

## **NEWS RELEASE**

Friday, February 13, 2015

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### **Advocates Celebrate Reductions in Toxic Chemicals in Child Care Settings**

(Rochester) Clean and Healthy New York, along with Children’s Environmental Health Network and Child Care Council, Inc., celebrated completion of a two year project to train child care providers to reduce toxic chemicals in their child care setting. The Reducing Toxic Chemicals in Child Care program trained 437 providers from over 250 facilities, and 44 trainers from 15 Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies who can continue to spread the message. It provided technical assistance to 49 facilities. The program developed New York-specific materials based on the Children’s Environmental Health Network’s award-winning Eco-Healthy Child Care® program. Thus far, 17 providers have become officially Eco-Healthy Child Care® Endorsed. 78% of providers went on to make one or more improvements in their facility.

“As a result of the leadership, commitment, and desire to support healthier child care facilities, Clean and Healthy New York and Child Care Council, Inc. are working to make long-standing change for children and their families. We are thrilled to see all that has been accomplished in the last two years and look forward to continued advancement in these important child health protection efforts,” said Nsedu Witherspoon, MPH, Executive Director of the Children’s Environmental Health Network.

Funding for the program comes from a 2012 grant by the the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The program expanded in 2014 to train 75 providers in the Southern Tier, thanks to funding from the New York State Pollution Prevention Institute, which is supporting further expansion into the Capital Region in 2015.

“Child care providers are key partners in safeguarding children’s health. The choices they make in their homes and centers can have a profound impact. We were thrilled to have the opportunity to work with them to make changes, and are excited to see quantifiable results,” said Bobbi Chase Wilding, Deputy Director for Clean and Healthy New York. “Reducing toxic chemicals in child care settings protects kids while they are there, and it protects our environment as products reach the end of their usefulness.”

Clean and Healthy New York have used phone surveys and direct testing during technical assistance to determine how much providers have reduced toxic chemicals. Over the course of the program, they have documented 417 kg in total chemical reductions, which they project will result in over a metric ton of chemicals avoided over 5 years. In addition, providers have recycled over 3,300 kg of electronic waste, laden with heavy metals, flame retardants, bisphenol A, and other chemicals of concern.

“Child Care Council is very pleased to be making a real difference in creating healthier environments for children in child care,” said Barbara-Ann Mattle, CEO, Child Care Council Inc. “Through this successful partnership with Clean and Healthy New York, we have helped more than 400 child care providers make

their facilities safer for the children they care for, by training them on how to remove toxic chemicals and to choose more environmentally friendly products.”

Clean and Healthy New York released a report documenting progress, and assessing opportunities and recommendations for future work. Successes included development of a disinfectants spreadsheet that provides a one-stop list of alternatives to bleach, customizing all materials to ensure they reflect New York State laws and regulations, meeting providers where they were to empower steps toward bigger change, and providing direct technical assistance. Opportunities for improvement in the program include offering guidance on shopping – with as much detail as possible so concerned providers get the kind of products they want, developing a FAQ with content that is outside the scope of toxics reduction but asked often, and improving access to information about which providers have become Eco-Healthy Child Care Endorsed.

“There is always opportunity for improvement – whether you’re a child care program working to address toxic chemicals, or a non-profit organization seeking to empower those changes. We are proud of what we have accomplished, and look forward the next steps,” added Wilding.

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