

**For Immediate Release**

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## **“Avoiding Big Risks for Small Kids” Report Reveals Overuse of Pesticides in NC Child Care**

**RALEIGH, N.C.** – A report released today finds that high-risk pest control methods are used in many North Carolina child care centers. The report, “Avoiding Big Risks for Small Kids”, is the result of a 2008 survey of 89 child care providers from across the state who answered questions about pests, pesticides and safety at their facilities. The report is available for download at [www.toxicfreenc.org](http://www.toxicfreenc.org).

More than half of child care providers surveyed (53%) reported that broadcast spraying and/or “bug bombs” are used in their centers. Both methods carry high risk for children and staff to be exposed to toxic pesticides. The report reveals that a child care provider’s star rating does not necessarily reflect whether their facility has serious pest problems. Because state standards do not address what type of pest control program should be used in child care, the star rating system also does not indicate whether a provider is using least-toxic pest management.

Babies and young children are among the most likely age groups to suffer long-term harm to their health from exposure to pesticides. Numerous scientific studies have connected pesticide exposure in early life to an increased risk of asthma, harm to growing brains, and some childhood cancers.

“As a pediatrician and a mother, I believe we should be avoiding the use of toxic chemicals in children’s environments,” says Dr. Katherine Shea. “Child care centers, where our youngest and most vulnerable children spend time eating and sleeping, playing and learning, should be safe and free from known chemical hazards like pesticides.”

The report’s authors recommend the creation of a training and certification program for pest control companies in kid-safe, least toxic methods of pest control, also called Integrated Pest Management (IPM). IPM calls for improved sanitation, structural repairs and monitoring for pests, with least-toxic pesticide application as a last resort. One out of four child care providers surveyed reported using least-toxic or IPM pest control methods; those same centers also reported fewer serious pest problems.

Pest control professional Philip Maready agrees with the report’s recommendation for IPM. “Having worked with public school systems in implementing IPM programs, I believe it is important to use those same IPM strategies in sensitive environments such as day care facilities”, Maready said.

Public schools in NC are now required to switch to IPM under the 2006 NC School Children’s Health Act, but no such requirement exists for child care.

Report author Billie Karel said “it is troubling to find that high-risk pesticide applications are used in so many child care facilities in our state. Most child care



providers don't have the information they need to make knowledgeable decisions about pest control. We must do a better job of protecting North Carolina's youngest and most vulnerable children."

Child care centers in the following counties participated in the survey: Buncombe, Caldwell, Chatham, Cherokee, Gaston, Guilford, Johnston, Pasquotank, Pender, Robeson, Rockingham, Wake and Wilson.

#### FIVE QUESTIONS PARENTS SHOULD ASK THEIR CHILD CARE PROVIDER

Based on the survey results, Toxic Free NC recommends that concerned parents ask their child care provider these five questions to find out about their pest management practices:

- Are baseboard spraying or fogging ever used?
- Are pesticides ever used while children are present?
- Do you keep records of pest control activities that parents can access?
- Do you have a pest management policy/contract that calls for least-toxic IPM?
- Do you notify parents in advance of pesticide spraying?

The full report – Avoiding Big Risks for Small Kids – and accompanying resources for parents and child care providers are all available free at [www.toxicfreenc.org](http://www.toxicfreenc.org).

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