

Climate Change & Child Care

FAQ

Climate change is adversely impacting children's health.



Health impacts include increases in:

- Heat-related illnesses such as heatstroke and dehydration;
- Water-borne diseases due to flooding;
- Vector-borne diseases such as: Lyme disease, West Nile, and other mosquito-borne illnesses;
- Asthma and allergies as a result of increased outdoor air pollution;
- Chronic bronchitis and reduced lung function as a result of exposure to wildfire smoke and
- Lost lives and homes from wildfires, hurricanes, or flooding.



Warmer temperatures are also associated with reductions in children's academic success.

Children are uniquely vulnerable to climate change impacts because of their size, developing bodies, breathing at a faster rate, and spending more time outdoors.



Environmental Justice

Children who are Black, Brown, Indigenous, or from low-income families experience disproportionate impacts from climate change because of historical patterns of inequity, socioeconomic disparities, and systemic environmental injustices (e.g., housing redlining). Specifically, they may live in locations prone to climate-related health hazards like flooding, extreme heat, and air pollution. Children residing in urban and rural areas with poorly maintained or aging infrastructure (e.g., buildings, roads) may not be able to handle climate-related events.

Actions Child Care Providers Can Take to Reduce the Impacts of Climate Change

Outdoor Air Pollution

Do not allow vehicle idling near child care facilities (car exhaust releases pollutants that harm health and the environment).

Maintain a working Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) system.

Close windows during heavy traffic.

Distance play areas from traffic.

Check the air quality index (AQI) at www.airnow.gov daily. On Code Orange days, minimize strenuous outdoor activities or keep children indoors. On days where the air quality index is unhealthy (e.g., red, purple or maroon), we keep children inside.



Actions Child Care Providers Can Take to Reduce the Impacts of Climate Change

Extreme Heat



Train staff to recognize the signs of heat illness and know when it is an emergency.

Find out about local heat alert systems and subscribe to them.

Regularly check the latest weather forecasts.



Ensure air conditioning systems work correctly.

Use electric fans to provide comfort when air conditioning is not present. Fans should not be used when the temperature is above 90 °F.



Ensure that children drink plenty of water.

Limit outdoor activities, especially during the middle of the day when the sun is hottest.

Locate nearby places to visit (e.g., community center or library) where children can cool off during extreme heat events.

Wildfires



Check your local Air Quality Index (AQI) on the www.AirNow.gov website to be notified of air quality alerts.

Keep children indoors with the doors and windows closed.

If you have an air conditioner, run it with the fresh air intake closed (recirculate mode).

Use portable air cleaners if you have them.

Create a "clean room" in your child care or home.



Have children wear an N95 or KN95 mask, but only if fitted tightly to the face. Use masks only for short periods when children must be outdoors.

Before being active outdoors, ensure the local air quality report has improved, or the air no longer smells or looks smokey.

Vector-Borne Diseases



Eliminate standing water by covering trash cans and emptying other containers (e.g., plant pots) that could hold water daily.

Reduce places where mosquitoes and ticks may live--get rid of leaf or mulch piles.

Ensure screens on windows and doors are in good repair.



Wear clothing that will protect children--light-colored, long-sleeved shirts and pants.

Check for ticks after coming inside during tick season.

Use EPA-registered insect repellent when appropriate.

Actions Child Care Providers Can Take to Reduce the Impacts of Climate Change

Flooding



Identify evacuation routes and strategies to follow during flooding and severe weather.

Sign up for flood-related alerts through your local emergency management office, visit [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov), or the [National Weather Service](https://www.nws.gov).



Find your local flood map at the [FEMA Flood Map Service Center \(MSC\)](https://www.fema.gov/flood-map-service-center) to learn if your child care is in an area likely to flood.

Put together an [emergency kit](#).

Policy Adoption

Consider adopting the below policies at your child care facility:

- [Anti-idling](#).
 - [Integrated Pest Management](#).
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Child Care Emergency & Disaster-Related Resources

- [Child Care Aware of America: Child Care Emergency Preparedness Resource Page](#)
- [Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry:](#)
 - [Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Disaster Recovery Supplement](#)
 - [Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance Manual](#)
- [Western States Pediatric and Health Specialty Unit:](#)
 - [Wildfire Smoke](#)

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