



Eco-Healthy Child Care®



Eco-Healthy Child Care® helps early childhood learning environments to be as healthy, safe and green as possible by reducing children's exposure to toxic chemicals.

Safe Siting

What is Safe Siting?

Safe siting involves choosing safe locations for child care facilities so that children and child care staff can avoid exposures from environmental hazards like lead in drinking water or poor indoor or outdoor air quality.

Why is it important?

Even if current state child care licensing regulations are being met, it is still possible that child care facilities are located in areas or buildings where exposure to toxic chemicals is taking place. This can put children-- who are particularly vulnerable to chemical exposures because of their developing bodies and behaviors--and child care staff at risk of health problems including cancer, asthma and learning disabilities.

How are children exposed?

Children can be exposed to harmful chemicals in the air they breathe, the water they drink, or soil they touch. The location—or site—of a child care facility can have an effect on the types and amounts of environmental exposures children in the program may be exposed to. For example, a child care facility could be located near or in close proximity to: a gas station, dry cleaner, nail salon, funeral home or housed within a formerly polluted industrial building, all of which can increase exposure to harmful chemicals.

What are some chemicals to look out for when considering the safe siting of a child care facility?

Pesticides: Children may be unknowingly exposed to harmful pesticides by playing on floors, lawns, and indoor or outdoor play areas. Pesticide sprays used outdoors can drift into child care facilities through ambient air or ventilation systems. Drinking water can become contaminated from agricultural use of pesticides. Long-term exposure to pesticides may lead to asthma, cancer or birth defects.

Lead: Children can be exposed to lead through paint, soil, drinking water and consumer products. There is no safe level of lead for children. Soil and groundwater could be contaminated with lead from past use of the site (ex. gas station or battery recycler) or if the facility resides close to a busy road or highway. Adverse health effects, including IQ deficits and learning and behavioral problems, occur at low levels of exposure to sources of lead.

Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs): VOCs are compounds that evaporate easily and form a vapor or gas in the air. Sources include: gas stations, dry cleaners, nail salons, funeral homes and industrial operations. VOCs can seep into nearby buildings and pollute indoor air. These chemicals can cause eye, nose and throat irritation, nausea, and damage to the liver, kidney and central nervous system.

Mercury: is a naturally occurring heavy metal that is released into the environment by human activity such as coal burning power plants. This heavy metal can also enter the environment when products containing mercury including: batteries or fluorescent light bulbs break or are thrown away improperly. Mercury exposure can damage the brain and nervous system. Infants, children, pregnant women, and breast feeding mothers are most vulnerable to the health effects of mercury.

What is being done to ensure the Safe Siting of child care facilities?

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has created the *Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education* program to encourage the careful consideration of where to locate child care facilities. It offers towns, cities, and states guidance on how to adopt practices that will make sure child care facilities are located away from chemical hazards. Twenty-five states (ATSDR's Partnership to Promote Local Efforts to Reduce Environmental Exposure

grantees) have received federal funding to support the creation of safe siting initiatives in their communities.

The *Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance Manual* (https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/safeplacesforECE/cspece_guidance/executive_summary.html) helps state and local health departments build safe siting programs in their communities.

The Manual also encourages child care providers to consider environmental hazards when selecting the location of their early learning facilities.

Since 2017, the Eco-Healthy Child Care® program has collaborated with the Environmental Law Institute and the National Association of County and City Health Officials to assist ATSDR in providing support to state health departments in implementing the Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance program.

Safe Siting Resources

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, *Choose Safe Places For Early Care and Education* Program:
www.atsdr.cdc.gov/safeplacesforECE/index.html

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, *Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Manual*:
www.atsdr.cdc.gov/safeplacesforECE/cspece_guidance/executive_summary.html

Eco-Healthy Child Care®'s Safe Siting FAQ:
www.cehn.org/our-work/eco-healthy-child-care/toxicant-faqs/

Map of Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's APPLETREE States:
https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/states/appletree_states_map.html

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call: 202-543-4033, ext. 10

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Eco-Healthy Child Care® (EHCC) is a science-based, award-winning national program that seeks to improve the environmental health of children by partnering with child care professionals to eliminate or reduce environmental health hazards found in child care facilities.

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