

1. Title:

Understanding and Improving Pest Management in Child Care Centers in New York

2. Project Leader(s):

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3. Cooperator(s):

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4. Abstract:

Good quality child care is extremely important for working families and NY has over a ½ million children enrolled in a child care program. Two laws have been put into place in NY with the intent of safeguarding for young children enrolled in child care centers, the Child Safe Playing Fields Act and the Neighbor Notification Law, yet the status of pests and pest management is unclear. In addition, pests and pest management are a minute part of what child care personnel think about each day in a child care business; however, when pest activity occurs (such as ants in food, mouse droppings in toy bins, head lice on children, or a wasp sting), pests can become the #1 top priority of the day.

Efforts to evaluate the pest management needs will help the NYS IPM Program develop tools to help child care staff prevent or handle pest issues while also protecting the health and safety of children and staff, assuring parents, and avoiding legal and financial liability for the business.

5. Background and justification:

Children need to be protected from environmental health hazards, especially during the earliest years of life. Almost a fourth of all children under the age of 5 in the United States are enrolled in some form of organized child care (CAP, 2012) and NY has 520,000 slots for children. Studies suggest that some pesticides can negatively affect child development (NRC 1993). It is also well documented that the presence of some common pests is hazardous to human health (Goddard 2003). We must ensure that children's indoor environments are healthy, pest-free and free of risks due to pest management activities.

In NY, two laws, the Child Safe Playing Fields Act and the Neighbor Notification Law, affect the use of pesticides in child care centers. These laws provide some safeguards for young children enrolled in day care. However, minimal effort has been made to conduct outreach to child care facility owners, staff or parents of young children in NY. It is likely that many child care center operators are unaware of the laws and are not familiar with integrated pest management. Pest management is not among the course offerings from child care training organizations. In light of recent bed bug issues and early childhood asthma, IPM education is needed in child care facilities. NY lags behind other states in IPM implementation in child care.

Good quality child care is extremely important for working families. We propose to assess the status of pest management and pest issues in child care facilities in NY. From this we will develop educational opportunities that will improve the quality of child care in the same way IPM has been successful in schools.

6. Objectives:

1. Assess the status of pest management in child care centers (not home-based child care) using a survey tool similar to one used in California (Bradman et al. 2003). The survey will assess the most important pests encountered, level of knowledge of staff, how pest management services are obtained, pesticide use patterns and interest in IPM.
2. Conduct five site evaluations of participating child care centers around NY state as a way to measure progress and highlight success.
3. Engage with child care providers by tailoring IPM outreach to the needs of the industry and by making contacts with providers and organizations that offer training.

7. Procedures:

Assess the status of pest management in child care centers (not home-based child care) using a survey tool similar to one used in California.

1. Developed a survey with feedback from several child care business owners and the NE School IPM Working Group.
2. Send postcards to about 2000 Child Care Centers in NY, excluding NYC using the OCFS database for contact information. Postcards asked recipients to fill out an online survey about their facility.
3. Child Care Councils and OCFS were made aware of the survey effort and anticipated benefits to the industry. These organizations helped to promote the survey.
4. Survey tool is assessing the most common pests encountered, staff knowledge, how pest management services are obtained, pesticide use and interest in IPM.
5. Five facility pest management evaluations (offered by NYS IPM program staff) will be raffled off for those facilities completing a survey. The first was completed in July 2014.

Engage with child care providers.

1. Assessment results from survey and evaluations will permit us to begin developing outreach materials tailored to the child care industry.
2. Contacts with Child Care Councils will provide opportunities to train providers in pest ID and pest management topics.
3. A blog targeting schools and child care staff, titled [The ABCs of School and Childcare Pest Management](#), has been developed.
4. An overseeding demonstration project was conducted at the Bethlehem Preschool in Glenmont, NY. While overseeding has been studied on school athletic fields, no work has been conducted on child care play yards, which receive consistent year round traffic. In this particular setting, all children enter the yard through a gate, which leads to a localized compacted and bare area. Weekly overseeding was conducted to try to provide a more consistent turf surface in this area. Results were inconclusive at the end of the season and will be reevaluated in the spring.

8. Results and discussion:

The survey response rate has been lower than expected with a current return rate of 2%. Scheduled presentations were cancelled due to low enrollment. There appears to be little enthusiasm within the industry to learn about IPM.

The raw data from the surveys collected so far, however, indicates that there is a great need for pest management information:

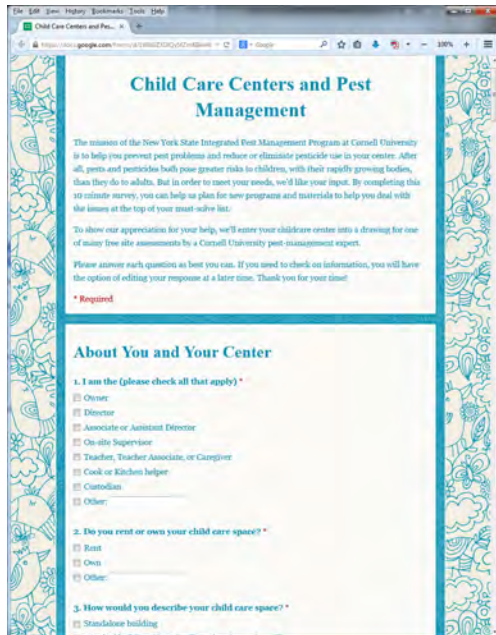
- Within the last three years, 65% have experienced pest complaints by staff at child care centers. 27% experienced complaints by children, 17% by parents, and 13% by other building occupants.
- 19% are not satisfied with the level of pest management at the center.
- Pesticide use complaints are comparatively lower, with staff, children, parents, and other building occupants making complaints at 6%, 2%, 1%, and 1% respectively.
- 27% reported using pesticide applications for weeds and 60% for outdoor insect pests.
- When asked if they had requested an emergency exemption for the Child Safe Playing Fields Act, 0% checked yes and 73% checked “I don’t know what this is”.

Renewed efforts at promotion will hopefully bring participation numbers up. A side benefit of the numerous survey promotions has been requests for trainings. The first two trainings are scheduled for March.

9. Project location(s):

New York State

10. Samples of resources developed:

A screenshot of a web browser displaying an online survey. The survey title is "Child Care Centers and Pest Management". The mission statement of the New York State Integrated Pest Management Program at Cornell University is provided. The survey asks for information about the respondent and their center. The first question is "1. I am the (please check all that apply) *", with options: Director, Associate or Assistant Director, On-site Supervisor, Teacher, Teacher Associate, or Caregiver, Cook or Kitchen helper, Custodian, and Other. The second question is "2. Do you rent or own your child care space? *", with options: Rent, Own, and Other. The third question is "3. How would you describe your child care space? *", with the option: Standalone building. The survey is framed by a decorative border of blue line art.

An online survey questions child care staff about pests and pest management within their centers.