Looking for a warm place to stay... Fall is here and winter isn’t far behind. Pests such as mice, rats and some insects will be looking for a warm, safe place to spend the cold months. Before the snow falls and chilly winds blow, use integrated pest management (IPM) methods to keep those critters from coming inside your facility. Remember, the first line of defense against pests is to remove access to food, water and shelter. To help you get started, here is a checklist of several things to look for and where to look.

**Indoor Areas:**
1. Food is stored in tightly sealed containers. □ Yes □ No
2. Floors, walls, counters, shelves, etc, are clean and dry. □ Yes □ No
3. Faucets and pipes don’t drip or leak. □ Yes □ No
4. Play areas and closets are free of clutter. □ Yes □ No
5. Garbage containers have plastic liners. □ Yes □ No

**Outside Areas:**
1. Windows and doors close tightly, no gaps. □ Yes □ No
2. Walls, roof and foundation are free of holes and cracks. □ Yes □ No
3. Plants are at least 12 inches away from the building. □ Yes □ No
4. Play equipment and toys are free of standing water. □ Yes □ No
5. Garbage cans/dumpsters are away from exterior doors. □ Yes □ No

Attached is a more thorough IPM Checklist for Early Care and Education Programs, which lists items to consider for specific indoor and outdoor areas that may be present at your facility. The checklist also includes information about what pest damage may look like, and it explains the items on the checklist and why they are included. While you personally may not be able to address all of the things on this checklist, share it with your director, pest control professional, landlord, and building maintenance workers. Report problems you see to the proper person. Working together, you can keep your child care facility pest-free and safe for the children in your care.

For more information about integrated pest management (IPM) and steps you can take to prevent pests and keep your home, school, or child care healthy and safe, visit the website of the Pennsylvania Integrated Pest Management Program ([www.paipm.org](http://www.paipm.org)). You can now follow us on Facebook and Twitter and subscribe to our blog from our homepage.

The University of California (UC), San Francisco School of Nursing’s California Childcare Health Program, UC Berkley’s Center for Environmental Research and Children’s Health, UC Statewide IPM Program, and the California Department of Pesticide Regulation developed this checklist. ([http://www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org/](http://www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org/)).