STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING
P.O. Box 40970, Olympia, Washington 98504-0970

April 15, 2008

Dear Child Care Provider:

On July 22, 2007, a new law (RCW 43.215.360) took effect that prohibits the use of window blinds or other window coverings with pull cords or inner cords that can form a loop and pose a strangulation risk for young children. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) wants to share some additional information about the law, and the policy instructions that DEL licensing staff must follow when checking window coverings.

The law applies to licensed family child care homes, child care centers and school-age centers. Window blinds and other coverings that have been manufactured, or otherwise permanently retrofitted, in a way that eliminates the pull cords or inner cords from forming a loop, are allowable in licensed child care settings.

DEL values licensed child care providers as vital partners in our mission to prepare *all* Washington children for school – which includes keeping children safe. In this spirit, DEL licensing professionals work closely with providers to ensure they have the information and assistance they need to meet Washington's minimum health and safety requirements, including the window blind law.

As a core agency value, DEL believes parents and families *must* be able to trust that a Washington State child care license signifies a safe, healthy environment for children. If at any time a child care center, family home, or school-age center does **not** meet the minimum licensing requirements for the window blinds or other window coverings, DEL licensing staff will require:

- A retrofitting kit that eliminates the potential for a pull cord or inner cord loop to be formed; or
- An alternative retrofitting solution that is both **permanent** and eliminates the potential for a pull cord or inner cord loop to be formed; or
- Immediate action to remove the window blinds or coverings that permanently removes any risk of pull cords or inner cords capable of forming a loop.

In order to be in compliance with this state law, licensed child care providers should inspect all window blinds or other window coverings located in licensed areas of their homes or facilities to ensure that any pull cords or inner cords cannot form loops. Providers should work to correct the possibility of loop formation if they find such a potential hazard exists with their window blinds or other window coverings. The Department of Early Learning will provide technical assistance and information as available regarding reduced cost or no-cost options for retrofitting or replacing unsafe window blinds and window coverings. If providers have any questions about whether a potential hazard exists with their window blinds or other window coverings or they have questions on how to correct a problem they've found, they can contact their DEL licensor.

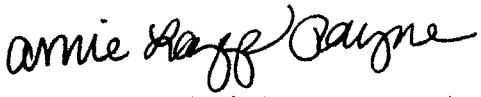
DEL licensors will be checking compliance with this law at future visits to your home or facility. If, upon inspection, the DEL licensor finds that the window blind or other window covering in licensed areas in a home or facility can form loops, the licensor will develop a compliance agreement, which is a written agreement for how the issue will be resolved. The DEL licensor will follow up and verify compliance with this law within 14 days of the compliance agreement.

More information on window blinds and coverings may be found at the following sites:

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission
http://www.cpsc.gov./cpscpub/pubs/5114.pdf

Window Covering Safety Council
http://www.windowcoverings.org

Sincerely,



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Deputy Director

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