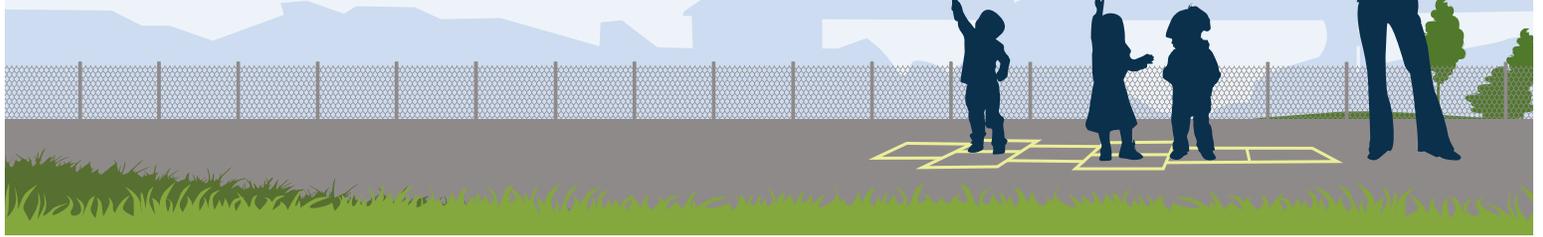




## Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education



### Choosing the right location for your child care center is essential. There's more to consider than cost and classroom size.

Some chemicals in the environment can make people sick, especially young children. This is called environmental contamination. When choosing a location for a child care facility, it's important to choose carefully and make sure it is safe and free of environmental contamination to protect children and your organization.

**Even if a child care program meets all current licensing regulations, it may be located in a place where children and staff can unknowingly come in contact with dangerous chemicals.** The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education program has developed a **voluntary Property Checklist** to help you collect information and see if there could be environmental contamination near your potential child care facility. It also provides guidance on what you may need to do to make sure the property is safe.

The checklist includes questions that cover the four key considerations for choosing a safe place for child care. It can help you protect children, your employees, and your financial investment.

#### Four key considerations for choosing a safe child care location:



**Previous use of a location can leave harmful chemicals behind.**

Some industries use harmful chemicals. If they're not cleaned up properly before the location is used for early care and education, it can put children and staff at risk of health effects. What was on this site in the past?



**Movement of harmful substances onto the site from other sites.**

Environmental contamination may come from a nearby location or business, such as a gas station, dry cleaner, or a hair/nail salon. Chemicals can move through air, water, and soil and onto the child care site. What is nearby this site now?



**Presence of naturally occurring harmful substances.**

Environmental contamination can occur naturally, such as arsenic in soil or groundwater. It can be as dangerous as contamination from human activities. What naturally occurs in the soil or groundwater?



**Access to safe drinking water.**

Clean drinking water is essential for the health of children and staff. Drinking water can become contaminated with dangerous chemicals such as old plumbing or use of fertilizers. What is the drinking water source? Could the groundwater be contaminated?



# Rhode Island Early Childcare Voluntary Property Checklist

Completing the voluntary Property Checklist can help you see if there is environmental contamination at a site before making an investment.

**Please answer all questions to the best of your ability. If you do not know the answers, we recommend you talk with:**

- The property owner,
- RIDOH—Center for Healthy Homes and Environment,
- Town/county planner or zoning office, or
- Town engineer or building department.

**To submit your completed checklist, ask a question, or share a concern, email RIDOH Choose Safe Places for Early Child Care and Education at [melissa.orpentuz@health.ri.gov](mailto:melissa.orpentuz@health.ri.gov)**

After you submit the checklist, the RIDOH Choose Safe Places for Early Child Care and Education program will review your completed checklist and use publicly available databases to screen the location for potential environmental hazards that could harm children or staff. The results of this evaluation will be shared with you. This may include some recommendations to consider before moving ahead with your plans. The RIDOH team is also available to provide a live, virtual walk through of the location and surrounding areas, highlighting potential hazards, using an interactive map.

**For more information about environmental contamination and how to protect your community from their effects, please visit our website at [health.ri.gov/ehrap](http://health.ri.gov/ehrap).**

## 1 When was the building constructed? Enter the year in the blank and check the box below. \_\_\_\_\_

To find this information, contact your real estate agent or county assessor's office.

 **After 1978 – Good!**

 **Before 1978 – Get more information.**

### What you can do

There may be lead-based paint or asbestos present. Lead and asbestos can both harm health if the building has not been properly maintained. Buildings built before 1978 may have lead-based paint. Look for chipping or peeling paint and dust on the inside or outside of the building. In buildings built before 1985, look for damage to pipes wrapped with solid insulation materials that may contain asbestos.

- ✓ Have a certified lead inspector test the building before you commit. The inspector will help you determine if lead is present, if there are any health risks, and what you need to do to make it safe. Find inspectors at <https://health.ri.gov/find/environmentallead/professionals/>.
- ✓ Have the building inspected by an accredited asbestos inspector before you commit. Find inspectors at <https://bit.ly/3zqAbht>.

## 2 Has the property ever been used for any of the following? If yes, check the box.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dry cleaner                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Metal plating         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Landfill/Dump                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Shooting range        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas station                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Farming/Agricultural  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Factory/Manufacturing/Industrial | <input type="checkbox"/> Hair salon/Nail salon |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auto repair/Auto painting shop   | <input type="checkbox"/> Funeral home          |

**If the property was used for other purposes in the past, please list them:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please enter additional details. How long ago was it used for this purpose? Was the property remediated or cleaned up?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*For more information about the past use of a site, contact your city's planning office and/or zoning committee.*



**3 Have you seen anything on the property that makes you think that chemicals could have been used there in the past? You might see clues like old metal drums, machine parts, piles of junk, a loading dock, etc.**

 **No – Good!**

 **Not sure – Get more information.**

Get more information before you commit. Town/county planners, tax assessors, and fire marshals can help you get historical records.

 **Yes – Get more information.**

These businesses may have left chemicals behind. Get more details (when, who, what products or chemicals) by contacting your town/county planner, tax assessor, and fire marshal.

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**4 Are there nearby businesses (~200 ft radius) that currently use chemicals?**

 **No – Good!**

 **Not sure – Get more information.**

Get more information before you commit. Walk around the building to see what is nearby.

 **Yes – Get more information.**

Chemicals can move through the air, water, or soil, meaning chemicals used next door can move onto your location.

**If you answered “not sure” or “yes,” mark which businesses are nearby.**

Factory/Manufacturing/Industrial

Landfill/Dump

Gas station

Dry cleaner

Nail/Hair salon

Auto repair/Auto painting shop

Metalworking

Shooting range

Copy/Print shop

Farming/Agricultural

Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Please provide additional details. How far away is the business from your location? Is it in the same building? Does it share an HVAC system or common space with your location?**

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**5 Has the building ever been tested for radon?**

Radon is a naturally occurring gas and is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the US.

 **Yes, with results below 4.0 pCi/L – Good!**

Radon levels can change over time, so make sure to test every 5 years.

 **No – Get more information. Test for radon before you commit.**

If radon is present at more than 4.0 pCi/L, you may need a mitigation system. Visit <https://bit.ly/3hRPCJk> for a list of radon testing businesses.

 **Yes, levels of radon at or above 4.0 pCi/L – Get more information.**

Get help with follow-up tests and/or a mitigation system. Find radon mitigation businesses here: <https://bit.ly/3ztHXXE>.



## 6 Where does the drinking water come from?

 **Public water system (PWS) – Get more information.**

Some water service lines are made with lead. Lead can harm health, especially children younger than six years old. Visit <https://health.ri.gov/water/about/yourwater/> for more information about drinking water in Rhode Island.

### What you can do

- ✓ Have your water tested for lead to make sure it's safe for children.
- ✓ Call your water supplier to get a copy of the annual water quality report. In some cases, your organization may be the PWS and is responsible for hiring a licensed drinking water operator and maintaining a sampling schedule.

 **Private well – Get more information.**

Germs and chemicals can enter and contaminate private wells. Visit RIDOH Center for Drinking Water Quality's comprehensive page for private well resources at <https://health.ri.gov/water/for/privatewellowners/>.

### What you can do

- ✓ Have the water tested by a laboratory before you commit.
- ✓ Have the well professionally inspected before you open your business.
- ✓ Budget for testing the water annually.

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## 7 Where does sewage go?

 **Municipal wastewater – Good!**

 **Septic system – Get more information.**

Septic systems require upkeep and are designed for use by a certain number of people. You may need to update or enlarge the system to meet the needs of your child care facility. Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management can help you with permitting, inspections, and site evaluations. Visit <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/water/owts/> for more information.

### What you can do

- ✓ Find out how old the system is and when it was last serviced.
- ✓ Check the design to make sure that your child care business won't overload the system's capacity.

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**Thank you for completing the voluntary Property Checklist.**

