

Security Awareness Tips for Child Care Providers

(Unless noted otherwise, these are just suggestions – not requirements. However, DCD strongly recommends that you take these kinds of steps for children's safety and parents' peace of mind.)

1) Monitor access to your facility.

- Consider tighter security for facility entrances. For example, single-action locks (which only lock people *out* of a building) are permitted by the Division of Child Development. Buzzers or bells that sound when doors open can signal when someone enters your building, as well as when children leave the building.
- Consider mandatory sign-in for all parents and visitors, with a staff member assigned at all times to answering the door or monitoring the building's entrance.
- As required, make sure that adults who pick up children from your program are authorized to do so. For any adult whom staff do not know, check that the adult's identification matches information on file about those authorized to pick up the child.

2) Develop policies about information to share with the public.

- Never share information about a child with anyone except his/her parents. Decide if there is other information that is sensitive and should be shared only with certain people.
- Tell your staff which information should (or should not) be shared, with whom, and how. Advise staff on what to do if they receive an unusual information request.
- Parents need information about your program to make informed decisions about child care. Be sure to balance security measures with responsiveness to parents.

3) Be alert and aware of your surroundings. Report anything out of the ordinary.

- Be aware of adults near your center or home who are not parents or adults from the neighborhood. Take notice of unusual visits or phone calls.
- Report anything out of the ordinary to the police and/or your Division of Child Development Licensing Consultant.

4) (*Hopefully as usual*) maintain high standards for handwashing/other aspects of sanitation

- Ask ALL children, staff, and visitors (including parents) to wash their hands upon entering the center or family child care home.
- Have children and staff wash their hands when coming in from outside; before preparing, serving, or eating food; after diapering and toileting; and after cleaning up sneezes.
- Take precautions in dealing with body fluids such as blood and vomit.

5) Get prepared for various types of emergencies.

- Call your local Emergency Management Coordinator/Red Cross office to find out about your area's risks, what you can do to prepare, and how to develop an emergency plan.
- Train your staff on how to be prepared and how to use the emergency plan.
- As part of the emergency plan, consider developing a plan for relocation of children off-site in case they need to be moved quickly for their safety. Identify two places (e.g., schools, recreation centers, other child care facilities, etc.) about a mile away where you can take your children. Make arrangements with the other facilities to agree to accept your children and staff in case of an emergency, and tell parents ahead of time where they can find their children if they are relocated during an emergency.
- If appropriate transportation is not readily available for all your children (including infants), make arrangements in advance with a local transportation authority, private company, or another child care program to help you safely transport children in an emergency.
- Call your county Emergency Management Coordinator to find out the kinds of situations in which "sheltering in place" is generally a safer option than relocation of children. "Sheltering in place" means staying/going inside, finding a "safe place," and (*depending on the type of danger*) sealing windows, doors, air vents, and/or staying away from windows. For example, in a tornado, it is better to "shelter in place" than to try to outrun the tornado, and it is important to go to a "safe place" that is toward the center/bottom of the building, away from windows.
- Learn how to identify suspicious packages that could contain dangerous materials. *Please note:* the known risk of dangerous mailings to child care providers is extremely low. For example, there is a better chance of being hit by lightning (a chance of one in three million) than of anyone in a child care facility contracting an infectious disease due to something sent in the mail.
- As a part of your required monthly fire drill, have your staff identify at least two ways out of each room and practice evacuation through alternate exits.
- Each month, test smoke alarms to make sure that they are in working order, and check any fire extinguishers you have to make sure that the gauges show that they are still "charged." Train staff on how to use any fire extinguishers you have. The county fire marshal's office or the local fire department will be available to assist in training needs.

Questions? Ask your Division of Child Development Licensing Consultant/Licensing Supervisor.