



Office of Children and Family Services

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

SHEILA J. POOLE
Commissioner

January 24, 2022

Dear Provider:

Our hearts go out to the victims and families of the catastrophic structure fire our state experienced this month. In the aftermath of this tragedy, OCFS is reaching out to our child care programs to remind everyone of the importance of fire safety and emergency preparedness planning.

Below is a brief checklist with some important fire safety reminders. It is not all inclusive but is an opportunity for you and your staff to take a fresh look at your program space using a fire prevention lens. Please refer to the child care regulations for the specific regulatory requirements in these areas.

- Make sure emergency evacuation drills are conducted at least monthly and in accordance with regulation.
- For safety reasons, it is suggested that you check your heating system before the winter season begins. It is recommended that you have your heating system checked annually by a professional. Equipment in disrepair can cause deadly carbon monoxide to build up in your home. Carbon monoxide is odorless, tasteless and colorless, and can be fatal. Also note, that kitchen ovens are not acceptable heating sources and should not be used for those purposes.
- Portable electric heaters or other portable heating devices, regardless of the type of fuel used, are discouraged and generally not permitted in a child care program. Please check the regulations for specific requirements.
- Make sure you check your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors regularly to ensure they are working properly and change the batteries as needed.
- All fire extinguishers with gauges show a full charge and all fire extinguishers with seals have unbroken seals. Make sure fire extinguishers are of appropriate type and are located in areas of your program as outlined in regulation.
- Make sure electrical outlets are not overloaded.
- All paths of egress, including corridors, aisles and approaches are free of obstructions, impediments and debris at all times. Make sure entrances and exits are free of snow and ice.

- Trash, garbage, and combustible materials must not be stored in the furnace room, or in rooms or outdoor areas adjacent to the home that are ordinarily occupied by or accessible to children.
- Always check to make sure outdoor vents are clear of snow and debris.
- If bad weather causes a power outage in your area, be sure to follow your emergency plan. Does everyone in your program (including parents) know your program's emergency plan (i.e., Shelter-in-Place or Emergency Relocation)?
- If a fire does break out in your program, follow your emergency plan.

Thank you for taking suitable precautions to eliminate all conditions which may contribute to or create a fire hazard.

Sincerely,



Janice M. Molnar, Ph.D.
Deputy Commissioner
Division of Child Care Services