



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **IDPH Announces \$10 Million Program to Provide Air Purifiers to Improve Air Quality in Day Care Centers**

*School Facilities with Clean Air Record Fewer Sick Students and Improved Academic Performance*

**CHICAGO** – Governor JB Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) announced today that the state is offering more than 20,000 HEPA (High Efficiency Particulate Air) purifiers at no cost to Day Care Centers in Illinois to help reduce the transmission of respiratory viruses, including COVID-19. To receive air purifiers, plus a three-year supply of filters, [Day Care providers must fill out an online request form by July 31](#). The federally funded offer is open to all licensed Illinois Day Care providers outside Chicago.

“The health and well-being of our youngest children is a key priority for my administration,” Governor Pritzker said. “By providing resources to maintain good air quality in our Day Care Centers, we can keep kids and staff healthy, prevent absences and also improve children’s ability to learn and gain essential skills.”

IDPH is coordinating the \$10 million investment with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), which licenses Day Care Centers in Illinois. SHIELD Illinois, the non-profit University of Illinois program established in 2020 as a response to the pandemic, is assisting IDPH by managing customer service and delivery of the units. The effort is the third phase of a previously announced [IDPH program to provide HEPA air purifiers to K-12 schools](#) throughout Illinois and to [Head Start Programs in Illinois](#). It is funded through the CDC’s Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Prevention and Control (ELC) Reopening Schools program.

In May, the CDC released [new guidelines for indoor ventilation](#) that set a specific target for the first time. The new guidelines call for at least five air changes per hour, meaning the equivalent of all the air in a room is replaced five or more times within an hour.

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“I have devoted much of my career to protecting and promoting the health of children,” said **IDPH Director Dr. Sameer Vohra**, a pediatrician. “The last few years have highlighted the importance of good ventilation in preventing the indoor transmission of viruses and keeping children and adults safe from respiratory illnesses. These HEPA air purifiers are an important investment in our children’s present and future. I am very excited that IDPH is partnering with the Department of Children and Family Services to provide tools to keep very young kids served by our Day Care Centers healthy to develop, learn, and grow.”

“As we have seen particularly in the last few years, air quality is critically important to health. The more our young learners are in school surrounded by peers and engaging with each other, the better it is for them on so many levels including socially, mentally and of course educationally,” said Illinois **DCFS Director Marc D. Smith**. “We are grateful that this program eases what could be an additional financial burden for our day cares while providing health benefits to our children and staff.”

IDPH is launching an enrollment process [that allows Day Care Centers to submit orders for portable HEPA air purifiers](#). Grantees will generally be eligible for one small unit for each classroom, with a limited number of larger units available for sites that serve large numbers of students.

[Studies show that cleaner air](#) can reduce absentee rates, and improve students’ abilities to think, learn, read and solve math problems.

Last year IDPH issued [ventilation guidance](#) to educate the community on the impact of ventilation systems and to provide information about low cost and DIY interventions for ventilation upgrades.

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