggestions do not replace rule and statute requirements. Please review this information and take precautions, including improved procedures, orientation, and training. Information might be included in previous Alerts that is not included in this Alert. This and other Alerts are online at www.dhs.state.mn.us. To find them, click the licensing tab and then click "investigations" in the left column.

CHILDREN IN THE COMMUNITY WITHOUT SUPERVISION: The Division of Licensing continues to receive reports involving children leaving child care centers without staff persons' knowledge; children left alone on playgrounds or in classrooms; children left behind in community settings; and children leaving the group during outings or fieldtrips. In addition to the provision of required supervision, the following suggestions are made to reduce the likelihood of such incidents:

- Increased awareness by staff persons of the elevated risk during transitions and at busy times of the day when entrance doors are frequently used by parents and other visitors.
- Maintaining an accurate attendance list of children. Taking attendance at regular intervals during the day should involve matching names on the list with the children present.
- Ensuring that children are within sight and hearing at all times. All staff persons should be trained on appropriate supervision requirements and demonstrate competence in implementation.

ELBOW INJURIES: We continue to receive reports of children suffering elbow injuries at child care centers. The most common injury is referred to as "nursemaid's elbow," partial dislocation, or radial head subluxation. The most common cause of such an injury is staff persons lifting or pulling children by the wrist or hand. Examples of incidents involving children suffering "nursemaid's elbow" include the following:

- A staff person "yanked" a child up by the hand when the child refused to walk with the staff person.
- A staff person pulled a child by the hand(s) when the child extended their hand(s) for assistance getting up from the floor or over a partition.
- A child dropped to the floor while a staff person held onto the child's hand.

In addition to increased awareness of this safety concern, the following might help prevent these injuries: Lift children by grasping them under their arms or around their bodies; do not continue to lead a struggling child by the hand; never grab, drag, pull, yank, swing, or lift children of any age by their arms or wrists; allow the child to hold onto the staff person's hand instead of the staff person holding onto the child's hand.

SEVERED/PINCHED FINGERTIPS: Doors and doorways pose a danger to children. Children are at risk of their finger(s) being caught in a closing door. There have also been incidents where children's fingers were pinched in cabinet doors. The following may reduce the likelihood of this type of incident occurring:

- Delineate a "safety zone" around the door, showing an area where children should not stand or sit.
- Increased awareness and supervision by staff persons around doors.
- The use of door protectors (light weight plastic that adheres to the door and frame and discourages a child from placing their fingers in the hinge side of the doorframe). These are not guaranteed to prevent an injury, but may reduce the severity of the injury.
- Securing doors in an open position, if appropriate.
- Removing any unnecessary doors.

BURNS/SUNBURNS: The Division of Licensing has received reports involving burns to children when bottle warmers have spilled onto children and/or children came into contact with the hot surface of a bottle warmer. The following may reduce the likelihood of such incidents: Secure the bottle warmer to the back of a countertop; ensure that electrical cords are out of the reach of children; post signs warning that the bottle warmer may be hot and that staff persons should not allow, or carry, children in the area of the bottle warmer; and increased awareness and supervision by staff persons

Develop and implement written procedures to reduce the risk of injury from sun exposure; provide seasonal reminders to caregivers on the procedures; check the expiration date on sunscreen products; apply sunscreen prior to exposure to the sun; and reapply sunscreen at frequent intervals, especially when engaging in water play.

Also ensure that foods and liquids served to children are at a safe temperature.

ROUGH HANDLING: The Division of Licensing has received reports regarding rough handling of children by staff persons. The following may reduce the likelihood of such incidents: provide training to the staff persons on acceptable methods of behavior guidance; discuss with parents or guardians methods of behavior guidance they have used successfully with their child; and when a child engages in persistent unacceptable behavior such as fighting or biting, develop a behavior plan and provide training to the staff persons on the implementation of the behavior plan.

ALLERGIES: The Division of Licensing has received numerous reports regarding children's allergies. The following may reduce the likelihood of children having allergic reactions:

- Develop and implement written procedures for documenting and posting children's allergies which are consistent throughout the facility. Provide training to all staff persons on those procedures.
- Discuss with parents or guardians the required treatment for the child when s/he has an allergic reaction. Ensure that the facility is provided an EpiPen if the child has been prescribed epinephrine for allergies.
- Provide training to all staff persons on how to respond to a child having an allergic reaction, which may include information on how and when to use an EpiPen.

Please Note: Photographs are essential in the investigation of injury incidents. Investigations by the Division of Licensing or county child protection (for incidents occurring outside the center) require the contemporaneous documentation of injuries. Your assistance in taking photographs of injuries as soon as they are noticed (and periodically during the healing process) will aid investigation and further the goal of your center, and the Division of Licensing, to protect children.

This information is provided to call your attention to areas that pose a risk of harm to children receiving services in child care centers and to provide suggestions to reduce this likelihood. Implementing these suggestions does not mitigate the license holder's responsibility to ensure compliance with licensing rules and statutes. If an incident occurs, failure to address the topics in this Alert may contribute to findings of maltreatment under the Reporting of Maltreatment of Minors Act (Minnesota Statutes, section 626.556). Findings of maltreatment at a center may result in the disqualification of one or more individuals and fines against the license holder.