

# THE RISK OBSERVER

FOUNDED 2006 — VOL. CLXI

PROFESSIONAL UNDERWRITERS

DAILY 5 CENTS, SUNDAY 15 CENTS

## PLAYGROUND SUPERVISION CONSIDERATIONS

### ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

#### **Are written guidelines for playground operation, which define goals and procedures, in place?**

School board policy on risk management should address playground safety, with administrative regulations that specify requirements for inspections, duties of personnel, safety, and tracking of injuries.

Equipment should reflect the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual differences of its planned users, and playground supervisors must be made aware of how these differences are exhibited on the playground. All playground equipment is not appropriate for all ages of children. If equipment is not labeled or separated for specific ages, children must be directed to equipment appropriate to their ages and development.

#### **Is a written schedule established to provide for constant supervision?**

Ensure you have an adequate number of adults supervising for the number of children. Playground supervisors should inspect equipment and surfacing each day prior to use by students. The inspections should be documented and kept on file.

#### **Do playground supervisors receive the support of those in authority who create the rules?**

Administration should advise playground supervisors of playground perils and injury frequency. They should also ensure that supervisors are familiar with CPSC and ADA guidelines. Site and equipment specific rules should be developed and shared with supervisors, as well as taught to students on a regular basis by classroom teachers.

#### **Do playground supervisors have a way to communicate emergency conditions?**

Provide access to a telephone and post emergency phone numbers in a prominent location.

#### **Is a procedure in place for the care of injured pupils on the playground?**

Playground supervisors should be aware of how to clearly communicate requests for assistance and communicate the basic important information to expedite appropriate care for the injured.

#### **Are written reports prepared as soon as possible following an accident?**

Reports should include surface conditions, equipment type and condition, type and extent of injury, age and sex of child, how the accident occurred, and weather conditions.



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## TRAINING

### **Are playground supervisors given formal instruction?**

Training should cover the written guidelines, playground rules, CPSC and ADA guidelines, inspection procedures, emergency communications, and documentation of events. The physical education staff and administration should be involved in the development of the formal playground training content, and the training records should be maintained in a file.

### **Are playground supervisors trained in emergency procedures?**

Keep a first aid kit stocked and easily available in case an injury occurs. First aid kits should be stocked and maintained by nurse/office staff and include latex gloves. Try to ensure at least one playground supervisor is certified in first aid and CPR.

### **Are substitutes expected to provide playground supervision?**

An administrative policy should be established that substitutes must be provided with formal training prior to providing playground supervision.

## ON THE PLAYGROUND

### **Are pupils reminded of the safety rules before entering the playground?**

Teach children the safety rules of the playground. Agree on rules before children are allowed on equipment to prevent confrontations on the playground. Realize school age children can remember up to five rules, while preschoolers should have only three or less. Remind children that they are never to leave the playground area without permission from a supervising adult. Instruct children to keep their hands to themselves—no hitting, pushing, punching, kicking or biting.

### **Do supervisors check children's clothing for any potential dangers before entering the playground?**

Remove any loose clothing, hoods or strings that might catch on playground equipment. Common conditions include untied shoelaces and necklaces that are dangling.

### **Are playground supervisors properly dressed for their job?**

Supervisors should be easily identifiable to the students when they are out on the playground. Additionally, they should be clothed so that they can tolerate the weather conditions while maintaining eye contact and able to hear the surrounding playground sounds

### **Are supervisors performing hazard evaluations of the playground site and equipment?**

Evaluate the playground for potential hazards that could cause serious or fatal injuries to children. Watch for foreign objects such as glass, nails, and pop tops that are hard to see. Ensure all animal



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feces are removed from area. Watch for hazards like loose or protruding nuts or bolts, broken parts, exposed concrete, and shallow protective surfacing that occur through the children's regular use of equipment.

## **Do supervisors ensure that children do not use wet or damaged equipment?**

If problems that are easily remedied by the supervisor, like picking up trash, should be corrected by the supervisor. If the supervisor observes other safety problems like broken equipment or inadequate amount of surfacing material, they should be instructed to contact the administrator and request that it be fixed or taken out of service. Equipment that is deemed a safety issue should be taken out of service immediately.

## **Do playground supervisors know the rules and enforce them fairly and consistently?**

Supervisors should use direct eye contact with children to help prevent inappropriate behavior. Warn children verbally about inappropriate behavior; intervene between fighting children immediately to prevent injury. Enforce rules firmly and consistently as pushing, throwing objects, and hitting other children can lead to serious injury. Reinforce safe playground behavior on public playgrounds by following through with appropriate measures.

## **Is there a policy that states the number of children per play unit?**

As part of the written program the capacity of the equipment should be defined, and supervisors should redirect the activity if overcrowded conditions develop.

## **Do supervisors observe play patterns to note possible hazards?**

Observe all children and the "secret" places where they could hide. Realize a child can wander into a hazardous situation in less than a minute. Keep an eye out for any unsafe behavior such as climbing up a slide or sliding down a slide backwards. Make sure children keep moving on equipment and keep their hands and feet on supports at all times. Playground supervisors should be encouraged to suggest appropriate equipment and use changes.

## **Are any areas of the playground under the supervisor's jurisdiction, but out of his or her sight?**

Adequate staffing should be provided so that all areas of the playground are able to be monitored. Supervisors should move through the playground area; stationary persons only help children nearest to them. Avoid staying only on outskirts of playground area. Supervisors should move about their areas of responsibility so that they may see as well as be seen. Staff should stay involved with the children on the playground; do not use playground time as a time for socializing with other adults or for doing paperwork.

## **Is there a policy to assess children who are recovering from illness or accident?**

The school nurse can provide valuable input regarding the ability of children returning from illness and injury to participate in active play.

