



# Mecklenburg County Health Department

## HANDWASHING SINK USE IN CHILD CARE CENTERS

- 1) If a caregiver:
  - a) Handles food or eating utensils during the preparation of meals
  - b) Opens or closes baby bottles, baby food jars, or cereal boxes
  - c) Open or closes any other food items intended for the assembly of ingredients for human consumption
  - d) Transfers dry goods from a bulk container to an individual bag
  - e) Prepares and/or warms baby food and bottles of milk sent from home
  - f) Warms and Serves food sent from home

The caregiver shall wash their hands at an approved **hand washing sink located in an approved food preparation area.**

\*\* Hand washing sinks associated with diaper changing and restroom/bathroom areas are not approved for adult hand washing prior to food preparation.

\*\*\* Food preparation can only occur in a room that has a designated/approved food preparation area. The area must include a hand washing sink and a food preparation countertop or table. Food preparation areas shall be approved by this Department.

- 2) If a caregiver:
  - a) **Distributes/Serves** food prepared in the kitchen for consumption, using utensils
  - b) **Distributes/Serves** milk placed in a pitcher or other serving container by kitchen staff
  - c) **Distributes/Serves or transports** ice, using utensils
  - d) **Distributes/Serves** bag lunches
  - e) **Distributes/Serves individually wrapped/pre-packaged snacks from the kitchen or commercial vendor.**

Caregivers shall wash their hands at a hand washing sink in a **food preparation** area or **at a hand washing sink that has been cleaned and disinfected.**

- a) Caregivers can clean and disinfect a handwashing sink located in a classroom or restroom, which is not associated with a diaper changing area, and wash their hands prior to serving the food.
- b) Caregivers can go to any approved food service only/food preparation area and use the designated hand washing sink to wash their hands prior to serving the food.

\*\*If the caregiver uses a hand washing sink located in another classroom/restroom/child care area, the caregiver must : 1) Clean and disinfect the sink (if required), 2) Wash their hands, 3) When they return to the classroom, use hand sanitizer or place clean disposable gloves on their hands before serving the food.  
Note: If a caregiver performs any non-food service function after washing their hands, they are required to wash their hands again.

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3) If a caregiver:

- a) Changes a child's diaper.

The caregiver shall wash their hands and the child's hands at a designated hand washing sink located next to the diaper changing table.

\*\*A hand washing sink shall be next to the diaper changing table in centers licensed for more than 12 children. Caregivers and children cannot cross the room, go into another room, or go through doors/gates to access a hand washing sink.

\*\* Centers in a Residence are allowed to have the diaper changing table outside of the restroom (next to restroom door).

- b) If a caregiver changes a child's pull up in a restroom. The caregiver must wash the child's hands and their hands at the restroom's hand washing sink.

4) Children are allowed to wash their hands at restroom/bathroom sinks, general handwashing sinks, and the diaper changing hand washing sink before lunch and upon entering the facility. The hand washing sink in the food preparation area can be used by children (except after a diaper change occurs) as long as the sink is cleaned and then disinfected after the child washes their hands.

5) Children are not allowed to wash their hands at the kitchen hand washing sink.

6) Other activities that will require caregivers to clean and disinfect handwashing sinks and "change the use" of a handwashing sink:

- a) If a food preparation hand washing sink is used to clean and sanitize toys.  
b) A handwashing sink is used to rinse and clean art supplies.

7) Classroom and restroom hand washing sinks cannot be used to wash fruits and vegetables.

8) Classroom and restroom hand washing sinks cannot be used as a drinking water source.

9) To summarize, 1) If children or staff utilize the restroom, hand washing should occur at the hand washing sink in/at the restroom. 2) After a child's diaper is changed, the caregiver and the child must use the hand washing sink located at the diaper changing area. 3) If food is prepared, staff must wash their hands at the hand washing sink in the kitchen or at the hand washing sink in the classroom food preparation area.