Toxic Substances, Poison Control, and Injury Reporting

Toxic Substances – A Possible Cause
All children are at risk for poisoning; however, children under the age of five are more vulnerable to poisoning. Young children are still using taste to explore the world around them and are likely to put substances in their mouths. Poisoning can occur from ingestion, absorption, inhalation, and animal and insect bites. The same materials and substances that are needed to maintain cleanliness and prevent illness can be toxic to children. Identifying substances that are harmful to children will enable proper storage that is away from children. The following items should be used as recommended by the manufacturer, be stored in the original labeled containers, and used in a manner that will not contaminate play surfaces, food, or food preparation areas:

- Cleaning products
- Detergents
- Automatic dishwasher detergents
- Aerosol cans
- Pesticides
- Health and beauty aids with chemicals
- Medications
- Lawn care chemicals
- Hand sanitizers

Store poisonous products safely by placing all cleaning products, other chemicals, medications, and classroom materials that could be harmful to children in locked cabinets out of reach. Save all of the needed product documentation and review steps to take in the event that a child is exposed.

Poison Control
If a teacher/caregiver suspects a child has been exposed to toxic substances or any potential poisoning, they should call Poison Control immediately. (800-222-1222)
Have the following information ready when you call the poison control center:

- The child’s age and sex.
- The substance involved.
- The estimated amount.
- The child’s condition.
- The time elapsed since ingestion or exposure.
The caregiver/teacher should not induce vomiting unless instructed to do so by the Poison Control Center.

Poison Prevention

95% of poisonings are preventable. Poisonings can be prevented through the education of children, staff, and parents.

*Caring for Our Children and California Childcare Health Program*

What are some other ways to prevent poisonings?

- Inspect your environment throughout the day and remove (or store in a locked container) any potential poisons and items labeled: "Keep out of reach of children."
- Do not take medicine in front of children.
- Do not put non-food items in food containers.
- Do not turn your back on a child when a hazardous product is in use.
- Label indoor and outdoor plants for quick and easy identification. Avoid highly toxic plants, such as Geraniums, Daffodils, Poinsettia, and palms.
- Display the National Poison Control Center phone number near telephones and post on walls: 800-222-1222.
- Educate children and parents on poison prevention throughout the year.

*Adapted from Texas Department of Family and Protective Services*

Injury Report

Even with careful planning, injuries can still occur. When a child or adult suffers an injury (needing first aid or medical attention) while in out-of-home care, the incident should be documented on an “Injury Report Form.” Complete three copies of the Injury Report Form for the parent/guardian (or injured adult), the child’s (or adult’s) file, and the third copy should be kept in an injury log.

There is a sample Injury Report on the Chapter Resource page.