

Identifying the extent of occupational health risks for child care providers

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TOPIC/TARGET AUDIENCE: Occupational Health

ABSTRACT: In the early care and education (ECE), environmental health and safety concerns have focused on children and classrooms, incorrectly assuming that by supporting children's health and classroom quality we support teacher's health (Whitebook & Ginsburg, 1983). In fact, ECE professionals have unique characteristics that warrant consideration beyond the classroom and the children. ECE professionals are exposed to health and safety risks including exposure to psychosocial stress and infectious diseases (Bright & Calabro, 1999; McGrath, 2007), which may impact teacher health and limit classroom quality. To date, the cumulative impact of these occupational health risks has not been linked to classroom quality.

The aim of this project is to explore relations between psychosocial stressors and infectious disease exposure among ECE professionals on classroom quality.

Data collection is on-going; an estimated 60 ECE professionals will participate in this study. Study participants complete surveys (i.e., demographics and work experience, adapted NIOSH Generic Job Stress Questionnaire, report of illnesses), and undergo classroom observations (i.e., Classroom Assessment Scoring System-Toddler, health-practices checklist).

Results from this study will inform professional development and quality improvement initiatives. Given the positive association between classroom quality and child outcomes, supporting the health of the professional is a critical factor for all.

OBJECTIVE(S): Evaluate relations between psychosocial stressors and infectious disease exposure among ECE professionals on classroom quality.

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