




**OCDEL Announcement C-14 #02**  
**OFFICE OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT & EARLY LEARNING**  
**BUREAU OF CERTIFICATION SERVICES**

**ISSUE DATE:** March 10, 2014  
**EFFECTIVE DATE:** March 10, 2014  
**SUNSET DATE:**

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Healthy and Green Initiative – Child Care Siting
<b>TO:</b>	OCDEL Staff
<b>FROM:</b>	Barbara G. Minzenberg, Ph.D. Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning 

**PURPOSE:**

To share information on a collaborative effort between the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) called the “Healthy & Green” Child Care Siting program.

**BACKGROUND:**

Child care centers are obligated to ensure that the locations where they are doing business are safe and free from environmental hazards. Regulations at 55 Pa. Code 3270.21 relating to general health and safety state that conditions at the facility may not pose a threat to the health or safety of the children.

As a state, Pennsylvania has a rich industrial history. Locations now being used for other business purposes, such as child care centers, may have once been industrial properties where harmful chemicals were used.

**DISCUSSION:**

Children, especially young children, are more vulnerable when exposed to chemicals in the environment. The purpose of the Healthy and Green Child Care Siting program is to ensure that new child care centers seeking to open a facility at or near old industrial sites where potential hazards might exist are identified before becoming licensed so the hazards can be addressed and children are not exposed.

OCDEL will make a one-page flyer “Is your child care center safe?” available on the DPW website, at new provider orientations and to new child care providers submitting an application for a child care license. See Attachment 1.

Child care providers applying for a child care license are encouraged to complete a preliminary survey by going to [www.surveymonkey.com/s/childcarecenters](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/childcarecenters). Providers should try to gather as much information as possible about the property they will be using as the location for their facility so they have it available when completing the survey.

The Pennsylvania DOH will review completed surveys and cross reference their data bases to identify any properties where a hazard might exist. If a potential hazard is identified, DOH will work with the appropriate authorities and the provider to remediate the problem.

Lastly, while the Healthy & Green Initiative is targeted at new child care locations that have not started operating, OCDEL certification staff will be able to refer existing facilities to DOH if they observe conditions at existing facilities that might present a hazard to the children in care. To do this, they will

complete a referral to DOH for follow-up. See Attachment 2 “Child Care Center Siting – Tip Sheet for Child Care Inspectors”.

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Review this memo and share it with staff as appropriate.
2. Make the one-page flyer “Is your child care center safe?” available to child care applicants and at new provider orientations.
3. Find this memo in the Certification shared folder under “Emails Sent from Headquarters to All Staff”
4. Direct questions to your supervisor or director.



# Healthy and Green Is Your Child Care Center Safe?

Providing a healthy environment for our children is a goal we all share.

## What is Healthy and Green?

The purpose of the Healthy and Green Child Care Siting program is to ensure that new child care centers are sited in healthy environments. Former industrial properties that used harmful chemicals could pose a health risk to child care centers that later opened on or near the property. The Healthy and Green Initiative is designed to contribute to the existing efforts of local and state officials by identifying and evaluating potentially contaminated sites early in the process, thereby identifying potential sources of chemical contamination before new child care centers open and preventing harmful exposures.

## Why is it important?

Children, especially young children, are more vulnerable when exposed to chemicals in the environment. Children's behaviors, such as putting non-food items in their mouths, make them more susceptible to environmental exposures, especially in soil and dust. Research has shown that chemical exposures during child development may contribute to respiratory illnesses, cancer, neurodevelopmental disorders, obesity and birth defects.

## What do I need to do?

1. Complete your child care center application as usual.
2. Gather as much information as possible about the history of the site. The following people may be able to provide relevant information on how the site was used in the past:
  - A. Former owner(s);
  - B. Local government officials, such as local zoning, planning, health or building officials; and
  - C. Other officials who may be able to provide useful information, including economic development or historical society members, fire marshals, or land record personnel.
3. Go to: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/childcarecenters](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/childcarecenters) and complete the survey to the best of your ability.





---

## What will the Health Assessment Program do?

1. Cross reference the location with a group of environmental databases, including:
  - Superfund sites;
  - Drycleaners;
  - Landfills;
  - Brownfield or land recycling sites;
  - Department of Energy or Defense sites; and
  - Other.
2. Review the survey and look for sources of contaminants that could potentially impact the air, soil or water on the site over time. These may include the following:
  - Major highways, rail yards, port facilities, truck traffic exceeding 100 trucks per day, airports;
  - Factories, power plants, refineries, propane or other storage tank areas, high pressure pipelines; and
  - Auto body shops, dry cleaners, large gas stations, large animal feeding operations, nail or hair salons, and print shops.
3. Conduct one or more of the following, if indicated and as appropriate:
  - Conduct a record review;
  - Conduct a site visit;
  - Recommend the collection of environmental samples;
  - Consult the environmental agencies;
  - Evaluate environmental sampling data;
  - Recommend environmental mitigation;
  - Prepare a health consultation or technical assistance letter; and
  - Provide guidance and information to parents and providers, as appropriate.

Please note that identifying any of the above current or former land usage does not necessarily mean that there is an environmental problem; it does indicate a need for further investigation to ensure the health and safety of sensitive populations attending or staffing the child care center. We do not expect to find many problems; however, if one is identified early, it may be addressed prior to occupancy, thereby preventing exposure and potential health and safety concerns.

## Where can I get more information?

Please contact the Health Assessment Program, Bureau of Epidemiology, at 717-787-3350 or via email at [ballerton@pa.gov](mailto:ballerton@pa.gov).

On the web: [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/environmental\\_health/14143/](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/environmental_health/14143/)



# Child Care Center Siting Tip Sheet for Child Care Inspectors

## Instructions

If you observe one of the following items, please contact the Pa. Department of Health, Health Assessment Program at 717-787-3350 or fax to 717-772-6975. These items do not necessarily pose a problem, although further investigation may be warranted.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Child care center: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of center: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Child care center contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please provide additional information on the back of this form, as needed.**

## Property

- Metal drums, barrels, tanks and/or pumps
- Junk vehicles and/or parts of old cars or trucks
- Old appliances, e.g., refrigerators, air conditioners, washing machines and/or pumps
- Farm machinery or outbuildings
- Other industrial items or items of concern

## Building characteristics

- Large delivery doors or loading docks
- Former mill buildings
- Old bricks or factory construction
- Former funeral homes

## Business or condition within one block of center\*

- |                                  |                                       |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Dry cleaners                   | • High pressure pipelines (1500')     |
| • Nail or hair salons            | • Heavy traffic (>100 trucks per day) |
| • Auto body repair shops         | • Airport, port or train stations     |
| • Print or copy shops            | • Industries or factories             |
| • Large gas stations             | • Power plants                        |
| • Landfills                      | • Incinerators                        |
| • Propane or other storage tanks | • Smelters                            |
| • Cement plants                  | • Large agriculture operations        |
| • Chemical plants                | • Refineries                          |

\*Unless noted otherwise

