

# Healthy Child Care Iowa Fact Sheet

## 5 Low Cost or No Cost Ways to Improve Health and Safety in ECE Environments | June 2024

Healthy Child Care Iowa (HCCI) works to improve the quality of health and safety in Early Care and Education (ECE) programs serving infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-aged children and their families. The items included in fact sheets were identified recent findings on the *Health and Safety Checklist for Early Care and Education Programs*.

### Active Supervision

Have an active supervision policy and plan that is practiced

### Drinking Water

Available and offered to children year-round, indoors and outdoors

### Sanitizing and Disinfecting

Use an EPA registered product that is not used near children and is stored out of reach of children

### Identify Safety Improvements

Assess your environment for any hazards and take recommended action to keep children away from these hazards

### Children Play Outside Daily

Use HCCI weather chart for guidance and promote physical activity both indoor and outdoors

## Identify Safety Improvements

It is important to routinely assess your environment for any hazards so you can address changes to keep children safe. One type of safety improvement is looking for items a child could get tangled in that could cut off their airflow. Items to look for include, but are not limited to:

- Dress up items such as scarfs, ties, necklaces, headbands
- Straps from purses or longer cloth carrying bags with straps
- Guitar straps and strings
- Electric cords
- Window blind cords
- Pull toys with long strings
- Strings on mittens, strings in clothing
- Hanging mobiles on cribs
- Rope swings
- Wearing helmets while playing on playground equipment

### What can I do?

- Look through your environment to identify and remove any objects that are unsafe.
- Some items such as window blinds have safety kits that can be ordered.
- Electric cords can be safely secured so children don't have access to them.
- Share this information with families.

Use the QR code, or link below, for more tips!

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/safety-entrap.html>



Scan the QR code to find your local CCNC or visit online at

<https://hhs.iowa.gov/programs/programs-and-services/child-care/hcci>

## Drinking Water Is Always Available

Staying hydrated is critical for our bodies. Children are at risk of becoming dehydrated quickly, since many toddlers and younger children may not understand or have the words to express that they are thirsty. In ECE, drinking water needs to be offered throughout the day for toddlers and children. Water breaks and having water available will help keep them hydrated throughout the day. Keep in mind that individual water needs are based on many things, such as age, weight, and activity level.

### What can I do?

- Have cups with a pitcher of water available indoors and outdoors.
- Keep individually labeled water bottles for each child.
- Make a routine to offer water throughout the day.
- Teach children that water is a healthy beverage choice.

Use the QR code, or link below, for more tips!

<https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/30870>



## Active Supervision of Children at All Times

Active supervision is defined as “Staff position themselves so that they can always observe all children—watching, counting and listening.”\* Active supervision supports a safe environment for children and helps prevent injuries. It should be used inside, outside and during transitions. Moving around is an important factor as standing or sitting in one spot may impede active supervision. Identifying areas with limited visibility will help to find solutions to modifying any areas that may prevent “watching, counting and listening” ECE providers are responsible for making sure no child is unsupervised and by using active supervision children are always supervised.

Active supervision requires providers to know and understand that they must constantly scan their environment and anticipate what a child(ren) may decide to do. Knowing each child’s developmental abilities are also a key component in anticipating a child’s behavior and how they may react in a situation. In addition, always have a current list of children who are in the building, or your home, and in each classroom for the day. Child Care Management Software (CCMS) for early childhood businesses can also help track who may be in the building (children, consultants, maintenance, etc.). If a computer software system isn’t used, a document with details of time in, time out, name, contact number and visit reason, is best practice.

\*source: National Center on Health, Behavioral Health and Safety.

### What can I do?

- Review your policy and plan for active supervision.
- Do practice scenario drills on supervision with staff at staff meetings.
- Scan and count the number of children in your care to ensure all children are accounted for.
- Take time to locate any areas in your early childhood environment that could impede your active supervision on your playground or in your inside learning environment.

Use the QR code, or link below, for more tips!



<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/active-supervision.pdf>

## Sanitizing and Disinfecting

Sanitizing and disinfecting are important to prevent the spread of illnesses. When sanitizing or disinfecting, children should not be present. This includes sanitizing tables for meals, disinfecting after a diaper change or any other time a chemical is used.

Practice safe procedures when using these products and make sure all staff use the product according to the manufacturer's instructions to ensure the surface is sanitized or disinfected properly. Each product has a specific dwell time, or "the amount of time that a sanitizer or disinfectant must be in contact with the surface, and remain wet, in order to achieve the product's advertised kill rate."\*

Check the labels on your current products to see if they have an EPA number. Not all products have been registered with the EPA. To help with selecting a product, use "Caring for Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs" as a resource. Appendix J is a helpful tool for early childhood programs to learn more about how to help select an appropriate product and Appendix K is a great tool to help determine when areas in an early childhood environment should be cleaned and whether they need to be sanitized or disinfected.

\*source: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

## Children Play Outside Daily

Playing outdoors has many great benefits for children. Children are able to explore the outdoors and use their imagination along with getting fresh air and enjoying the change of environment. Children can use gross motor skills outside by riding tricycles, jumping, running and skipping. Children also need to use the energy that they have and learn in the process. Playing outside can help children to relax as they are able to be more active. Adults can also benefit from being outdoors. The outdoor environment doesn't have to have expensive playground equipment for children to benefit from being outside. Keep in mind that many inside learning activities can be brought outdoors for additional learning or for a change of pace of always doing an activity inside such a circle time or reading a book. Being creative and taking activities that are normally done inside to the outside can be fun and exciting for the children and staff. Also remember to plan for teacher led physical activity inside for days the weather isn't favorable for outdoor play. For more ideas on physical activities that can be done indoors or outdoors, consider taking the PALS training.

### What can I do?

- Keep chemicals inaccessible from children at all times.
- Do not spray chemicals around children.
- Have Safety Data Sheets available for emergencies such as chemical splash in the eye or ingestion of the chemical.
- Use a product that has an EPA number listed on the product label.

Use the QR code, or link below, for more tips!



<https://nrckids.org/files/appendix/AappendixK.pdf>

### What can I do?

- Use HCCI weather chart to determine if weather is appropriate for outside play.
- Have extra winter gear available such as gloves, hats, and boots.
- Use sunscreen of least SPF 15 for children older than 6 months of age.
- Do a planned teacher led physical activity outside.

Use the QR code, or link below, for more tips!



<https://iowaccrr.org/training/pals/>