

Child Care Centre Outdoor and Playground Safety Policy and Procedures

Name of Child Care Centre: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Date Policy and Procedures Established: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Date Policy and Procedures Updated: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Purpose

Outdoor play is an integral part of the daily schedule and plays an important role in the development of children's overall well-being. In order for children to thrive in outdoor play, it is crucial that there be sufficient toys and equipment for children to engage in active play and that educators engage as active participants in the play.

The *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years* document describes how children thrive in programs where they can engage in vigorous physical play in natural outdoor spaces and playgrounds that present manageable levels of challenge. In addition to providing physical benefits, active play outdoors strengthens functioning in cognitive areas such as perception, attention, creative problem solving, and complex thinking.

While these environments need to be safe, it is also important for them to provide children with interesting opportunities for a reasonable degree of risk-taking.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the responsibilities of the licensee, staff, students and volunteers in ensuring that the outdoor and playground spaces provide a safe and well-supervised environment for children's play and meet Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standards.

This policy is intended to fulfill the obligations set out under Ontario Regulation 137/15 for a playground safety policy for child care centres.

Note: definitions for terms used throughout this policy are provided in a Glossary at the end of the document.

Policy

General

- The child care centre will ensure that there are enough play materials available that are appropriate for the children's age and learning and developmental needs during outdoor play.
- The maximum capacity of the playground will not be exceeded at any time.

Playground Inspections/Checks

- Outdoor play space, fixed play structures and surfacing checks will be conducted on a daily, monthly and annual basis.
- All playground inspections will be documented. All documentation and reports will be filed by the [insert position] in the [insert location of file (e.g. playground inspection binder)].
- The licensee will ensure that where the playground has fixed equipment, the certified playground inspection is conducted by a third party inspector who:
 - Has declared non-conflict of interest including declaration of non-affiliation with playground equipment and protective surface manufacturers, suppliers and/or other contractors involved in the retrofit, upgrade or repair of the playground equipment and protective surfaces;
 - has proof of current Professional Errors and Omissions insurance coverage; and \
 - has proof of playground inspector certification.
- [insert additional playground check requirements]

Repairs and Maintenance

- All items identified in the checklists as requiring repair will be documented in the repair log and repaired or addressed in a timely manner (the form in Appendix C may be used for this purpose). Note: the amount of time required will depend on the scope of the work and who is required to conduct the repairs..
- Documentation on the repair log will also include:
 - the date the issue was identified;
 - documentation of what steps and efforts have been taken to address any identified items which cannot be repaired immediately due to circumstances out of the child care centre's control; and
 - the date the related repairs were completed.
- Where outdoor space or playground repairs cannot be completed immediately, the area or space requiring repairs will be sectioned off to prevent children from using that area in order to protect their safety and reduce the risk of injury. Children will be supervised at all times during outdoor play to ensure that they do not approach or use spaces that are sectioned off pending repairs.
- Any repairs requiring alterations or renovations to the playground premises will not begin until site or playground plans are approved by a Ministry of Education Director.
- [insert additional repair and maintenance requirements]

Compliance with the CSA Standards

- Any outdoor play space, fixed play structure or surfacing under those structures that is constructed or renovated will meet the requirements set out in the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standard CAN/CSA-Z614-14, “Children’s Playspaces and Equipment”.
- Written confirmation of compliance with the CSA standard will be obtained from a Certified Playground Safety Inspector, upon completion of any repairs or renovations which have resulted in a non-compliance with the CSA standard as outlined in a playground inspection report.
- [insert additional compliance with CSA standards requirements]

Supervision

- Children will be supervised at all times during outdoor play.
- Staff will position themselves throughout the playground and rotate their position where required to ensure children can be visually supervised while engaging in play.
- Staff to child ratios will be maintained on the playground at all times.
- Reduced ratios will never be used on the playground.
- Infant and toddler children will be separated from other children during outdoor activities.
- Staff will ensure that there all gates are securely closed at all times.
- [insert additional supervision requirements]

Documentation and Report Retention

- All documentation and reports related to the outdoor space or playground will be:
 - Kept for three years from the date they were created and/or updated (whichever date is most recent); and
 - Made available for Ministry of Education staff to review at all times.
- [insert additional documentation and report retention requirements]

Additional Policy Statements

Consider including additional policy statements, as applicable, e.g. what time(s) of the day or at what frequency daily playground checks are completed, what date of the month each monthly check will be completed, how to complete an annual inspection for a playground without a fixed structure, whether seasonal playground inspections will be completed, etc.

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Playground Safety Procedures

Timeline	Steps to Follow
<p>Daily: before using the outdoor play space/ playground</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. [insert position] must: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. walk around the entire outdoor play space or playground to look for and identify hazards and defects as indicated in the daily playground inspection checklist (the form in Appendix A may be used for this purpose); ii. remove any garbage, hazards or defects using gloves; iii. complete the playground inspection checklist, sign and date it; and iv. file the playground inspection checklist in the [insert name/location of file] . <p>Where hazards or defects cannot immediately be removed or repaired, [insert position] must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. report the hazards or defects to [insert position] who will log and maintain the information in the repair log and take appropriate action to initiate any repairs. ii. Section off the area with the hazard/defect if it poses a hazard to children. 2. In preparation to exit the child care centre to use the outdoor play space or playground, [insert position] must: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. ensure all emergency medication accompanies children, where applicable; ii. ensure all emergency contact information is readily available for children; iii. ensure the attendance record is readily available; iv. ensure that the allergy and dietary restriction lists are readily available; v. ensure appropriate steps related to environmental factors have been implemented (e.g.: children are appropriately dressed for the weather, there are no entanglement risks, bug nets are in place, etc.); and vi. conduct head counts prior to leaving the indoor play activity area, and while transitioning them to the outdoor play space or playground.

Timeline	Steps to Follow
<p>Daily: while using the outdoor play space/ playground</p>	<p>1. Staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. position themselves in areas that ensure that all children and areas of the playground can be properly supervised at all times; ii. ensure that there is access to drinking water at all times; iii. complete head counts of children every [insert frequency] ; iv. implement the goals and approaches of the program statement, such as engaging with the children in play; and v. refrain from using personal cellular phones (except in emergency situations) or using outdoor time to socialize with other staff, students or volunteers during outdoor play. <p>Where a child is injured on the playground, staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. administer first aid, where appropriate; ii. contact emergency services, where appropriate; iii. notify the parent of the child; iv. complete an accident report and provide a copy to the child’s parent; and v. follow the serious occurrence policy and procedures, where appropriate.
<p>Daily: When returning from the outdoor play space/ playground</p>	<p>1. Staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. conduct head counts prior to returning indoors from the outdoor play space or playground, while transitioning indoors, and upon returning to the indoor play activity space. ii. Ensure that attendance records, emergency medication and children’s emergency contact information is brought indoors with the group.
<p>Monthly</p>	<p>1. [insert position] must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. walk around the entire outdoor play space or playground to look for and identify hazards and defects as indicated in the monthly playground inspection checklist (the form in Appendix B may be used for this purpose); ii. remove any hazards or defects, where possible;

Timeline	Steps to Follow
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. complete the monthly inspection checklist (including verification of seasonal issues), sign and date it; and iv. file the playground inspection checklist in the [insert name/location of file] . <p>Where hazards or defects cannot immediately be removed or repaired, [insert position] must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. report the hazards or defects to [insert position] who will log and maintain the information in the repair log and take appropriate action to initiate any repairs. ii. Section off the area with the hazard/defect if it poses a hazard to children. <p>2. [insert position] must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. review outdoor injuries and accidents that have occurred to look for trends; ii. take appropriate action to prevent similar injuries and accidents from happening in the future. <p>3. [insert position] must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. review the repair logs and follow up on any outstanding identified issues still requiring repair.
Annually	<p>1. Where the playground has fixed equipment, [insert position] must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. ensure a certified playground inspector conducts an annual playground inspection; ii. discuss the findings of the playground inspection with the certified playground inspector, including items that need to be repaired or replaced; and iii. obtain a copy of the playground inspection report. <p>2. Where the playground does not have fixed equipment [insert position] must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. walk around the entire outdoor play space or playground to look for and identify hazards and defects as indicated in the annual playground inspection checklist; ii. remove any hazards or defects, where possible;

Timeline	Steps to Follow
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> iii. complete the annual inspection checklist, sign and date it; and iv. develop a written plan to address any hazards and/or defects, including a timeline to address the issues identified during the inspection. <p>3. Where hazards or defects cannot immediately be removed or repaired, [insert position] must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. report the hazards or defects to [insert position] who will log and maintain the information in the repair log and take appropriate action to initiate any repairs. ii. section off the area with the hazard/defect if it poses a hazard to children.

Additional Procedures

Consider including additional procedures, as applicable, e.g. how to address vandalism on the playground (e.g. graffiti), the frequency at which head counts must be completed while on the playground, what to do during inclement weather, what to look for in regards to allergens (nuts hidden by animals, bee hives), etc.

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Glossary

Canadian Standards Association (CSA): a non-profit, voluntary association engaged in standards development and certification activities. The current standard in Ontario for licensed child care centre playgrounds is CAN/CSA Z614-14 - Children's Playspaces and Equipment. This standard specifies design and maintenance criteria to reduce the risk of injury.

Certified Playground Inspector: An individual who holds a current certification with the [Canadian Playground Safety Institute](#).

Fixed play structure: a structure anchored to the ground that is designed for children to climb on (e.g. a climber).

Licensee: The individual or corporation named on the licence issued by the Ministry of Education responsible for the operation and management of the child care centre.

Staff (Employee): Individual employed by the licensee (e.g. program room staff).

[Enter additional definitions here]

Regulatory Requirements: Ontario Regulation 137/15

Outdoor Play Space

Playground Safety Policy

24(4) Every licensee shall ensure that, at each child care centre it operates, any outdoor play space, fixed play structure or surfacing under those structures that is constructed or renovated on or after August 29, 2016 meets the requirements set out in the Canadian Standards Association standard CAN/CSA-Z614-14, "Children's playspaces and equipment", as amended from time to time. O. Reg. 126/16, s. 18 (2).

- (5) Every licensee shall ensure that at each child care centre it operates,
- (a) a playground safety policy is developed that reflects the Canadian Standards Association standard mentioned in subsection (4) and indicates the roles and responsibilities of employees regarding safety on playgrounds;
 - (b) daily, monthly and annual inspections of the outdoor place space, fixed play structures and surfacing are conducted in accordance with the requirements set out in the Canadian Standards Association standard mentioned in subsection (4);
 - (c) a plan is developed on how issues or problems identified in a playground inspection will be addressed; and
 - (d) a playground repair log is maintained.

Disclaimer: This document is a sample of a policy and procedure that has been prepared to assist licensees in understanding their obligations under the CCEYA and O. Reg. 137/15. It is the responsibility of the licensee to ensure that the information included in this document is

appropriately modified to reflect the individual circumstances and needs of each child care centre it operates.

Please be advised that this document does not constitute legal advice and should not be relied on as such. The information provided in this document does not impact the Ministry's authority to enforce the CCEYA and its regulations. Ministry staff will continue to enforce such legislation based on the facts as they may find them at the time of any inspection or investigation.

It is the responsibility of the licensee to ensure compliance with all applicable legislation. If the licensee requires assistance with respect to the interpretation of the legislation and its application, the licensee may wish to consult legal counsel.