



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
P.O. BOX 2120
RICHMOND, VA 23218-2120

DATE: August 12, 2024

TO: Licensed Child Day Centers, Licensed Family Day Homes, Licensed Family Day Systems, Religiously Exempt Child Day Centers, Certified Preschools, Center-Based and Home-Based Programs Participating in the Child Care Subsidy Program, Voluntarily Registered Family Day Homes, Family Day Homes Approved by a Family Day System, and Filing Exempt Child Day Programs

FROM: Jeffrey Williams, Assistant Superintendent - Child Care Health and Safety, Virginia Department of Education

SUBJECT: Weighted Sensory Products: Guidelines and Considerations for Use in Child Day Programs

The Virginia Department of Education has noticed an increase in the use of weighted sensory products. The intent of this memo is to provide information on safety practices and considerations for the safe use of these products.

Weighted sensory products such as vests, blankets, sashes, lap pads, shoulder wraps, toys, etc., provide deep touch pressure (DTP) or proprioceptive input that may provide a calming effect in efforts to help children with difficulty self-regulating. The weight and compression delivered by the product provide proprioceptive input using deep pressure to the muscles and joints, which sends signals to the brain, potentially providing calm and focus.

Specific recommendations, tips, and guidelines are cited by multiple national organizations and focus on the use of the products for children with diagnosed attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or children with an autism spectrum disorder. While the product may not be limited to use for children with a developmental disability, safety measures and procedures are recommended to ensure proper use and compliance with licensing standards, including documenting this special accommodation in the child's record.

Guidelines and considerations for the use of weighted sensory products include the following:

- If any weighted sensory products are used in a child day program, the product should be age-appropriate and used in accordance with manufacturer's instructions.
- Weighted sensory products that restrict movement must be used with parental consent and under supervision to ensure the child's safety. In addition, VDOE recommends that the use of sensory products that restrict movement be implemented under the guidance of the child's health professional such as a pediatrician or occupational therapist.
- Providers should be aware of any recalls on weighted products provided by the facility or the parents, as well as risks and benefits of use.

- The Academy of Pediatrics and the Consumer Product Safety Commission declares weighted blankets and weighted sleep products unsafe for infants.
- Providers are encouraged to partner with parents on the safe use of weighted products while children are in care and parents are encouraged to consult with their child's health professional(s) to discuss the safe use of weighted products and to determine if the product is necessary for the child's condition(s) while in child care.

Thank you for your continued commitment to keep children in the Commonwealth safe.