



June 8, 2011

Dear Day Care Providers:

This notice is to remind you that this is the time of year when diarrhea diseases increase in numbers, especially in day care settings. Health Departments in Southwest Ohio and Northern Kentucky are reporting more than 100 recent cases of shigella; many of these are among children who attend or adults who work in day care programs.

As you know, Ohio law specifies that child care center workers or attendees with diarrhea are NOT permitted to attend the child care center (see OAC 3701-3-13, I). Persons with diarrhea should be referred to medical care for testing. This is important in order to identify which germs are causing the symptoms.

Most diarrhea illnesses occur when viruses or bacteria are passed from stools or soiled fingers of one person to the mouth of another person. This happens when good hygiene and hand washing are not consistently practiced by staff, children and family members. It is particularly likely to occur among toddlers and young children who need assistance with toileting and hand washing. Family members and playmates of young children are also at risk of becoming infected.

Frequent, thorough hand washing and attention to the required diaper changing technique is the most effective means of preventing spread of all diarrhea illnesses.

Below are additional action steps you can take to prevent these diseases from entering your facility; or reduce their spread if they are introduced.:

- Question parents who wish to enroll their children in your program about symptoms of diarrheal illness in their family and their reasons for leaving their previous day care provider;
- Discontinue any water-related activities that involve standing water;
- Clean and sanitize toys frequently, especially in infant and toddler rooms;
- Frequently clean and disinfect sinks, bathrooms and diaper changing areas;
- Minimize mixing or combining staff and children from different groups;
- Clean surfaces touched by little hands touch frequently;
- Post information about shigellosis to educate parents.

Thank you for your cooperation. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local health department.