

Overarching Competency 9

How to Find Science-Informed and Evidence-Based Health Information

Note: hyperlinks are also available on the resources page at the end of this document.

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Chapter Progress Key

- Not Started
- In Progress
- Completed

What is this competency?

Competency 9: Find and use appropriate sources of evidence-based or science-informed health and safety information.

This competency focuses on being able to find and use current, accurate, and consistent health information that applies to the children in your program. This skill helps someone tell the difference between an opinion and an explanation supported by scientific data.

Why is it important?

There is so much information available online that it can be confusing to know which resources to use. Families and other staff members look to health services staff for health information they can trust. Using current, accurate, and consistent health information is the best way to:

- Develop program policies and procedures
- Support the health and safety of children
- Educate families and staff

This module was created under grant #90HC0013 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Office of Child Care, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau by the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness.

How do you know if what you're using is current and accurate?

Select the numbers below.

1. Use information from trustworthy sources.
2. Look for scientific references.
3. Check the date of the content.
4. Avoid personal stories and information from online discussion forums or commercial sites.
5. Use more than one website.

What are trustworthy institutions?

In general, state and federal government agencies, colleges and universities, professional health organizations, and certain groups with early childhood health experience can be considered **trustworthy***. These organizations all have strict standards regarding the information they produce and support.

***Trustworthy Sources:** The best way to get health information is to use an original source. This means you have to find out where the information came from and go to that site. For example, if an article is based on a study from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is best to go directly to the CDC website to read about the topic for yourself.

Start Local

When looking for health information, start local as these experts are likely to know your families and communities best. Use your Health Services Advisory Committee, local Board of Health, and community, migrant or tribal health centers. You can also reach out to your state Department of Public Health or cooperative extension service. In addition, you can contact the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness (NCECHW) at (toll-free) 1-888-227-5125 or health@ecetta.info.

Other Trusted Sources

Trusted sources also include state and government agencies, colleges and universities, professional organizations, and groups with early childhood experience.

Examples of Federal and State Government Agencies

- Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)
- Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- State departments of public health, education, agriculture, and human services
- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Examples of Institutions of Higher Education

- Cooperative extensions
- Georgetown University
- Center for Child and Human Development
- National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center
- Schools of dentistry and dental hygiene
- Schools of medicine, including specialty practices
- Schools of nursing
- UCLA Anderson School of Management

Examples of Professional Health Organizations

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics
- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry
- American Psychological Association
- American Public Health Association
- Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs
- National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
- National Association of School Nurses

Examples of Organizations with Early Childhood Health Expertise

- Child Care Aware of America
- Education Development Center
- Education Resources Information Center (ERIC): Institute of Education Sciences
- KidsHealth from Nemours
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations
- National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education (NRC)
- ZERO TO THREE

Look for scientific references.

Information is more trustworthy if it is based on scientific studies.

Professional journals are a good source of these studies and **peer-reviewed articles***.

***Peer-Reviewed Articles**

A peer-reviewed article means the article has gone through a process which includes:

- Impartial experts who specialize in the same area of study:
 - Reviewing the quality of the writing
 - Checking for accuracy
 - Assessing the validity of the research methodology and procedures
- The reviewers may accept the article, suggest revisions, or reject it.
 - Peer-reviewed articles that are accepted for publication exemplify the best research practices in a field
- Professional organizations often publish journals and other resources for their members.
 - Examples include:
 - American Journal of Public Health, American Public Health Association
 - Caring for Our Children (CFOC) Online Standards Database
 - Pediatrics, American Academy of Pediatrics

Check the date of the content.

- Ideally, content should be no more than five years old. Sometimes, though, articles that were written more than five years ago are so important that they are still cited by other authors and researchers in the field.
- Individual sites may list the date the information was last reviewed. The date of review does not always mean the information is current.
- Even trusted sites may have some out-of-date information.

Avoid personal stories and information from online discussion forums or commercial sites.

Select the numbers below.

1. Personal stories are not scientific fact. They have not been tested and are not supported by evidence.
2. Beware of claims about specific products.
3. Content in online discussions is typically not reviewed or regulated.
4. Beware of sites that are trying to sell you something.

Do not rely on only one website.

- Compare the information from one site with the content on other sites.
- Check the dates of publication and last review.
- Make sure that the information is consistent.

Summary

Select the buttons to review the tips for finding science-informed and evidence-based health information online.

- Use information from trustworthy sources.
- Look for scientific references.
- Check the date of the content.
- Use more than one website.
- Avoid personal stories and information from online discussion forums or commercial sites.

Use information from trustworthy institutions.

In general, state and federal government agencies, colleges and universities, professional health organizations, and certain groups with early childhood health experience can be considered trustworthy. These organizations all have strict standards regarding the information they produce and support.

Look for scientific references.

Information is more trustworthy if it is based on scientific studies. Professional journals publish peer-reviewed articles that are a good source of these studies. A peer-reviewed article means impartial experts who specialize in the same area of study have reviewed the quality of the writing, checked the data for accuracy, and assessed the validity of the research methodology and procedures. Look for peer-reviewed articles in the citations of any documents or resources you use.

Check the date of the content.

Ideally, content should be no more than five years old. Sometimes, though, articles that were written more than five years ago are so important that they are still cited by other authors and researchers in the field. Individual websites may list the date the information was last reviewed. The date of review does not always mean the information is current.

Use more than one website.

Compare the information from one website with the content on other sites. Check the dates of publication and last review. Make sure that the information is consistent.

Avoid personal stories and information from online discussion forums or commercial sites.

Personal stories are not scientific fact. They have not been tested and are not supported by evidence. Content in online discussions is typically not reviewed or regulated. Beware of claims about specific products and sites that are trying to sell you something.

Try Your Hand

1. Consider a pressing health issue in your community.
2. Search online for information on that topic to share with others.
 - Does it meet the criteria listed in the **tips*** for finding health information online?
 - Do the recommendations apply to the ages and backgrounds of the children in your program?
3. Share your results with other staff or families.

*Tips

1. Is it from a trustworthy institution?
2. Does it include scientific references?
3. Is the date current?
4. It's not from a discussion forum or commercial site.
5. Did you include more than one website?

If you have five minutes, review:

[Evaluating Information Sources: What Is a Peer-Reviewed Article?](#)

If you have 10 minutes, review:

[Finding and Evaluating Online Resources](#)

If you have 20 minutes, listen to:

[Evaluating Internet Health Information: A Tutorial from the National Library of Medicine](#)

Connecting with Others

- If you have more questions, contact NCECHW at health@ecetta.info or (toll-free) 1-888-227-5125.
- Join [MyPeers](#): a collaborative platform for the early care and education community
- Subscribe to the American Academy of Pediatrics Early Childhood [listserv](#)

Congratulations! You have reached the end of this module.

Module Resources

The list below contains the resources used to develop this module and can be used to continue learning.

Examples of Federal and State Government Agencies

- [Consumer Product Safety Commission \(CPSC\)](#)
- [Maternal and Child Health Bureau \(MCHB\)](#)
- [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#)
- [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#)

Examples of Institutions of Higher Education

- [Georgetown University](#)
 - [Center for Child and Human Development](#)
 - [National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center](#)
- [UCLA Anderson School of Management](#)

Examples of Professional Health Organizations

- [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#)
- [American Academy of Family Physicians](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry](#)
- [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)
- [American Psychological Association](#)
- [American Public Health Association](#)
- [Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs](#)
- [National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners](#)
- [National Association of School Nurses](#)

Examples of Organizations with Early Childhood Health Expertise

- [Child Care Aware® of America](#)
- [Education Development Center](#)
- [Education Resources Information Center \(ERIC\): Institute of Education Sciences](#)
- [KidsHealth from Nemours](#)
- [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#)
- [National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations \(NCPMI\)](#)

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- [National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education \(NRC\)](#)
- [ZERO TO THREE](#)

Examples of Scientific References

- [American Journal of Public Health](#)
- [CFOC Standards Online Database](#)
- [Pediatrics](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Evaluating Information Sources: What Is a Peer-Reviewed Article?](#)
- [Evaluating Internet Health Information: A Tutorial from the National Library of Medicine](#)
- [Finding and Evaluating Online Resources](#)