



Child Care Licensing Summer Health and Safety Reminders

As summer approaches child providers often plan activities to get children out to enjoy the warm weather. There are three areas of concern when it comes to having fun in the sun safely: Transportation, Swimming and Supervision.

Transportation

Whether walking to a park or transporting children in a vehicle, it is important that additional precautions are made by the director and caregivers to ensure that the regulations are being met. Prior to transporting children in a vehicle, written consent from the parent or guardian must be on file at the facility. Children must be secured in age appropriate safety restraints whenever the vehicle is in motion. Per ARM 37.95.132(8), *all vehicles must be equipped with children's car seats or booster seats that meet federal Department of Transportation recommendations for the age and weight of the child being transported.* Children must use a car seat or booster seat until they are at least 6 years of age **and** 60 pounds. Additionally, there should never be more than one child to a seatbelt, often referred to as "double buckling."

Children should never be left unattended in a vehicle, not even for a minute! When the director or caregiver exits the vehicle, the children should also be taken out of the vehicle EVERY TIME. When unloading the vehicle, caregivers should conduct a head count or role call against the attendance records and check each seat in the vehicle to make sure a child was not forgotten in the vehicle. It is important that all caregivers are aware of transportation policies and that extra precautions are taken while transporting children.

To avoid any incidents of leaving children behind while on a field trip, attendance should be taken prior to children leaving the facility, upon arrival at the destination and prior to returning to the facility as well as throughout the duration of the activity. Maintaining accurate attendance records during an outing is a critical step in ensuring that children are accounted for at all times.

When away from the facility caregivers must take an emergency contact form of each child and a fully stocked first aid kit.

Water Activities

Water play is a good way to stay cool during summer. Although wading pools and swimming pools are not prohibited, it is recommended that sprinklers or other forms of water play that do not collect water are used. If wading pools are used, they may not exceed 24 inches of water depth. Wading pools must be filled only prior to use and once they are no longer being used, they should be emptied immediately and sanitized. Never allow a wading pool to sit with any amount of water in it. Be mindful of water that may be collected by rain and sprinklers. It takes only a small amount of collected water to become a danger to young children in care.

When using swimming pools, whether on-site or off-site of a day care facility, a certified lifeguard, who is not counted in the facility's child to staff ratio, must always be present. Per ARM 37.95.127(8), *the child-staff ratio shall be maintained whenever children participate in swimming activities, including swimming instruction.* Having active and fully present caregivers are key factors in providing a safe environment. **Regardless of the type of water activity, water play should ALWAYS be supervised.**

Supervision/Ratios

Whether care is being provided on-site or away from the facility, directors and caregivers must properly supervise children and ensure that ratios are met at **all times**. Direct and active observation is essential to safety and the prevention of injury. This means that caregivers must be actively involved with the children and be able to directly observe children at all times. There is a variety of play equipment that consists of hidden areas where children can be out of caregivers' view. Caregivers must be aware of these areas and monitor them regularly. In addition, caregivers may not allow children to play or nap behind closed doors. If multiple rooms are being used, it is the caregiver's responsibility to be present in the room with the children.

Keeping accurate attendance records at all times is important and a great tool to ensure that all children are accounted for at any point of the day. It also assists caregivers in determining whether they meet the required ratios. It is the department's recommendation that "head counts" be conducted every 15-30 minutes

Cell phone use is a common problem that interferes with supervision. Caregivers who are texting or taking personal calls cannot adequately supervise children. Personal calls and texting should only occur during break times or when the caregiver is not counted in the ratios.

Additional Reminders

Caregivers are responsible for ensuring that all children are adequately protected from exposure to sunlight in order to prevent sunburn. In order for caregivers to apply sunscreen or bug spray, parents must fill out the Over-the-Counter (OTC) Medication Form. Caregivers should also ensure children are provided with fresh water so they are hydrated during play in the summer's heat.

Keeping these points in mind will help provide a safe summer for the children in care. If there are additional questions on summertime issues, regulations, or other concerns, please contact the local licensor.