



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 3, 2009

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AS TEMPERATURES INCREASE, SO DO DHS INSPECTIONS *CHILD CARE PROVIDERS PUT ON NOTICE DURING HOT SUMMER MONTHS*

NASHVILLE, Tenn.—Child care providers across Tennessee who transport children are facing increased inspections again this summer. The Tennessee Department of Human Services is cracking down with extra monitoring visits, and even surveillance, to ensure that the state’s comprehensive transportation rules are being followed. Providers are being notified this week to be extra vigilant to keep their children safe during the hot summer months, or face the consequences. Those caught breaking the rules face a range of penalties, from being put on notice, probation or even suspension of their transportation operation.

Children can suffer severe effects after only a few moments inside a closed vehicle during hot, summer weather. Temperatures inside a closed vehicle climb quickly, rising to more than 107 degrees within minutes. Children exposed to such extreme heat can suffer heatstroke, brain damage and death. Two children have died already this year in sweltering daycare vehicles—one in Wisconsin and a second in North Carolina. Four children died in hot child care vans in Memphis between 1997 and 2003. July 21st marks the 10th anniversary of the deaths of two toddlers who were forgotten in their child care vans in separate parts of that city. These tragic deaths prompted substantial changes in Tennessee’s child care licensing laws and transportation rules.

“Most child care agencies do an excellent job of keeping children safe and following our rules,” said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. “Unfortunately, our program evaluators are still finding problems with some agencies, despite the fact that providers are trained on transportation rules every six months. We will continue to be vigilant in our efforts to ensure the rules are followed and the children stay safe during these hot summer days.”

Last year, hundreds of visits exposed serious violations at child care agencies across the state. At least 80 providers were “put on notice” for violations that included failure to reconcile passenger logs, no first aid training, expired drivers’ licenses or lack of transportation training. Just a handful of agencies voluntarily suspended their licenses to transport, including one that left a child asleep on a bus after a field trip.

The Department of Human Services licenses 3,300 child care agencies across the state, and nearly 700 of these offer transportation. The majority of transporting agencies are found in Memphis, with 250 providers offering the service. Knoxville and Nashville have the next highest concentration, with 50 providers transporting, followed by Clarksville and Chattanooga, where 30 providers transport children.

If you witness transportation or other child-care violations, please call the Child Care Complaint Hotline at **1-800-462-8261**. This number is posted on every licensed child care vehicle.

For more information on child care licensing, visit: http://www.tn.gov/humanserv/adfam/cc_main.html
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