

**[INSERT DATE]**

Dear Community Partners,

Recently the Florida Department of Health has identified a recent increase in shigellosis cases in parts of Florida, particularly in daycare attendees.

Shigellosis is an infection of the intestines that causes diarrhea. It is usually a mild, self-resolving illness (meaning the body will fight off the infection without treatment), and most people recover completely within 4 to 7 days. After a person is infected, symptoms may develop within 1 to 3 days and include diarrhea, fever, nausea, and/or vomiting. Some people never develop any symptoms after being infected.

Shigellosis is very contagious and can spread easily from person to person. The disease is caused by a group of bacteria called *Shigella*. The infection is acquired by swallowing something contaminated with the feces of an infected person. This most commonly happens when an infected person does not wash his/her hands properly after a bowel movement, and then touches somebody else's hands or prepares food for others. Even persons without symptoms can carry the bacteria and pass it on to others.

There are prevention measures that daycare centers may implement to reduce the occurrence of shigellosis outbreaks:

- **Proper handwashing is the most effective way to prevent shigellosis and many other diseases.**
  - Hand washing is to be done after bathroom visits, diaper changes, play time, and handling of pets or soil and before food preparation and eating.
  - Wash hands for at least 20 seconds and use soap and running water to lather and rinse the palms, backs of hands, between fingers, under fingernails, and around wrists.
  - Hand washing among children should be frequent and supervised by an adult in child care facilities and homes with children who have not been fully toilet trained.
- Child care facilities should keep the food preparation area separate from the diapering area, diaper-changers should not prepare foods, and water for formula or juices should not come from the bathroom or hand washing faucet.
- Everyone who changes any child's diapers should be sure the diapers are disposed of properly in a closed-lid garbage can, and should wash his or her hands and the child's hands carefully with soap and warm water immediately after changing the diapers. This is particularly important when the child has diarrhea.
- Clean and disinfect bathrooms, diaper changing areas, and soiled toys on a routine basis.
- People with diarrhea should not prepare food or drinks for others.
- Child care facilities should not provide water play areas.
- Sick children should be excluded from child care facilities (see attached [Guidelines for Control of Outbreaks of Enteric Disease in Child Care Settings](#)).

- Sick staff should stay home until their illness has cleared.

Clusters or outbreaks of illnesses are reportable to your local county health department. If you are observing an increase in gastrointestinal illness in your facility, please contact the **[INSERT COUNTY NAME]** County Health Department Epidemiology Program at **[INSERT PHONE NUMBER]**.

Sincerely,

**[INSERT SIGNATURE BLOCK]**