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Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting of Screening, Multidisciplinary, and Supplemental Evaluation Testing Materials for Re-Use

62. Can providers bring testing materials into a home or community setting?

Response: The practice of bringing the same testing materials into multiple homes and community-based settings during in-person early intervention (EI) service delivery has the potential to transmit COVID-19 or other viral or bacterial infections. Therefore, the Department strongly discourages this practice unless all alternatives have been exhausted and it is absolutely necessary in the provider's clinical judgment. If providers must bring the same testing materials into multiple homes and community-based settings, they must consistently follow proper cleaning and sanitizing protocols as detailed herein:

- Testing materials that will be touched by children (including mouthed) and parents/caregivers, and providers cannot be used unless they are hard non-porous surfaces that can be cleaned and sanitized between uses; for example, plastic testing materials such as: balls, blocks, dolls/animals, nesting cups, puzzles, rattles, rings, cars, pull toys, peg boards, etc. Testing materials that are made of porous materials cannot be used; for example, wooden blocks, wooden puzzles/shape sorters, cloth dolls, stuffed animals, wooden cars/boats, cloth balls, etc.

- Testing materials that children have placed in their mouths or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretions or excretions must be set aside in a separate container until they can be cleaned and sanitized.

- Testing materials that have been used with one child must be cleaned and sanitized before being used by another child. Providers must have a plan in place for properly cleaning and sanitizing the test materials between multiple home visits on the same day; for example, returning to the office between visits or having available multiple "sets" of test materials to be used for each home or community-based visit.

  It is important to have a basic knowledge of the difference between cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting:

- **Cleaning** is the process of removing germs**,** dirt, and impurities from surfaces or objects. Cleaning works by using soap (or detergent) and water to physically remove germs from surfaces. This process does not necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection. Cleaning of soiled areas must be completed prior to sanitizing and disinfecting to ensure the effectiveness of the sanitizer or disinfectant product.

- **Sanitizing** is the process of using a product that reduces but does not eliminate germs on inanimate surfaces to levels considered safe by public health codes or regulations. A sanitizer may be appropriate to use on food contact surfaces (dishes, utensils, cutting boards, highchair trays), toys that children may place in their mouths, and pacifiers.

- **Disinfecting** is the process of using a substance, or mixture of substances, that destroys or irreversibly inactivates bacteria, fungi and viruses, but not necessarily bacterial spores, on an inanimate object. Disinfectants should typically not be applied on items used by children, especially any items that children might put in their mouths. Many disinfectants are toxic when swallowed. A disinfectant may be appropriate to use on hard, non-porous surfaces such as diaper change tables, counter tops, door & cabinet handles, and toilets and other bathroom surfaces.

- Testing materials must be routinely cleaned between sessions with water and detergent, rinsed, and sanitized with a sanitizer that is approved by both the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) for use against the virus that causes COVID-19, and must be used according to the manufacturer's label instructions for purpose, concentration, application method, and contact time. A fragrance-free EPA registered bleach soaking solution prepared fresh daily can also be used to sanitize testing materials as follows: prepare 1 teaspoon of bleach to 1 gallon of water, soak testing materials in bleach solution for 5 minutes, rinse with cool water and let air dry. A list of products that are EPA and NYS DEC approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available at:
  https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19
  http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials_minerals_pdf/covid19.pdf

- Children's paperback books, like other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, are not considered a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning, sanitizing, or disinfection procedures.

Additional information on cleaning and sanitizing toys and other surfaces in an early childhood program setting can be found at the following links:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Guidance for Childcare Programs that Remain Open
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html

Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting
American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs.* 4th ed. Itasca, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; 2019, USA https://nrckids.org/files/CFOC4%20pdf-%20FINAL.pdf

Appendix J, Selecting an Appropriate Sanitizer or Disinfectant
https://nrckids.org/files/appendix/AppendixJ.pdf,

Appendix K, Routine Schedule for Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting, Safety Performance Standards for guidance on use of sanitizers and disinfectants
https://nrckids.org/files/appendix/AppendixK.pdf