

Ensuring Health and Safety in Connecticut's Child Care Programs: A Focus on Medication Administration

A 2009 study funded by Children's Fund of Connecticut examined results of over 1,400 unannounced licensing inspections in Connecticut's child care centers. Among the health and safety concerns identified by the research, led by Angela Crowley (Yale School of Nursing) and Marjorie Rosenthal (Yale School of Medicine), were two directly related to the administration of medication to children:

- 1 in 5 centers had no staff members trained in medication administration
- 4 in 10 medications were being administered without an approved prescriber's order

Ensuring safe medication administration in child care settings continues to grow in importance, particularly as increasing numbers of children with various health conditions enroll in child care. CT childcare regulations require that providers who administer medication be trained on how to properly administer medication by a healthcare professional. Additionally, the study indicated that continuing education of child care center staff was the most frequent predictor of compliance with health and safety regulations designed to minimize risks. Child care providers trained on best practices for health and safety – including medication administration – demonstrated a clear and consistent pattern of compliance. Moreover, safer medication administration was more likely with weekly visits to the program by a trained nurse consultant. Overall, training and weekly nurse consultant visits reduced the chance for medication errors and provided ongoing guidance on the wider range of health and safety issues.

Based on the research findings, in 2010 the CT Department of Social Services awarded funding, from a one-time allocation from federal child care stimulus funds, to address medication administration training and develop an updated curriculum and system of dissemination.

A Plan, a Program and the Need for a Sustainable System

Angela Crowley and Lori Yu, a nurse consultant, developed a standardized curriculum for health professional to use when training child care providers based on a review of three nationally recognized training courses. Working with partners from other New England states, they chose an American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) course and adapted it for Connecticut's child care environment by adding content on asthma, inhalants, anaphylaxis and emergency injectable medications.

This curriculum is now being offered in three train-the-trainer sessions in April and May. Although the initial plan called for two train-the-trainer sessions for 50 health providers, an overwhelming response led to an expansion to three sessions to accommodate 90. There is a current waiting list of 23. Additional costs due to the expansion were covered by corporate donations and additional funds from CHDI and the University of Connecticut Health Center.

Qualified health and child care professionals will also be able to access material in PDF form on the Department of Public Health's TRAINConnecticut website. AAP has requested that a summary of the project be posted on their website in June or July of 2011.

Continued system oversight is needed to ensure and monitor ongoing dissemination, additional train-the-trainer sessions, and to identify potentially unmet needs such as training of family child care providers and identifying underserved areas or groups (e.g. Spanish speakers).

Based on survey results of other states and evaluation of the initial training program, a steering committee is developing a set of recommendations for state agencies to ensure that the program is built into Connecticut's child care training system.

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