

Building a System of Safe Medication Administration in Child Care Settings

In 2009 CHDI published a report citing serious concerns with how medication was being administered in Connecticut's child care settings. The findings sparked a joint effort to develop a high quality system of medication administration accessible to child care providers statewide. This Issue Brief describes progress made and what's still needed to fix this important safety issue for some of Connecticut's most vulnerable children.

The Need:

Approximately ten percent of the 122,000 children enrolled in child care in Connecticut have a special health care need, and most of these children require medication administered by their child care provider. Unfortunately, children's safety is at risk due to high rates of noncompliance with State medication administration regulations.

A 2009 study of unannounced, routine inspections of child care programs by CT DPH Licensing Specialists in Connecticut, summarized in [CHDI's Issue Brief #2 \(Crowley and Rosenthal\)](#) found that:

- 1 in 5 five centers did not have a provider trained in medication administration;
- only 20% of family child care providers and 74% of center-based providers were administering medications;
- 40% of the centers administering medications were doing it without an approved written medication order, 30% had medications not in their original labeled container, and 10% had medications accessible to children.

A more recent series of focus groups with parents and child care providers, conducted by the Yale School of Nursing, revealed that:

- family child care providers find administering medications to be a daunting responsibility;
- parents have difficulty finding a program that will take their child with special health care needs. (*The Americans with Disabilities Act, prohibits programs from refusing admission or discontinuing enrollment of a child with a special health care need who requires medication. However, parents regularly report being turned away from providers who are not comfortable administering needed medications*).

Addressing the Need

The 2009 study found that compliance with medication administration regulations correlated with access to a nurse trainer who delivered a high quality medication administration training curriculum and visited the center weekly. To address this, the Children's Fund of Connecticut, through CHDI, has provided grant funding to lead investigator Angela Crowley at the Yale School of Nursing. The goals of this ongoing effort are:

- All Connecticut child care providers will have access to a high quality medication administration training
- Providers will be competent and confident in enrolling children with special health care needs who require medication
- Children who require medication will be safely enrolled in early care and education programs
- Families of children who need medications will be supported

This work is timely, as building the state's capacity to train child care providers to better meet health standards, including medication administration, is an essential component of Connecticut's investment in improving and monitoring the quality of early care and education programs.

Progress

Over the past three years the Yale School of Nursing developed and launched a high quality medication administration training curriculum and created the beginnings of a statewide infrastructure for delivering training.

High Quality Curriculum

The new state-of-the-art curriculum "*CT Medication Administration Training in Early Care and Education and Child Care Settings (2011)*" has been used to train 121 nurse consultants in the past two years. Next steps, subject to available resources, include: revising the curriculum to address medications for the growing number of children with Type 1 diabetes and those with epilepsy, promoting its dissemination, and developing a Spanish translation of the curriculum for the growing number of Latino child care providers and recruiting bilingual trainers.

Statewide Infrastructure to Deliver Training

Through a partnership with CT Charts-A-Course, there is now a registry of nurse trainers with 60 nurses approved to deliver medication administration training to child care providers. With an additional grant from the Children's Fund and other potential public and private support, plans for the coming year include: expanding the registry and providing more training and on-going support for trainers, and working with Connecticut's 19 schools of nursing to create regional resource centers for training activities and support.

For further information about this initiative, please contact Judith Meyers at meyers@adp.uchc.edu

Child Health and Development Institute
270 Farmington Ave., Suite 367
Farmington, CT 06032
860-679-1519