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## Washington Choose Safe Places

### Children Need Safe Places

Choosing the right location for your business is important for many reasons, especially if it's a childcare center. We know you strive to meet all licensing requirements and create a safe, welcoming environment where children can thrive. And the children in your care can be safer if environmental chemical hazards at your center are known and addressed.

### We're here to help!

**Washington Choose Safe Places** is a FREE Environmental Public Health program at the Washington State Department of Health. We can help early care and education (ECE) programs assess if there are harmful chemicals in the natural environment (soil, air, or water), building materials, and other places in or near their centers.

We can help you learn about the possible environmental hazards in your center and share ways that you can take action to improve the health and safety of the children in your care.

Children are sensitive to their environments. They need to be in safe places for several reasons:

- They play or crawl on the ground and then put their hands or other objects in their mouths, which may expose them to chemicals on the ground or on objects.
- They drink more water and breathe more air relative to adults, which increases their exposure to chemicals that may be in the water or the air.
- Their brains are still developing, and exposure to harmful chemicals as a child can have lifelong impacts on their development, learning, and behavior.

## How can I learn if my center is safe?

It's not always easy to tell if a location is safe from chemicals or other contaminants, but there are often clues. You can start by learning the history of the property.

Past businesses like funeral homes, dry cleaners, automotive garages, and nail salons may have left chemicals on the site. Learning the history of the building and the land can help you understand if chemicals have been used or stored there.

You can also learn if nearby businesses use chemicals now or in the past. These chemicals could pose a health risk to children, even if used at a distance. We can help you find and understand this information.

## What steps can I take to protect the children at my center?

Chemicals like [lead](#), [arsenic](#), or [radon](#) can harm children's health. These chemicals may be in the water, air, soil, building materials, toys, and other places. You can check these parts of your property for these chemicals. There are free or low-cost resources available to help you test your property.

- Test for lead-based paint and [asbestos](#).
- [Test the water](#) for copper and lead.
- [Test your building](#) for radon.
- Use or switch to [safer cleaning products](#).

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## How can choosing a safe location help my business?

Having a childcare center in a safe location can help your business thrive, because parents want to know their children are safe. You can share these efforts with parents as they tour your center. Choosing and maintaining safe places also reduces risk to your center, by avoiding chemical risks like leaks or releases at or near your center. Whether you are choosing a new location, or want to make the one you have safer, we can help you.

We have resources available to help you keep your center safe from environmental hazards. Email us at [wencsp@doh.wa.gov](mailto:wensp@doh.wa.gov) or call 360-810-1088 with any questions or concerns.

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