



Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education

Planning. Guidance. Protection.



Set It Up Safe: Planning Tool

Early care and education (ECE) program owners and operators, city planners, zoning officials, early care and education licensing agencies, and health and environmental protection departments can all work together to keep children in ECE programs safe from harmful chemicals. You can use this tool to make sure that children have a safe place to grow, develop, and play.

Following these recommendations will help ensure that ECE programs are located in safe places — so that children aren't exposed to chemicals left over from former uses of a site, naturally occurring hazards, or contamination from nearby locations. These recommendations are designed to complement — and not replace — state and local regulations.

Elements of Safe Early Care and Education Siting

There are 4 things to consider before choosing a location for a new ECE program:

1. Former use of the site
2. Nearby sites and nearby activities
3. Naturally occurring contamination
4. Safe drinking water

Choosing Safe Places for Early Care and Education needs to be a collaborative process. Building partnerships with the agencies and sectors that have the expertise to evaluate each of these 4 elements is essential. It's the best way to help ensure that ECE programs are located in safe places.



Set It Up Safe: New Early Care and Education Program Facility

Former use of the site

- Look at documents (such as land records, databases, or other resources) related to current and prior ownership of the property to find out whether any businesses on the property could have used or disposed of hazardous contaminants
- Get assistance finding relevant documents from the
 - ✓ Town or county clerk's office
 - ✓ Town or county planning or zoning department
 - ✓ State or county environmental agency
 - ✓ State, county, or local health department
 - ✓ Historical society
 - ✓ Local Chamber of Commerce
 - ✓ Town tax assessor
 - ✓ Find out whether any environmental site assessments have been done for the property (such as a Phase 1, Phase 2, or Phase 3 Environmental Site Assessment)
- Get assistance finding relevant environmental documents from the
 - ✓ Current property owner
 - ✓ State environmental agency files
 - ✓ State or national databases of hazardous waste sites
 - ✓ State, county, or local health department town files
 - ✓ Local land records
- Review environmental documents to confirm that the site's former uses have not left hazardous contaminants in the environment
- Partner with the state or county health department and environmental agency staff with the appropriate expertise to review the documents
- Visit the site to look for clues that the ECE program building or property may have hazardous substances
 - ✓ Inspect areas that may have been used to store hazardous substances such as storage sheds, underground storage tanks, basements, or attics
- Work with partners (who have the appropriate expertise) to take any necessary follow-up actions to resolve questions or concerns about hazardous contaminants from former use

Resources:

- ▶ [ATSDR Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance Manual. Chapter 4: Former Use and Nearby Sites](#)
- ▶ [ATSDR Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance Manual. Chapter 5: How to Build a Program – Models for a Safe ECE Siting Program](#)
- ▶ [ATSDR Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance Manual. Chapter 6: Safer ECE Program Siting Program Tools](#)
- ▶ [ATSDR Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance Manual. Appendix F: Activities of Concern With Former or Adjacent Uses to a Site](#)



Nearby sites and activities

- Visit the site or do a windshield tour (observing the area from a car) to see whether there are properties surrounding the site that might be using hazardous materials that could affect the ECE property
- Find out whether there are environmental reports that indicate environmental pollution on nearby properties that could impact the ECE property
- Get assistance finding environmental reports from
 - ✓ State agency files
 - ✓ State or national databases of hazardous waste sites
 - ✓ State, county, or local health department files
 - ✓ Owners of nearby properties
- Review environmental reports to confirm that pollution from nearby properties is not impacting the ECE property and have not left hazardous contaminants in the environment
- Partner with the state or county health department and environmental agency staff with the appropriate expertise to review the documents.
- If there are nearby businesses of potential concern, conduct a site visit of these businesses to determine whether hazardous materials could impact the ECE program property
- Work with partners (who have the appropriate expertise) to take any necessary follow-up actions to resolve questions or concerns about hazardous contaminants coming from these businesses

Resources

- ▶ [ATSDR Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance Manual, Chapter 4: Former Use and Nearby Sites](#)
- ▶ [ATSDR Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance Manual, Chapter 5: How to Build a Program – Models for a Safe ECE Siting Program](#)
- ▶ [ATSDR Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance Manual, Appendix F: Activities of Concern With Former or Adjacent Uses to a Site](#)
- ▶ [EPA Smart School Siting Tool](#): Use this tool to get ideas on how to work together to align ECE program siting with community development
- ▶ [EPA Toxics Release Inventory \(TRI\) Program](#): Learn about toxic chemicals in your area and how they are being managed

Naturally occurring contamination

- Find out whether any areas of naturally occurring contamination (such as arsenic in water, radon in buildings, or asbestos in soil) could affect the proposed ECE program site
- Get assistance with finding areas of naturally occurring contamination from
 - ✓ County or local health departments
 - ✓ State or county environmental agencies
 - ✓ U.S. Geological Survey or a state geologist

Resources:

- ▶ [ATSDR Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance Manual, Chapter 4: Naturally Occurring Contamination](#)
- ▶ [EPA Envirofacts](#): Find data about environmental hazards in your area
- ▶ [EPA Superfund](#): Find contaminated sites that are being cleaned
- ▶ [CDC Environmental Public Health Tracking Network](#): Find data on environmental health issues in your area

Safe drinking water

- Note the type of water system used by the proposed ECE program site
- If the water comes from a private system (a private well, for example)
 - ✓ Learn about relevant regulations and possible contaminants from state or local health departments
 - ✓ Develop a water sampling program and retest at regular intervals
 - ✓ Maintain the well and water treatment system as recommended by the provider or manufacturer
 - ✓ Review EPA booklet [Drinking Water Best Management Practices For Schools and Child Care Facilities With Their Own Drinking Water Source](#) for information on cleaning water fountains and hot water tanks, testing for copper pipes, and routine measures to reduce lead exposure and follow up on elevated levels
- If the water comes from a public water system
 - ✓ Get and review your water system's "Consumer Confidence Report"
 - ✓ Review EPA booklet [Drinking Water Best Management Practices For Schools and Child Care Facilities Served by Municipal Water Systems](#) for information on cleaning water fountains and hot water tanks, testing for copper pipes, and routine measures to reduce lead exposure and follow up on elevated levels

Resources:

- ▶ [ATSDR Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Guidance Manual, Chapter 4: Access to Safe Drinking Water](#)
- ▶ EPA: [Drinking Water Best Management Practices for Schools and Child Care Facilities with their Own Drinking Water Source](#)
- ▶ EPA: [Drinking Water Best Management Practices for Schools and Child Care Facilities Served by Municipal Water Systems](#)
- ▶ EPA: [Lead and Copper Rule: Quick Reference Guide for Schools and Child Care Facilities that are Regulated Under the Safe Drinking Water Act](#)
- ▶ EPA: [Drinking Water Contaminants – Standards and Regulations](#)

Additional Tools and Resources

- ▶ GIS mapping tools
 - ✓ [EPA EnviroAtlas](#)
- ▶ Data tools
 - ✓ [CDC Environmental Public Health Tracking Network](#): Find data on environmental health issues in your area.
 - ✓ [EPA Toxic Release Inventory \(TRI\) Program](#): Learn about toxic chemicals being managed in your area.
 - ✓ [EPA Envirofacts](#): Find data about environmental hazards in your area.
 - ✓ [EPA Superfund](#): Find contaminated sites that are being cleaned.