

Playground Safety Series



Part Three Playground Supervision By Colorado School Districts Self Insurance Pool

Trainer Guide

Playground Safety Series Trainer Guide

Introduction

This Playground Safety Series is designed to provide school personnel with an introduction to supervision concepts applicable to playgrounds. Participants will be introduced to common playground risk exposures and given strategies to identify and manage those risks. The information provided in this program should be customized to reflect your policies, procedures and management protocols to improve its effectiveness.

The purpose of the playground supervision series is to provide a safe environment for students and users while on the playground. Proper supervision will help prevent accidents and injuries.

Mission

The Mission of The Colorado School District Self Insurance Pool (CSDSIP) is to provide a user friendly format to bring public schools into compliance with the current standards and best practices advanced by the Consumer Product Safety Commission and ASTM Guidelines. These voluntary standards have evolved into the standard of care for designing and managing public playgrounds.

CSDSIP Support

We anticipate that the implementation of the playground safety series may generate a need for a deeper level of understanding for playground risk management or generate more sophisticated questions than are addressed in the training material. The CSDSIP Risk Control Staff are Certified Playground Safety Inspectors and are available to assist you in the development and review of your playground safety program.

Training Objectives

After completing Playground Supervision Series you will:

- ✓ Be able to supervise and guide appropriate play activity
- ✓ Know what to do in case of an emergency
- ✓ Identify hazards on play equipment and grounds

Administrator Guide

A recent Colorado Supreme Court decision, *Loveland v. St. Vrain SD*, has increased the liability exposure of schools related to the maintenance and safety of their playgrounds. Adequate and proper supervision is an important component in defending a district against a playground injury lawsuit.

Supervising Children

While it is impossible to completely prevent accidents from occurring on playgrounds, good supervision can help reduce the risk of injury. In general, supervising playgrounds and controlling the play environment can be very challenging. There are some supervision guidelines, rules, and procedures that can help overcome these challenges. Some examples include:

- *The identification of areas that are off limits to students.* If it is difficult to prevent students from entering non-access areas, it may be necessary to install barriers, such as fences.
- *Control over crowding in a particular area.* This may mean decreasing the number of students on climbing bars or high platforms so that others can play more easily.
- *Supervisor positioning.* Since most playground injuries result from falls, supervisors should be positioned close to climbing equipment. The position should also allow supervisors to see all students in the play area. If this is not possible, then another supervisor should be used. Supervisors should not bring paperwork or use recess time to socialize with other adults.
- *Actively survey the play area.* While children are on the playground, keep your eyes scanning the area. Know each child's first name. Communicating verbally is a good way to let the children know you are monitoring them.
- *Supervisor to student ratio.* There is no set supervisor to student ratio in the public playground guidelines (CPSC) or standards (ASTM). A good rule of thumb is 1 adult to every 30 children – keep at least the same child to staff ratios used in the classroom. Because of distractions, more staff members may be required to supervise children. Preschool age children need more supervision.
- *Controlling child behavior.* Children inherently push the safety limits of the equipment and their environment. Watch for unsafe behavior such as climbing up a slide. It is important for students to know the playground rules and why they are being enforced.

First Aid

- Be prepared: keep a first aid kit stocked and easily available in case an injury occurs
- First aid kit should be maintained by nurse/office staff and include latex gloves
- Ensure at least one playground supervisor is certified in first aid and CPR
- All staff should be familiar with what to do in an emergency on the playground; know your school's procedures in case you need to respond to an injury
- A staff person should be ready to contact parents

Identifying Playground Hazards

Your playground and equipment should be inspected daily. Do a quick visual sweep to insure that trash and debris are removed. Schools should keep playgrounds in good condition by inspecting and maintaining the equipment throughout the year. Heavy rainfall, snow,

temperature extremes and high winds can damage playground equipment. So can heavy use. Any conditions that are unsuitable should be reported to the maintenance department immediately and affected areas may be restricted from use.

Your **high frequency** inspections should be done as often as *daily* or no less than *weekly*.

Routine Inspection and Maintenance Issues ([Handout A](#)) provides a list of maintenance issues to check for during your inspections.

Learning Objectives Review

After the Playground Supervision series is completed administrators may use these questions as material review to evaluate the participant's comprehension and understanding.

Playground Supervision Material – Question and Answer Session

1. How often should an adult check on children at the playground?

Answer: Children should always be supervised when using playground equipment

2. What is a good rule of thumb for child to staff ratios on the playground?

Answer: 1 adult to every 30 children

3. What is the first task a playground supervisor should conduct before children enter the playground?

Answer: Do a quick visual inspection of the grounds to make sure equipment is in good working order and the grounds are free from trash and debris

4. What equipment should a playground supervisor carry on them?

Answer: Walkie-talkies or cell phones for communication with the office

5. Where should playground supervisors be situated on the playground?

Answer: Supervisors should move around the playground, actively scanning the play area, especially high risk areas

6. What is the main purpose of supervision on school playgrounds?

Answer: To help protect students from injury or diminish the risk of student injury

Training Specifications

The following sources provide guidelines and/or standards applicable to playgrounds:

- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commissions Pubic Playground Safety Handbook
- ASTM F 1487-Standard Consumer Safety Performance of Playground Equipment for Public Use
- ASTM F 1292- Standard Specifications for Impact Attenuation of Surfacing Systems Under and Around Playground Equipment
- ASTM F 2223-Standard Guild on Playground Surfacing
- ASTM F 2075- Standard Specifications for Engineered Wood Fiber

Limits of Liability (Disclaimer)

The authors and publishers of this training (document) assume no risk or liability for incident arising from the application of this information in any way. This training (document) should not be construed as a substitute for ASTM Performance Standard U.S Consumer Safety Commissions Guideline or the Applicable play area safety coded and/or standard of the state or jurisdiction in which the training document is used.

Participant Handouts

Handout A

Routine Inspection and Maintenance Issues

- Broken equipment such as loose bolts, missing end caps, cracks, etc.
- Broken glass & other trash
- Cracks in plastics
- Loose anchoring
- Hazardous or dangerous debris
- Insect damage
- Problems with surfacing
- Displaced loose-fill surfacing (see Section 4.3)
- Holes, flakes, and/or buckling of unitary surfacing
- User modifications (such as ropes tied to parts or equipment rearranged)
- Vandalism
- Worn, loose, damaged, or missing parts
- Wood splitting
- Rusted or corroded metals
- Rot
- Drainage

Notes:

Date: _____

Inspected By: _____

Source: Handbook for Public Playground Safety