

Outdoor Play Areas (Away)

Gaining Approval to Use a Play Area Away From the Facility

A licensee must provide each child in care with at least 6.0 m² of outdoor play area. To meet the Regulation requirements, outdoor play areas are ideally situated directly adjacent to the child care facility, (i.e. fenced play yard or fenced backyard). Licensing does occasionally receive a request from an applicant to use a play area away from a facility.

A play area away from a facility:

- Can pose increased risk to the health and safety of children in care.
- May not be approved by Licensing if there are health and safety risks to children.

If you propose to use an outdoor play area located off-site, your licensing officer will request that you submit an Off-Site Play Space Plan outlining how you will ensure the health, safety and well-being of children and meet legislative requirements. (Please see addendum for relevant legislation)



The following questions will help support an applicant/licensee in developing an appropriate Off-Site Play Area Plan:

Travelling To and From the Play Area

- How far away from the daycare is the play area, and is the journey suitable for the ages and abilities of children in care?
- What forms of transportation will you use? (e.g. strollers, wagons, car)
- If children are to be transported by vehicle, are age-appropriate child safety seats available?
- If children are walking:
 - Is the route safe and is there a need to cross streets?
 - Are there marked crosswalks or is there a way to minimize the crossing of streets?
 - Are there sidewalks?

Ensuring Safety at the Play Area

- How are the limits of the play area shown clearly to children?
 - Can children enter unsafe areas such as ravines, retaining walls, roads, driveways, parking lots?
 - Are there any extra safety measures needed such as blocking off inappropriate equipment?
- How will you ensure that the playground equipment and surrounding area is safe at all times? (i.e. free from animal feces, glass, garbage, exposed nails, rust etc...)
- If equipment is being made available to children, is it suitable for the age and abilities of all the children in your care? (See attached Director of Licensing's Standard Of Practice for Safe Play Space)

Staffing Levels / Supervision

- How will you ensure:
 - Adequate supervision going to and from the play area?
 - Adequate supervision at the play area?
 - Staff are able to see and move through the whole area utilized by children?
 - Active supervision (a combination of staying close, giving full attention, watching, and listening) at all times?
 - Adequate staff are present to respond to all potential needs of children including any injuries, toileting needs, etc.?)
- If the play area is used by others, what is the plan to ensure the children in your care can be easily seen? (E.g. will children wear pinnies or hats etc., as a way to distinguish them from others?)



Program of Activities

- How will you give children:
 - More than one outdoor play time each day?
 - Outdoor play when they need it?
 - Outdoor play times which are long enough for children to take part in meaningful activity?
 - Opportunities to develop large and small muscle skills when playing outside?
 - Opportunities to grow? (social, emotionally, creatively, cognitively and physically)
 - An environment that can meet their changing needs and interests?

Other Health and Safety Considerations

- How will you make sure you have emergency equipment and information? (i.e. cellular phone, first aid kit, emergency information and consent for each child)
- Has a policy been developed to guide staff with regards to the use of an off-site play area?

Other Considerations

- If you needed, have you discussed the use of this playground with the agency that is the owner of the property (i.e. municipality, school, strata complex or other agency).
- How will you make sure children can use a bathroom, if needed while at the off-site play area?
- How will you let parents know about the off-site play area plan?

Next Steps

Information Required

You will need to submit the following to your local Licensing Officer:

- A plan showing the route to the off-site play area (including distance information and any major features which increase risk e.g. roads, bodies of water, etc.)
- A site-plan showing off-site play area(s).
- Any policies and procedures intended to guide staff with regards to using the proposed off-site play area.

Assessment Process

Your geographical Licensing Officer will review your proposal to determine if the increased risk posted to children is appropriately addressed. As part of the assessment process, your Licensing Officer will ask to accompany you to the proposed play space to conduct an inspection.

Addendum

Child Care Licensing Regulation

Schedule B

- 6** An applicant must provide a site plan, drawn to scale, showing all of the following:
- (a) the proposed location of the community care facility, including the property boundaries;
 - (b) subject to section 8, the location and dimensions of the outdoor play area intended for regular or daily outdoor activities;
 - (c) if children will be attending outdoor play areas or activities located outside the property boundaries on a regular or daily basis,
 - (i) the distances from the community care facility to the outdoor play areas and activities,
 - (ii) the routes to the outdoor play areas and activities, and
 - (iii) any major physical features that may affect the safety of children, including roads and bodies of water, located along the routes to, and in the immediate vicinity of, the outdoor play areas and activities.
- 8** If there is no outdoor play area available for regular or daily outdoor activities, an applicant must provide an activity plan that describes both of the following:
- (a) how the program standards set out in section 1 of Schedule G will be met;
 - (b) any community services that will be used, including visits to parks, pools or recreation centres.

Play area, materials and equipment

- 16** (1) A licensee, other than a licensee who provides a care program described as Occasional Child Care or Child-minding, must have for each child at least 7 m² of outdoor play area.
- (2) Subsection (1) does not apply to a licensee who provides a care program described as Family Child Care, but the licensee must provide an indoor and outdoor play area for children.
 - (3) A licensee must ensure that the entire outdoor play area is
 - (a) enclosed in a manner that is suitable for the age and development of children, and will ensure that children are free of harm, and
 - (b) constructed in a manner, and using materials, that are suitable for the age and development of the children intended to use it.
 - (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.

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
 - (c) complies with the program standards set out in Schedule G.
- (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.

Schedule G

(Section 44 [program of activities])

- (d) A licensee must ensure that a program of activities is provided that encourages the physical development of children, including providing
 - (i) indoor and outdoor activities that encourage the development of large and small muscle skills appropriate to each child's level of development,
- (e) A licensee must ensure that a program of activities is provided that encourages the intellectual development of children, including providing
 - (i) a flexible daily program that responds to the needs and interests of the children,
 - (ii) an environment that facilitates the development of curiosity, reasoning and problem-solving skills,
 - (iii) age-appropriate activities that encourage development of concept-building skills such as classifying, ordering, determining direction and perceiving spatial relationships,

Director of Licensing Standards of Practice - Safe Play Space

Play Space Design

- The licensee must ensure that enough shade is provided to protect children from sunburn and sunstroke.
- 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
- For the prevention of entrapment, spaces (i.e., holes or openings) must be smaller than 9cm (3.5 inches) or larger than 23 cm (9 inches).
- Structures that incorporate stairs, landings, ladders, tunnels, bridges, etc. must have appropriate and secure safety barriers, guardrails and railings.

Materials and Equipment

- Staff must be educated regarding the correct use of equipment. Manufacturer's instructions must be followed to ensure safety.
- 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.
- 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.
- Keep a log of all inspections, maintenance and repairs.