

Choose Safe Places & Local Health Department Engagement



Choose Safe Places
for Early Care and Education
Planning. Guidance. Protection.

New Hampshire Snapshot

New Hampshire's Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education Program (NH Choose Safe Places) is working to protect children from harmful chemicals in child care facilities by

- Training local governments (e.g., health officers);
- Developing a private well water testing initiative;
- Identifying opportunities for professional development for child care providers; and
- Working with state child care licensing and development agencies to identify best practices to improve the inspection and siting process.

The NH Choose Safe Places work is carried out using a multi-disciplinary approach by bringing together health, child care, and environmental agencies at the state and local levels.



Advisory Committee

A statewide advisory committee was formed to provide guidance to the Choose Safe Places program. Committee members include representatives from:

- Child care and provider-based regional organizations;
- NH Health and Human Services (such as Child Care Licensing, Bureau of Child Development and Head Start Collaboration, and the Division of Public Health Services);
- Local health agencies;
- NH Department of Environmental Services;
- NH APPLETREE (ATSDR's Partnership to Promote Local Efforts to Reduce Environmental Exposure) program; and
- NH Child Care Aware of America.

Advisory meetings are held virtually every month, which has helped keep remote partners actively engaged.

Outreach to Local Health Officers

One result of NH CSP strategic planning, connections, and input from the statewide advisory committee was the development of targeted outreach to local health officers as a strategy to learn more about the child care inspection process and identify gaps and opportunities to improve it. Outreach to local health officers' outreach has occurred via surveys and focus groups and through the health officer liaison within the Division of Public Health Services at the NH Department of Health and Human Services.

Partnering with local health officials has also increased their understanding of the resources available to educate child care providers on environmental health--leading to more providers receiving education and resources. Children's environmental health has become a greater priority at the local level due to the NH Choose Safe Places' work. An additional outcome of this local work has been NH Choose Safe Places staff knowing more about the child care licensing and inspection processes and potential opportunities for action and improvement.

Environmental Health Training

NH Choose Safe Places is providing free training by purchasing Eco-Healthy Child Care®'s Protecting Children's Environmental Health e-course for state child care providers to improve their knowledge of environmental health. The course is approved for adult learning clock hours in the state of NH which allows them to learn more about environmental health best practices while meeting continuing education requirements.



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The NH Choose Safe Places (CSP) program is piloting free water quality testing for a suite of common contaminants of concern, including arsenic, lead, manganese, and uranium, as well as radon, volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Through this effort, providers receive a toolkit offering resources that are available as a means to encourage participation. NH CSP is coordinating with the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services lead in drinking water for schools and child care programs via the EPA's Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation Act's (WIIN) School and Child Care Lead Testing and Reduction Program grant. View the WIIN Act, and additional grants, at <https://www.epa.gov/dwcapacity/water-infrastructure-improvements-nation-act-wiin-act-grant-programs>. Coordinating with the WIIN grant program avoids duplication and makes testing child care providers' water as effortless as possible. Funds from the American Rescue Plan Act and NH Department of Environmental Services' PFAS program can be used for child care facilities that require remediation. NH Choose Safe Places will use data gathered from sampling to identify hot spots and areas of concern for elevated contaminants in water.

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