

# HEALTH LINK ONLINE

Uniting Children, Parents, Caregivers and Health Professionals

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## CBK for Health and Safety Works with Keystone STARS

One of the first steps Pennsylvania took to improve the quality of early education was to define the Core Body of Knowledge (CBK) for early childhood and school-age practitioners. The CBK identifies “what early learning practitioners need to know and do when caring for and educating young children.” The CBK has 8 knowledge areas. Each has 3 levels of competency. Level 1 is remembering and understanding; level 2 is applying; and level 3 is analyzing, evaluating and synthesizing to create something new. Knowledge Area 7 is Health, Safety & Nutrition. The content of CBK Knowledge Area 7 (K7) is essential to the ability of children to learn. The issues covered in K7 are listed in the box on page 2. K8 is Program Organization & Administration. This area addresses many of the policy, procedural and regulatory issues that are related to health and safety also. K1-6 include some content that relate to



health and safety too: K1. Child Growth & Development, K2. The Environment, Curriculum & Content, K3. Families in Society, K4. Child Assessment, K5. Communication, and K6. Professionalism & Leadership. As a minimum, all early learning practitioners should acquire Level 1 and the Level 2 competencies relevant to their role in K7. Health, safety and nutrition are a part of everything else. The program must be safe. The children and the adults who care for them must be healthy to be successful. In addition, someone at each facility should make sure that the program as a whole achieves the content covered in K7. The individual who carries out this focused role is a Child Care Health Advocate. This person may combine the role of a Child Care Health Advocate with other functions. The Child Care Health Advocate does not need to perform all the tasks, but

makes sure that the tasks get done. The director or lead teacher may be the Child Care Health Advocate. However, whoever takes this role must have defined time and the designated responsibility of making sure that the program meets the health, safety and nutrition best practice standards.

Keystone STARS requires professional development to achieve the CBK. ECELS-Healthy Child Care Pennsylvania offers workshops and self-learning modules so early learning practitioners can acquire the K7 competencies. In addition, ECELS helps colleges implement a curriculum for a 3 college credit course for educators/providers to learn how to be Child Care Health Advocates.

On the ECELS website, the description for each professional development opportunity includes the corresponding K7 competency level as well as the corresponding level of Keystone STARS Standards requirements that satisfactory completion would meet. The instructors who conduct these professional development activities are recognized in the Pennsylvania’s Quality Assurance System (PQAS).

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## Asthma and Allergy Awareness

May is National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month. Allergies and asthma are among the most common types of chronic physical illness. The problems range from annoying symptoms to life-threatening illness that requires hospitalization. Seasonal allergies are a common asthma trigger. Seasonal allergies cause other types of misery too.

Symptoms of seasonal allergies come from irritation anywhere in the respiratory system. These include sneezing, a clear runny nasal discharge, a stuffy or itchy nose, coughing, wheezing, itchy eyes, and itchy ears – even an itchy sensation in the roof of the mouth. A bio-chemical reaction to something foreign to the body, such as pollen in the air causes the irritation and symptoms.

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ECELS enters credits for satisfactory completion of professional development activities into the PQAS transcript system. Pennsylvania published the first edition of the CBK in 2005. The CBK is a foundation stone of Keystone STARS. Health, Safety and Nutrition are essential components of this system.

Reference: *CBK Revised June 2006* - accessed 2/27/2010 at <http://www.pakeys.org/docs/cbk.pdf>.

### **Content Areas in the Pennsylvania CBK, Knowledge Area 7**

*(Copied from pages 41 and 42 of CBK Revised 2006, with **bold** font added for emphasis)*

- A. **Health, safety, and nutrition policies** of a facility must comply with government regulations and strive to meet national health and safety performance standards to support the health and safety of children and staff (i.e., **physical, mental, nutritional, and oral health**).
- B. **Identifying hazards** through routine observations in and around the facility is essential for reducing the risk of injury.
- C. Infectious diseases are controlled by following current recommendations about **structuring the environment** and following **practices that reduce the spread of disease**.
- D. Through **promotion of preventive health services, management of acute and chronic illness**, the physical well being of children and families is promoted. It is essential to **exchange information**, as appropriate, about:
- The **children's health and development** (medical, mental, nutritional, and oral health).
  - **Staff health** that affects job performance or risk to other individuals.
  - **Family health** issues that pose a risk to children or adults.
- E. **Health records** should be maintained and accurately record information about a child's health to plan and implement individually appropriate care. Such records include documentation of:
- Up-to-date, routine **check-up services** such as immunizations and screening tests.
  - **Special health and nutritional needs and management plans** for conditions such as allergies, asthma, or other physical, developmental, or behavioral conditions that require more care than usual for the typically developing child.
- F. Positive **relationships with families** support the emotional growth and health of children and their families. This involves:
- Responding to **feelings and needs**.
  - **Resolving conflicts** in positive ways.
  - Encouraging family members to address their needs appropriately and **referring them to community resources** to meet their needs (e.g., for early prenatal care).
- G. The **promotion of daily health habits** for children ensures that children follow healthy habits that are individually, age, and ability appropriate such as tooth brushing, toileting, hand washing, resting, eating healthy meals and snacks, and learning to use increasingly difficult self-help skills, as well as stress management techniques.
- H. **Emergency preparedness** involves the development of policies and procedures to be prepared for emergencies.
- I. Recognizing and reporting **child abuse and neglect** is mandated by law; program staff must be aware of and follow the requirements of a mandated reporter.

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When pollen levels are high, even people who are not allergic to pollen may have symptoms. The fine pollen grains can irritate respiratory tissues just like fine grains of sand or dirt. People with allergies may wrinkle or rub their noses, rub or frequently blink their eyes, clear their throats, try to scratch inside their ears. If the tissues lining the air tubes in their lungs become irritated, they may wheeze. Wheezing is a symptom of asthma.

Caring for children and staff with allergies and asthma in early learning settings is essential to having healthy, happy and successful children. To learn more about allergies and asthma, put "asthma" into the search box on the ECELS website at [www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org](http://www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org). The search identifies direct links to useful tools for child care, and professional development opportunities. Schedule an ECELS Asthma Workshop or use the Asthma Self-Learning Module offered by ECELS .

## Pottstown Early Action for Kindergarten (PEAK) Emphasizes Health and Safety

PEAK is a unique approach to school readiness in Pottstown, Montgomery County. One focus of PEAK is to ensure that every child has access to health and wellness services. Another is for the PEAK Health Specialist, Kathy Perry, to provide on-site health consultation to 6 early learning programs. She works with the early learning staff to improve health and safety policies and practices. Also, she coordinates professional development for them. In addition, she provides information and support for families. Her role includes arranging health screenings for children who are enrolled in community early learning programs. She collaborates with community agencies to provide health and wellness services. The PEAK Health Initiative has accomplished:

- Improved performance of selected *Caring for Our Children* standards
- Hearing and vision screening provided for 190 children
- Lead screening provided for 158 children
- Professional development focused on health, nutrition and safety topics
- Two early learning programs advanced from Keystone STAR 2 to STAR 3
- Significant increase in the social-emotional competence of students in over 50% of classrooms that used the *Preschool PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)* curriculum supplement

In 2010, PEAK is extending the *Preschool PATHS* social emotional curriculum to additional classrooms. Teachers have found the curriculum to be very effective in supporting positive social skills and eliminating some of the classroom behavior problems. Also in 2010, the PEAK Health Initiative will use the *Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC)*.

The NAP SACC self-assessment tool empowers early learning practitioners to evaluate their nutrition and physical activity practices. With the results, they can make improvement plans. Reducing sugar content in the foods served to children and increasing the use of whole wheat products at community sites is a goal. The PEAK Health Specialist is working with programs to revise their menus. PEAK is extending the *Color Me Healthy/Go Active* curriculum to additional classrooms too. Activities will include family and child make-your-own snacks.

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### Q&A

#### Sanitizing Computer Keyboards

**Question:** A child care health consultant asked ECELS what to suggest for cleaning and sanitizing computer keyboards that she sees preschool and school age children are using in child care. A recent study reported in a reliable medical journal documented that computer keyboards are heavily contaminated with disease-causing germs. Putting any water-based product such as diluted bleach or alcohol pads on the keys could damage the electronics.

**Answer:** Put a cleanable cover over the keyboard. ECELS searched the Internet for "computer keyboard covers." Several manufacturers make keyboard covers that fit over the keyboard and allow typing on the keys. The covers cost between \$15 and \$30. You can sanitize them in place or remove them to clean and sanitize them. Many restaurants and health care facilities use them.

#### How Does HIPAA Affect Child Care?

Educators need information from health care professionals to care properly for children. Health professionals must comply with federal and state law to release such information. When asking a health professional for protected health information, educators should make sure the health professional has what is legally required to release it. HIPAA is the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. The primary purpose of HIPAA is to protect health insurance coverage for people who change or lose their jobs. In addition, this law establishes national standards to protect the privacy of patient information.

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(continued from page 3: *PEAK Emphasizes Health and Safety*)

PEAK involves a variety of school, child care and community partners working together to help families and young children prepare for school. The partners include: the Pottstown School District, Head Start, Montgomery County Intermediate Unit, United Way of Southeastern PA, as well as several early learning programs and community organizations. Since 2007, health consultant Rosemary Johnston has provided technical assistance to PEAK from ECELS. PEAK is a worthwhile model for other Pennsylvania communities to consider. Funding for the PEAK Health Initiative comes from the Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation. For more about PEAK, see [www.peakonline.org](http://www.peakonline.org) and for NAP SACC, click <http://www.center-trt.org/>. If you don't see NAP SACC, select "Obesity Prevention" and then in the left pane of the next webpage, select "NAP SACC" under "Research-tested Interventions."

Article written by Libby Ungvary, ECELS Director with contributions from Mary Rieck, PEAK Coordinator, Pottstown School District.

### Immunization News

**Universal Flu Vaccine Recommended:** On March 2, 2010, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice (ACIP) posted new influenza recommendations. The ACIP's advice appears on the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For 2010-11, everyone in the United States over 6 months of age should receive annual influenza vaccination. The only exceptions are those people with a medical problem that precludes receiving the vaccine. The 2010-11 seasonal vaccine will have the H1N1 vaccine included in it. Influenza kills thousands of people every year. Healthy people who never had influenza before can die from influenza. Do not believe uninformed myths. The vaccine does not make people very ill. The risk is real. Plan for and promote use of influenza vaccine next fall.

**New Trustworthy Vaccine Website:** A new website offers information on vaccines and the diseases they prevent. View print material and videos with factual answers to myths that many people continue to believe about vaccines. The special section for families provides current vaccine schedules and easy-to-understand information about vaccine safety. Videos that show the diseases that vaccines prevent are available on the website too. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention funds the website. The American Academy of Pediatrics maintains the content. Go to [www.aap.org/immunization](http://www.aap.org/immunization).

### Choking Prevention



In March 2010, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) released new recommendations to prevent choking for young children. Based on data that showed the most common causes of choking, the AAP identified key strategies to reduce choking deaths and injuries. Almost 60% of choking episodes are related to food. Choking on food is the cause of a child death on one out of every 5 days. The most common non-food cause of death from choking is latex balloons. Over three-fourths of choking injuries occur in children who are less than three years of age.

The small airways of young children plug easily. Small, compressible, cylindrical or round objects fit into these small spaces. Young children's coughs cannot get tightly wedged objects of substances out of their airways. The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has a standard for toys that many think should be more stringent. The current standard suggests warnings for objects that are less than 1.25 inches in diameter and between 1 and 2.25 inches deep based on the estimated size of a child's mouth and throat. Some suggest revising the minimum allowable diameter to 1.75 inches. The public must learn to protect young children. Toys are not pretested by the CPSC before they are sold. Food sellers do not put warning labels on products that pose choking hazards.



The most hazardous foods are hot dogs. Hot dogs caused 17% of the food related deaths of children. Given their relatively poor nutritional content, hazardous shape and compressibility, hot dogs are not good foods for young children.

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## Keystone STARS Financial Awards Can Pay for Child Care Health Consultation



Keystone STARS encourages programs to use STARS Financial Awards to implement best practices. Health and safety is one of the areas of specialized professional development and technical assistance eligible for these awards. Providing for the health and safety needs of children is essential for high-quality early learning and school age environments. To operate legally, all centers and home-based programs serving 4 or more children must meet the basic health and safety requirements in Pennsylvania's regulations. For programs in Keystone STARS,



the Environmental Rating Scale items related to health and safety are often the lowest scoring. To address these concerns, some programs are using Keystone STARS Financial Awards to pay for child care health consultation. For an early education and child care program, having a Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC) is a way to establish the essential school health component.

The evidence from studies in several states shows health consultation improves practitioner knowledge and brings about behavior changes. For example, child care health consultation is associated with fewer absences of children and staff for illness. CCHCs collaborate with staff. They suggest feasible ways to implement best practices. Their involvement improves hand washing and toileting/diapering practices. They help staff and families apply current pediatric rationale about symptoms that require a child's temporary exclusion from attendance. Also, CCHCs can help programs link families with community-based health and developmental services. CCHCs can recommend how to adopt environmental changes such as a "safe sleep environment." This lessens the likelihood of an infant dying of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Often, a health professional's explanations and suggested alternative ways to apply recommendations can help overcome resistance to implementing best practices. Some of these changes can save money. For example, a CCHC can explain why having a separate and darkened room for infant sleeping is not necessary and makes supervision more difficult. Many CCHCs have access to free materials to supplement health education activities for adults and children. Early learning environments are ideal settings to teach children, staff and families about healthful behaviors.

Prominent national organizations support the value of having early educators collaborate with health professionals who serve as CCHCs. Among these national organizations are the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of Pediatric Nurses and Practitioners, and the American Public Health Association.

Some programs have access to health professionals who can give free child care health consultation. Many will have to pay something for this service. Programs should find out what is available in their communities and plan to put necessary payment for child care health consultation into their operating budgets. According to *Caring for Our Children, National Health and Safety Performance Standards*, for programs with infants, monthly routine visits are best. For programs with preschool age and older children, plan quarterly routine visits. The National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation Standards require CCHC visits only 4 times a year for programs with infants and toddlers and two times a year for all others. Consider using Keystone STARS Financial Awards for specialized professional development and technical assistance as a funding source. The award must relate to achieving STARS Performance Standards and meet the following criteria:

- Maximum of a \$50 hourly rate
- Total payment not to exceed \$2,500
- The service provider must be PQAS approved (some exceptions in the area of Administration/ Business Practices and Playgrounds).

For suggestions about how to choose and use a Child Care Health Consultant visit the ECELS-Healthy Child Care PA website at: <http://www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org>. Put "child care health consultant" in the search box on the home page. Then scroll down to the heading "How to Choose and Use a Child Care Health Consultant." Look at other listings on the ECELS website about CCHCs also.

## New Health & Safety Professional Development Opportunities

Enroll now in the 3 college credit, online, Summer 2010 Child Care Health Advocate Course.— See the ECELS website home page NEWS details.

Use the new obesity-prevention online self-learning module: Look for “Fitness and Nutrition: Moving and Munching—Supporting Physical Activity and Nutrition in Early Learning Programs on the ECELS website.

*(continued from page 4: Choking Prevention)*

Other foods that are choke hazards include hard candies, peanuts/nuts, seeds, whole grapes, raw carrots, apples, popcorn, peanut butter that is not thinly spread, marshmallows, chewing gum, and sausages. Educating teachers and families about safe and nutritious eating could prevent a trip to the Emergency Room or even save a life. Eating while doing some other activity increases the risk of choking. Children should not walk or run while eating. Learning not to talk with food in your mouth is not just polite. It prevents choking.



The AAP's recommendations include educating all caregivers about the risks and how to administer CPR/choke-saving measures. The AAP urges new legislation and agency cooperation to require labeling of foods that pose choking hazards for young children. Sweden has had such labeling since 1979. The AAP recommends more stringent before-market, recall and resale regulation of toys also. Only 10-30% of recalled toys are ever returned. Everyone needs to safeguard children by preventing resale and purchase of toys that have been recalled.

Share this information with everyone who takes care of young children. For a News Capsule (short version) about this topic, look on the ECELS website in the section heading “Publications and Media.”

The policy statement of the American Academy of Pediatrics at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) under the heading “For Medical Professionals.” Select “Policy Statements and Practice Guidelines,” and then on the insert the search term “choking.” The statement appeared in PEDIATRICS Volume 125, Number 3, March 2010, 601.

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HIPAA applies to health care professionals and related health care organizations that handle patient information. Under HIPAA, written authorization from the legal guardian for a health professional to release covered information covered must include:

- a description of the information to be disclosed
- who is being authorized to make and receive the disclosure
- an expiration date for the authorization
- the risk of re-disclosure once the protected information is disclosed and no longer protected by HIPAA
- the purpose for which the information is being used or disclosed

Health professionals will be more willing to share information and collaborate with early educators who provide written permission that complies with HIPAA when they request information. Sample forms to request information with consent are on pages 153-155 and 157 of the 2009 guidebook of the American Academy of Pediatrics: *Managing Chronic Health Needs in Child Care and Schools*. This book can be purchased at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). By using such forms, educators show professionalism and respect for confidentiality constraints.

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