



Policy #16

Revision date: July 2019

September 2022

Whitestone After-School Program Outdoor and Playground Safety Policy and Procedures

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, the Program Coordinator, 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 basis by the Program Coordinator. The near North School Board will provide monthly and annual inspections.
- All playground inspections will be documented. All documentation and reports will be filed by the Program Coordinator in the Program Binder located at the Whitestone Lake Central School in a secure location.
- 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.

NOTE: THESE INSPECTIONS ARE UNDERTAKEN BY THE NEAR NORTH SCHOOL BOARD

Repairs and Maintenance

- All repairs and maintenance are undertaken by the Near North School Board.

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.

NOTE: THIS INFORMATION WILL BE OBTAINED FORM THE NEAR NORTH SCHOOL BOARD

Supervision

- Children will be supervised during outdoor play.
- The Program Coordinator will position herself to ensure children can be visually supervised while engaging in play.
- Program Coordinator to child ratios will be maintained on the playground at all times.
- Reduced ratios will never be used on the playground.

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.

Playground Safety Procedures

Timeline	Steps to Follow
<p>Daily: before using the outdoor play space/ playground</p>	<p>1. The Program Coordinator 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 daily playground inspection checklist (the form in Appendix A may be used for this purpose); ii. ensure general cleanup is undertaken; iii. complete the playground inspection checklist, sign and date it; and iv. file the playground inspection checklist in the Program Binder located at the Whitestone Lake Central School in a secure location. <p>Where hazards or defects cannot immediately be removed or repaired, the Program Coordinator must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. report the hazards or defects to the Near North School Board who will log and maintain the information in the repair log and take appropriate action to initiate any repairs. <p>2. In preparation to exit the child care centre to use the outdoor play space or playground, the Program Provider must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. ensure all emergency medication accompanies children, where applicable;

Timeline	Steps to Follow
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. ensure all emergency contact information is readily available for children; iii. ensure the attendance record is readily available if deemed necessary by the Program Coordinator; 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.
<p>Daily: while using the outdoor play space/ playground</p>	<p>1. The Program Coordinator must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. position themselves in allocation to 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 at a minimum of every ten (10) minutes; 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 others including parent and students during outdoor play. <p>Where a child is injured on the playground, the Program Coordinator 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 the Municipality of Whitestone (the Licensee); and <p>follow the serious occurrence policy and procedures, where appropriate.</p>
<p>Daily: When returning from the outdoor</p>	<p>1. The Program Coordinator must:</p>

Timeline	Steps to Follow
play space/ playground	<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.

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.

Program Coordinator: Individual contracted by the licensee.

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.