

Public Playground Safety Checklist



Make sure **surfaces** around playground equipment have at least 12 inches wood chips, mulch, sand, or pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.

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Check that protective **surfacing extends** at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.

Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are **spaced** at least 9 feet apart.

Check for **dangerous hardware**, like open "S" hooks or protruding bolt ends.

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Make sure **spaces** that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.

Check for **sharp points or edges** in equipment.

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Look out for **tripping hazards**, like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks.

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Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have **guardrails** to prevent falls.

Check **playgrounds regularly** to see that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.

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Carefully **supervise children** on playgrounds to make sure they're safe.

Playground Safety

Policy

Playground safety is of foremost importance in preventing childhood accidents. Routine safety inspections and rules will be established and maintained at all sites. Northwest Head Start will follow the Consumer Product Safety Commission and National guidelines related to playground safety.

Procedure

Daily inspections of the playground will include but not be limited to a search for the following hazards:

- A. Needles, glass and other sharp objects. Glass and non-biohazardous sharp materials can be disposed of in hard plastic or metal containers in the dumpster. However, if syringes are discovered, the Health Services Manager should be notified so that the Local Police Department and Health Services can arrange to safely remove the syringes. This is important so that other paraphernalia can be confiscated and so that illicit drug use on Head Start property is reported appropriately.
- B. Suspicious persons who do not have any legitimate reason for being in or around the playground area.
- C. Areas underneath play structures and swings where the depth of ground cover (bark chips, sand, *etc.*) isn't adequate (less than 12 inches)
- D. Other dangers may include: poisonous or hazardous foliage, including sharp branches, thorns, poisonous mushrooms, bee or wasp nests and wood structures that have sharp splinters, bolts, nails, *etc.*

Central Office Managers should inspect the Playground with staff several times throughout the program year, focusing on these areas:

- A. Movable play structures must only be located on a cushioned surface (with 6 feet of space on all sides) in an area that is at least 6-8 feet away from jumping (from structures) and running zones.
- B. Some equipment located on public school playgrounds is inappropriate for the ages of Head Start children (ex: monkey bars, chain and net climbers, free standing arch climbers, sliding poles). Head Start children should not be allowed to play on these structures and should be instructed to only play on the structures that are age appropriate.
- C. Staff should be familiar with the Playground Safety Checklist and incorporate it into work with Children and Families.
- D. Sandboxes should be covered to avoid contamination from animals. If vandalism is a problem with a site's playground- mechanisms to prevent vandalism should be explored.