

► What is the Section of Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology

The Louisiana Department of Health's Section of Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology (SEET) investigates how exposure to chemicals in the environment impacts human health.

Since 1980, the Section of Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology has addressed morbidity and mortality associated with environmental chemicals. In recent years, there has been an increase in public awareness of the immediate and long-term health effects related to chemicals in the environment and, as a result, a greater demand for SEET to investigate these effects.

As a public health program using an applied science approach, SEET investigates the health effects of chemical exposures in populations. It supports, collaborates, and participates in environmental health research. SEET is committed to reducing any known environmental threat to the public's health.

It also provides information and data to the public to ensure better government policies and personal choices. Public health education efforts by SEET promote awareness of environmental health issues and are an integral part of its mission.

► Goal of the Section of Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology's Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education program

The Louisiana Department of Health's Section of Environmental Epidemiology and Toxicology (SEET) has partnered with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to reduce children's risk of being exposed to dangerous chemicals during their care through a program called Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education (CSPECE).

Our goal is to protect children in early care and education programs from potential exposure to chemicals such as arsenic, lead, pesticides, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) through the education of childcare professionals regarding risks of exposure and by providing guidance to childcare professionals when choosing a location for a facility.

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EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION SITES: LEARN HOW TO MAKE SURE YOURS IS SAFE



Visit us at ldh.la.gov/ChooseSafePlaces

GET THE FACTS ON SAFE PLACES

► **All early care and education (ECE) programs which provide care to 7 or more children on a regular basis for at least 12.5 hours a week in Louisiana are required to have a state child care license in order to operate (Louisiana Title 28, Part CLXI).**

- In the United States about 8.3 million children are in licensed ECE programs for an average of 36 hours per week.
- Of Louisiana's population, 6.6 percent, or about 309,000, are children under 5 years old.
- In Louisiana, 55,095 children are in ECE programs.
- Approximately 150-200 new ECE facilities are licensed each year. This includes licenses that are transferred from one owner to another.

► **Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education**

Choose Safe Places for Early Care and Education (CSPECE), a federally funded program, encourages better choices about where to locate ECE programs. It gives towns, cities, and states a framework to adopt practices and support policies that will ensure ECE programs are located a safe distance from potential environmental hazards. The program provides professionals who make ECE siting decisions with resources to assist in the evaluation of potential sites.



► **Elements of Safe Early Care and Education Siting**

There are four things to consider before choosing a location for a new child care facility.

- Former use of the site
- Nearby sites and nearby activities
- Naturally occurring contamination
- Safe drinking water

► **Elements of Safe Early Care and Education Siting Questionnaire**

SEET has developed a questionnaire for childcare providers to use when considering a location for their facility. This questionnaire may not be a comprehensive list of potential hazards that you may find on or near your property but should serve as a starting point when selecting a location.

All completed questionnaires will be sent to SEET for review. Upon review of the complete questionnaire, a member of the staff may contact you to provide additional guidance.

To access the questionnaire, go to www.ldh.la.gov/ChooseSafePlaces.

Former Use of Site

Review documents such as land records, databases, or other resources related to current and prior ownership of the property to find out whether any business on the property could have used or disposed of hazardous contaminants. Locations of possible concern include dry cleaners, gas stations, auto repair shops, funeral homes, industrial or manufacturing sites or agricultural sites.

Look for items such as metal drums or barrels, old cars or vehicle parts, old appliances, construction debris or farm machinery.

Construction such as loading docks or large delivery doors may also give you a clue.

Nearby sites and nearby activities

Visit the site or do a windshield tour (observing the area from a car) to see whether there are properties surrounding the site that might be using hazardous materials that could affect the ECE property. Some nearby or adjacent properties of concern include gas stations, auto repair shops, dry cleaners, print shops, funeral homes, hair/ nail salons, and landfills/ dumps. It is possible for hazardous contaminants from these properties to move to other surrounding properties.

Naturally occurring contamination

Find out whether any areas of naturally occurring contamination (such as arsenic in water, radon in buildings, or asbestos in soil) could affect the proposed ECE program site. Get assistance with finding areas of naturally occurring contamination from parish or local health departments, state or county environmental agencies, or the U.S. Geological Survey.

Safe Drinking Water

It is important to know the type of water system used by the ECE site. If the water comes from a private system (a private well or cistern), it should be treated as recommended by the provider/ manufacturer and the well should be tested at regular intervals. If the water comes from a public water system, you can obtain a copy of your water system's "Consumer Confidence Report" from your local health department.

