



Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education



Preparing and keeping your home ready and safe for child care

Some chemicals in and around our homes can make people sick, especially young children. These are called environmental hazards. They can be fixed, but they have to be found first.

Even if a child care program meets all current licensing regulations, it may have dangerous chemicals or other environmental hazards that children and staff can unknowingly come into contact with. The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) Choose Safe Places for Early Child Care and Education program has developed a voluntary checklist to help you prepare and keep your home safe and ready for child care.

Completing this checklist and taking recommended actions can help you protect children, your employees, and your business investment.

Key considerations for making your home safe for child care:



Buildings materials and age

Over time, we've learned that some building materials can be hazardous. Older buildings may have lead-based paint or asbestos, which can harm health if they're not properly maintained.

Ask: When was my home built?



Indoor air quality

Some chemicals exist naturally around us and can get into our homes, like radon. Radon is a colorless, odorless gas that can cause cancer if breathed over many years. Mold, on the other hand, grows in damp places and can harm health if breathed in.

Ask: Has my home been tested for radon? Do I see mold anywhere?



Safe drinking water

Clean drinking water is essential for our health. Drinking water can become contaminated with dangerous chemicals by various activities and sources, such as old plumbing or use of fertilizers.

Ask: What is my drinking water source?

Rhode Island Early Childcare Voluntary Property Checklist

Completing the voluntary checklist can help you see if there are environmental hazards present at your home that could harm children and determine what to do.

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.

For more information about the program, please visit our website at 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 – Caution.**

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.

✓ A lead inspection is required to become a licensed provider.

✓ 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. Find inspectors at <https://health.ri.gov/find/asbestos>.

2 Has the building ever been tested for radon?

Radon is a colorless, odorless, radioactive gas and is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the US. Radon is naturally in the ground and can sometimes enter a home.

 **No – Caution. Radon testing is a requirement to becoming a licensed provider.**

If radon is present at more than 4.0 pCi/L, you may need a mitigation system. Visit <https://health.ri.gov/find/radon/> for a list of radon testing businesses.

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

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

 **Yes, levels of radon at or above 4.0 pCi/L – Caution.**

Get help with follow-up tests and/or a mitigation system. Visit <https://health.ri.gov/find/radon/> to find radon mitigation businesses.

3 Where does the drinking water come from?

Dangerous chemicals and germs can get into drinking water. Find out if your water is from a public water system or a private well.

 **Public water system.**

✓ Talk to your water supplier about getting a test kit to see if there is lead in your drinking water. Lead can seriously harm children, especially those younger than six years old.

Visit <https://health.ri.gov/water/about/lead/> to learn about what you should do.

✓ Visit <https://health.ri.gov/water/about/yourwater/> for more information about drinking water in Rhode Island.

 **Private Well.**

Visit RIDOH Center for Drinking Water Quality's page for private well resources at <https://health.ri.gov/water/for/privatewellowners/>.

✓ Testing of well water is a requirement to becoming licensed. Have the water tested by a laboratory.

✓ Have the well professionally inspected.

✓ Confirm if your building has lead pipes that supply drinking water.

If it does, visit <https://health.ri.gov/water/about/lead/> to learn about what you should do.

✓ Budget for testing the water annually.



4 Where does sewage go?

 **Municipal wastewater – Good!**

 **Septic System – Caution.**

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 caring for children. 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.

✓ 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.

5 Do you have a carbon monoxide detector?

Carbon monoxide is a potentially deadly, odorless, tasteless gas.

 **Yes – Good!**

✓ Replace the detector's batteries at least twice per year

 **No – Caution.**

Carbon monoxide is a poisonous gas that has no color or smell.

✓ Installing a carbon monoxide detector could save a life.

6 Do you have any appliances that burn fuel and are not ventilated?

Carbon monoxide comes from burning fuel and is produced by many common sources including: furnaces, fireplaces, cars, wood stoves, kerosene space heaters, charcoal grills, and gas appliances like water heaters, ovens, generators and clothes dryers. Visit <https://health.ri.gov/healthrisks/poisoning/carbonmonoxide/> to learn more.

 **Yes – Caution**

Carbon monoxide is a potentially deadly, odorless, tasteless gas.

✓ All fuel burning sources should be properly ventilated. When possible, they should be outside and at least 20 feet from your home.

 **No – Good!**

7 Do you have household cleaning products, pest traps or treatments, or other chemicals stored in your home?

Some household products contain chemicals or poisons that can harm children.

 **Non-toxic cleaning products – Good!**

✓ Store all cleaning products securely and out of children's reach.

 **Chemical cleaning products and pest traps or treatments – Caution.**

✓ Use non-toxic products when possible.

✓ Store all cleaning and pest products securely and out of children's reach.



8 Can you see mold growing anywhere in your home? Check under sinks and on bathroom walls.

 **No visible mold – Good!**

✓ Check for mold regularly.

 **Mold growth is visible – Caution.**

Mold can be harmful to health. While mold spores are common, mold grows when there is moisture.

✓ Properly clean the mold and address the source of the moisture. You may need to have the area professionally cleaned. Learn more at <https://health.ri.gov/healthrisks/mold/>.

✓ Check for mold regularly.

9 Was the property your home is on ever used for any of the following? If yes, check the box.

Certain business and industrial uses can leave behind dangerous chemicals that can make people sick. It's important to be aware of this and be mindful of how a child may be exposed to the environmental hazard(s).

Hair salon/Nail salon

Factory/Manufacturing/Industrial

Dry cleaner

Funeral Home

Landfill/Dump

Metal plating

Gas station

Shooting range

Auto repair/Auto painting shop

Farming/Agricultural

If you are concerned about potential previous use at your home, please reach out the Environmental Health Risk Assessment Program (EHRAP) program. Visit <https://health.ri.gov/ehrap> to learn more.

10 Are there nearby businesses (within about 200 feet in any direction) that currently use chemicals?

 **No – Good!**

 **Not sure – Caution.**

✓ Walk around the building to see what is nearby

 **Yes – Caution.**

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

Gas station

Landfill/Dump

Dry cleaner

Metalworking

Nail/Hair Salon

Shooting range

Copy/Print shop

Farming/Agricultural

Auto repair/Auto painting shop

Other _____

Factory/Manufacturing/Industrial

Please provide additional details. How far away is the business from your home?
Does it share any common space with your home?



Thank you for completing the voluntary Property Checklist.