



Early Childhood Health and Safety Resources

Resources for Maine Pre K and Early Childhood Education Programs



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Introduction

This document brings together health-related resources and supporting documents that may be helpful when planning for safe and healthy early childhood education settings in Maine. The resources included here are intended to support programs in their work and are not a substitute for applicable federal, state, or local requirements.

Early childhood education programs in Maine operate under differing approval and licensing structures, such as school approval standards, center-based or family child care licensing, and Head Start performance standards. Health and safety requirements may vary depending on the type of program and its licensing or oversight authority. Programs are responsible for knowing and following the rules that apply to their specific setting and should include health-related discussions in their planning processes.

This resource guide is informational in nature and is not a regulatory or compliance manual. Programs should always consult applicable [Maine Department of Education \(DOE\) Early Childhood Education](#) requirements, licensing rules, approval standards, and other official guidance for complete and up-to-date information.

The table below identifies common early childhood education settings and provides links to the licensing or approval rules that apply to each. Readers are encouraged to first review the rules and requirements relevant to their program and then use the resources in this document as a supplement to those requirements.

The pages that follow include child health resources that may be useful across a range of early childhood education settings. Topics include immunizations, infection control, toileting, nutrition, environmental health, screenings, mental and behavioral health, emergency preparedness, and injury prevention. Resources are drawn from state and federal agencies and professional organizations to support safe, healthy, and developmentally appropriate learning environments. This document is designed to be viewed digitally for access to hyperlinks.

Early Childhood Education Setting	Licensing Standards, rules, and/or Regulations
Maine Public Preschool Programs	Maine Department of Education: Basic Approval Standards: Public Preschool Programs
Maine Center-Based Child Care Programs	Maine Child Care Facility Licensing Rule
Maine Family Child Care	Maine Family Child Care Licensing Rule
Head Start Programs	Head Start Policy and Regulations

Attendance Foundational Practices

Research supports that strong attendance practices are one of the major indicators of academic success. Missing just one or two days of preschool or kindergarten every few weeks can make it harder for children to develop reading skills and to be prepared for first grade. Head Start and Pre-K programs that provide parents and caregivers with guidance or resources supporting consistent and routine attendance establish a strong foundation for future success.

- Count ME In!: [Resources for Maine Families](#)
- Attendance Works: [Handouts for Families](#)
- Maine DOE: [Maine Engagement and Attendance Center](#)
- Parent Powered: [K12 Attendance](#)

Emergency Procedures

Schools and center-based or family childcare sites must take a proactive approach to better prepare all staff for unplanned circumstances. The Maine DOE School Health Emergency Quick Guide is designed to support school staff who are not licensed medical professionals in responding to an emergency. Brief explanations of common emergencies are presented, followed by clear steps to assist in a timely response with confidence.

- Maine [School Health Emergency Quick Guide PDF](#) or [Interactive Mobile Version](#)
- Maine DOE: [Emergency Care](#)
- Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS): [Child Care Provider Licensing](#)

Environment

A safe and healthy environment provides ideal conditions for children of all ages to learn, grow, and thrive.

- US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): [Take Steps for Cleaner Air](#)
- Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, & Forestry (DACF): [Pest Management](#)
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): [Smoke-Free Environments Toolkit](#)
- Maine CDC: [Climate and Health](#)
- Head Start: [Safe Environments](#)

Family Engagement

Strong family partnerships significantly contribute to improved future outcomes. Early childhood educators who view families as equal partners and who promote engagement with and among families experience multiple benefits for children: better attendance, better behavior, improved mental health, stronger social skills, and faster literacy development.

- Head Start: [Parent, Family, and Community Engagement \(PFCE\) Framework](#)
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): [Family Engagement](#)

Family Support

Strategies and resources to support family wellbeing are key to foster child health and safety. Connecting to resources can assist families in reaching their highest potential.

- Access Maine: [About Access Maine](#)
- Be There for ME: [Be There for ME](#)
- Maine Prevention Councils: [Maine Prevention Council Network](#)
- Maine DHHS: [Maine's Child Safety and Family Well-Being Plan](#)
- Maine DHHS: [Mandated Reporting Training](#)
- 211 Maine: [211 Maine](#)

Health Consulting and Advising

As required by Section 12C of the Maine DHHS [Child Care Provider Licensing Rule](#), center-based child care sites licensed for 13 or more children must partner with a Child Care Health Consultant. Child Care Health Consultants (CCHCs) are health professionals (a physician, physician's assistant, nurse practitioner, or registered nurse with pediatric or child care experience) who work to support early learning teams to improve the health and safety of children within their care. This support includes providing education to staff on health issues, best practice, and improving/developing health and safety policies. CCHCs also work to support health assessment access to include oral health, growth and development, and vision and hearing screenings. Included in this supportive role is strengthening inclusion of children with special health care needs and strengthening environmental health practices. All Head Start programs have Health Services Managers who support the health and safety of children and families, and programs are required to establish and maintain a Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee (HMHSAC).

Regardless of the size and setting of the early childhood program, it is best practice to partner with a qualified healthcare professional to review and to ensure health policies, protocols, and requirements promote a safe and healthy environment for all students. It is recommended to

include a qualified healthcare professional in the planning and implementation of early childhood education in all settings. Please refer to the licensing documents for the specific early childhood setting provided in the “Introduction” section of this document. Additionally, each school board must appoint one or more physicians or family nurse practitioners to act as a school health advisor.

- Maine Legislature: [School Health Advisor](#)
- Maine DOE: [Information and Recommendations, School Health Advisor Role](#)
- Maine DOE: [Maine School Health Advisor Role Template](#)
- Head Start and Child Care: [Resources for Child Care Health Consultants](#)
- Head Start: [Health Services Management](#)

Health Qualifications for Staff

In addition to any licensing and specific Early Childhood staffing requirements not covered in this resource guide, it is recommended that staff who are in a position to provide health services or emergency services to students participate in approved training for specific tasks such as Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), medication administration, first aid, etc. Staff assisting in healthcare procedures or administering medication(s) should first be trained by a qualified healthcare professional. The qualified healthcare professional should refer to Maine DOE’s [Rule for Medication Administration in Maine Schools](#) for specific training guidelines and [Delegation, Coordination, and Oversight](#) to determine if a task is appropriate for delegation and oversight in the school setting. A separate section of this document provides resources related to Child Care Health Consultants and School Health Advisors.

- American Heart Association: [CPR in Schools](#)
- American Red Cross: [CPR Training in Maine](#)
- Maine DOE: [Medication Administration](#)
- Maine DHHS: [Mandated Reporter Information](#)
- Stop the Bleed: [American College of Surgeons \(ACS\) Stop the Bleed Program](#)

Immunizations

Immunization remains the single most effective way to protect against many diseases and some cancers. Evidence-based immunization schedules are designed to provide immunity (protection) early in life before children are likely to be exposed to serious, potentially life-threatening diseases. Vaccines are safe and effective at preventing serious diseases.

Immunization recommendations and requirements differ for preschool-aged students and school-aged students. Recommendations and requirements may also differ based on the licensing of the educational setting. In a situation where the program is a partnership regulated by more than one licensing rule (ex: private childcare partnership with a public school) all requirements must be met for each licensing organization: therefore, the more stringent requirement must be used.

Immunization Resources for Public and Private Schools (Pre K, Head Start):

- State of Maine: [Immunization Requirements for School Children](#)
- Maine CDC: [Immunization Requirements for Schools, Child Care & Camp](#)
- Maine CDC & Maine DOE: [Immunization Requirements for School Children FAQs](#)
- For Students less than 4 years of age, refer to [CDC Recommended Immunizations](#)

Immunization Resources for Center-Based or Family Child Care Centers:

- Maine CDC: [Child Care Immunization Standards](#)
- Maine CDC: [Immunization Requirements for Schools, Child Care & Camp](#)
- Maine CDC: [Regulations for the Licensing of Child Care Facilities](#)
- Maine DHHS: [Child Care Provider Licensing](#) (See Section 12A)

Immunization Resources for Youth Camps:

- Maine CDC: [Immunization Requirements for Schools, Child Care & Camp](#)
- Per Maine CDC, campers are usually required to be up-to-date on the same immunizations required for school. However, there is no state law mandating vaccines for summer camps; therefore, individual camps may have slightly different requirements.
 - For more information about Youth Camp regulations, contact Maine CDC Health Inspections at 207-287-5671.

Infection Control

Children in schools and child care settings often share objects and are in close contact with others, which can make them effective vectors for common viral and bacterial infections. US CDC recommends everyday actions for schools to prevent and to control the spread of infections to help keep students and communities healthy, including:

- [Take Steps for Cleaner Air](#)
- [Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting](#)
- [Hand Washing](#)
- [Respiratory Etiquette](#)
- [Immunizations](#) (see the “Immunizations” section for additional details)

See below for additional resources:

- Maine CDC: [Infectious Disease Materials](#)
- Maine DHHS: [Communicable Disease Quick Guide](#)
- Maine DOE: [Communicable Disease Resources](#)

Injury Prevention

Maintaining an environment to avoid preventable injuries should be a collaborative effort among all staff. For preschool-aged children, specific attention should be paid to maintaining safe play equipment, providing a developmentally appropriate environment, and having policies in place to provide appropriate staff training.

- Maine DOE: [Concussion Management](#)
- Maine DOE: [Restraint and Seclusion](#)
- Maine DHHS: [Child Care Provider Licensing](#) (See Section 12F-12G)
- Maine DHHS: [Reporting Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect](#)
- Maine DHHS: [Mandated Reporter Information and Training](#)
- Maine Prevention Store: [Safe Sleep](#)
- AAP: [Safe Sleep](#)
- Head Start: [Resources for Safe Playgrounds](#)
- Head Start: [Safety and Unintended Injury Prevention](#)
- Kids Health: [Choosing Safe Toys for Toddlers and Preschoolers](#)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): [K-12 Toolkit for Safe Chemical Management](#)
- US CDC: [Outdoor Play and Safety for Children in Early Care and Education \(ECE\)](#)
- Maine Legislature: [Sunscreen in Schools \(Section 5.D.\)](#)
- Maine DOE: [Maine School Safety Center](#)

Maine's Early Learning and Development Standards

The [Maine Early Learning and Development Standards \(MELDS\)](#) is a statewide resource for everyone committed to the development of children birth through school entry to support the development of the whole child. The standards provide essential information to support and enhance children's development and learning and provide a continuum to the Maine Learning Results (MLRs) that is Maine's K-12 learning standards.

McKinney-Vento

The McKinney-Vento Act requires schools to enroll students experiencing homelessness immediately, even if the student is unable to provide documents that are typically required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, records of immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, or other documentation. 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(C).

Per the U.S. Department of Education's data collection, specific examples of preschool programs that meet this definition include preschool programs operated or administered by a Local Education Agency (LEA); Head Start programs receiving funding from an LEA or for which an LEA receives the grant; preschool special education services operated or funded by the LEA or mandated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; preschool programs and services administered or funded by the LEA through the use of Title I or similar government grants; and home-based early childhood educational services funded and administered by an LEA. Families who qualify for McKinney-Vento supports and who have young children/siblings ages birth to five are categorically eligible for Head Start's comprehensive education and health services.

- Maine DOE: [Resources for McKinney-Vento Liaisons](#)
- Head Start: [Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- National Center for Homeless Education: [Preschool and Early Childhood](#)
- SchoolHouse Connection: [Early Childhood](#)

Mental Health

Children today are increasingly exposed to many social forces that negatively affect their role as students. Good mental health is critical to children's success in school and life. Mental health is not simply the absence of mental illness but also encompasses social, emotional, and behavioral health and the ability to cope with life's challenges.

- Maine DHHS: [ECE Consultation for ME](#)
- Maine DOE: [School-Based Mental Health Supports](#)
- Head Start: [Mental Health Resources](#)

Nutrition

A hungry child cannot learn. Maine DOE Child Nutrition supports several federal programs for the health and well-being of Maine's children and youth. Each of these programs helps fight hunger and obesity by reimbursing organizations such as schools, center-based or family child care sites, and after-school programs for providing healthy meals to children.

- Maine DOE: [Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)
- Maine DOE: [Child Nutrition](#)
- Maine DOE: [Food Safety and Standard Operating Procedures](#)
- US Department of Agriculture (USDAC): [Choking Risk in Young Children at Mealtimes](#)

Oral Health

All schools and center-based or family child care sites can play a role in enhancing children's oral health. Through education, screening, and preventative care, we can improve oral health for all people in Maine. Oral health information must be provided as a part of the screening process at public preschools in Maine. For more details, see the "Screening" section of this document.

- Maine CDC: [Oral Health in Schools](#)
- Children's Oral Health Network of Maine: [Oral Health Care: Schools & Communities](#)
- AAP: [Oral Health in Schools](#)
- Head Start and Child Care: [Oral Health Resources](#)

Physical Activity

Physical activity has a positive effect on academic achievement and can help reduce behavioral challenges. Active recess time, physical education classes, and utilizing action-based learning strategies in the classroom and center-based or family child care sites can all be part of the regular day.

- Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures: [Get Kids Moving](#)
- Maine Health: [Let's Go!](#)
- AAP: [Screen Time at School](#)
- Head Start: [I Am Moving, I Am Learning](#)
- Head Start: [Physical Activity Resources](#)
- Winter Kids: [Outdoor Play Resources](#)

Policies for Children with Special Health Care Needs

Students with chronic conditions and other special health needs often have unique educational needs and health considerations that require individual planning. Better management and control of chronic health conditions are key, leading to success for these students, both in school and in their community. Resources exist on the Maine DOE School Health Services website to guide supporting students with chronic health conditions and other special health needs.

- Maine DOE: [Chronic Conditions Management](#)
- Maine DOE: [Medication Administration in Schools](#)
- Maine DHHS: [Child Care Provider Licensing](#) (See Section 12H)
- Maine CDC: [Community Care Program and Referral Form](#)
- Head Start and Child Care: [Chronic Health Conditions Resources](#)

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

Maine's QRIS system, Rising Stars for ME, is designed to increase awareness of the basic standards of early care and education, to recognize and support early care and education programs providing care above and beyond those standards, and to educate the community about the benefits of higher quality care and early learning.

- Maine DHHS: [Rising Stars for ME](#)

Screenings

In public preschools, all children must be screened using a valid and reliable research based tool within the first 30 days of the school year (or before school entry) which includes: early language and literacy/numeracy/cognitive; gross and fine motor; personal/social; social/emotional development; and hearing/vision to identify those who may need additional assessment or to determine eligibility for special education services unless the child has an existing Individualized Education Program (IEP). Additional screenings required in public preschools include ([05-071 Chapter 124](#)):

- **Child Find:** Each public preschool program shall develop a written Child Find referral policy consistent with the [State of Maine Unified Special Education Rules 05-071 Chapter 101 Section IV. 2\(D\)\(E\)](#).
 - Maine DOE: [Guidance for Pre K/K Child Find Screening](#)
 - Maine DOE: [Child Find Form](#)
- **Developmental Screening:** *Developmental Screenings* take a close look at how a child is developing. Help Me Grow Maine uses the Ages & Stages Questionnaire® (ASQ) for this. We also use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional® (ASQ SE-2). These are simple questionnaires that focus on a child's development. They look at language, movement, thinking, behavior, and emotions.
 - Maine DHHS: [Developmental Screening](#)
 - Maine DHHS: [Help Me Grow Maine](#)
- **Lead:** Information about lead poisoning must be provided within the first 30 days of the school year (or before school entry). Examples of information include:
 - US EPA: [Protect Your Family from Lead in Your Home](#)
 - Maine CDC: [Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention](#)
- **Oral Health:** Information about oral health must be provided within the first 30 days of the school year (or before school entry). An example of information to include:
 - US DHHS: [Oral Health: Tips for Families](#)
- **Vision and Hearing:** Periodic vision and hearing screening can help to identify and correct vision and/or hearing difficulties early, leading to more classroom engagement, development, and success for the student.
 - **Preschool:** Per [Maine Rule Chapter 45](#), preschool students must be screened for distance vision and hearing (near vision is recommended) within 30 days of the start of school. Instrument-based screening may be used in place of visual acuity

screenings with children ages 3, 4, and 5 years and children of any age when these children cannot participate in optotype-based vision screening. See below for additional resources:

- Maine DOE: [Health Screenings](#)
- **Head Start:** Per [Head Start Performance Standard 1302.42](#), Head Start students must be screened (or screening obtained) for vision and hearing within 45 calendar days of the child first attending the program. For programs lasting 90 days or less, vision and hearing screenings must occur within 30 days.

Toileting

Transitioning into a school or child care environment can be a time of trepidation and anxiety for many children and their families. Providing support, understanding, a toileting routine, and consistent communication with the family will aid in a child becoming more independent. Ultimately, a public school district cannot refuse to enroll or to serve a child with toileting needs, nor should any punishment be associated with soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet. Each school or child care site is encouraged to adopt sanitation and hygiene procedures for assisting with toileting and/or diapering that adequately protect the health and safety of all children and staff. The determination of which school personnel within a school setting can be asked to assist with toilet training/toileting support is a local employment and collective bargaining matter.

- Maine DOE: [Toileting Support Resource](#)
- Head Start: [Toileting Independence in Preschool-age Children](#)

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