

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

July 23, 2024

Heat Education and Alerts for TK-12 Schools, Early Care and Education Settings and Summer Camps

Heat is a dangerous side-effect of climate change across the world, including Los Angeles County. Children are particularly vulnerable since they cannot regulate their body temperature as efficiently as adults. The youngest children and those with underlying health conditions are at highest risk of injury and death from heat. In August 2023, a youth in Riverside County with pre-existing heart conditions passed away following a physical education class that required outdoor activity during triple degree heat.

Following this tragic event, on September 12, 2023, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved a motion that triggered outreach and new initiatives to address extreme heat in schools. The motion focused on examining the reduction of pavement in schools, using schools as cooling centers, and uplifting existing cooling center locations near schools. Additionally, the motion instructed Los Angeles County departments to provide technical assistance to schools regarding

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potential grant opportunities that could help increase green spaces on school grounds. Furthermore, the motion led to the development of a toolkit for schools that includes information on early symptoms of heat illness and heat stroke prevention strategies.

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health is already working on several approaches to address heat and heat-affiliated health risks such as releasing extreme heat press releases via newsletter signup; the development of the informational school heat toolkit; and support of green space development and cooling measures in schools, in partnership with the Chief Sustainability Office. However, more immediate action is necessary as young children and youth continue to be exposed to extreme heat. Additionally, a 2023 report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) found that prolonged heat exposure without respite also impacts school performance with a 4%-7% reduction in academic achievement per child. The impact of learning in extreme heat conditions further adds to inequity since it impacts academic futures and potentially impacts future income.

The development of health education information for school personnel and parents regarding heat, early symptoms of heat illness, and implications for youth with pre-existing conditions, continues to be a critical need. Additionally, there is currently no uniform, intentional approach to providing schools with heat alerts. It is critical that school heat alerts are provided to school administrators to help ensure all schools are aware of upcoming extreme temperatures and can make the necessary plans to safeguard their students.

It is imperative to also address heat education and alerts that are specific to settings where young children are cared for since young children may not show signs of

heat illness the same way older children do. Early care and education (ECE) settings provide services for children of varying age groups, including infants who are at an elevated risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) following heat exposure. It is vital that ECE settings receive appropriate alerts and information ahead of extreme heat days.

To cohesively implement heat alerts that can help safeguard all children, it is vital to also recognize where children play during the hottest months of the year. Seasonal programs, such as summer camps, should also receive heat alerts. Summer camps typically include outdoor activities that may expose children to high temperatures. The alert system with accompanying health education and guidance available by the County, will help schools, early care and education settings, and summer camps with the least cooling resources the most.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to collaborate with Los Angeles County Office of Education, Los Angeles County Chief Sustainability Office, Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, and Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management to:

1. Establish and implement a heat alert system to communicate heat alerts ahead of high heat days to TK-12 schools, early care and education settings and seasonal summer camps with general recommendations of actions to take; and release the alerts with the previously prepared school heat toolkit to TK-12 schools and summer camps;
2. Develop a health education presentation regarding extreme heat that is available

in multiple languages for TK-12 school personnel and parents that will provide information on early symptoms of heat illness and types of heatstroke; first aid actions to address heat illness symptoms; impact of heat on children in TK-12 schools, including school aged children with underlying health conditions; and should include information about the heat alert system;

3. Develop a health education presentation that is available in multiple languages and is specific to early care and education (ECE) settings regarding heat to disseminate to caregivers, parents, and educators of infants and young children on the risks and steps to take to protect them from extreme heat;
4. Outreach to TK-12 schools and parks hosting seasonal summer camps to engage regarding the school heat toolkit and implementation of heat alerts; outreach regarding the heat presentation for both TK-12 and early care and education (ECE) settings; existing resources to assist schools; and the available guidance to support schools with their own heat action plan development; and
5. Report back on the results of the above directives within 180 days. This report should also include, but not be limited to, metrics showing how many school administrators, educators, parents, and caregivers were engaged around extreme heat and steps to take to protect children; metrics on presentation attendees; the number of times heat alerts are sent to schools; and the reach of health education tools.

I, FURTHER, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health to collaborate with Los Angeles County Office of Education, Los Angeles County Chief Sustainability Office, and Los Angeles County

Office of Emergency Management to:

1. Identify and report back in 180 days on the feasibility of:
 - a. developing a best practices fact sheet applicable to infants and young children, and
 - b. establishing a contact list of private childcare and preschool facilities in Los Angeles County that can be reached with a heat alert.

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