



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
OFFICE OF CHILDHOOD - CHILD CARE COMPLIANCE

COMPLAINT INVESTIGATION OF
SUBSTANTIATED STATUTE OR RULE VIOLATIONS

DATE OF REPORT
1/9/2023

DVN
002691743

FACILITY NAME

STEP BY STEP LEARNING CENTER LLC

FACILITY ADDRESS

5285 HIGHWAY N STE 107

CITY

COTTLEVILLE

ZIP CODE

63304-7733

PHONE NUMBER

(314) 609-9115

COUNTY

ST CHARLES

ASSIGNED SPECIALIST

FYFE, IAN

RULE/STATUTE VIOLATION(S)

VIOLATION(S)

5 CSR 25-500.082(1)(A)

The premises shall be safe and suitable for the care of children.

CONCLUSION SUMMARY

On January 9, 2023, the Office of Childhood (OOC) received an allegation that Step by Step Learning Center LLC is using a recalled Boppy Lounger in the classroom. After conducting an investigation, Compliance Inspector (CI) Ian Fyfe has found this allegation to be substantiated based on the following evidence:

5 CSR 25-500.082(1)(A)., which states the following: "The premises shall be safe and suitable for the care of children."

On January 10, 2023, Compliance Inspector (CI) Ian Fyfe conducted an interview with Abby Melchert. Ms. Melchert observed unknown staff members placing children on recalled Boppy Loungers in the infant and toddler classroom. Ms. Melchert was able to provide CI Fyfe with two photographs of the Boppy Lounger in question.

On January 12, 2023, CI Fyfe conducted an unannounced inspection to Step by Step Learning Center LLC and observed the Boppy Lounger mentioned in the reported concerns to be present in the infant classroom. Though no child was using the lounger, it was accessible to the children present in the room. There appeared to be only one of the item at the facility, but it was immediately removed from the classroom after CI Fyfe informed Director Vanessa Arnold that the item had been recalled in September of 2021. Ms. Arnold informed CI Fyfe that she was unaware of the item's recall and that no compliance inspectors had informed her of the item's recall despite multiple inspections from the OOC since the recall date.

VIOLATION(S)

5 CSR 25-500.092(1)(B)2.G.

Cribs, portable cribs, and playpens shall be free of soft objects, loose bedding, or any object that can increase the risk of entrapment, suffocation, or strangulation. Examples include bumper pads, pillows, quilts, comforters, sleep positioning devices, sheepskins, blankets, flat sheets, cloth diapers, bibs, pillow-like toys, wedges, infant positioners, special mattresses, special sleep surfaces, and other similar items.

CONCLUSION SUMMARY

On January 9, 2023, the Office of Childhood (OOC) received an allegation that crib sheets being used in the infant and toddler room are too loose. After conducting an investigation, Compliance Inspector (CI) Ian Fyfe has found this allegation to be substantiated based on the following evidence:

5 CSR 25-500.092(1)(B)2.G., which states the following: "Cribs, portable cribs, and playpens shall be free of soft objects, loose bedding, or any object that can increase the risk of entrapment, suffocation, or strangulation. Examples include bumper pads, pillows, quilts, comforters, sleep positioning devices, sheepskins, blankets, flat sheets, cloth diapers, bibs, pillow-like toys, wedges, infant positioners, special mattresses, special sleep surfaces, and other similar items."

On January 10, 2023, Compliance Inspector (CI) Ian Fyfe conducted an interview with Abby Melchert. Ms. Melchert worked at the facility on December 19, 2022, and December 20, 2022. According to Ms. Melchert, the sheets being used on the pack-n-play cribs in the infant and toddler classroom are not tight and are loose-fitting. Ms. Melchert was able to provide CI Fyfe

with a photograph of a loose-fitting sheet. Ms. Melchert stated that she did not inform management at the facility of her concerns while she worked at the facility.

On January 12, 2023, CI Fyfe conducted an unannounced inspection to the facility and observed the sheets being used in the infant classroom to be loose. CI Fyfe was able to document these observations with photographs. One of the cribs with a loose-fitting sheet had Child A (9-months-old) sleeping in the crib. While present at the facility, CI Fyfe interviewed Director Vanessa Arnold, Assistant Director Sara Chilton, staff member Alena Drogekamp, and staff member Kelsi Conrath. Ms. Drogekamp and Ms. Conrath expressed concerns with CI Fyfe that the crib sheets are too large for the cribs. Once CI Fyfe brought the concerns to the attention of Ms. Arnold and Ms. Chilton, Ms. Arnold proceeded to order appropriate-fitting sheets for the cribs.

VIOLATION(S)

5 CSR 25-500.182(2)(C)4.A.

A child under twelve (12) months of age shall be placed on his/her back to sleep;

5 CSR 25-500.092(1)(B)2.I.

Sitting devices such as car safety seats, strollers, swings, infant carriers, infant slings, and other sitting devices shall not be used for sleep/nap time. Infants who fall asleep anywhere other than a crib, portable crib, or playpen shall be placed in the crib or playpen for the remainder of their sleep or nap time.

CONCLUSION SUMMARY

On January 9, 2023, the Office of Childhood (OOC) received an allegation that infants are being left to sleep in bouncers. After conducting an investigation, Compliance Inspector (CI) Ian Fyfe has found this allegation to be substantiated based on the following evidence:

5 CSR 25-500.182(2)(C)4.A., which states the following: "A child under twelve (12) months of age shall be placed on his/her back to sleep;"

AND

5 CSR 25-500.092(1)(B)2.I., which states the following: "Sitting devices such as car safety seats, strollers, swings, infant carriers, infant slings, and other sitting devices shall not be used for sleep/nap time. Infants who fall asleep anywhere other than a crib, portable crib, or playpen shall be placed in the crib or playpen for the remainder of their sleep or nap time."

On January 10, 2023, Compliance Inspector (CI) Ian Fyfe conducted an interview with Abby Melchert. Ms. Melchert worked at the facility for two days, December 19, 2022, and December 20, 2022. Ms. Melchert was working in the infant and toddler room when they observed a child fall asleep in their bouncer. The other staff member in the room with Ms. Melchert instructed Ms. Melchert to leave the child in the bouncer as their parent was arriving to the facility soon. The child remained in the bouncer, asleep, for the next ten to fifteen minutes until their parent arrived to pick them up. Ms. Melchert does not know who the other staff member involved was. While Ms. Melchert was unable to identify the child involved, she noted that the child was African American. This is a reoccurring concern at the facility.

On January 12, 2023, CI Fyfe conducted an unannounced inspection to the facility and interviewed Director Vanessa Arnold, Assistant Director Sara Chilton, staff member Alena Drogekamp, and staff member Kelsi Conrath. Ms. Arnold and Ms. Chilton were unaware of the reported concerns overall. Ms. Drogekamp, who is Ms. Conrath's co-teacher in the infant room, informed CI Fyfe that she has seen the reported concerns occur with Ms. Conrath and Child A (9-months-old). Child A is a child that frequently bounces themselves to sleep in the bouncer. When Ms. Drogekamp observes this with any child, she will move the child to their crib as soon as she is able to get to the child. Ms. Drogekamp has observed Ms. Conrath purposely leave children, mainly Child A, in the bouncer to sleep on multiple occasions. Ms. Drogekamp will attempt to correct Ms. Conrath and inform her that she should not do this, however Ms. Conrath does not appear to care about Ms. Drogekamp's advice. The longest amount of time that Ms. Drogekamp has observed Ms. Conrath leave a child in a bouncer was approximately three minutes. While present at the facility, CI Fyfe addressed the reported concerns with Ms. Conrath. Ms. Conrath denied the reported concerns.

CORRECTIVE MEASURES

CORRECTIVE MEASURE	COMPLETED (Y/N)	COMPLETED DATE
The facility shall ensure that the recalled item has been removed from all classrooms.	Yes	1/12/2023
CORRECTIVE MEASURE	COMPLETED (Y/N)	COMPLETED DATE
The facility shall conduct a staff meeting to review all licensing rules and regulations regarding Safe Sleep Procedures. The facility must provide the Child Care Compliance Section with a statement, signed by all staff (paid employees or	Yes	2/7/2023

unpaid volunteers), to indicate they understand and agree to follow those rules and regulations.

DISPOSITION

SUBSTANTIATED

DISPOSITION DATE

1/20/2023

APPROVING SUPERVISOR

CHRISCO, MARLA L