Health and Safety in Child Care Programs

EDC works with state leaders to improve health and safety practices

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What’s the safest position for a napping infant? Which immunizations should a preschooler receive? How can you tell whether a cut requires stitches? For those who work in child care programs, vital health-related questions like these occur daily. Yet, many child care providers lack knowledge in basic health and safety issues. To fill this need, centers often engage child care health consultants (CCHCs), who bring up-to-date information to staff. EDC is working with state health and early education leaders to help build and sustain state CCHC initiatives that enhance the quality of child care services.

CCHCs come from a variety of backgrounds. They can be nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, physicians, health educators, medical social workers, or early education professionals. “The requirements for CCHCs are defined differently in each state,” explains EDC Project Director Patricia Fahey. Most CCHCs are either on staff at local departments of public health or child care resource and referral agencies. Some are private consultants who provide consulting services for a fee; others volunteer their services. They provide a variety of services to child care centers, including:

- Assessing the needs of child care providers and parents/guardians for health and safety training;
- Teaching and advising child care staff and parents/guardians about health and safety issues;
- Meeting on-site with child care providers about health and safety in their program;
- Providing referrals to community services;
- Developing or updating health and safety policies and procedures for child care facilities;
- Helping to manage the care of children with special health care needs;
- Interpreting standards or regulations and providing technical advice, separate and apart from the enforcement role of a licensing inspector

CCHC Resources

EDC is developing resources for state CCHC systems with funding from the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and in partnership with the CHT Resource Group, a nonprofit organization that provides training and technical assistance. Project staff have created a Web site that includes a national CCHC registry, detailed profiles of each state’s and territory’s CCHC initiative; and a range of resources. The project also provides an e-newsletter for state CCHC leaders, and conducts webinars on topics relevant to developing CCHC systems.

“This is the first time that so much comprehensive information on CCHCs has been gathered in one place,” says Fahey. “This is useful for child care programs, as well as for state officials who can now easily review their state’s information, along with that of other states,” she explains.

The state profiles include information on how states define, fund, train, and use CCHCs. These profiles also include selected state demographic data and contact information for child care and child health leaders.

“CCHC systems are pretty diverse—each is a state-designed system and each state has its own model,” says EDC’s Ann Schlesinger

The National CCHC Registry allows child care providers to find appropriate consultation support for the children and families they serve. For example, they can search the CCHC Registry by location, expertise, and languages spoken. National and state leaders can use the information in the database to get a clear picture about the CCHC resources in their state and across the country.

http://www.edc.org/newsroom/articles/health_and_safety_child_care_programs
“Many CCHCs were initially hesitant to sign up for a national registry when we first launched it. But as people got to know us better and recognize what we offer, they began to see us as a resource and a place to find support,” explained Schlesinger.

The project’s publication, *The Influence of Child Care Health Consultants in Promoting Children’s Health and Well-Being: A Report on Selected Resources*, synthesizes 79 resource documents that explore the impact consultation has on health and safety practices in early education programs. The literature strongly suggests that CCHCs improve the overall quality of child care programs and have a positive impact on child health. In the CCHC community, the report has been a useful advocacy tool to highlight the benefits of the profession.

The biggest challenges facing states in sustaining CCHC systems are funding, building awareness, and conducting evaluations. Project staff work with state health officials to support these worthwhile initiatives by providing technical assistance in the form of webinars, onsite or telephone technical assistance, and e-mail exchanges.

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