



Observed Serious Health & Safety Concern (SHSC) Policy Guidance



Oregon Department of
Early Learning
and Care

All children, families, early care and education professionals, and communities are supported and empowered to thrive

Audience: Public Program Grantees (OPK and PSP)

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Mandatory Reporting Requirements	2
Serious Health and Safety Concerns.....	3
When a concern is observed, the observer should:.....	4
Examples of Serious Health and Safety Concerns:	6

Introduction

Safety and well-being for children, families and early learning and care professionals is a priority for the Department of Early Learning and Care. There is a shared responsibility across all programs, funding streams, community partners and policy makers to ensure this priority is achieved.

One aspect of this responsibility is to serve as mandated reporters, but it does not stop there. Creating and maintaining healthy and safe early learning environments also requires an investment in continuous improvement. As public service professionals, there is an extra responsibility on DELC, CCR&R and Hub staff, as well as Observation & Assessment Specialists to support continuous improvement in the area of health and safety. This will require these individuals to serve as mandatory reporters and adhere to their ethical responsibility to address the serious health and safety concerns they observe.

Utilizing a relational and strength-based approach, we have created a serious health and safety concern policy and a procedure. This policy and procedure clarifies the difference between mandatory reportable concerns and serious health and safety concerns. It also outlines the steps that each individual must take to address the concerns and support the continuous improvement process. This process will be regularly reflected and evaluated on with partners, early learning programs and DELC grantees to identify successes and areas for improvement.

Mandatory Reporting Requirements

All early childhood professionals who provide quality improvement assessment and technical assistance or formal classroom observations are mandatory reporters per [ORS 419B.010](#).

As mandatory reporters, these individuals must report to the Oregon Department of Human Services or law enforcement in accordance with [mandatory reporting laws](#).

If an early childhood professional observes a mandatory reportable concern, they must:

1. End the assessment or TA session.
2. Immediately intervene, if necessary, to help ensure the safety of the children.
Contact 911 if there is imminent danger.
3. **Call the Oregon Department of Human Services:** 1-855-503-SAFE (7233);
Report the concern and ask for direction regarding next steps.
4. **Call the Child Care Licensing Division:** 1-800-556-6616 to report the concern.
5. Document this incident in appropriate TA log, assessment notes, etc.

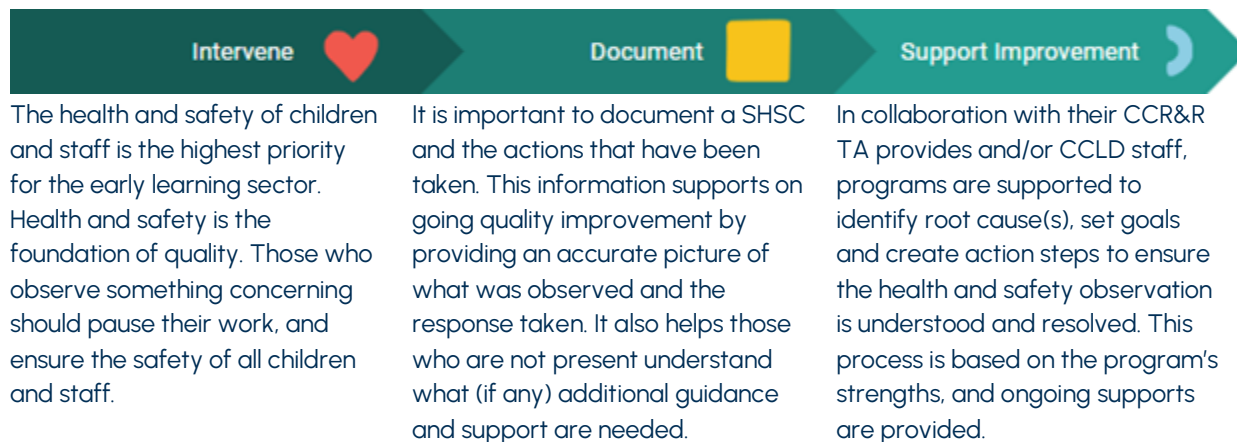
Additional information on Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect (RRCAN) and Introduction to Child Care Health and Safety (ICCHS) can be found [here](#).

Serious Health and Safety Concerns

Serious health and safety concerns (SHSC) do not rise to the level of mandatory reportable concern, but still pose an imminent danger to a child or children. (Examples included in *DELIC Serious Health & Safety Concern Guidance*, below.) In order to ensure the health and safety of young children we have created a process to provide the program with the level of support needed to correct the concern as soon as possible.

Therefore, if an DELIC funded classroom or program visitor observes a serious health & safety concern, they must **intervene** to keep children safe, **document** what occurred, and then **support improvement** of health and safety practices.

Program staff can expect that they will be engaged in conversation at the time of the observation, either by the TA Provider or Classroom Assessor¹. It is important for program staff to identify a point of contact who would be available during the observation for conversation. This point of contact should also be aware of any internal process for communication with grantee leadership, should a concern be noted. If a grantee would like additional leadership roles identified for further communication regarding an observed concern, they should inform the Provider or Classroom Assessor before the visit, and provide contact information.



¹ Please note: For the purpose of this document, both Classroom Assessors and TA Providers may be referred to as "observers" when the context applies to both roles.

When a concern is observed, the observer should:

Intervene

The goal of this step is to address the concern in the moment, both to prevent further threats to a child or children's safety and to bring awareness to the staff present. The observer should ensure that the child or children are no longer in a concerning situation, and that staff are aware of the situation.

PROGRAM STAFF: Ensuring the health and safety of each child in their classroom is the primary function of each program staff role. If a concern is observed and the observation is paused, program staff should engage with the observer to learn about the concern, make a careful assessment of the situation and work to resolve the issue immediately. If program staff are unable to resolve the concern at the time of the visit, observers are asked to reach out to the Child Care Licensing Division (CCLD) Regional Manager for consultation. Once the health and safety of children has been assured, program staff should reach out to their internal program identified point of contact (if different than staff on site at the time) and follow all internal communication procedures to ensure that the observed concern is shared and steps are taken to put into place corrective action.

Document

The goal of this step is to create an anecdotal record of the concern and actions taken. The situation and actions taken should be appropriately documented and preserved for future discussion and action planning.

PROGRAM STAFF: If the concern is observed during a Classroom Observation, the concern will be noted in the Summary Report. Additional documentation will be made in the TA Log, which is shared with DELC Program Managers. This information is used to identify overall trends, needs and areas for additional supportive communication.

Support Improvement

The goal of this step is to provide support to the program to achieve the shared goal of providing a safe and healthy early learning experience for children, and preserving the trusting relationship between programs and families. In order to improve overall quality and avoid the concerning issue recurring, programs and observers will work together to identify next steps, and other avenues for support. CCLD Regional Manager may be contacted for additional consultation. Reporting serious health and safety concerns to CCLD supports child safety.

PROGRAM STAFF: Ensuring the health and safety of children is the foundation of quality early learning. Program staff should be prepared to reflect on causes and any contributing factors, participate in the creation of a quality improvement and/or support plan, and implement any action steps needed.

Examples of Serious Health and Safety Concerns:

This is not a comprehensive list, and observers should be reflective of the level of concern, danger and any biases that may be present when considering the situation.

- Imminent danger to child(ren) is observed
- More children allowed by law or inadequate number of adults to provide safe care for the children present.
 - Children's health and safety is jeopardized due to the program being over their licensed capacity or , above staff-child ratio.
- Early educator behavior related to unsafe guidance, discipline, or interaction.
- Children are left unsupervised (out of sight and sound) for extended periods of time or a child is injured resulting from a lack of supervision.
 - Includes: Lost or missing child, serious injuries resulting from lack of supervision.
- Infant Safety Risks:
 - Any unsafe sleep practices (Examples include, but are not limited to: infants placed to sleep on their stomach; infants sleeping in car seats/swings; infants being laid to sleep with a bottle, blankets or other items in a crib, pacifier holders or attachments).
 - Bottles being propped.
- Multiple or Serious Fire, Health or Safety Hazards:
 - Any medicines/cleaners/toxics within reach of children and in their immediate area;
 - Facility in extreme disrepair (e.g., collapsing stairs or porch, broken glass, exposed wiring);
 - Wood stove or burning fire with no barrier or in reach of children;
 - Access to severe hazards (e.g., power tools, knives, sharp scissors, razors, or other potentially hazardous equipment not locked);
 - Firearms, weapons, projectiles not under lock;
 - Hot tub or pool (including wading pool), other bodies of water unsecured;
 - Animal feces on the ground in the play area; rodent or insect infestations/droppings;
 - Feces or soiled diapers accessible to children;
 - Excessive filth, or other excessively unsanitary conditions.
- Any unsupervised access to children by individuals who are conditionally enrolled or not enrolled at all in Oregon's Criminal Background Registry (if this becomes known to a TA provider or assessor on site).
- Illegal Care: Unlicensed care with more children in care than allowed by law or more hours in care than allowed by law.

Suspensions of child abuse or neglect must be reported to ODHS at 1-855-503-SAFE(7233).