

Addressing Problems

New staff members sometimes forget the guidelines about how to keep their environments clean and healthy. Read these scenarios and describe how you would respond.

Scenario	I would...
<p>Felicity is a parent of a 10-month-old child in your program. She comes to you very upset one afternoon. "I'm the first to admit that I'm a bit of a clean-freak," she begins, "but my baby has been sick since the day she started in this program. The kids just trade chew toys back and forth. When I came in today, another child had my baby's pacifier in his mouth. I can't take it. I've talked to the teacher a million times, but nothing has changed. I don't know what to do."</p>	<p><i>Calm the parent and let her know you understand her concerns. Then probe for specific information that will help you know how to respond. You might say something like, "I understand your concerns. It's so frustrating and scary when your baby gets sick. You mentioned today another child had a pacifier; are there other specific problems you've tried to address with the teacher?" You might also need to help the mother understand that many of the behaviors she is describing are developmentally typical; we can't limit babies' opportunities to explore with their mouths. Reassure her of your program's commitment to cleanliness. "The concerns you have brought up are valid. I will talk to the teacher today. It's so important that infants have clean environments to explore. We'll make a plan and check back with you next week, ok?"</i></p>
<p>You walk into a preschool classroom during lunchtime. You hear Bryce call out, "I'm finished ..." from the restroom. Before the teacher has a chance to respond, Bryce walks out naked and hands his underwear to the teacher at the lunch table. "They got wet," he declares.</p>	<p><i>You might need to step in and help the classroom team. You can provide supervision at the lunch table while the teacher assists the child in the restroom. You might say, "How can I help? Let me grab you a plastic bag for those pants you're holding. Then I'll wash my hands and stay at the table. You can get some fresh clothes for Bryce and help him. I'll block the area where he dripped until we can clean it."</i></p>

The four staff members in your school-age program are generally very laid-back and relaxed. The kids love them and they all have a lot of fun. You are growing concerned, though, that they are not taking their cleaning responsibilities seriously. You have noticed that the snack table often looks sticky and covered in crumbs.

Recognize the strong relationships the staff members have with the children, but emphasize the important responsibility they have to make the program look professional and clean at all times. You might sit down with the team and look at a role and responsibility chart. Use your health and safety checklists to identify cleaning tasks that need done regularly. Then let the team decide who is responsible for cleaning tasks at opening, closing, and throughout the program time. Work with them to develop a fair schedule. Continue to monitor and observe.