

Instructions and Tips for Creating Compliant Policies and Procedures: Playground Safety Policy (O. Reg. 137/15, ss. 24(5))



Mandatory Information

Licenses of child care centres that are not located in publicly-funded schools are required to develop a playground safety policy that reflects the Canadian Standards Association standard, and that indicates the roles and responsibilities of employees regarding safety on playgrounds, to demonstrate compliance with requirements under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and O. Reg. 137/15.

Other Considerations

The following are some tips and other considerations for developing your playground safety policy. These are not mandatory, but they will support the development of more comprehensive and high-quality policies and procedures:

General

- Provide definitions for ambiguous terms used throughout your document.
- Include a space to put the date that the policy was last developed and/or updated.
- Break down your procedures into a step-by-step process that is easy to understand and follow and that includes clear roles and responsibilities.
- Link this policy to other policies and procedures that have been established and implemented (e.g. serious occurrence policy, program statement implementation policy).
- Be clear about the intent of your policy and what you are trying to achieve through its implementation.
- Describe how your [policy and/or procedure or process] links to the four foundations of the *How Does Learning Happen* framework.

Consultation and Resources

- Consult resources about all the best practices that could support your program in ensuring playground safety before and while using outdoor play spaces (e.g. the Child Care Centre Licensing Manual, the Canadian Standards Association standard CAN/CSA-Z614-14, “Children’s playspaces and equipment”, the Health Canada document *Is Your Child Safe? Play Time*, the *Canadian Certified Playground Inspectors directory*, etc.).

Processes and Expectations to Include

- Reflect other regulatory requirements in your policy and procedures, such as:
 - Conducting daily, monthly and annual playground inspections of the outdoor play space, fixed play structures (where applicable) and surfacing in accordance with requirements set out in the applicable Canadian Standards Association standard;
 - Developing a plan on how issues or problems identified in a playground inspection will be addressed;

- Maintaining a playground repair log;
- Ensuring that the play materials are available, accessible, provided in numbers to serve the licensed capacity, and maintained in a safe condition and kept in a good state of repair;
- Ensuring that there is adequate storage available for the play materials;
- Ensuring outdoor play spaces are fenced to a minimum of 4 feet or 1.2 metres, and the fences are furnished with one or more gates that are securely closed at all times, where applicable;
- Maintaining a maximum capacity of 64 children on the playground, or a lower maximum capacity of the playground based on its size;
- Separating infant and toddler groups from other children during active outdoor play periods;
- Meeting minimum outdoor time requirements (at least two hours each day for programs that operate for six hours or more, and/or at least 30 minutes of outdoor time each day for programs that operate only before and after school), weather permitting;
- Ensuring playgrounds are designed so staff can maintain constant supervision of the children;
- Ensuring children are supervised at all times;
- Having up-to-date emergency contact information readily available;
- Making allergy lists available in each play area;
- Creating accident reports and providing them to parents;
- Reporting serious occurrences for life-threatening injuries; etc.

When developing the roles and responsibilities of employees regarding safety on playgrounds:

- Set out specific and observable expectations for staff to meet on the playground to support positive experiences for children as well as maintain their safety and supervision.
- Include requirements to bring attendance records, emergency medications, emergency contact information and allergy lists to and from the playground.
- Describe the steps to complete daily playground inspections, including details about when and how frequently throughout the day they must be completed (e.g. before the children use the playground), as well as documentation requirements.
- Describe the steps to complete monthly playground inspections, including details about when they must be completed, as well as documentation requirements.
- Describe how to complete playground inspections for fixed playground equipment and areas that do not have fixed equipment.
- Clarify who will complete annual playground inspections and obtain or develop documentation of the inspections.
- Set out the qualifications of a certified playground inspector.

- Provide forms for completing required playground inspections that set out all the specific areas that need to be verified, provide a space for comments and action plans, and include a space to write the date, time and signature of the individual(s) conducting the inspections.
- Indicate how the outdoor play space or playground will be prepared for seasonal changes.
- Provide steps for dealing with hazards or defects that cannot be immediately removed or repaired, and how such issues will be dealt with, including timelines for repair.
- Set out hazard ratings and how to respond to hazards based on their priority.
- Describe what to do in case of vandalism on the playground.
- Outline how children will be transitioned to and from the outdoor play area.
- Provide the process for assisting a child who has been injured on the playground.
- Set out a requirement to document injuries that take place on the playground to identify trends and take appropriate action to prevent recurrence.
- Explain how the program will provide outdoor and/or active play experiences during inclement weather.