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TRAIN AND INFORM STAFF AND PARENTS:

Everyone in the school community should understand the importance of a safer cleaning strategy. Adequate training for staff is essential and should include the adverse health effects of unsafe cleaning products, the proper use and disposal of cleaning products, protective measures for staff and children during use, and how to read a product label and safety data sheet. Training on proper usage is also crucial. And it is important to educate parents on the importance of green cleaning products. Informing parents of your program may assist them in making safer choices at home as well.

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IMPLEMENT YOUR GREEN CLEANING, SANITIZING AND DISINFECTING PROGRAM:

Remove your old cleaning products once your new products are in place and dispose of them as hazardous waste. You may also want to consider investing in new equipment, such as microfiber cloths and mops, to use with your new, safer cleaning products. Microfiber cloths remove dirt, debris and germs from surfaces far more efficiently than cotton cloths, mops and paper towels. Also, HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter vacuums can provide a healthier indoor environment, and floor mats for inside and outside entrance doors can help reduce the amount of dirt brought into your facility and contribute to a greener and cleaner environment.



A Union of Professionals

Why Should
Early Childhood Educators
Implement a

GREEN CLEANING, Sanitizing and Disinfecting Program?

OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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GREEN CLEANING,

Sanitizing and Disinfecting Program in Early Childhood Education



AFT early childhood educators understand that actively cleaning and disinfecting their child care setting is an essential part of their commitment to keep children safe. However, too many conventional cleaning products in use today contain hazardous chemicals. Research has found that children and staff exposed to these chemicals are at a higher risk of developing or suffering from:

- Asthma attacks;
- Headaches;
- Skin irritation;
- Central nervous system problems; and
- Reproductive problems.

Studies have also found that cleaning chemicals can contribute to poor indoor air quality. To make matters worse, these chemicals are routinely washed down the drain, where they find their way into drinking water, lakes and streams—posing a potential environmental and public health threat.

Safer, cost-effective products are available, and they're easy to find if you know how to identify them. Follow these steps to a clean, green and safer indoor environment that protects the health of staff and children.



EVALUATE YOUR CURRENT PRODUCTS:

CLEANING PRODUCTS

Reduce the number of products in your cleaning arsenal. Your early childhood setting needs only three or four types of cleaners: a general cleaner, glass cleaner, sanitizer and disinfectant.

Look at the label on each product. Do any have the following seals? **If so, they are third-party certified and safer to use.**



SANITIZERS

1. Look for a registration number from the Environmental Protection Agency on the label, which signals that the product is safe to use in early childhood education programs. Also, sanitizers and disinfectants are required to have a “signal word” on their label if they contain hazardous ingredients. Products with no signal word or with the word **Caution** are the least hazardous, while products with the words **Danger**, **Warning** or **Poison** are too hazardous to use in early childhood education settings.

2. Are fragrances listed as an ingredient, or can you smell them? If so, don't use these products. Scents can cause respiratory irritation and trigger asthma in staff and children.

3. Does the label say the product is approved for food-contact surfaces?

DISINFECTANTS

- 1.** Follow the first two steps above.
- 2.** Look for labels that say the product can be used in healthcare or hospital settings.
- 3.** When using the disinfectant during the day, is the dwell or contact time less than five minutes (30-60 seconds is recommended)?

→ The Environmental Protection Agency doesn't allow sanitizers and disinfectants to be third-party certified



CHOOSE SAFER PRODUCTS:

- If possible, discard any products that are not labeled or that contain any of the following ingredients:

2-butoxyethanol
Alkylpyenol ethoxylates
Bisphenol A
Ethanolamines
Parabens
Phthalates
Pine oil
Quaternary ammonium compounds
Triclocarban
Triclosan

→ Look for sanitizers and disinfectants that use hydrogen peroxide, citric acid or lactic acid. Find safer products at go.aft.org/greenclean.

- Replace discarded cleaning products with those that display third-party certification seals. These products are available in retail stores and through companies that sell supplies to schools. Replace discarded sanitizers and disinfectants with products that don't contain any of the ingredients listed above. Also, always select free and clear or fragrance- and dye-free products.