

**OUTDOOR PLAY AREA  
STANDARDS MANUAL  
FOR  
CENTRE-BASED CHILD CARE**



**Department of Health and Community Services  
2006**



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## **Introduction**

**This manual provides the standards to follow when designing, equipping and maintaining an outdoor play area for a regulated child care centre. The intent behind these standards is to create safe, secure and appropriate outdoor play areas that provide a range of opportunities for the social, cognitive, physical and emotional development of children.**

**Please read the entire manual to become familiar with the provincial requirements for outdoor play areas.**

**There are several documents that are referenced in this manual. If you require copies of these documents or if you have any questions about the content of the manual, please contact your Regional Integrated Health Authority and ask to speak to the child care services consultant or social worker.**

### **Documents available through the Regional Integrated Health Authority**

*Child Care Services Act (1999)*

*Child Care Services Regulations*

*Standards for Early Childhood Programs in Child Care Centres*

*Centre-Based Child Care Policy Document*

*Standards and Guidelines for Health in Child Care Settings*

### **Documents available through Canadian Standards Association (1-800-463-6727):**

*Canadian Standards Association Children's Playspaces and Equipment CAN/CSA-Z614*

*What's new in CAN/CSA-Z614*



## **SECTION A - REQUIREMENTS FOR OUTDOOR PLAY AREAS AND EQUIPMENT IN CENTRE-BASED CHILD CARE**

### **1. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS**

Every child care centre shall have an outdoor play area. In full time centre-based care, this area is to be minimally 7 m<sup>2</sup> of play space per child, enclosed and surfaced to meet the standards described in this manual. The measurement of 7 m<sup>2</sup> per child is inclusive of fixed equipment and protective surfacing zones. If a centre accommodates children birth to 24 months, outdoor play space shall be physically separated from the outdoor play space used by any other age group at that centre. At least two different types of surfacing must be included in the design of the outdoor play area.

In part time programs, any on-site outdoor play area must comply with the same safety standards as those in place for full time programs. If the outdoor play area is off-site, it is to be within reasonable walking distance (*see Centre-Based Child Care Policy Document*) for the ages of children enrolled in the child care centre. There must be safe access to this off-site area and the operator must ensure that the area and the equipment are safe. “Off site” refers to play areas that are either not on the child care premises, yet are safely accessible and within a reasonable walking distance, or to play areas that are on-site but are operated by a third party, for example, if a centre is located in a public school, the school yard is to be considered “off-site” as it is operated by a third party (the school administration).

### **2. REQUIREMENTS FOR PROTECTIVE SURFACING MATERIALS AND PROTECTIVE SURFACING ZONES**

**PROTECTIVE SURFACING** - All outdoor fixed play equipment and/or equipment with a critical fall height of 1.2 metres (4 feet) or higher shall be located on a protective surface, that is, a surface which will lessen the impact of a fall. Any movable equipment with a critical fall height of less than 1.2 metres (4 feet) shall be located on a grassy surface. Protective surfacing materials (or protective surfacing) refers to the surfacing materials that are found under play structures in an outdoor play area. Protective surfacing is shock absorbent and is designed to lessen the impact of a fall, for example, pea gravel, wood chips, shredded tires.

All protective surfacing must provide, and be maintained to provide, acceptable shock-absorbing performance, regardless of the age of the site. The specific requirements that must be met are described in Table 1 in Section D of this document. Regular maintenance of surfaces (raking, lifting, re-distributing) must be provided on an ongoing basis. Periodic site inspection of installed protective surfacing depth is required.

Fine sand is not recommended as a protective surfacing material in on-site outdoor play areas. If it is possible to purchase another type of protective surfacing material, it is advisable to do so. Fine sand is difficult to maintain. In addition, it is abrasive and can cause injury to children if it gets in their eyes.

## **RECOMMENDED PROTECTIVE SURFACING MATERIALS\***

The following is a description of recommended protective surfacing materials. These descriptions include the advantages and disadvantages of each type of material. according to the Canadian Standards Association.

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### **1. General**

All playground protective surfacing systems must be considered according to their merits. At each stage of selection, specification, acquisition, installation, maintenance, and repair, there are costs that must be balanced with the advantages and disadvantages of the surface system or combination of systems. When loosefill material is used, a minimum depth of 300mm is recommended\*\*. (*\*\*Please note: The minimum depth of 300 mm is recommended by CSA, however, depths in accordance with Table 1 – Critical Heights of Tested Materials, Section D of this document, are accepted.*)

### **2. Wood Chips/Bark Mulch**

2.1 Bark Mulch generally results from pruning and disposing of trees as part of urban tree management and landscape maintenance programs or the debarking of trees in the forest or mill. It can contain twigs and leaves from the trees and shrubbery that have been processed. Wood chips are generally uniformly crushed shreds or chips that contain no bark or leaves. The wood must be separated prior to chipping or processing to ensure that no woods containing toxic substances or allergens are included in the final product.

2.2 The advantages of using this material include the following:

- a) the initial cost is low;
- b) it is easy to install;
- c) it allows for good drainage;
- d) it is less abrasive than sand;
- e) it is readily available;
- f) it is less attractive than sand to cats and dogs;
- g) the mildly acidic composition of some woods retards insect infestation and fungal growth; and
- h) users of the playground will generally not use the wood chips for other purposes or play with it.

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- 2.3 The disadvantages of this material include the following:
- a) rainy weather, high humidity, or freezing temperatures can cause it to compact;
  - b) with normal use over time, it combines with dirt and other foreign materials;
  - c) over time, it decomposes, is pulverized, and compacts. The greater the quantity of leaves or moisture, the faster the rate of decomposition;
  - d) its depth can be reduced by displacement due to children's activity or by materials being blown by the wind;
  - e) it can be blown or thrown into children's eyes;
  - f) it is subject to microbial growth when wet;
  - g) it can conceal animal excrement and trash (e.g., broken glass, nails, pencils, and other sharp objects that can cause cuts or puncture wounds);
  - h) it spreads easily outside the containment area; and
  - i) it can be flammable.

### **3. Engineered Wood Fibre**

3.1 Engineered wood fibre generally results from grinding virgin or new wood, which has been debarked and contains no leaves, to specific dimensions and performance criteria. The wood must be separated prior to chipping or processing to ensure that no woods containing toxic substances or allergens are included in the final product.

3.2 The advantages of this material include the following;

- a) it is easy to install;
- b) it allows for good drainage;
- c) it is less abrasive than sand;
- d) it is readily available;
- e) it is less attractive than sand to cats and dogs;
- f) the mildly acidic composition of some woods retards insect infestation and fungal growth;
- g) users of the playground will generally not use the material for other purposes or play with it;
- h) it is free of bark and leaves; and
- i) it is less likely than other loosefill material to conceal animal excrement and trash (e.g., broken glass, nails, pencils, and other sharp objects that can cause cuts or puncture wounds).

3.3 The disadvantages of this material include the following:

- a) rainy weather, high humidity, and freezing temperatures reduce its effectiveness;
- b) with normal use over time it combines dirt and other foreign materials;

- c) over time, it decomposes, is pulverized, and compacts. The greater the level of moisture, the faster the rate of decomposition;
- d) its depth can be reduced by displacement due to children's activity or by materials being blown by the wind;
- e) it can be blown or thrown into children's eyes;
- f) it is subject to microbial growth when wet;
- g) it can conceal animal excrement and trash (e.g., broken glass, nails, pencils, and other sharp objects that can cause cuts or puncture wounds);
- h) it spreads easily outside the containment area; and
- i) it can be flammable.

#### **4. Sand**

4.1 Sand is a naturally occurring material that will vary in texture and composition depending on the source and geographic location from which it is mined. Once mined, the raw sand is processed or manufactured through washing, screening, and other actions, to provide specific grades and classifications.

4.2 The advantages of this material include the following:

- a) the initial cost is low;
- b) it is easy to install;
- c) it does not easily support microbial growth;
- d) it is readily available;
- e) it is non-flammable; and
- f) it is not susceptible to vandalism except by contamination.

4.3 The disadvantages of this material include the following:

- a) rainy weather, high humidity, and freezing temperatures reduces its effectiveness;
- b) with normal use over time, it combines with dirt and other foreign materials;
- c) its depth can be reduced by displacement due to children's activity or by materials being blown by the wind;
- d) it can be blown or thrown into children's eyes;
- e) it can be swallowed;
- f) it can conceal animal excrement and trash (e.g., broken glass, nails, pencils and other sharp objects that can cause cuts or puncture wounds.)
- g) it spreads easily outside the containment area;
- h) small particles bind together and become less cushioning when wet; when thoroughly wet, sand reacts as a rigid material;
- i) it can be tracked onto other surfaces; when installed in conjunction with a

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unitary surface, the fine particles can reduce the shock-absorbing properties of porous unitary material. The abrasive characteristic of sand can damage most other surfaces, including non-porous unitary materials and surfaces outside the playground; and

- j) it adheres to clothing.

### **5. Gravel**

5.1 Gravel is a naturally occurring material that will vary in texture and composition depending on the source and geographic location from which it is mined. Once mined, the raw gravel is processed on manufactured through washing, screening, and other actions, to provide specific grades and classifications. Crushed or broken gravel is unacceptable, as this material does not allow for the displacement of the particles.

5.2 The advantages of this material include the following:

- a) the initial cost is low;
- b) it is easy to install;
- c) it does not easily support microbial growth;
- d) it is readily available;
- e) it is non-flammable;
- f) it is not susceptible to vandalism except by contamination; and
- g) it is less attractive than sand to animals.

5.3 The disadvantages of this material include the following;

- a) rainy weather, high humidity, and freezing temperatures reduce its effectiveness;
- b) with normal use over time, it combines with dirt and other foreign materials;
- c) its depth can be reduced by displacement due to children's activity;
- d) it can be thrown into children's eyes;
- e) it can be swallowed;
- f) it can be lodged in bodily openings such as the nose and ears;
- g) it conceals animal excrement and trash (e.g. broken glass, nails, pencils and other sharp objects that can cause cuts and puncture wounds);
- h) it spreads very easily outside the containment area;
- i) small particles bind together, become less cushioning, and form hard pan;
- j) it can be tracked onto other surfaces. When on other hard surfaces, the rolling nature of the gravel can contribute to slip-fall injuries; and
- k) it is difficult to walk on.

## **6. Shredded Tires**

6.1 Shredded tire materials are the result of grinding, buffing, or crushing a whole tire or any part of the tire. The tire particle must not contain any metals or foreign contaminants. Some processing techniques provide for the pigmentation of the outside of the black rubber; this must be non-toxic and contain no allergens such as latex.

6.2 The advantages of this material include the following;

- a) it is easy to install;
- b) it is not abrasive;
- c) it does not easily support microbial growth;
- d) it is not susceptible to vandalism except by contamination; and
- e) it is less attractive than sand to animals.

6.3 The disadvantages of this material include the following:

- a) it can contain wires or other metal components;
- b) its depth can be reduced by displacement due to children's activity or by materials being blown by the wind;
- c) it can be blown or thrown into children's eyes;
- d) it can be swallowed;
- e) it can contain lead and other toxins;
- f) small or dust-sized particles can enter and remain in the lungs;
- g) when wet, small particles will stick to clothing and skin;
- h) it can become lodged in bodily openings such as the nose and ears;
- i) it can conceal animal excrement and trash (e.g., broken glass, nails, pencils, and other sharp objects that can cause cuts or puncture wounds);
- j) it spreads easily outside the containment area; and
- k) it is difficult to walk on.

## **7. Mats or Tiles**

7.1 Mats or tiles are generally the result of the combination of a chemical binder and rubber filler product. The mats or tiles can be manufactured using a combination of heat, pressure or ambient application of a mixture within a form or mould. The mats or tiles can appear to be monolithic in a single- or multiple-layer system or can have a support or leg structure combined with a firm top. Mats or tiles can be porous or non-porous to water. Pigmentation of the surface can be provided through the pigmentation of the binder holding the rubber particles or through utilizing coloured rubber particles or chips. Mats or tiles are manufactured in various thicknesses, lengths, and widths, depending on the properties desired by the manufacturer.

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7.2 The advantages of this material include the following:

- a) it requires low maintenance;
- b) it is easy to clean;
- c) it provides consistent shock absorbency;
- d) it is not displaced by children during play activities;
- e) life-cycle costs are generally low;
- f) good footing can be provided (depending on the surface texture);
- g) it can harbour few foreign objects;
- h) generally, no retaining edges are required; and
- i) it makes the playspace accessible to people with disabilities.

7.3 The disadvantages of this material include the following:

- a) the initial cost is relatively high;
- b) the base materials can be critical for thinner materials;
- c) it often must be used on almost smooth uniform surfaces without deviation in slope;
- d) it can be flammable;
- e) it is subject to vandalism (e.g. ignited, defaced, cut);
- f) it can curl up and cause tripping;
- g) it can shrink and cause an accumulation of dirt and debris that does not absorb impact;
- h) it can become hard over time as a result of environmental degradation. This would necessitate a total removal and replacement and would incur added costs unless the damage was to be covered by warranty or insurance;
- i) some designs are susceptible to frost damage;
- j) the locations of seams, anchors, and other fasteners cannot attenuate impact to the same degree as the balance of the mat or tile; and
- k) mechanical fasteners or anchors can become dislodged and present a hazard to the user.

## **8. Poured-in-Place**

8.1 A poured-in-place surface is generally the result of a combination of a chemical binder and rubber filler product. It can be manufactured using single or multiple layers of materials and binders, and generally is monolithic. Poured-in-place surfaces are generally porous; however, they can be non-porous to water through the application of a non-porous material. Pigmentation of the surface can be provided through the pigmentation of the binder holding the rubber particles or through utilizing coloured rubber particles or chips. Poured-in-place surfaces are manufactured in various thicknesses, depending on the properties desired by the manufacturer.

8.2 The advantages of this material include the following:

- a) it requires low maintenance;
- b) it is easy to clean;
- c) it provides consistent shock absorbency;
- d) it is not displaced by children during play activities;
- e) life cycle costs are generally low;
- f) it does not require smooth uniform surfaces without deviation in slope;
- g) good footing can be provided (depending on surface texture);
- h) it can harbour few foreign objects;
- i) generally, no retaining edges are required; and
- j) it makes the playspace accessible to people with disabilities.

8.3 The disadvantages of this material include the following:

- a) the initial cost is relatively high;
- b) the base materials can be critical for thinner materials;
- c) it can be flammable;
- d) it is subject to vandalism (e.g., ignited, defaced, cut);
- e) it can shrink and cause an accumulation of dirt and debris that does not absorb impact at the edges;
- f) it can become hard over time as a result of environmental degradation. This would necessitate a total removal and replacement and would incur added costs unless the damage were to be covered by warranty or insurance; and
- g) some designs are susceptible to frost damage.

## **PROTECTIVE SURFACING ZONES**

There must be an area or zone of protective surfacing surrounding each playstructure in an outdoor play area. This is called the protective surfacing zone. This area must be kept free from broken glass, or other sharp objects, garbage, animal feces or debris. Surfaces must be raked weekly to prevent them from becoming compacted and hard. A child only needs to fall three feet to a hard surface to sustain a fatal head injury.

The protective surfacing zone consists of obstacle free protective surfacing which is of the appropriate type and depth for the defined fall height of the equipment. The actual dimensions and configuration of the protective surfacing zone depends upon the type and size of play equipment and is determined in accordance with CAN/CSA-Z614 (current edition). When deciding upon the placement of play structures in an outdoor play area, it is important to note that the protective surfacing zones for each individual play structure cannot overlap. (*Note: For these standards, the term 'protective surfacing zone' replaces the 'no encroachment zone' previously referred to in the Centre-Based Child Care Policy Document.*)

## **3. REQUIREMENTS FOR OTHER TYPES OF OUTDOOR PLAY SURFACING**

An outdoor play space must provide two or more suitable play surfaces for different types of play. Outdoor play surfaces are defined as surfaces covering the outdoor area where children play. If choosing to install hard surfaces such as asphalt for use as riding paths or play surfaces for particular outdoor games and activities, keep in mind that these hard surfaces can only constitute up to 50% of the minimum required space. (*For more information on types of surfacing see Section D, Table 4 – Examples of Hard and Soft Surfacing Materials*)

## **4. REQUIREMENTS FOR ENCLOSURES**

### **4.1 FENCES**

Fencing of outdoor play areas must meet the following requirements:

- height minimum of 4 feet (1.2 metres)
- less than 3.5 inches (9 cm) between slats
- constructed in such a way that climbing is discouraged
- the top of the enclosure is to be finished (i.e. No pointed, sharp or jagged edges) to prevent injury or entanglement.
- closed with a gate that is safely secured at all times.

### **4.2 CRAWL SPACES**

Crawl spaces are defined as spaces under four feet (1.2 m) high where children can access and adults cannot access. These crawl spaces must be enclosed. Examples of crawl spaces include areas under decks, patios or steps. If the crawl space is at ground level the latticing or chain link is permitted for purposes of enclosure.

## **5. REQUIREMENTS FOR OUTDOOR PLAY EQUIPMENT**

All site constructed and commercially purchased outdoor play equipment must conform to Section 12 of the CAN/CSA-Z614 (current edition) *Outdoor Play Equipment Performance Requirements*. Prior to approval for use outdoor play equipment must be inspected and approved for use by a Government Services Centre (GSC) certified playground inspector. For more information on how to contact a GSC inspector, contact child care services staff at the Regional Integrated Health Authority.

All outdoor play equipment is to be maintained as per CAN/CSA-Z614 (current edition) standards for maintenance.

## **6. REQUIREMENTS FOR ROUTINE MAINTENANCE AND INSPECTIONS**

### **a. Daily Visual Inspection:**

A daily visual inspection shall be carried out by the owner, operator, or delegate to identify defects or emerging problems. A record of daily inspections is to be kept in the Outdoor Play Area Safety Log, described below (6 e.). This daily inspection shall include, but is not limited to:

- checking the entire outdoor play area for hazardous debris, litter or animal waste;
- checking for damage;
- checking for any potential hazard, e.g., loose strings or ropes, obviously damaged equipment.

### **b. Detailed and Documented Monthly Inspection, with a Plan of Action:**

A comprehensive maintenance program shall be developed for each outdoor play area. A detailed inspection shall be carried out every month by the owner, operator or delegate and the results and actions taken entered in the Outdoor Play Area Safety Log described below (6 e.). This inspection shall include, but is not limited to:

- checking for any damage and wear, (e.g. broken or missing components to equipment, anything tied or added on to the equipment, or other features caused by vandalism or wear);
- checking for any broken or missing handrails, guardrails, stairs or ladder rungs, etc.;
- checking for splinters;
- checking for damaged fences, gates and retaining walls.

When defects are observed, the defects are to be immediately recorded in the Outdoor Play Area Safety Log (see 6 e.) and repaired as soon as possible. Details of the defect or problem will require a plan of action in writing. If the repair is not able to occur immediately, access to the defective equipment shall be barred to the children. Removal of the defective equipment may, in some cases, be the only solution.

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### c. Seasonal Maintenance Procedures:

Seasonal maintenance checklists are to be developed by each centre. These checklists will outline what needs to be done to prepare the playground site and equipment for summer or winter use, for example, removing certain pieces of play equipment, replacing sand in the sandbox. These seasonal checklists are to be completed and recorded in the Outdoor Play Area Safety Log (see 6 e.).

### d. Annual Comprehensive Inspection and Report:

Every year, a comprehensive inspection report will be completed by the Certified playground inspector with the Department of Government Services as part of the licensing/Relicensing process. A copy of the inspection report shall be entered in the Outdoor Play Area Safety Log (see 6 e.).

### e. Outdoor Play Area Safety Log:

A detailed Outdoor Play Area Safety Log must be maintained. This log will be maintained as a permanent record and is to be available at all times for examination by any regional licensing inspector. It will record:

- Repairs, removal or installation of equipment, including dates and companies;
- Injury log - incident/injury reports specific to the outdoor play area shall be kept separate from other incident/injury reports. A cumulative record must be kept;
- Daily inspection checklists - done in writing, prior to the children entering the outdoor play area;
- Monthly maintenance inspection - including any hazards or defects which need immediate attention as well as any plans of action that have been put in place to resolve the problem (with a specific time frame);
- Seasonal maintenance inspection - including preparation plans for summer or winter use of outdoor play area;
- Copy of the annual inspection report.

## **7. REQUIREMENTS FOR OUTDOOR PLAY AREA SAFETY POLICY**

All licensed child care centres are required to have an Outdoor Play Area safety policy. This policy is to be included in the program submission form used for licensing/relicensing. This policy will contain the following:

- A playground supervision statement that provides the child care centre staff with expectations and requirements for supervision of children in the outdoor play area, and for promoting creative and constructive play for children.
- A statement that an Outdoor Play Area Safety Log is maintained as required and is available for examination by any licensing inspector. This statement is to provide an explanation of each of the following; outdoor play area incident/injury reports, daily inspections, monthly inspections, seasonal inspections, annual inspections and action

- plans related to the inspections.
- The designated person or position responsible for logging the daily inspections, the monthly maintenance inspections, seasonal maintenance inspections and plans, annual inspection, and the injury log.
  - The designated person or position responsible for carrying out maintenance and repairs.

*All staff must review the policy prior to commencing employment and annually thereafter. A written record of the review must be signed by the staff. The signed record is to be kept on file for (at least three years) from the time of entry.*

## **SECTION B - PROGRAMMING INFORMATION**

### **Outdoor Play**

Children need outdoor play experiences of all kinds and in all kinds of weather. They need to play outdoors on a daily basis for at least once a day and, whenever conditions permit, twice a day. They need an outdoor play space that is safe, suitable and welcoming. In a well equipped outdoor play space children will:

- develop positive attitudes about themselves, their physical abilities and the outdoor environment.
- engage in games and activities that will help them in developing concepts relating to body awareness spatial abilities.
- develop fine and gross motor skills.
- engage in solitary and group play situations.
- be creative, solve problems, explore and discover new things about the world around them.

When planning a developmentally appropriate outdoor play space, ECEs must incorporate the developmental needs of the children into the design. For more information on design principles that can help to guide the ECE in planning an outdoor play environment based on children's interests and developmental needs, see *Table 3 – Outdoor Play Design Principles* in Section D of this document.

### **Designing and Equipping an Outdoor Play Space**

Designing an outdoor play space requires many of the same considerations as designing an indoor play space. As with room arrangement, there are specific questions that each ECE should ask when evaluating the outdoor play space. These questions include:

- Are there cozy, comfortable spaces available to the children?
- Are there opportunities for individual children to have some private time, alone and away from the group but still within the view of the ECE?
- Is there plenty of natural light (and shade)?
- Is there enough space that children and adults can move about freely?
- Is child-sized and adult-sized seating provided?
- Are there clear pathways from one activity area to another?
- Are materials accessible to children?
- Is there good ventilation (e.g. is it far enough away from a parking lot so that children are not overly exposed to car exhaust fumes?)
- Is the space clean and well-maintained?
- Are materials and equipment in good repair?
- Is the surfacing suitable?
- Are areas accessible to all children?
- Is the space inviting to children and comfortable for adults?

The first step in designing an appropriate outdoor play space is the landscaping of that space. Landscaping deals with such features as space, surfacing, activity areas, terrain, pathways, gardens and weather. As much as possible, naturally occurring elements and features should be incorporated into the landscape, e.g., natural slopes, trees and grassy areas, keeping in mind the safety and developmental needs of the children. Some factors to keep in mind for each one of these landscape features are:

## **Space**

An outdoor play space must contain enough space for all children to be active while at the same time providing room for a variety of activities to be taking place at one time. When designing the space, attention must be paid to the following considerations:

Outdoor play space must include:

- adequate space ( a minimum of 7m<sup>2</sup> per licensed space)
- a sheltered space that provides protection from the elements
- an approved source of drinking water
- easy access to a bathroom
- easy access to playroom
- storage for outdoor play equipment

## **Surfacing**

An outdoor play space must provide two or more suitable play surfaces for different types of play. Hard surfaces, such as asphalt, may constitute up to 50% of the minimum required space. Hard surfaces are used as riding paths for children on riding toys and may also be used for bouncing balls, chalk drawing or for playground games like hopscotch. A variety of “soft surfacing” would be used in any areas of the outdoor play space that are not covered with a hard surface. Providing children with a variety of surfacing allows them to experience various textures and enriches their sensory environment. Table 4 (Section D) provides some examples of hard and soft surfacing.

## **Activity Areas**

Similar to the indoor play space, the outdoor play space will also have various activity areas. Some of the activity areas that can be found outdoors include:

- **Art/Manipulative/Creative area** - this area would contain materials that allow children to be creative and constructive. Some of the materials that would be found in this area are art easel, art materials, carpentry materials, and/or construction materials (e.g. large blocks).

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- **Sensory area** - this area would include the sand box, water play area and related materials. For more information on what could be included see Section III, Water Play and Sand Play Area in the *Standards for Early Childhood Programs in Centre-Based Child Care*.
- **Dramatic Play area** - this area might include a play house structure that can be used in a variety of ways. Props and materials will be included that can support the children's dramatic play and should be rotated on a regular basis, depending on the children's interests.
- **Gross Motor Play** - included in this area would be stationary play equipment such as a climber or slide. Portable equipment such as riding toys, balls and other types of sport equipment will also contribute to gross motor play. Participation in this area leads children to develop a greater awareness of their body and it challenges them to discover what their body can do. It leads to greater coordination and development of movement and gross motor skills.
- **Quiet Area** - this area would be one where a child or a small group of children can sit comfortably to observe the play that is occurring in other areas of the outdoor play space. In the quiet area children can also socialize with each other, read books, or engage in quiet, less active play.
- **Science Area** - science will be occurring in all areas of the outdoor play space, however, the discovery of scientific concepts can be encouraged by providing some basic equipment in an outdoor science area. Providing magnifying glasses, weighing scales, small containers and sets of tweezers or tongs (for collecting "specimens") will assist children in exploring the world around them. This area helps children to develop a sense of wonder and curiosity about the world around them. It encourages children to explore, experiment, hypothesize, and problem solve.

### **Terrain**

Terrain refers to the type of land being used as an outdoor play space. For example, terrain can be described as "hilly", "rocky" or "grassy". It is desirable to maintain the natural elements of the terrain as much as possible. Small hills and slopes are desirable in an outdoor play area as they provide many opportunities for children's experimentation. Children can roll balls, toy cars and trucks (and when it is safe and practical even themselves) down a slope, experimenting with speed and gravity. Hills provide sliding and climbing opportunities as well. Large rocks (boulders) can be objects of interest in an outdoor play area and should be incorporated whenever possible as long as they are large enough to not be considered a tripping hazard.

### **Pathways**

Pathways must be constructed in such a way that children can move freely from one area of the

outdoor play area to another. Creating paths that are clearly marked and distinct from the rest of the play area can add interest to the outdoor play space and can also increase the safety of the area by encouraging children to not wander too closely to play equipment that is already in use. Paths can also prevent children from crossing into another's child's play and can, therefore, help to prevent the conflict that arises from these types of situations.

## **Gardens**

Incorporating non-poisonous plants, flowers, shrubs and trees into an outdoor play space serves many uses. Children can learn about and develop an appreciation for nature, science and natural beauty. When children are encouraged to help create and maintain the garden they develop a sense of responsibility and stewardship.

## **Weather**

There is only one certainty when it comes to weather in Newfoundland and Labrador and that is, we have lots of it! Knowing this, care must be taken to ensure that the outdoor play space is usable and interesting in all types of weather throughout the year. When planning the outdoor play space, the ECE must allow for such factors as:

- adequate drainage after rainstorms.
- shelter from high winds/hot sun using trees, fences and other shade/shelter features.
- clear pathways to equipment after snowfalls or, if necessary, removal of certain pieces of equipment if banks of snow alter their standards of safety.

## **Planning an Outdoor Play Program**

Planning outdoor play experiences is an essential component of any developmentally appropriate program. Too often outdoor play is viewed as a time where adults get a break and children get to burn off excess energy. It is, certainly, a time when children get to be physically active, however, thought and preparation must be put into every outdoor play time so that the children and the adults can make the most of the time allotted for outdoor play.

Outdoor play shall occur every day and in every type of weather. Unless it is hazardous for the children to be outside (e.g. in extreme weather conditions) children need to be outside every day. Remember that activities that are conducted during summer activities, e.g., playing in the sandbox, can be easily done in the winter as well - substituting snow for sand. Snow is an excellent play medium that can be moulded, sculpted, explored, measured and used as a play surface.

Outdoor play shall be scheduled in large blocks of time (minimally 45 - 60 minutes) so that children have the opportunity to become involved in complex play activities. There should be time set aside in both the morning and the afternoon schedules for outdoor play time so that it can occur twice a day, whenever conditions permit.

## *Outdoor Play Area Standards Manual for Centre-Based Child Care*

As with indoor play, ECEs observe children's play outdoors and these observations become the basis for planning outdoor play activities. Activities shall involve materials and experiences that challenge the children, providing learning opportunities that lead to the development of effective problem solving skills.

### **The Role of the ECE during Outdoor Play**

The role of the ECE during Outdoor Play is the same as the role of the ECE during any play time. Outdoor play time is not to be seen as a type of "recess" where the ECE's only role is to supervise the children's play to ensure that everyone stays safe. The ECE must also be a facilitator of play, an assistant to the play and a play-planner. As with all components of the program, the adult sets the tone for the types of interactions that occur among the children and with the environment. If the adult has a positive attitude about outdoor play, then the children's interactions with each other and with the environment will be positive and constructive. If the adult does not enjoy outdoor time the time spent outside will not be as valuable. It is important for ECEs to examine their own feelings about outdoor play and do whatever they can to make the experience a positive one. Dressing comfortably and appropriately, being actively involved and designing the space in such a way that it is attractive for adults as well as children are ways that positive feelings for outdoor play can be encouraged.

Outside play time is an ideal time to provide planned activities based on science and nature, art, gross motor development, music and movement and even whole group times. During outside play time the adults will:

- assist children in their play by supplying the materials they need
- interact with the children by being a play partner when appropriate, expanding and extending the play as necessary
- look for 'teachable moments'
- observe children's play, noting their interests, their questions and their discoveries. Use these observations as the basis for planning outdoor play experiences.
- guide children's behaviour by allowing them the opportunity to solve their own problems and resolve their own conflicts but stepping in when it appears that they need help. Any intervention must be done in a helpful and matter of fact manner.

## What Can Children Do On Your Playground?

*(These lists are from a Playground Policy Manual, Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services and were published in the Summer, 2002 issue of Interaction. Reprinted with permission from CCCF)*

Once you understand the various types of play necessary for children's healthy development, how can you implement these types of play into every day activities? Examples of the many sorts of activities that can benefit children in a playground setting follow. It may be helpful to circle or check those activities you already use; then try to figure out how to implement some of the ones you do not use. Don't forget to ask the children!

### Movement and Perception:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> sit                   | <input type="checkbox"/> use sled                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> stand                 | <input type="checkbox"/> roller skate            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> crawl under, in, over | <input type="checkbox"/> ice skate               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> creep                 | <input type="checkbox"/> strike object           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> roll                  | <input type="checkbox"/> make an obstacle course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> walk                  | <input type="checkbox"/> stretch                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hop                   | <input type="checkbox"/> pull up                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> skip                  | <input type="checkbox"/> assemble                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> run                   | <input type="checkbox"/> disassemble             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> jump                  | <input type="checkbox"/> stack                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sprint                | <input type="checkbox"/> pile                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> turn                  | <input type="checkbox"/> build                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> stop                  | <input type="checkbox"/> put in                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pedal                 | <input type="checkbox"/> take out                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> push                  | <input type="checkbox"/> pound                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> pull                  | <input type="checkbox"/> pinch                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> throw at a distance   | <input type="checkbox"/> scrape                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> throw at a target     | <input type="checkbox"/> poke                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> catch                 | <input type="checkbox"/> squeeze                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> reach                 | <input type="checkbox"/> dance                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> grasp                 | <input type="checkbox"/> smell                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> grip                  | <input type="checkbox"/> touch                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hold                  | <input type="checkbox"/> feel                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lift                  | <input type="checkbox"/> taste                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> carry                 |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dump                  | <b>Expression</b>                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> punch                 | <input type="checkbox"/> talk                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> balance               | <input type="checkbox"/> shout                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> somersault            | <input type="checkbox"/> scream                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> swing                 | <input type="checkbox"/> whisper                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sway                  | <input type="checkbox"/> make noises             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> climb                 | <input type="checkbox"/> sing                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> slide                 | <input type="checkbox"/> be quiet                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tumble                | <input type="checkbox"/> listen                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> kick                  | <input type="checkbox"/> see, watch, look        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> dig                   | <input type="checkbox"/> create                  |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpt                  |

*Outdoor Play Area Standards Manual for Centre-Based Child Care*

- weave
- paint with water
- paint with fingers
- paint with brushes
- paint with rollers
- paint with branches
- tear down
- build
- woodwork
- nail
- glue
- dress up
- play doll
- imitate
- imagine
- invent
- play with water
- pour
- splash
- play with sand
- mix
- wash
- play with bubbles
- make bubbles
- use objects in original ways
- blow
- shape earth
- shape a sphere
- shape a space
- invent
- draw caricatures
- sketch
- play with mud

**Cognitive Skills**

- observe
- understand
- make rules
- decide
- choose
- collect
- gather
- compare
- select

- match
- arrange
- rearrange
- put in order
- discover
- question
- notice changes
- develop theories and concepts
- count
- write
- explore by trial and error
- read books
- read symbols

**Emotion and Affection**

- cuddle
- hug
- kiss
- tickle
- change their minds
- be alone with a friend
- be alone
- be in a small group
- have individual attention
- be in a large group
- retreat
- nest
- hide
- look
- help
- pat
- feel
- hear
- take care of
- plant
- prune
- mix
- water
- tend
- enjoy
- eat
- sleep
- rest



## **SECTION C - HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION**

Children love playing on swing sets, jungle gyms, ride-on toys, playhouses, climbers and the like. However, if not properly assembled, installed or maintained, they can cause injuries; and, of course, even the best-designed and maintained structures can be hazardous if children are not supervised or taught some basic rules about their proper use. Please read the following checklists and make sure that play structures are safe for children in your care.

Children are naturally inquisitive. They love to explore their physical surroundings, test limits and see how far they can get. Exploring the outside environment is important to their healthy development. Adult supervision is the key aspect of any safety program. Develop a safe environment where children can live and play comfortably and safely.

### **Assembly Is Crucial**

- ✓ Assemble and install equipment in strict accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If the instructions are not clear, contact the manufacturer or dealer. If it isn't put together properly, it could break and cause injury.
- ✓ Keep your instruction sheets. You may need them to make repairs or order parts.
- ✓ Making changes to the equipment without the manufacturer's approval could make the structure unsafe.
- ✓ Make sure that all nuts and bolts are tight.
- ✓ Remove or cover any sharp points or edges. Any bolt that extends beyond the nut must be replaced with a shorter bolt, or covered with an acorn nut or plastic cap.
- ✓ See that all tent pegs, stabilizer bars, etc, are level with ground or easy to see so children don't trip.
- ✓ Adjust the height of swing sets so that children can get on and off safely. You must leave enough space from the ground and a protective surfacing zone in front and behind the swing to allow safe movement of a child's legs and feet while swinging.
- ✓ Swings must have no open-ended or 'S-shaped' hooks. Closed hooks are necessary.
- ✓ Ensure that swing sets, slides and climbing equipment are securely anchored.
- ✓ Make sure that no part of a play structure could trap a child's head or limbs.
- ✓ Seesaws must have wooden blocks or rubber tires placed on the underside of the seats to prevent feet from getting caught.
- ✓ Garbage containers must be anchored and away from equipment and play areas.
- ✓ Boundaries of play areas must be clear to both adults and children.
- ✓ Play areas for active play (e.g., bike riding, running games) are separate from areas for other activities (e.g., sandbox, outdoor tables).
- ✓ Swing sets must be located a safe distance from fences, trees, houses, electrical wires or other obstacles. They must also be placed a safe distance from other play equipment so children don't collide.
- ✓ Remember that slides can become too hot for safe use. Place them in the shade or facing away from the sun.
- ✓ Sandboxes should be located in a shaded spot; must have proper drainage and must be covered at night to protect from moisture and animal feces. If animal feces are found in

the outdoor sand area, the feces are to be removed and properly disposed of as well as the sand from a 12" radius from the area where the feces was found. If the animal stool is loosely formed, then the entire amount of sand in the sand box is to be removed and replaced with clean sand. Sand must be raked at least every two weeks to check for debris and provide exposure to the air and sun.

- ✓ Fences are essential in back gardens or outdoor play spaces. Fences must be at least 1.2 metres (4 ft.) high and have gate locks on the outside so that children can not reach them.

### **Maintenance Is a Must**

- ▶ Plastic parts take an additional beating in the summer's sun and winter's cold. Check all plastic parts carefully and frequently - especially those parts designed to support a child's weight. You can often buy replacement parts such as swing seats, slide tops, ladder rungs, bolt caps, tube end-covers, etc. from local dealers or from the manufacturer.
- ▶ Chains for swings, rings, and hand holds, etc. must be checked frequently for smooth functioning and for signs of wear, weakness or rust. Replace them when necessary.
- ▶ Use non-toxic paints when repainting any children's product. Take care of rusted parts as soon as possible.
- ▶ Check all nuts and bolts regularly to make sure that they are tight.
- ▶ The surface of slides must be smooth and show no wear and there must be no gaps, pinch points, or rough edges in the sliding surface.
- ▶ Maintenance of protective surfacing materials is essential. If the required depth of surfacing materials is not maintained then these surfaces are not considered safe.

### **Adult Supervision Is Essential**

In supervising playgrounds, the number of adults assigned will depend on the risk associated with a particular activity. For example, extra adults may be required to supervise swings, slides and other similar equipment.

In addition to watching the children allowed on the equipment, children too young to use the apparatus must be kept off and out of danger. It is required that adults have a pocket first aid kit available at the playground, and record all playground injuries requiring first aid. The key to an ever-improving injury control strategy is to carefully review how injuries happened.

- ▶ Remember that loose clothing, hats with chin straps, draw strings, bike helmets, ponchos, scarves, and jewellery can get caught on equipment. Make sure that children in your care are dressed appropriately.
- ▶ Preschoolers need constant supervision and must never be left alone on play structures. Older children often try to make equipment 'more challenging' and use it in unexpected and unintended ways. They also take risks as they develop their physical skills. As this kind of 'misuse' results in a large number of injuries, play rules are very important.
- ▶ Swing sets with back supports and safety bars must be used for young children or children with disabilities.
- ▶ A source of clean drinking water must be provided in the play area.

**Reaching a Balance between Safety and Physical Activity\***

It is the responsibility and legal obligation of all early childhood educators to ensure that children in their care have a safe place to play. ECEs can also help children become more responsible and safety conscious by being aware of the potential consequences of their actions. This can be taught through education and practice. As a result of being active in a setting which is appropriately designed and well supervised, a child will learn what is safe and what is not.

Reaching a balance between safety and physical activity within a child care setting represents a typical “trade-off” situation. If children are not allowed to take risks they will not engage in physical activity for fear of becoming injured. However, if children are allowed to pursue physical activities as they wish, their safety may be jeopardized.

Injuries in an outdoor play area usually occur because of one or more of the following reasons:

- inadequate supervision
- improper use of equipment/toys
- using equipment that was designed for older or younger children; and
- poor maintenance of equipment.

To reach a balance between safety and physical activity, keep the following points in mind:

- ✓ Active supervision is most important! Scan the environment constantly. Provide appropriate adult:child ratios. Position adults in the play space in such a way that all children are able to be seen at all times.
- ✓ Educate children on safety; that is, helping them to determine what is safe and what is not safe. Tell the child about the proper uses of equipment and demonstrate when appropriate.
- ✓ Maintain equipment so that it is safe for all children. Discard or repair broken equipment immediately.
- ✓ Supply only equipment/toys that are suited to the developmental age of the child.
- ✓ Check the environment for hazards on an ongoing basis (at least daily). Implement a safety checklist to ensure a safe play environment.
- ✓ When using playground equipment, check the clothing of each child for straps, buckles, hoods and strings that could become snagged. Long hair must be tied back or tucked in.
- ✓ Have simple, clear rules that can be understood by each child. Phrase the rules and guidelines in such a way that they tell the child what to DO as opposed to what not to DO.

- ✓ Many injuries occur to children as pedestrians. On outings and field trips, use a rope that each child must hold. Place one leader at the front of the line and one at the end.
- ✓ Educate the children on traffic safety. Make the outings **safe and fun**.
- ✓ Ensure that outdoor play spaces are enclosed by a fence or a similar barrier.
- ✓ Ensure that the appropriate play surfacing is used in all areas of the outdoor play area.
- ✓ Guidelines and rules need to be consistent among all ECEs so that children are not confused.
- ✓ Have information cards on all children. These can be used for attendance purposes while on field trips. Cards must also contain medical information and emergency telephone numbers.

In case of emergency:

- ✓ Be prepared.
- ✓ Have mandatory first aid training for all employees. Make sure that this training is regularly updated.
- ✓ Develop an emergency plan. Quick action often reduces the seriousness of injuries.
- ✓ Preplan activities that will keep other children occupied if a child should become injured.
- ✓ Refer to the child's information card that will contain his or her medical information and emergency telephone numbers.

\* from: *Active Living for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers*, (1994) published by the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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**Teach Children How to Use Playground Equipment with These Guidelines for Safe Play**

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Remind children that they are to:

- ▶ Avoid walking in front of, between or directly behind moving parts.
- ▶ Keep fingers away from moving parts.
- ▶ Use feet first when sliding. Never run up and down slide beds or slide down head first.
- ▶ Remember that equipment is slippery when wet! Slick surfaces can cause serious injuries. Wait until structure and clothing are dry.
- ▶ Always hold onto handgrips or rails.
- ▶ Sit on swings - never stand on swings or jump off them while they are moving.

Adults must remember that:

- ▶ Children sometimes have difficulty judging distance and what can be considered a safe height. When helping a child judge what can be considered a safe jumping height, factors such as the landing surface, and the child's age and ability must be taken into account.
- ▶ They are not to lift younger children to unsafe heights.
- ▶ They must ensure that riding toys are stable and well balanced
- ▶ Children riding bicycles, tricycles, and similar wheeled toys must always wear a CSA approved bicycle helmet.
- ▶ Play equipment is designed for a specific number of children at any one time. Make sure that children do not exceed this number.
- ▶ Riding downhill is dangerous. A tricycle can pick up so much speed that it becomes almost impossible for a child to stop.
- ▶ Riding toys are to stay off sidewalks and streets.
- ▶ Children must not be lifted on and off equipment. They must be able to get on and off themselves. If they are not able to do this then the equipment is probably not developmentally appropriate for that particular child.



**SECTION D - TABLES**

Table 1 – Critical Heights of Tested Materials

Table 2 – Loosefill - Tested Materials

Table 3 – Outdoor Play Design Principles

Table 4 – Examples of Hard and Soft Surfacing Materials



**Table 1 - Critical Heights of Tested Materials\***

Material	Uncompressed Depth of Protective Surfacing Material**			Compressed Depth **
	150mm (6 in.)	225 mm (9 in.)	300 mm (12 in.)	225 mm (9 in.)
<b>Height of the designated play surface of the outdoor play structure</b>				
Wood Chips	2.1 m (7 ft.)	3 m (10 ft.)	3.3 m (11 ft.)	3 m (10 ft.)
Double Shredded bark mulch	1.8 m (6 ft.)	3 m (10 ft.)	3.3 m (11 ft.)	2.1 m (7 ft.)
Engineered wood fibres	1.8 m (6 ft.)	2.1 m (7 ft.)	3.6 m (12 ft.)	1.8 m (6 ft.)
Fine Sand	1.5 m (5 ft.)	1.5 m (5 ft.)	2.7 m (9 ft.)	1.5 m (5 ft.)
Coarse Sand	1.5 m (5 ft.)	1.5 m (5 ft.)	1.8 m (6 ft.)	1.2 m (4 ft.)
Fine Gravel	1.8 m (6 ft.)	2.1 m (7 ft.)	3 m (10 ft.)	1.8 m (6 ft.)
Medium Gravel	1.5 m (5 ft.)	1.5 m (5 ft.)	1.8 m (6 ft.)	1.5 m (5 ft.)
Shredded Tires†	3.6 m (12 ft.)	n/a	n/a	n/a

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\*\* Results of tests conducted by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), according to ASTM F 355 test method.

†This data is from tests conducted by independent testing laboratories on a 6 in. depth of uncompressed shredded tire samples produced by four manufacturers. The tests reported critical heights that varied from 3m (10 ft.) to greater than 3.6 m (12 ft.). It is recommended that persons seeking to install shredded tires as a protective surface obtain test data from the supplier showing the critical height of the material when it was tested in accordance with ASTM F 1292.

Note: Maintenance is integral to the reliability of surfacing materials.

How to use this table:

To determine the required depth of the protective surfacing material:

1. Select the **row** that contains the type of material being used, e.g., wood chips.
2. Select the **column** that indicates the height of the designated play surface of the outdoor play structure e.g., a climber that has a designated play surface with a height of 2.1 metres or 7 feet.
3. Follow the column up to the **shaded area** which will indicate the required depth of the protective surfacing material, e.g. 150mm (6 in.) uncompressed depth.

**Table 2 - Loose Fill - Tested Materials\***

The following chart is from *Children’s Playspaces and Equipment CAN/CSA-Z614-98 (p. 99)*. It indicates the recommended size of particles for each type of loose fill, according to tests conducted by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. The information found in this table will assist a supplier in determining what is considered *fine sand and coarse sand*; what is considered *medium gravel* and what is considered *fine gravel*.

**Fine Sand**

ASTM C 136 test results for Fine Sand

Screen Size	Percent Passing Through Screen
Num 16	100%
Num 30	98%
Num 50	62%
Num 100	17%
Num 200	0-1%

**Coarse Sand**

ASTM C 136 test results for Coarse Sand

Screen Size	Percent Passing Through Screen
Num 4	98%
Num 8	73%
Num 16	4%
Num 30	1%
Num 50	0-1%

**Medium Gravel**

ASTM C 136 test results for medium gravel

Screen Size	Percent Passing Through Screen
12mm ( 1/2 in)	100%
9mm (3/8 in)	80%
7mm (5/16 in)	58%
Num 3 1/2	20%
Num 4	8%
Num 16	3%

**Fine Gravel**

ASTM C 136 test results for fine gravel

Screen Size	Percent Passing Through Screen
9mm ( 3/8 in)	100%
Num 3 1/2	93%
Num 4	65%
Num 8	8%
Num 16	5%
Num 30	4%

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**Table 3 - Outdoor Play Design Principles**

Children's Interests and Developmental Needs	Design Element
The need to move	Open, flat area for running, paths for riding toys, boundaries for defining play areas
The need to climb	Slopes with varying inclines, fixed climbing equipment, portable climbing equipment, protective surfacing materials
The need to experience nature	Trees, bushes, shrubs, flowers, grass
The need to experience challenges and make mistakes	Age appropriate equipment that provides a moderate risk, protective surfacing to cushion falls, appropriate supervision, adult encouragement, well planned and designed environment
The need to socialize	A place to sit, quiet areas, semi-private places that can be seen easily by an adult but can create a feeling of privacy; larger areas where more organized group games can be played.
To construct, transform and create in a hands-on way	Well equipped sand play area, manipulative materials such as large blocks, art materials such as brushes and buckets (for painting with water)
To make choices	A variety of areas/zones in which to play (manipulative, gross motor, quiet, creative) and a variety of play materials and equipment ranging in simple to complex.

**Table 4 - Examples of Hard and Soft Surfacing Materials\***

Hard Surfacing Materials†	Soft Surfacing Materials
Asphalt	Grass
Hard Packed Dirt/Soil	** Wood chips
Patio Stones	**Coarse Sand
Interlocking Bricks	**Fine Gravel
Wooden Decking	**Medium Gravel
Flag Stone	** Shredded Tires
Concrete	Rubber Matting

\* This chart is not meant to be considered a complete list of hard and soft surfacing materials - these are examples only.

† Hard surfacing can **only** constitute **up to** 50% of the minimum required surface.

\*\*Can also be used as protective surfacing.

**SECTION E - FORMS AND CHECKLISTS**

1. Daily Visual Inspection of Outdoor Play Area\*
2. Monthly Inspection Checklist for Outdoor Play Areas\*
3. Seasonal Maintenance Inspection Checklist
4. Outdoor Play Area Design Approval Form

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*Outdoor Play Area Standards Manual for Centre-Based Child Care*

**Daily Visual Inspection of Outdoor Play Area**

Name of Centre: _____
Date: _____
Time: _____
Weather: _____
Comments: _____ _____
Signed by: _____



*Outdoor Play Area Standards Manual for Centre-Based Child Care*

**Monthly Inspection Checklist for Outdoor Play Areas**

Name of Centre: _____  Inspected by: _____  Date of Inspection: _____		<b>General Site</b>	<b>Surfacing</b>					<b>Legend</b>  ✓ Satisfactory ✗ Attention Required n/a Not applicable Please check all boxes	
							<i>Action Taken</i>	<i>Date Completed</i>	
<b>SURFACES</b>	Surface Contamination								
	Surface Compaction								
	Surface Level								
	Surface Containment								
	Protective Surface Zone								
	Footings exposed								
<b>PERFORMANCE</b>	Head/neck entrapment								
	Protrusion Hazards								
	Sharp points/edges								
	Entanglement Hazards								
	Crush/shear hazards								
	Looping hazards								
<b>MAINTENANCE</b>	Tilting/Frost Heave								
	Chain Wear								
	Bearings Wear								
	Lubrication								
	Loose/worn/missing fasteners								
	Wood Splinters/cracking								
	Broken/worn/damaged parts								
	Surface finish/UV stability								

<b>S I T E</b>	Fencing						
	Lighting						
	Signs						
	Furniture/Amenities						
	Pathways						

Comments:	
Action Plan:	
<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Signature	<hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin-bottom: 5px;"/> Date

*Outdoor Play Area Standards Manual for Centre-Based Child Care*

**Monthly Checklist  
Guide to Completion**

*(Note: For assistance in completing this checklist or for further clarification on the terms being used, contact the certified playground safety inspector affiliated with your child care service.)*

**Surface Contamination** - look for debris, stones, sharp objects, broken bottles, and other foreign objects in or on the protective surface. Check for sand or other granular material contaminating synthetic rubber surfaces.

**Surface Compaction** - Inspect the surface to see if it has become hard over time and requires loosening. Check for evidence of “hard pan” condition in sand, pea gravel, etc. surfaces. Check any synthetic surfacing to see if it has become hard over time due to sun exposure, etc.

**Surface level** - Check to see if the surface has settled over time. Ensure that appropriate levels exist in high wear areas under swings, slides, and sliding poles, etc.

**Surface Containment** - Ensure that the protective surface is contained. Check for container damage. Look for loose fill material migrating out of the contained area. Look for surrounding grass migrating into the contained surface area.

**Surface drainage** - Ensure that the surface is adequately drained and no evidence of standing water exists.

**Protective surface zone** - Ensure that the protective surface zones around the equipment comply with provincial requirements.

**Footings exposed** - Check to see if the footings have shifted and heaved over time. Ensure that the tops of the footings are not exposed in the protective surface material.

**Head/Neck entrapment** - look for any entrapment hazards (refer to Clause 12.1 of CAN/CSA - Z614-04 for more information).

**Protrusion Hazards** - Check for any protrusion hazards (refer to Clause 12.2 of CAN/CSA - Z614-04 for more information); look for bolts with more than two threads exposed or that pass through the protrusion gadgets.

**Sharp points/edges** - Check for any accessible sharp edges or points that can cut, puncture, or lacerate a user’s skin during use. Check for textured surfaces on seats or slides capable of cutting or abrading human skin. Look for popping nails and fasteners on wooden platforms and benches.

**Entanglement hazards** - Check for any entanglement hazards (refer to Clause 12.3 of CAN/CSA - Z614-04 for more information). Look for projections pointing upward more than 3mm, exposed bolt ends, and projections that increase in size. Look for connecting devices with

gaps greater than 1mm. Look for gaps and other openings adjacent to slides and sliding poles that will catch the toggle test device. On slides, look for any projection that extends more than 3 mm from the surface.

**Crush/shear hazards** - Look for any point that entraps a 16 mm diameter rod at the juncture of two components moving relative to one another. Look for any juncture at which a user could suffer contusion, laceration, abrasion, amputation, or fracture during use of the equipment or because of the user's motion. Look for loose or worn joints in suspension bridges, narrow gaps that could catch a child's finger at the entrance to slides and sliding poles. Look for crush points between flex ladders and adjacent posts, etc. Please note that the following are exempt from this requirement:

- chains and their method of attachment;
- the attachment area of heavy-duty coil springs to the body and base of rocking equipment;
- the area between a swinging element and a horizontal top rail; and
- the area between small, lightweight moving parts necessary as an integral part of the play activity (e.g., abacus beads, bell clappers, telephone receivers) provided that this area is not considered a crush or shear point, defined as a juncture at which the user could suffer contusion, laceration, abrasion, amputation, or fracture during use of the playground equipment or because of the user's motion.

**Looping hazards** - Look for rope, cable, and chain (excluding swings) elements that are not fixed at both ends or that can be looped back on themselves to create an inside loop perimeter greater than 125 mm.

**Tilting/frost heave** - Look for evidence of frost action that has lifted, loosened, or otherwise misaligned structural elements and platforms. Determine the source of the frost action and repair it.

**Chain wear** - Look for bent, worn, open links, rust and/or rough edges. Replace as required.

**Bearings wear** - Look for worn or excessive play in bearings and bushings and corroded or work bolts, rivets, and clamps. Replace when worn.

**Lubrication** - Lubricate all parts as recommended by the manufacturer with a non-toxic lubricant.

**Loose/worn/missing fasteners** - Ensure that all locking and fastening devices are secure. Look for missing, worn, rusted, or corroded fasteners and replace (never reuse S-hooks). Look for missing or broken fastener caps.

**Wood splinters/checking** - Check wood timbers and support posts for excessive checking. Note cracks exceeding 19 mm in width.

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**Broken/worn/ damaged parts** - Look for damaged welds, bent components, cracks, broken panels and members, and fire damage. Look for extremely warped plastic components.

**Surface finish/UV stability** - Look for scratched or damaged paint finishes and penetrating rust on metal components. Look for paint, plastic coatings, and plastic components that are chalking and fading due to ultraviolet ray sunlight exposure.

**Fencing** - Look for any visible damage. Check for protruding points in fence fabric and hardware. Check for added attachments such as skipping ropes, etc.

**Lighting** - Check for visible damage and that lights are in proper working order.

**Signs** - Check for visible damage or graffiti. Look to see if signs are securely fastened and readable.

**Furniture/amenities** - Look for visible damage and that all parts are secure and functioning. Look for graffiti, etc.

**Pathways** - Check for visible damage, cracks in hard surfaces, trip points, and drainage problems (ponding of water).



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**Seasonal Maintenance and Repair Checklist**

The following checklist is to be completed twice per year, once in the spring (once snow covering has melted) and once in the fall (before ground is covered in snow.) This checklist is not exhaustive and can be added to by the licensee, based on the requirements of the particular child care service. The completed checklists are to be kept in the outdoor play area safety log.

Name of Centre: _____	<i>Check All boxes</i>	<b>Legend</b>	
Date of Inspection: _____		✓ Satisfactory × Attention Required n/a Not applicable	
Name of Inspector: _____		<b>Action Required and/or Taken</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Asphalt paths			
Chains			
Cleared of Debris			
Exposed concrete removed			
Fencing			
Surfacing			
Protective Surfacing Zones			
Landscaping			
Lighting/Signs			
Locking devices			
Seats			
Tires			
Stability in ground			
Drainage			
Condition of wood			
Other (specify)			



**Seasonal Maintenance and Repair Checklist  
Guide to Completion**

In addition to completing the monthly checklist, centres must conduct a seasonal inspection twice per year. The following guidelines based upon information from CSA-CANZ614-03 and are provided to assist the licensee when conducting seasonal maintenance inspections. This list is not exhaustive and can be added to by the licensee, based on the requirements of the particular child care service. Seasonal maintenance is conducted in the late fall (before ground is covered in snow) and in spring (once snow covering has melted).

- Asphalt paths** – check for and repair uneven, eroding or crumbling asphalt.
- Chains**– check for and remove damaged covers, visible signs of wear, bent, worn or open links, rust, rough edges.
- Debris** – check entire play area for debris, broken glass and animal feces. Rake to loosen sand in sand boxes.
- Exposed concrete** – remove all exposed concrete to 150 mm below grade. Backfill and level depressions or open holes with proper material.
- Fencing** – check for and repair any visible damage, including splinters, broken fencing, tilting, damage from vandalism, or from climate conditions.
- Surfacing** – Ensure that there are no tripping hazards, e.g., roots and rocks. If there are that any depressions in the surfacing that may become a tripping hazard, these depressions are to be filled with proper material.
- Protective Surfacing zones** –Ensure that the proper depth and amount of protective surfacing material is covering all protective surfacing zones. Check for and remove obstacles in any of the protective surfacing zones.
- Landscaping** – sweep all hard surfaces. Prune all trees and shrubs. Empty all trash receptacles. Mow and water surrounding grass areas as needed.
- Lighting, signs** – check for any visible damage. Replace or repair as necessary.
- Locking devices** – check all locking devices, interior and exterior to make sure they are in good working order.
- Seats** – check rubber seats for wear, sharp edges/points, scorching or burn damage. Ensure that safety bars on infant seats are intact and fixed.
- Tires** – check any tires that are used for play materials. Check for wear and cracks and exposed steel belts. Remove or repair as necessary.
- Stability in ground** – ensure that structures are not easily swayed and that connections are solid and adequately secured. Check all posts (wood and steel) in ground for corrosion or rot. Check for unstable anchoring of equipment. Repair or remove as necessary.
- Drainage** – check entire play area for drainage problems, with special attention to heavy use areas.
- Wooden borders, benches, play equipment, fences** – check for and remove all splinters. Check for decaying wood. Check for excessive cracks, welds on seating, insecure fittings. Check the condition of paint/stain. Repair or remove as necessary.
- Other areas as applicable**, e.g., stairs, steps, ramps, other play surfaces or equipment.



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**Seasonal Maintenance and Repair Checklist  
(SAMPLE)**

The following checklist is to be completed twice per year, once in the spring (once snow covering has melted) and once in the fall (before ground is covered in snow). This checklist is not exhaustive and can be added to by the licensee, based on the requirements of the particular child care service. The completed checklists are to be kept in the outdoor play area safety log.

Name of Centre:		<b>Legend</b>	
<u>Smith Ave. Child Care Centre</u>	<i>Check All boxes</i>	✓ Satisfactory ✕ Attention Required n/a Not applicable	
Date of Inspection:			
<u>April 1, 2007</u>			
Name of Inspector:		<b>Action Required and/or Taken</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
<u>Jane Doe</u>			
Asphalt paths	✓		
Chains	n/a		
Cleared of Debris	✓		
Exposed concrete removed	✓		
Fencing	✕	Gate repaired	April 5 '07
Surfacing	✓		
Protective Surfacing Zones	✕	Fine gravel replenished	April 8'07
Landscaping	✕	Will need to re-seed grassy areas	June 18'07
Lighting/Signs	✓		
Locking devices	✓		
Seats	n/a		
Tires	n/a		
Stability in ground	✕	New concrete poured for front post under climber platform	May 3 '07
Drainage	✓		
Condition of wood	✓		
Other (specify)			



### **Outdoor Play Area Plans Approval**

(Prior Approval - New and Renovation to Outdoor Play Area)

**Policy:** Outdoor Play Area layout plans must be drafted by a person with a certificate, degree or diploma in architecture, engineering, or drafting. All outdoor play area plan submissions in a child care centre must include:

- i) three copies of the outdoor play area site plan drafted to a recognized scale,
- ii) completed Outdoor Play Area Design Approval Form,
- iii) the size and layout of the outdoor play area, location of fixed equipment, the protective surfacing zones, and the location of the space in relation to the child care centre
- iv) manufacturer's data sheets on the equipment being installed.
- v) compliance with the requirements of the Building Accessibility Act, if applicable

Where renovations are proposed for an existing outdoor play space, the proposed renovations shall be subject to the submission requirements stated above.

No applicant shall proceed to develop or renovate an outdoor play area until the inspection authorities and the Regional Director of Child Care Services provide approval to proceed and specifications have been issued in writing by the appropriate inspectors.

A plans review submission is required when an application is made for:

- i) a new outdoor play area,
- ii) addition to a outdoor play area in an existing child care centre,
- iii) change in the use of an existing outdoor play area,
- iv) any structural change to equipment,
- v) the installation of new equipment
- vi) any change in the layout of existing fixed equipment and/or
- vii) any change in the elevation of landscaping



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**OUTDOOR PLAY AREA  
DESIGN APPROVAL FORM**

Telephone: (709) 729-2747  
Facsimile: (709) 729-2071

**Subject: Request for Approval of Plans**

NAME OF CHILD CARE SERVICE	
DATE SUBMITTED	LICENSED SPACES (IF KNOWN)
LOCATION OF CHILD CARE SERVICE	
MAILING ADDRESS	
	POSTAL CODE
NAME OF DESIGNER	TELEPHONE

**1. OUTDOOR PLAY AREA**

FENCING:	TYPE	HEIGHT
OUTDOOR PLAY AREA	TOTAL M <sup>2</sup>	TYPE(S) OF SURFACING

**2. TYPES OF EQUIPMENT (Fixed and Portable)**

**INFANTS (0 to 24 months)**

	PROTECTIVE SURFACING DEPTH	PROTECTIVE SURFACING TYPE	PROTECTIVE SURFACING ZONE m <sup>2</sup>	NUMBER	CRITICAL HEIGHT
SWINGS:					
SLIDES					
CUMBERS					
COMPOSITE					
OTHER: _____					
OTHER: _____					
OTHER: _____					

**PRESCHOOL (2 to 5 YEARS)**

	PROTECTIVE SURFACING DEPTH	PROTECTIVE SURFACING TYPE	PROTECTIVE SURFACING ZONE m <sup>2</sup>	NUMBER	CRITICAL HEIGHT
SWINGS:					
SLIDES					
CUMBERS					
SEE SAWS (SPRING TYPE)					
NET STRUCTURES					
COMPOSITE					
OTHER: _____					
OTHER: _____					
OTHER: _____					

**SCHOOL AGE (5 to 12) YEARS**

	PROTECTIVE SURFACING DEPTH	PROTECTIVE SURFACING TYPE	PROTECTIVE SURFACING ZONE m <sup>2</sup>	NUMBER	CRITICAL HEIGHT
SWINGS:					
SLIDES					
CUMBERS					
SEE SAWS					
NET STRUCTURES					
COMPOSITE					
OTHER:					
OTHER:					
OTHER:					

**3. PROVISIONS FOR BARRIER FREE ACCESS**

SPECIFIC AREAS PROVIDED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	SPECIFIC EQUIPMENT PROVIDED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO
SPECIFIC PROVISIONS					

**4. DETAILED EXPLANATION (if required)**


This is to certify that this form has been completed to the best of my ability and that the outdoor play area has been designed and will be installed in accordance to the requirements and provisions of the latest edition of the CAN/CSA-Z614 "Children's Playspaces and Equipment".

**PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY**

**Designer:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**Licensee/Applicant:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

