Choosing a Child Care Center Location

CHOOSE SAFE PLACES - AVOID HARMFUL ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES

Follow these recommendations to help ensure your child care center is located in a safe place – so that children aren’t exposed to chemicals left over from former uses of a site or contamination from nearby locations.

✔ Learn about the former property use

Contaminants may have been left behind due to some former property uses, such as:

- dry cleaners
- auto body shops
- gas stations
- manufacturing or industrial uses

Learning about former property uses helps identify when further investigation may be needed to rule out harmful environmental exposures. Search for information related to prior ownership of the property to find out whether any businesses could have used or disposed of hazardous contaminants. Find out whether environmental site assessments have been done for the property (such as a Phase 1 or Phase 2).

✔ Learn about nearby environmental contamination

Tenant spaces that share walls with other businesses using chemicals may have their indoor air quality affected. Dry cleaners and nail salons are common examples of commercial businesses that may affect adjacent spaces, particularly if they are located in a strip mall with shared HVAC systems.

In some places, chemicals used in the past have polluted soil and groundwater. Chemicals that evaporate can create chemical vapors underground. These vapors can move and come in contact with buildings and contaminate indoor air. This process – when pollution moves from air spaces in soil to indoor air – is called vapor intrusion. Nearby current and former property uses, and nearby known contaminated sites can provide clues of the potential for vapor intrusion to affect your location.

Helpful resources to learn about former property uses and nearby contamination

- Talk to the current property owner.
- Use online mapping tools to identify nearby property uses and search the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency’s “What’s in My Neighborhood” online tool. (https://www.pca.state.mn.us/data/whats-my-neighborhood)
- Request assistance to find documents from the city/local government agencies.
- Look around your location. Visible property and building attributes could suggest a former or current use that may warrant follow-up.
- Contact MDH for further assistance in screening your location.
Learn about the drinking water

Determine where the drinking water comes from – either a municipal system or a well.

If the location is served by a municipal system, data on the water quality can be found in an annual report called the “Consumer Confidence Report”, often found on a city’s website. Water should be tested for lead, since lead can leach from the building’s plumbing system and faucet fixtures.

If a child care center on its own well serves 25 or more individuals, it is a nontransient noncommunity public water system and is required to test for a wide variety of contaminants. In this case, MDH’s Drinking Water Protection program will work with the center in meeting sampling requirements.

In-home family child care providers served by a well are required to test the water for bacteria and nitrate annually. MDH recommends providers also test for arsenic, manganese, and lead at least once.

Helpful resources for drinking water from municipal systems

- Visit MDH Drinking Water Protection – Consumer Confidence Reports webpage to find your municipal water system’s Consumer Confidence Report (CCR).
  (https://mnccr.web.health.state.mn.us/index.faces)
- Information about Reducing Lead in Drinking Water.
  (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/pbschoolguide.pdf)

Helpful resources for drinking water from a well

- MDH information about Well Water and Your Baby.
  (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/docs/wells/waterquality/safebaby.pdf)
- MDH Safe Drinking Water For Your Baby.
  (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/wells/waterquality/safebaby.html)
- Information for Nontransient Noncommunity Public Water Systems.
  (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/water/noncom/nontransient.html)