

Child Care

NEWS BRIEF



Greetings from your Partners at the Tennessee
Department of Human Services, Child Care
Services Team!

Welcome
SUMMER

Let's soak up the sun, enjoy the outdoors, and
celebrate every bright, beautiful moment.

It is that time of year again when the temperatures turn hotter and outdoor activities increase. This edition of the Child Care Services Newsletter will focus on summer transportation and supervision reminders as well as some important updates. During this time of year, as there is more outdoor activity, it is increasingly important to remain vigilant in ensuring the safety of children. We encourage you to follow transportation protocols at all times, and especially in these warmer summer months when heat can be so harmful to our precious passengers. This newsletter contains a wealth of information that can be an excellent resource for you, your agency, and the families you serve. Please carefully consider the supervision, transportation, training, and weather-related information, then apply it in your day-to-day work. Being mindful of licensure requirements and best practices will support your agency in maintaining compliance and, most importantly, keeping our children safe!

We greatly appreciate our Child Care Agency and Community Partners and wish you a Safe, Happy and Healthy summer!

2026 Summer Transportation Alert

Summertime safety procedures are critical in keeping all children from harm. Each

year we learn of the deaths of young children that resulted from being left unattended in a child care vehicle or a parent's car. If your agency provides transportation, help prevent any tragedies this year by ensuring that all staff members understand what is at stake and how their diligence in following transportation rules can help save a life. Often, these tragedies occur when there are one or more changes in typical parent or child care agency staff routines, or when child care agency staff fail to follow established transportation procedures. When followed properly, well-reasoned agency transportation procedures will help child care programs ensure children's safety even when there are changes to routines or staffing.

According to the [U.S. Department of Transportation](#), **32 children died of heatstroke in vehicles nationally in 2025.**

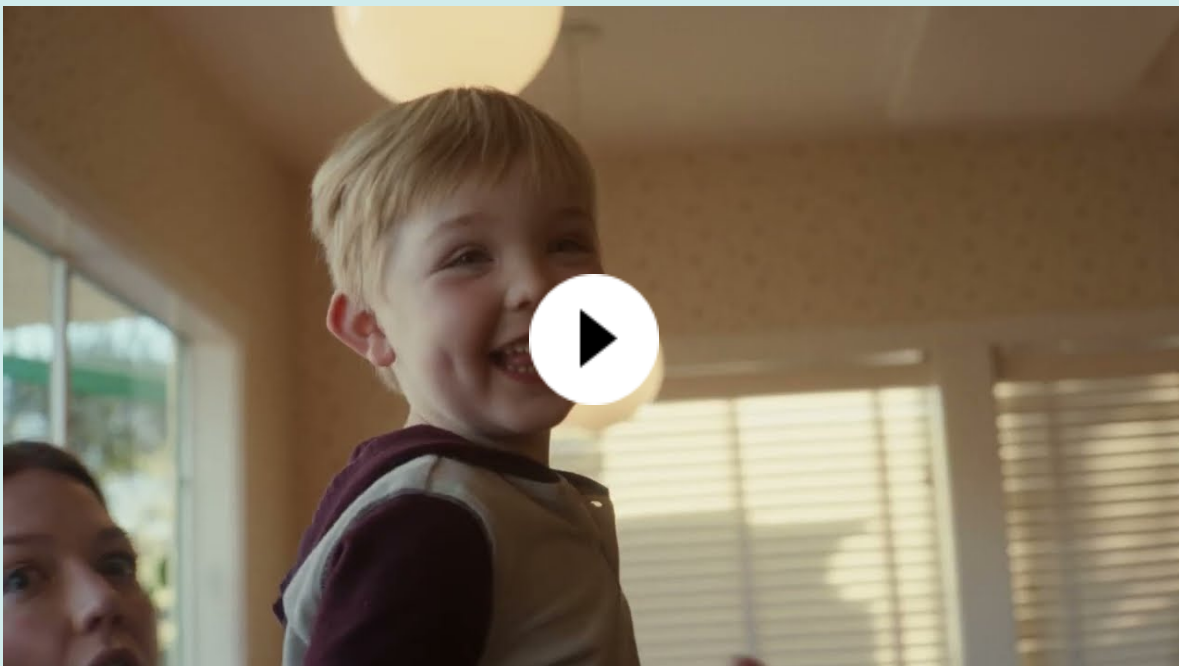
- Total number of U.S. pediatric vehicular heatstroke deaths, 2025 (to date): **37**
- Total number of U.S. pediatric vehicular heatstroke deaths, 2024: **39**
- Total number of U.S. pediatric vehicular heatstroke deaths, 1998-present: **1046**
- Average number of U.S. child heatstroke fatalities per year 1998-2025: **38**
- **More than half (54%) of deaths are children under 2 years of age.**

An examination of media reports since 1998 through 2025 by [NoHeatStroke.org](#) highlights notable circumstances leading to these preventable deaths:

- 9% Forgotten by caregiver (531 children)
- 8% Gained access on their own (248 children)
- 9% Knowingly left by caregiver (228 children)
- 3% Unknown (14 children)

The Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) notes that the temperature inside an average car or truck can increase 20 degrees in 10 minutes. On National Heatstroke Prevention Day, **May 1** - NHTSA markets the campaign to prevent hot car deaths, "[Stop. Look. Lock](#)".

There are additional basic tips that may be found on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website as shown here: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/child-safety/tips-avoid-child-heatstroke>. There is a dropdown option at the top of the webpage to select English or Spanish.



Please review/share this information and the safety tips below with all staff in your program.

Heatstroke Prevention Safety Tips - [English](#) [Spanish](#)

These three tips could save a child's life:

- NEVER leave a child in a vehicle unattended.
- Make it a habit to look in the back seat EVERY time you exit the car.
- ALWAYS lock the car and put the keys out of reach.

For more information, visit [Vehicular Heatstroke Prevention | Traffic Safety Marketing](#).

NHTSA urges everyone to do their part to keep children safe:

- Lock your car when you aren't using it.
 - Even if you don't have a child of your own, a child in your neighborhood could get into your unlocked vehicle, with tragic consequences.
- Never leave your child alone in a car, even if you think you'll only be gone for a minute.
 - Rolling down a window does little to keep a vehicle cool.
 - Heatstroke can happen even on a relatively cool day.
 - The inside of a vehicle can reach dangerous temperatures in as little as 10 minutes.
- When you're driving with your child, remember to always look before you leave your vehicle to make sure your child has been dropped off at daycare or with a caregiver, not left behind in the car seat.
 - Keep an item in the back seat, like a teddy bear. Put the bear up front with you when your child is in the car seat to serve as a reminder.
 - Or, put your purse or phone in the back seat with the child.
 - Some new vehicles come with backseat reminder technology.
- And if you see a child in distress in a vehicle – ACT. Call 911 immediately and get help.

Whether you provide transportation or not, please consider sharing this information with all enrolled parents.

As always, you may submit any general questions to ChildCareServices.DHS@tn.gov or contact your Licensing Consultant/Program Specialist.

Protect Children from Sun and Heat - CDC Ways to Keep Children Safe and Healthy While Playing Outside - [Outdoor Play and Safety for Children in ECE | CDC](#)

Sun Safety Facts

Protection from UV rays is important all year, not just during the summer. UV rays can reach you on cloudy and cool days, and they reflect off of surfaces like water, cement, sand, and snow. In the continental United States, UV rays tend to be strongest from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daylight saving time (9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. standard time). **Sunscreen tips:**

- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes prior to outside play to allow the sunscreen to absorb into the skin.
- Reapply at least every 2 hours or more often if children are sweating or spending time in the water.

Sunscreen is not recommended for babies who are 6 months old or younger. The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) recommends keeping infants out of the sun during midday and using protective clothing if they have to be in the sun.

Infants and Children in Heat

Protect kids on hot days. Take steps to protect kids on hot days:

- Dress children in lightweight, loose-fitting clothing to help keep them from overheating when it's hot.
- Check to make sure the children are drinking plenty of fluids such as water to keep them cool and hydrated. Stay away from really cold drinks or drinks with too

much sugar.

Supervision Reminders

- Develop and follow a written plan that includes the use of a name to face roll call when transitioning children to and from the classroom, including: 1. Restroom breaks; 2. Kitchen/cafeteria; 3. Gyms or other indoor play areas; 4. Transportation drop-off/pick up sites; and 5. Any other location in the area that children are transitioned to or from the classroom.
- Know where children are at all times, be aware of their activities and to be able to intervene appropriately.
- Conduct visual inspections of all areas of the building and grounds after closing the agency each day to ensure no children have been unintentionally left in any part of the agency.
- Check playground prior to use each day. Ensure that gates are properly latched.
- Only release children to their parent/guardian or other authorized person designated by the parent.
- Verify the identity of the individual who is picking up the child if unknown or unfamiliar to the agency.
- The person who is picking up the child should sign the child out by the method established by the agency in accordance with licensing rules.
- Maintain direct supervision of children between six (6) weeks and five (5) years of age during meal and snack time. This includes room arrangement that allows staff to directly supervise each child at all times.
- Have a written plan in place for playground supervision that follows licensing rules and includes:
 - Arrival and departure procedures
 - Individual staff duties to ensure age-appropriate supervision to each child at all times
 - Emergency procedures, including communication with other staff
 - Name-to-face roll call before leaving the classroom, upon arrival at the playground, before leaving the playground and upon arrival in the classroom
- Supervision during Field Trips should follow licensing rules and includes:
 - Age-appropriate supervision to each child at all times
 - The adult:child ratio will double during field trips.
 - The agency should monitor attendance by utilizing a name-to-face roll call:
 - Prior to leaving the agency
 - Upon arrival at each destination
 - At the beginning of each activity (such as lunch, breaks, etc.)
 - Upon departing each destination
 - Upon arrival at the child care agency
- Agencies should follow Supervision in and Near Water licensing rules including:
 - When children are engaged in activities in or near a body of water, the following adult:child ratios shall be met:

Age Group	Adult:Child Ratio
Six (6) Weeks – Twelve (12) months	1:1
Thirteen (13) months-Thirty-Five (35) months	1:2
Three (3) years	1:3
Four (4) years	1:4
Five (5) years	1:5
School-age (Kindergarten and above)	1:10

- One (1) adult present shall have a current certificate in advanced aquatic lifesaving skills. This person shall supervise from above the level of the swimmers. This person may be the lifeguard provided by the facility
- The lifeguard, including those provided by a swimming facility, shall not be included in the required adult:child ratio while performing lifeguard duties
- Agencies should follow Safe Sleep Supervision Procedures as defined in the licensing rules including:
 - Infants shall sleep in cribs or play yards

- o No infant shall be allowed to sleep on a sofa, soft mattress, adult bed, in a car seat, in a swing, or in other restraining devices
- o Infants shall be positioned on their backs for sleeping
- o Infants shall be touched by an educator every fifteen (15) minutes in order to check breathing, body temperature and position
- All infant educators shall practice safe sleep procedures
- Infants who arrive asleep in car seats or fall asleep in any piece of equipment other than a crib must be immediately removed and placed on their back in a crib

Outdoor Play and Playground Routines

Children of all ages, including infants, who are in care more than three (3) daylight hours, shall have a daily opportunity for outdoor play when the temperature range, after adjustment for wind chill and heat index, is between thirty-two degrees and ninety-five degrees Fahrenheit (32°F and 95°F) and it is not raining.

- Exception: Child care agencies where outdoor play is prohibitive or dangerous, as determined in the discretion of the Department, may substitute unoccupied indoor space providing fifty (50) square feet per child, subject to approval by the Department.

Have written policies promoting physical activity and strive to remove any potential barriers for children to participate in physical activity.

Outdoor play and moderate to vigorous indoor or outdoor physical activity shall be available as follows:

- Weather permitting, infants shall be taken outside two to three times per day.
- Toddlers and preschoolers shall have sixty (60) to ninety (90) minutes of outdoor play per day for full-time programs. **Exception: Indoor activity can be increased if adverse weather does not permit outdoor play.**
- Toddlers shall have sixty (60) to ninety (90) minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per eight (8) hour day for full-time programs.
- Preschoolers shall have ninety (90) to one hundred and twenty (120) minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity per eight (8) hour day for full-time programs

Physical Activity Requirements for Part-Time Providers:

Number of Hours in Operation	2 Hours	3 Hours	4 Hours	5 Hours	6 Hours	7 Hours
Approximate Minutes Required	15	25	30	40	45	50

Children shall be properly dressed, and the length of time outside adjusted according to the weather conditions and the age of the children.

Educators shall be alert for any signs of weather-related distress, including dehydration, heat stroke and frostbite.

Each child care agency shall develop simple playground rules that use positive language. Staff shall verbally communicate these rules to children prior to outdoor play.

Staff shall plan and implement activities that engage all children in developmentally appropriate active, physical play such as skipping, running, and jumping.

Happy Summertime! It is hard to believe we are wrapping up QRIS Quarter 3 and moving into the final quarter of this QRIS cycle. During the previous quarters of this cycle, your licensing consultants and program specialists have been providing agency specific technical assistance to support your agency in achieving and maintaining compliance with the recent rules' revisions. Our goal is to partner with you and provide the resources you need to be successful in providing high quality care for the children and families you serve.

As you prepare for QRIS Quarter 4, please review all licensure rules to ensure your agency has effectively implemented them into your program. We highly recommend completing all training before September 15, 2026, to ensure directors and educators meet all licensure training requirements before the end of the QRIS cycle.

Please also note that *Before You Begin: New Educator* and *Before You Begin: New School-Age Educator* have been updated with additional content to strengthen alignment with emergency preparedness and response planning federal CCDBG requirements. Before You Begin trainings are available from CCR&R as well as TCCOTS. More information about these and other trainings recognized by TDHS may be found at our [TrainTN Catalog](#).

If you have any questions, reach out to your Licensing Consultant or Program Specialist. They are there to help you and appreciate the opportunity for continuous collaboration. Also remember you can utilize the "Your Voice Matters" tile in your provider portal to share your thoughts, feedback, and questions. Our leadership team reviews every submission and will follow-up.

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