

Summer safety

Child Care Licensing is a division of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). It regulates and monitors child care operations in Texas. For more information about child care licensing and its services, visit www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care.

Child Care Licensing wants to share some important reminders and tips for keeping the children in your care healthy and safe this summer. While summer can be a fun time with the opportunity to enjoy water activities and outings around town, it is also a time for extra vigilance. Rely on licensing rules for the additional safeguards you need to consider when offering water activities and transporting children on field trips.

Never leave children alone in a vehicle

If you transport children, make sure that every child leaves the vehicle after you arrive at your destination. Children left in vehicles are not only unsupervised, they are at risk for heat stroke, which can cause shock, seizures, irregular heartbeat, heart attack, damage to the brain, liver, and kidney, and death. It takes only 10 minutes for the interior temperature of the vehicle to rise 20 degrees. This means that on an 80 degree day the inside of the vehicle will reach 100 degrees in the time it takes to read a book or sing a few songs with the children. In addition, a child's body can heat up three to five times faster than an adult's.

DEVELOP AND PRACTICE A ROUTINE THAT IS
USED EVERY TIME YOU
TRANSPORT CHILDREN.

How do you make sure that every child exits the vehicle every time? First, develop and practice a routine that is used every time you transport children.

This system should be in writing, shared, and used by everyone who is involved in transporting the children, including the director, driver, and any other employees riding in the vehicle or assisting the children when exiting. Consider using one or more of the following in your plan to help ensure all children are accounted for when exiting a vehicle:

- Use the list of children to verify each child by name.
- Walk and check the inside of the vehicle, both in and under each seat.
- Have a second person check the vehicle.
- Have a visual reminder such as a sticker, keychain, or hangtag that helps you do the walkthrough.

There are now commercial products designed to help you remember this safety check. One, for example, is installed at the back of a vehicle. It is designed to make a noise when the vehicle is turned off; the noise continues until someone moves to the back of the vehicle to turn it off.

In addition, consider sharing information with the parents of the children in your care to educate them about the risks of leaving a child alone in a vehicle. More than half of reported heat stroke deaths occurred when a distracted adult forgets that a child is in the car. Other top risk factors include leaving a car unlocked providing unsupervised access for a child, and intentionally leaving a child in a parked car unattended by an adult.

There are four simple things all of us can do to minimize risk and prevent injury:

- Never leave a child alone in a vehicle.
- Make it a habit to look in the backseat every time you exit the vehicle.
- Always lock the vehicle and put the keys out of reach of children.
- If you ever see a child left alone in a vehicle, call 9-1-1 right away.

Download these informational safety brochures to help reinforce your vehicle safety plan.

- Safe Riders (free resources in English and Spanish): www.dshs.state.tx.us/saferiders/hyperthermia.shtm
- Safe Kids USA: www.safekids.org
- National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: www.safercar.gov/heatstroke
- Free iPhone app “Baby Reminder”: www.babyreminder.co.il/index.html

Water safety

Water activities are a good way to cool off and get the children involved in physically active play. However, drowning is the leading cause of accidental death among infants, toddlers, and young children. It takes only a few minutes for a child to drown, and it is a misconception that a child will make a lot of noise when struggling in the water. The opposite is often true—the child may slip silently under water.

IT TAKES ONLY A FEW MINUTES FOR
A CHILD TO DROWN.

It is important that you provide close supervision to keep the children safe, even if the children are just playing on the playground with a sprinkler. Make sure that sprinkler or water hose play is away from hard, slippery surfaces such as driveways, sidewalks, patios, or playground equipment. Be sure to store the equipment out of the reach of children when it's not in use.

If you use a wading or splashing pool (two feet of water or less), you must provide extra adult supervision. The number of additional adults depends on the age and number of children participating. The required ratios and group sizes are in the minimum standards that apply to your program (See Subchapter E Child/Caregiver Ratios and Group Sizes). Wading pools must be emptied, sanitized, and stored out of reach of children after use at the end of each day.

When children in your care go swimming, a certi-

fied lifeguard must be on duty at all times, and all caregivers counted in the ratio must be able to swim and ready to rescue a child.

If you share a pool with people who aren't associated with your program, make sure you have a supervision plan to maximize the safety of the children in your care both in and out of the water. Items that can help you keep track of each child might include the use of brightly colored wristbands or the creative application of colored zinc oxide (an effective sunblock).

Use these resources to help ensure water safety.

- Watch Kids Around Water: www.dfps.state.tx.us/Watch_Kids_Around_Water/
- Water Safety Guide from Safe Kids USA: www.safekids.org/safety-basics/safety-guide/water-safety-guide/
- Pool Safety from the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission: www.poolsafely.gov/ ■