

Steps for Early Care and Education Programs to Reduce Illness

To reduce illness, facilities must pay attention to risks and address them. Research shows that four steps make a difference:

1. **Write and use policies** that define how the facility avoids known problems.
2. **Establish routine checks** for conditions and practices that could cause harm.
3. **Use records of illness** to see what needs attention.
4. **Make and implement Action Plans** that reduce the risks and control illness. As appropriate, modify written policies and routine checks so the facility does better in the future.

1. Write and Use Policies

Every facility needs written health policies. These policies are tools for staff and parent orientation and a reference for daily procedures at the facility. Sitting down to write policies from scratch is hard. You can use a set of model policies to get started. Many aspects of written health and safety policies are similar from one facility to another. Adapting model policies to fit the needs of your program is important.

[Model Child Care Health Policies \(MCCHP\)](#), 5th Edition, is a set of “starter” policies with blanks for staff to fill in to adapt the policies. The sample policies were developed with input from early care and education programs and reviewed by national experts. The appendix section of MCCHP includes many sample forms to implement the policies. To buy a print copy of this guide, order it from the [American Academy of Pediatrics bookstore](#). For a **free** copy of *Model Child Care Health Policies, 5th edition*, click [here](#) to download the file from ECELS website.

Consult a Child Care Health Consultant to be sure your site’s health policies are up-to-date with what experts recommend. If your facility does not have a local health professional who routinely visits to offer health and safety advice, contact your Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC) or ECELS. A Child Care Health Consultant can work with your program to help develop a plan of action to improve health and safety practices. Minimizing the risk of the spread of illness among the children keeps staff healthier too!

2. Establish Routine Checks

Everyday, when children arrive at the program, the teacher/caregiver will talk with the family member and child, observe each child for signs of illness/injury that could affect the child’s ability to participate in the day’s activities, and with the family member, document the information. The teacher/caregiver may update the information documentation if the status of the child changes during the day. [Model Child Care Health Policies](#), 5th edition includes *Appendix M for Instructions for the Daily Health Check* to document the information. *MCCHP Appendix U for Cleaning Guidelines* is also especially relevant for illness prevention.

3. Use Records of Illness to See What Needs Attention

Illness/Symptom Record: Everyday, facilities need to document enrollment, attendance and symptoms for the children in care. Some facilities use a sign-in sheet at the entrance to the facility that parents complete; others have a classroom log. A good tool for tracking illness is in *Model Child Care Health Policies*, 5th edition, *Appendix N: Enrollment/ Attendance/ Symptom Record*.

Tracking Procedure: Everyday someone should look at the records of symptoms to detect patterns of illness promptly — in each group of children and in the facility overall. Stepping up sanitation and hygiene work best if done at the first sign of an outbreak. In addition, someone on the staff should review the daily illness/symptom records about once a month, noting differences in patterns between groups of children in the facility. Such differences might indicate that a particular group needs to pay more attention to sanitation and hygiene measures to reduce disease.

Corrective Action: When children in a group seem to have similar symptoms that suggest a contagious disease is spreading, consult a Child Care Health Consultant. The Child Care Health Consultant can help develop a plan of action to minimize the spread of illness among children, staff and families.

4. Make and Implement an Action Plan

Figure out what you want to change, the resources you will need, who will be responsible for needed changes, how changes will be implemented, and a time frame to get the job done. Assign the tasks, including checkpoints when a responsible person will monitor progress on the plan.

Using these approaches and tools will promote the health of children and staff, with the goal to reduce illness.

Criteria #	Performance Standard	Suggested Measurement / Evidence / Documentation
Leadership and Management		
LM.2.3	Program uses documents for tracking child and staff illnesses and injuries, including plans of action to prevent further occurrences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Copy of tracking document - In progress and current action plans– not sample. - Description of process implementation
Effective July 1, 2018		

If you need technical assistance to implement these four steps, contact ECELS by phone or e-mail:

ECELS (Early Childhood Education Linkage System)
 e-mail: ecels@paaap.org
 800-243-2357 (800-24-ECELS) or 484-446-3003
www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org