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IMPROVING
CHILDREN'S
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Media contacts:
Nancy A. Cowles
312.595.0649
nancy@kidsindanger.org

New KID Study Finds Hazards Remain in Child Care Despite Progressive Legislation

(CHICAGO) A recent survey of child care workers throughout Illinois has found that 49% of child care workers report seeing at least one recalled or otherwise prohibited product in use at their facility. Additionally, 37% of Illinois child care workers indicated that they had seen either unsafe sleep products or practices used in the place of their employment. However, nearly all child care workers agree that child product safety should be a priority at child care facilities (10% agree, 81% strongly agree) and most are interested in additional training on the issue (66%).

“Only 33% of respondents could report that the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) had checked their facilities for a mandated recall product notice within the last two years,” said Jordan Durrett, KID graduate student intern and report author. “The notice is a dated and signed document that ensures that child care facilities continuously check for recalled products on their premise. DCFS is charged to check for this notice as part of their yearly inspections.”

Kids In Danger (KID), a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting children by improving children’s product safety, released [*Safe Products and Child Care: An Illinois Snapshot*](#), an examination of how well child product safety and safe sleep is handled within Illinois child care facilities. The report uses firsthand accounts from Illinois child care workers distilled from an online survey of over 225 child care workers across the state. The survey results have a sampling margin of error of ± 5.45 percentage points and a confidence level of 90%.

It is estimated that there are over 500,000 children less than five in Illinois that depend on some form of regular child care. This report found that a slim majority of child care workers that care for a significant portion of these children had not observed dangerous, prohibited products in their child care facilities. Meanwhile a more substantial two-thirds reported only safe sleep practices and products in use in their facilities. Even as enforcement lags behind, Illinois child care workers continue to step up to provide the children in their charge safe places to grow and learn away from home.

Additional findings of the report include:

- Sixty-eight percent of respondents reported using secondhand products in their facility. They were 180% more likely to report the use of a recalled or otherwise prohibited product than respondents that worked in a facility that did not use secondhand products.
- Most child care providers surveyed reported getting recall information primarily from Internet, email alerts, and TV.

“This survey clearly indicates the continued need to educate providers and parents about children’s product safety. While Illinois has taken steps to insure our state’s child care regulations calls out product safety as central in our standards, Kids In Danger’s vigilance on these issues remains important,” said Sessy Nyman, the Vice President of Policy at Illinois Action for Children. “Illinois is a leader in the nation on children’s product safety because we have Kids In Danger focusing on this critical issue for children in their own homes and in child care across the state.”

In 1999, Illinois became the first state to pass legislation banning recalled products from child care facilities when it passed the Children’s Product Safety Act (CPSA). Since then, Illinois has continued to push child care facilities to become even safer. In 2011, Governor Pat Quinn signed into law further child care regulations that require child care workers to complete safe sleep training every three years in order to reduce the Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) rate in Illinois child care. The emphasis these regulations place on ensuring child product safety and safe sleep practices within child care has protected countless children.

If Illinois’ child care safety legislation is progressive, then its enforcement is stagnant at best. Years of funding and staffing cuts have left DCFS unable to thoroughly and timely inspect child care facilities. Overburdened DCFS child care licensing officers simply do not have the resources necessary to make sure that child care facilities are aware of and comply with rules regarding product recalls. But without proper enforcement these powerful laws cannot fully protect our children.

”Illinois must increase child care workers’ access to more educational programs targeted at product safety and safe sleep,” stated Nancy Cowles, Executive Director of KID. “Illinois child care workers have expressed a strong interest in improving their knowledge and behaviors around these important issues. These programs and trainings can help foster this interest into action.”