

# Director of Licensing Standards of Practice

## Safe Play Space

**Number: 10/07**

**Effective Date: December 10, 2007**

This Standard of Practice is made under the authority of section 4(1) of the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* (CCALA), which provides that the Director of Licensing may:

- (e) specify policies and standards of practice for all community care facilities or a class of community care facilities....

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A safe and well-planned play space creates an appropriate balance between safety and meeting children's developmental needs. It should offer activities to encourage the development of perception and physical skills and include opportunities for social, physical, and cognitive forms of play.

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### STANDARD OF PRACTICE

#### PLAY SPACE DESIGN

- Landscape is an important component of an outdoor play space. Features such as small grassy bumps or hills, pathways for a variety of activities, different types of surfaces (grass, sidewalks, sand, smooth, bumpy, etc.) and shaded areas should be considered. The licensee must ensure that enough shade is provided to protect children from sunburn and sunstroke. Trees should be considered as they may help to provide shade as well as to absorb noise and promote air quality.
- The licensee must ensure that any equipment provided is placed to reduce direct exposure to sun. Equipment such as slides may become too hot to use during certain times of the day if they are sited poorly.
- Noise from traffic, construction, industrial activities and hard surfaces should be considered when designing a play space. Environmental pollutants should also be considered (e.g., parking lot adjacent to the play space).
- For prevention of entrapment, spaces (i.e., holes or openings) must be smaller than 9 cm (3.5 inches) or larger than 23cm (9 inches).
- Structures that incorporate stairs, landings, ladders, tunnels, bridges, etc. must have appropriate and secure safety barriers, guardrails and railings.
- Play spaces should offer activities to encourage the development of perception and physical skills, including running, walking, climbing, dodging, swinging, sliding, throwing, catching, pulling, and pushing. There should be separate areas for active play, such as swinging, and quiet play, such as digging in sandboxes. Where possible, play spaces for older children should be away from areas for younger children.
- Physical design considerations to facilitate supervision include:
  - Separation of equipment

- Divide into sections appropriate for different ages, where possible
  - Open sightlines
    - It is important to have clear sight lines so that supervisors can see all areas of the play space at all times
  - Establish zones for play; separate busy areas with popular attractions from calmer areas.
    - **Activity zones:** provide areas for social/dramatic play, fine motor play, gross motor play, as well as quiet play.
      - An *activity zone* should include areas for both physical and social play to encourage children to develop gross motor skills and to socialize with other children.
    - **Use zones:** are the safety zones around the equipment to allow for proper use of the equipment, with adequate space for entering and exiting. *Use zones* are surfaces under and around equipment, generally extending 6 feet in all directions (swings should extend a minimum of 6 feet from the outer edge of the support structure on each side and the front and back of the swing should extend out a minimum distance of twice the height of the swing as measured from the ground to the swing hangers on support structure). Children should not be allowed in the *use zone* to hide, relax, play, etc.
- *Rooftop play spaces* require careful and detailed deliberation when designing. Consideration and precautions must be taken for (but not limited to): sound levels; wind and sun exposure; building hazards (e.g., rooftop ventilation systems); surrounding factors: car exhaust, environment pollution (e.g., factories); and emergency evacuation plans.

## EDUCATION AND INJURY PREVENTION

- Teach children how to be safe and act responsibly at the playground as well as how to correctly use play equipment, and to be aware of potential hazards.
- Minimize exposure to harmful *UV* rays by appropriate scheduling. Consider staying indoors during the hottest part of the day.
- Teach children about safety promotion and injury prevention, to remove items around their neck such as scarves, necklaces, and hood strings before playing on equipment.
- Teach children to wear helmets and other sports safety equipment while riding a tricycle/bicycle, using roller skates or skateboards, and playing team sports. Staff must be aware of their responsibility to ensure such equipment is properly adjusted and worn.
- Staff must be educated with respect to safety promotion, injury prevention and First Responder/First Aid procedures. A staff member with current approved first aid certification, as described in section 23 and Schedule C of the Child Care Licensing Regulation, must be accessible at all times.

## **SUPERVISION OF PLAY SPACES**

- The licensee must ensure that children are supervised at all times by one or more responsible adult(s) and that staffing ratios specified by the Child Care Licensing Regulation are maintained at all times. Practice active supervision, a combination of close proximity and attention, watching, and listening. Staff must be able to move through and see the entire play space.
- Staff must demonstrably understand the expectations of outdoor supervision and the area to which they have been assigned.
- Staff should model appropriate play.

## **MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT**

### **The provision of large, fixed play equipment is not mandatory in British Columbia.**

- Staff must be educated regarding the correct use of equipment. Manufacturers' instructions must be followed to ensure safety.
- All materials and equipment must be free from hazards and in good repair.
- Where possible, equipment should be grouped by age, thus enabling school-age children and preschool children to have separate outdoor play spaces.
- All play materials and equipment that are provided must be developmentally and age-appropriate (i.e., toys and equipment for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children). Where possible, because of differences in their size and physical development, children should play on separate equipment designed specifically for their age group.
- Equipment for toddlers must be no more than .9 meters (three feet) in height.
- Equipment for preschool children must be no more than 1.5 meters (5 feet) in height.
- Equipment for school-age children must be no more than 2.3 meters (7 feet) in height.

## **GROUND SURFACING**

- Equipment must not be installed over concrete, asphalt or other hard surfaces.
- *Protective surfacing* such as soft sand, wood chips, pea gravel or rubber material will reduce the risk of injury from falls.
- The licensee should choose protective surfacing that best fits with the weather conditions and materials available in the area where the licensed facility is located.
- The taller the equipment, the deeper the protective surfacing should be.
- A 1.8 metre (six feet) clearance around equipment is considered safest.
- Depth guidelines for loose fill material: minimum of 15 cm (6 inches) for 1.5-meter (five-foot) equipment height; minimum of 30 cm (12 inches) for 2.3- meter (seven-foot) equipment height. The specific amount of fill will vary within this range, depending on the height of the equipment.

- For equipment that is over 45 cm (18 inches) but is less than 1.5 meters (5 feet), protective surfacing is recommended. Ground covering, soil types, and climate are all factors which must be considered in making this decision.
- Any protective surfacing used must be checked regularly to ensure the depth and adequacy of the material.
- The playground surface must be free of standing water and debris, such as poorly placed rocks, tree stumps, and tree roots that could cause a child to trip and fall.

## MAINTENANCE OF EQUIPMENT

- Thorough daily, monthly and annual inspection programs must be performed regularly. If needed repairs/replacement cannot be made immediately, equipment must be removed from service until repaired or the licensee must ensure that additional safety precautions are put into action. Checklists will assist in reminding staff of the types of checks to be performed and in ensuring that proper maintenance and repair are completed.
  - *Daily*: check the play space for garbage, broken glass, animal feces and other hazardous items. This is especially important if the play space is located in an area to which the public has access, such as parks or schools.
  - *Monthly*: check the play space in greater detail, including a check of the landscaping and fencing and overall condition of equipment to ensure that they do not pose any hazards to children.
  - *Annually*: conduct a detailed audit of the play space, landscaping, and all equipment.
- Check for the following:
  - Appropriate depths and preservation of protective surfacing.
  - Pinch, entanglement, entrapment and fall hazards.
  - Damaged or missing supports, anchors, or footings.
  - Loose or missing nuts, bolts, or other fasteners and connectors.
  - Broken or missing rails, steps, rungs, or seats.
  - Bending, warping, rusting, deterioration or breakage of any component.
  - Sharp edges or points due to wear, damage or breakage.
  - Protective end caps missing from bolts or tubes.
  - Deformed hooks, shackles, rings, links, etc.
  - Worn swing hangers and chains, worn bearings.
  - Lack of lubrication on moving parts.
  - Exposed mechanisms such as joints or springs that could result in pinch or crush injury.
  - Splintered and deteriorated wood cracks or holes in surfacing materials.
- Keep a log of all inspections, maintenance and repairs.

## **SHARED SPACES**

Licenseses operating in shared spaces or caring for mixed ages face challenges in creating an appropriate and safe play space. In cases where children of mixed ages are cared for, or where they use public play spaces, it is recognized that some equipment may be present that is not appropriate for certain age groups. In such cases, care providers must actively supervise children to ensure that they use only those portions of the play space and equipment that are appropriate. In addition, caregivers must educate children regarding appropriate use of equipment, safety promotion, and injury prevention.

## **ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT**

Pools, trampolines, and other atypical equipment may be desired by some licenseses. The use of this type of equipment requires careful and detailed consideration on a case-by-case basis. Although the use of such equipment is not prohibited by the Child Care Licensing Regulation, it may pose additional risks to the health and safety of children. Some considerations include: whether the equipment meets the needs of the children in care, what additional types of risk are involved if used, what necessary steps will be needed to ensure adequate active supervision, and how will staff ensure the equipment is used and maintained properly. It is important to recognize that there may be times when this type of equipment is not suitable, safe or in the best interests of children.

## **APPLICABLE LEGISLATION**

### *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*

#### **Standards to be Maintained**

7. (1) A licensee must operate the community care facility in a manner that will promote the health, safety and dignity of persons in care

### *Child Care Licensing Regulation*

#### **Play area, materials and equipment**

16. (4) A licensee must ensure that all indoor and outdoor play materials and equipment accessible to children are
  - (a) Suitable for the age and development of the children, and
  - (b) safely constructed, free from hazards and in good repair

#### **Emergency training and equipment**

22. (1) A licensee must have all of the following:
  - (a) emergency exits and a fire drill system approved by a local assistant within the meaning of the *Fire Services Act*;

- (b) an emergency plan that sets out procedures to prepare for, mitigate, respond to and recover from any emergency
- (2) A licensee must ensure that each employee
  - (a) is trained in the implementation of the fire drill system and emergency plan described in subsection (1), including the use of any equipment noted in the fire drill system and emergency plan,
  - (b) practices implementing the fire drill system at least once each month, and
  - (c) practices implementing the emergency plan at least once each year

### **First Aid**

- 23. (1) A licensee must ensure that children have at all times immediate access to an employee who
  - (a) holds a valid first aid and CPR certificate, provided on completion of a course that meets the requirements of Schedule C,
  - (b) is knowledgeable respecting each child's medical condition, if any, and
  - (c) is capable of effectively communicating with emergency personnel
- (2) A licensee must have first aid kits that are readily accessible to all employees, including while care is provided off the community care facility premises.

### **Continuous supervision required**

- 39. (1) A licensee must ensure that children are supervised at all times by a person who is an educator, an assistant, or a responsible adult.
- (2) A licensee must ensure that a second adult is immediately available to supervise children in case the person responsible for supervising children needs a replacement because of urgent and unforeseen circumstances.

### **Program of Activities**

- 44 (1) A licensee must provide to children a comprehensive and coordinated program of indoor and outdoor activities that
  - (a) is designed for the development and care of children
  - (b) is appropriate for the age and development of children in each group in the community care facility, and
  - © complies with the program standards set out in Schedule G.
- (2) If a child who requires extra support is attending the community care facility, the licensee must
  - a. Ensure that the program of activities is modified to address the needs of the child, with reference to the child's care plan, and

- b. Record in the child's care plan the manner in which the program of activities was modified
- (3) A licensee, other than a licensee providing a care program described as Occasional Child Care, must provide each child with daily outdoor play periods unless weather conditions would make it unreasonable to do so.
- (4) Despite subsection(1), a licensee who provides a care program described as Occasional child Care need not provide a program of outdoor activities

### **Schedule G: Program Standards**

1. A licensee must ensure that a program of activities is provided that encourages the physical development of children, including providing
    - (a) indoor and outdoor activities that encourage the development of large and small muscle skills appropriate to each child's level of development,
    - (b) activities that promote the development of self-help skills, and
    - (c) activities that encourage good health and safety habits
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