



Children Need Safe Places

Consider these environmental public health concerns for your child care business

Choose your location wisely when opening a child care business

You may meet all other licensing requirements and create a wonderful environment in which children can thrive, but if your child care program is located where children and staff come into contact with harmful chemicals, the children in your care are not safe. Choosing the right location for your child care business is essential to protect the health of children and the success of your business.

We're here to help!

Washington Choose Safe Places, an Environmental Public Health program at the Washington State Department of Health, helps ensure early care and education (ECE) programs are in safe places, away from harmful chemicals in the environment.

Children are not small adults

Children are usually more sensitive to toxic chemicals than adults.

- Their young, growing brains are more vulnerable.
- Children drink more water and breathe more air relative to adults.
- Crawling and hand-to-mouth behavior can increase exposure to chemicals in their environment.
- Exposure to toxic chemicals as a child can have lifelong effects.

Chemical hazards may be hard to detect

Even if a site looks clean, it might not be free of dangerous chemicals. The best thing to do is to research the history of your property.

- How was the property used in the past? Were harmful chemicals used on site? Businesses like funeral homes, dry cleaners, automotive garages, and nail salons may have left chemicals on the site. Know the history of the building and the land.
- Do nearby businesses use chemicals? These chemicals could move onto your property and be a health risk to children.
- Test for lead-based paint and asbestos. These materials were widely used in buildings constructed before 1978 and may still be in older buildings.
- If the property uses well water, test the water regularly for arsenic and lead which can occur naturally.
- Cleaning products, insect repellants, weed killers, and pesticides can all be dangerous if not used properly.

It makes good business sense

- Having to shut down your business due to contamination, unsafe drinking water, or a chemical leak would be expensive and costly.
- Minimize the risk to your business by carefully considering your location.

Contact us

Our experts know about the health effects of toxic chemicals, and can help answer questions about choosing a safe location for your child care business. Please email us at wcsp@doh.wa.gov if you have any questions or concerns. For more information please visit doh.wa.gov and search for “Washington Choose Safe Places.”

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