

Best Practices
For Voluntarily Registered Family Day Homes

Best practices are strategies, activities, and procedures that have proven themselves as the safest, most efficient, and effective way of doing things. Best practices are methods and procedures that have been shown through research, to be the superior way to accomplish positive results.

The best practices listed here are not directly tied to a specific standard in the *Voluntary Registration of Family Day Homes Requirements for Providers* but are offered to you as additional information to assist and support you in providing a safe and nurturing environment for the children in your care.

Water Safety

Children should be under constant supervision in areas where there is any body of water, including swimming pools, built-in wading pools, tubs, pails, sinks, toilets, ponds, and irrigation ditches. Small children can drown within 30 seconds, and in as little as 2 inches of liquid.

Each year many young children drown in swimming pools, other bodies of water, and standing water around the home, which has included the following:

- Bathtubs, even with baby bathtub "supporting ring" devices
- Buckets and pails, especially 5-gallon buckets and diaper pails
- Ice chests with melted ice
- Toilets
- Hot tubs, spas, and whirlpools
- Irrigation ditches, post holes, and wells
- Fish ponds and fountains

An estimated 50 infants and toddlers drown each year in buckets containing liquid used for mopping floors and other household chores. Of all buckets, the five gallon size presents the greatest hazard to young children because of its tall straight sides and its weight when containing even just a little bit of liquid. It is nearly impossible for top-heavy infants and toddlers to free themselves when they fall into a 5-gallon bucket headfirst.

General water safety practices for both indoor and outdoor water hazards should include the following:

- Children who need assistance with toileting should not be allowed in toilet or bathroom facilities without direct visual supervision.

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- Keep young children out of the bathroom unless they are closely watched. Teach others in the home to keep the bathroom door closed at all times.
- Install a hook-and-eye latch or doorknob cover on the outside of the door.
- Never leave a child alone in a bathtub or in the care of another child, even for a moment.
- While bathing, swimming, or when around water hazards, adults should keep children within arms length.
- Empty all buckets, pails, and bathtubs completely after each use – do not leave them filled and unattended.
- Use a rigid, lockable cover on a hot tub, spa, or whirlpool, or fence in all four sides as you would for a swimming pool.
- Set your water heater thermostat so that the hottest temperature at the faucet is no greater than 120°F to avoid burns.
- Throw away or tightly cover water or chemical mixtures after use.
- Watch children closely when they are playing near wells, open post holes, or irrigation or drainage ditches. Fill in empty holes or have fences installed to protect children.
- Learn CPR and know how to get emergency help.

Sick Children

Keeping children healthy is a goal of caregivers, teachers, parents and families. In general, sending home or excluding mildly ill children is not always necessary. Many infections are spread by individuals who do not look ill. Caregivers need to decide whether children are too ill to participate in care, or require more care than can reasonably be provided without compromising the care of the other children.

The following questions/information should be considered in determining the health and safety of the all children in care and to determine the level of supervision required to ensure that both ill and well children are safe and comfortable:

- Does the child pose a risk to any other enrolled children, the provider and/or the providers own family? A child with the following symptoms may pose a risk to others unless otherwise approved by a child's health care professional:
 - An oral body temperature of 101° F or greater, or
An axillary (armpit) temperature of 100° F or greater;
 - Recurrent vomiting or diarrhea; or
 - Symptoms of a communicable disease as outlined in the current Communicable Disease Chart from the Virginia Department of Health (web link below)

http://www.vdh.state.va.us/Epidemiology/documents/pdf/Communicable_Disease_Chart_Rev_3_06.pdf

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- Are all enrolled children from the same family?
- If the child requires prescription medication, does the provider have the required Medication Administration Training (MAT) certification necessary to legally administer prescription medications?

If a child in care develops symptoms of an illness, a provider should contact the parents immediately to discuss how the situation will be handled.

Smoke-Free Environment

Children are particularly susceptible to the effects of environmental tobacco smoke (or second hand smoke). Therefore, every effort should be made to keep children's environments smoke-free. Secondhand smoke does not respect boundaries, seeping through light fixtures, wall electric outlets, ceiling crawl spaces, and doorways into all areas of a home with smokers. Secondhand smoke cannot be controlled by ventilation, air cleaning, or the separation of smokers from nonsmokers.

Recently, the United States Surgeon General's Report concluded that scientific evidence indicates that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Eliminating smoking in indoor spaces is the only way to fully protect nonsmokers from secondhand smoke exposure.

Keeping And Maintaining Pets

Any pet or animal present in the home, indoors or outdoors, should be in good health, show no evidence of carrying any disease, be fully immunized, and be maintained on a flea, tick, and worm control program. In Virginia, dogs and cats are required to have up-to-date rabies shots. Contact between animals and children should always be supervised and animals should be kept away from food preparation areas. Animals that have shown aggressive behavior should not be kept in the home or on the grounds.

Providers are encouraged to check with their locality for any local ordinances regarding a particular animal or breed of animal. All pet owners should develop a safety plan not only for the children in care, but also for the animal. Providers should also make parents of children aware of any pets and discuss allergies, fears, etc. prior to enrolling the child.

Salmonella and Animals

Reptiles may carry salmonella and pose a risk to children who are likely to touch the reptile and then put their hands in their mouths. Salmonella bacteria can be found in

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the feces (stool) of infected persons or pets (e.g., reptiles, chicks, dogs, cats) without the pet appearing sick. People can also be infected with *Salmonella* if hands are not washed well after contact with sick or seemingly healthy infected animals (especially poultry, pigs, cows, rodents, and pets such as lizards, turtles, chicks, ducklings, dogs, and cats).

To prevent illness or injury, the following animals should not be in areas accessible to children during the hours children are in care:

- Turtles
- Constricting or venomous snakes
- Ferrets
- Psittacine birds (birds of the parrot family)
- Monkeys
- Iguanas

For additional information on salmonella please visit the Virginia Department of Health's website and view the **Fact Sheet on Salmonella** (web link below)

<http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/Epidemiology/factsheets/pdf/Salmonellosis.pdf>

Night-time Care, Sleeping and Napping Safety

Infant Sleep Safety

To reduce the risk of **SIDS** (sudden infant death syndrome) and prevent suffocation when caring for infants under 12 months of age, providers should:

- Place babies on their back in a crib with a firm, tight fitting mattress.
- Not put pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, pillow-like bumper pads, or pillow-like stuffed toys in the crib.
- Consider using a sleeper instead of a blanket.
- If you use a blanket, place baby with feet to foot of the crib, tuck a thin blanket around the foot of the crib mattress, covering baby **ONLY** as high as his/her chest.
- Use only a fitted bottom sheet specifically made for crib use.

Crib and Play Yard Safety

Since the beginning of 2007, more than five million cribs, play yards and bassinets have been recalled. Babies spend much of their time sleeping; therefore, the nursery should be the safest room in the house. Check to see if your crib(s) has been recalled by visiting the following website: <http://www.cpsc.gov/cribs.html>

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With any crib, bassinet, or play yard, following a few simple rules will keep babies sleeping safely:

- To prevent suffocation, never place pillows or thick quilts in a baby's sleep environment. Also, make sure there are no gaps larger than two fingers between the sides of the crib and the mattress.
- Proper assembly of cribs is paramount – Follow the instructions provided and make sure that every part is installed correctly. If you are not sure, call the manufacturer for assistance.
- Do not use old, broken, or modified cribs – Infants can strangle to death if their bodies pass through gaps between loose components or broken slats while their heads remain entrapped.
- Properly set up play yards according to manufacturers' directions. Only use the mattress pad provided with the play yard; do not add extra padding.
- Never place a crib near a window with blind or curtain cords; babies can strangle on a curtain or blind cord.

Nighttime Care or Napping.

For nighttime care or napping, the following is recommended:

- Each child should be provided with an individual crib, cot, rest mat, or bed for resting or napping
- Upper levels of double-deck beds should not be used
- When occupied cribs, cots, rest mats, and beds should be:
 - At least three feet from any heat-producing appliance; and
 - At least 12 inches from each other
- Rest mats should have at least an inch of cushioning
- Rest mats should be cleaned and sanitized on all sides at least weekly and more often as needed
- Cribs should be provided for children from birth through 12 months of age and for children over 12 months of age who are not developmentally ready to sleep on a cot, rest mat, or bed
- Cribs should never be used as a play space for infants
- To avoid suffocation or SIDS do not use crib bumper pads
- Crib sides should always be up and the fastenings secured when a child is in the crib, except when the caregiver is giving the child immediate attention

In addition, cribs should:

- Meet the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission standards at the time they were manufactured
- Not have been recalled
- Have no more than six centimeters or 2-3/8 inches of space between slats
- Have mattresses that fit snugly next to the crib so that no more than two fingers can be inserted between the mattress and the crib

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- Not have end panel cut-outs of a size to cause head entrapment
- Not have mesh sides

Linens and bedding

- Cribs used by infants need to have a tight-fitting bottom sheet
- Linens should be assigned for individual use
- Linens should be clean and washed at least weekly or when soiled; crib sheets should be cleaned and washed daily
- Clean linens should be used each time a child rests on the bed of a family member
- No soft bedding of any kind should be used under or around infants including, but not limited to, pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, bumper pads, or stuffed toys
- Children under two years of age should not use pillows or filled comforters
- Pillows, when used for children over two years of age, should be assigned for individual use and covered with pillowcases
- Mattresses, when used, should be covered with a waterproof material that can be cleaned and sanitized

Some additional guidelines for safe and healthy overnight care:

- Establish a bedtime schedule for the child in consultation with the child's parent(s)
- Provide separate sleeping and dressing areas for children of the opposite sex over six years of age
- Provide a toothbrush and a comb or hairbrush assigned for individual use
- Ensure each child nine months of age or older has flame-resistant or snug-fitting sleepwear
- Bath towels and washcloths, when used, should be assigned for individual use and laundered as needed, but at least weekly
- Ensure each child has a routine that encourages good personal hygiene practices including bathing (if needed) and teeth brushing
- Caregivers should remain awake until all children are asleep and sleep on the same floor level as the children in care
- Use a baby monitor if the caregiver is not sleeping in the room with the child or in a room adjacent to the room where the child is sleeping