



## **Safety Practices in the Classroom**

### **General Responsibilities for Child Care Personnel**

All child care center employees, including those who are not counted in child/staff ratios, must:

- Demonstrate competency, good judgment, and self-control when in the presence of children and when performing assigned responsibilities
- Relate to children with courtesy, respect, acceptance and patience
- Recognize and respect the uniqueness and potential of all children, their families and their cultures
- Not abuse, neglect or exploit children
- Report suspected abuse, neglect and exploitation to CPS or the law enforcement

### **Additional Responsibilities for Caregivers Counted in Child/Staff Ratios:**

- Know and comply with state minimum standards
- Know what children they are responsible for
- Know each child's name and age
- Supervise the children at all times, adjusting appropriately for different ages and abilities of each child
- Ensure the children are not out of control
- Be free from other duties not directly related to the teaching, care, and supervision of the children; such as administrative duties, meal preparation, and janitorial duties
- Interact routinely with children in a positive manner
- Foster developmentally appropriate independence in children through planned but flexible program activities
- Foster a cooperative rather than a competitive atmosphere
- Show appreciation for children's efforts and accomplishments
- Ensure the continuity of care for children by sharing with incoming caregiver information about each child's activities during the previous shift and any verbal or written instructions given by the parent



## Supervision

Supervising children at all times means that the assigned caregiver is accountable for each child's care. This includes responsibility for the on-going activity for each child, appropriate visual and or auditory awareness, physical proximity, and knowledge of activity requirements and each child's needs. The caregiver must intervene when necessary to ensure the children's safety. In deciding how closely to supervise children, the caregiver must take into account:

- Ages of the children
- Individual differences and abilities
- Indoor and outdoor layout of the child care center
- Neighborhood circumstances, hazards and risks

Supervision is basic to the prevention of harm. Parents have an understanding that caregivers will supervise their children in their absence. Adults who are attentive and who understand young children's behaviors are in the best position to safeguard their well being. Child-care centers can also establish an understanding with the parents regarding who is responsible for the child while the parent and the child are both on the premises. These understandings could be laid out in the enrollment agreement.



## Daily Checklist for Maintaining a Safe Environment

- Children are never left unattended
- Electrical outlets are covered with safety plugs
- No electrical cords are within a child's reach
- Cords from blinds and draperies are out of the reach of children
- Cleaning supplies are locked up and are inaccessible to children
- Medications are stored in the front office and are inaccessible to children
- Personal belongings are locked in cabinets and are inaccessible to children
- Hot drinks are not allowed in the classroom
- Bleach water solution, or its equivalent, is available in each classroom
- Diaper pails are covered and are inaccessible to children
- Waste baskets are covered
- Toys are checked for choking hazards
- Paper clips, push pins, and staples are not used in areas where children are present
- Children are not left alone on a changing table; teachers keep one hand on a child at all times, even when they are strapped
- Sides of infant cribs are closed and locked when not in use
- Toys and furniture are in good repair with no sharp edges or splinters
- Rugs have non-skid backing
- Caution is taken when opening doors
- Water is not warmer than 120 degrees
- No poisonous plants are in the program
- Knives and non-age appropriate scissors are out of reach of the children
- Three forms of attendance tracking are present
- Playground is checked daily for trash or debris
- Children's personal clothing is appropriate for the weather and does not have hoods with ties
- Teachers are zoning the playground
- Temperature of the slides is checked frequently
- Water play is not done on cement or other hard surfaces
- Playground equipment is checked for splinters, nails, and screws
- Gates are closed at all times



## Outdoor Play Procedures

### Summer Outdoor Play

Every program should believe that children should have some time every day for outdoor activities. Because our primary concern is our children's safety, we should ensure that they are not subjected to conditions that would cause heat exhaustion. Teachers should always be aware of the symptoms of heat exhaustion, which may include:

- Pale and clammy skin, heavy sweating
- Fatigue, weakness, dizziness, fainting
- Headache, nausea, vomiting, muscle cramps

Heat exhaustion and dehydration can be avoided by encouraging children to drink liquids, eat fruit, and cool off frequently. Thirst is not a good indicator of dehydration, as a child can become dehydrated before becoming thirsty.

Children should be monitored constantly for signs of heat exhaustion and dehydration. Staff members should also be monitored by each other. Staff should provide plenty of cool water while children are outside. Water fountains should be checked for maintenance. If no water fountains are available, staff should take water outside for the children.

A parent may request that their child be excluded from outdoor play by noting the request in writing at the time of drop off. You should make every effort to accommodate every parents request, however it is recommended that you explain to the parents the importance of outside play and that your program has procedures in place to protect the children against heat related incidents.

Please note the heat index chart located in the back of this book. Staff should consider the temperature outside as well as the relative humidity. This will determine if it is safe for a child to play outside.



## Playground Safety and Procedures

The programs management staff and teachers should complete daily and weekly playground checklists. This is to insure that your playground is safe for the children. Your program should alternate the individual that does this check each day and week. This way a new set of eyes is constantly checking the playground. Any violations to the checklist should be immediately addressed to the programs Director. Depending on the severity of the damage or safety issue, children should not be allowed on the playground until the issue is addressed.

The following items should be taken every time a class goes outside. These items should never be left on the playground from class to class.

- Band-Aids – In the event that a child injures himself/herself on the playground, band-aids should be available to immediately treat the injury rather than a teacher leaving a group to get one from inside.
- Gloves – While keeping with blood borne pathogens guidelines, staff should always have gloves on hand to assist children with issues that involve bodily fluids, such as blood, mucus, and/or vomit. Staff should keep a pair of gloves in their pocket so that they will have immediate access in order to protect themselves and the other children. Program Management should pay attention to any staff that may have a latex allergy and be willing and able to accommodate them.
- Tissues – Children’s noses should be kept clean while they are on the playground. Staff should remember to wear gloves when assisting children with tissues. A trashcan anchored to the ground and with a lid should be on the playground for trash. Avoid tying grocery bags to the fence to put trash in.
- Anti-Bacterial Gel – Children and staff should make a habit to always wash their hands after blowing noses or assisting in incidents or injuries, even when wearing gloves. Since sinks are not available on the playground, anti-bacterial gel should be available to sanitize hands and arms.
- Incident Reports – These should be taken outside, along with a working pen, so that staff can immediately fill out an incident report after an accident. This prevents staff from trying to remember details of an accident later. Also, the report will be ready for the parents at any time of pick up.
- Emergency Notebooks – This should include emergency contact information for all children in the classrooms care. In the event of a significant event, this notebook needs to be easily accessible. The emergency notebook should be kept in close contact with the staff members and always stored away in a safe place when returning to the classroom. Staff should acknowledge that this notebook contains confidential information on the parents and children and should be monitored for privacy and security.
- Water Jugs and Cups (if no water fountain is on the playground) – Children need to have immediate and unlimited access to cool water on the playground. Water jugs should be secured with safety ties or anchored so that children do not pull these down on top of them. Teachers should avoid giving the children water through jugs where their mouths touch the spout and could cause cross-contamination from child to child.



## **Zoning the Playground and Outside Area**

- Teachers should spread out to all corners of the playground and outside area. Teachers should position themselves so that they are within 4-feet of any child whose feet may leave the ground. This is to avoid the risk of children falling and injuring themselves.
- Teachers should be aware of all blind spots on the playground and in the equipment. If blind spots do exist, teachers should position themselves, and be willing and able to enter these areas in order to interact and supervise the children.
- It is not recommended that a teacher ever be alone on the playground. In the event of a single teacher on the playground, only areas that can be effectively zoned by that one teacher should be open.
- At least one staff member should always position himself/herself by the door or gate of the playground. In the event of a single staff member on the playground, the open play area should be the section closest to the door or gate. When more than one teacher is on the playground, one should be close to the door or gate to greet and monitor visitors and parents entering the playground.
- Doors leading to the playground should never be propped open. This could create a fire hazard and is not safe for the children and staff.
- Staff members should have at least two forms of attendance tracking giving the names and the number of children in their care on the playground. Management should make consistent checks to insure staff are interacting and supervising the children, and have the correct names and number of children on the attendance tracking.

## **What the Playground IS NOT**

- The playground is not a break time for the staff. Staff should not ever sit on the playground unless they are participating in a group activity with the entire group. Staff should not engage in socializing with each other while on the playground. Staff should stay within 20-feet of each other at all times, unless assisting with an incident on the playground. Programs are encouraged to invest in hand held communication devices to help with teacher/office communication while on the playground. Children should never have these items in their possession.
- The playground or outside area should never be used as a time for staff to let children “blow off energy”. Interactions and activities on the playground should be age-appropriate and productive for all children.
- Outside time is not the time for staff planning and development. Staff should be free of any additional responsibilities while on the playground.



## Field Trip Safety

When you start to think about field trips, some things to ask yourself to help with your planning are:

- Is this trip appropriate? (age & fit into your theme)
- Is this going to be something that can keep the children's attention?
- Do I have enough chaperones? (remember your ratio on a field trip should be lower than in the classroom)
- What do I know about the place we are visiting?
- Will the children need a bag lunch?
- Is there a place for eating available?
- What is the parking like?
- Do you have to pay to park?
- Is the parking lot large enough to accommodate our buses?
- If not, what alternate parking is available?
- Will the children have to walk from the parking lot/deck?
- How much time do we need to allow for the field trip in order for it to be successful?
- What do I want to accomplish with this trip?
- What kind of follow up activity can I plan that goes along with the trip?
- Do I have a permission slip signed for all children attending the trip?
- Do I have emergency info on all children & adults that are attending the trip?
- Has the bus been serviced lately?
- Do I have enough gas for the trip?
- Is there a first-aid kit on the bus?
- Do I have portable first-aid kits to take with us on the trip?
- Do I have emergency money for those unexpected things that might happen?
- Is there a charged up cell phone on each bus?
- Does every bus driver know the directions to the destination?
- Have the bus driver's traded cell phone #'s in case they get separated?
- Does the school know which driver has which phone?



## Slips, Trips and Falls

Slips, trips and falls are among the leading causes of injuries in the school for three reasons: lack of safety awareness, unsafe conditions and unsafe behavior. Studies show that the majority of falls happen in flat areas resulting from slips and trips. These types of injuries should not be taken lightly.

- More than a million people suffer from a slip, trip or falling injury each year.
- Over 11,000 people die as a result of falls alone.
- Slips, trips and falls account for 15 to 20 percent of all workers' compensation costs.
- Falls account for 90 percent of the most severe playground related injuries and one-third of fatalities.
- Falls account for the largest share of injury costs for children 14 years old and under.
- In general, children ages 10 and under are injured from falls at a rate of about twice that of the total population.

***Below are some tips to help you reduce the number of injuries due to slips, trips and falls.***

- Keep your floors in good repair. Loose boards, frayed carpet and loose tiles can be easily overlooked until they cause a fall.
- Provide dry walking surfaces. Wipe up spills immediately.
- In areas where the walking surfaces are likely to be slippery or wet, like the entrances to your building, provide non-skid strips or floor coatings.
- Keep all high-traffic areas free of obstacles.
- Don't stretch electrical cords across rooms or run extension cords under rugs.
- Provide adequate lighting, especially in areas in which people will be moving between light and dark areas.
- Make sure stairways are brightly lit and have sturdy handrails on both sides.
- Make sure all the steps in the stairway have the same rise and depth, with visible edges.
- Never use stairwells to store boxes, equipment or other objects, even temporarily.
- For extra caution, put white stripes on the front edges of steps.
- Emphasize no running, only walking, in your halls and classrooms.
- Inspect the walking areas of the school frequently to identify hazards that could cause slips, trips and falls.
- Conduct a facility assessment to identify areas of congestion, danger, etc.

These are all things that we can do in our schools so that we are not a statistic. Let's not be part of the million people injured by something that is "preventable."



## Daily Maintenance of a Classroom

Not only will your room look great but keeping your room neat and clean will also reduce the germs & sickness in your classroom. Just a few general housekeeping tips will help you have a great looking room with children (and teachers that are sick less often). Ask yourself these questions...

- ✓ Are your shelves labeled & neat? Do they have a toy store appearance?
- ✓ Are your toys sanitized/washed routinely? (infants/toddlers “mouthed” toys should be washed immediately)
- ✓ Are your floors swept/mopped/vacuumed daily or more often if needed? (sweep after meals & clean up spills immediately)
- ✓ Are tables washed & sanitized before & after each meal?
- ✓ Is the sanitizing solution made daily? Has the strength been tested today?
- ✓ Do ALL of your children wash hands before & after each meal?
- ✓ Do you use food service gloves EVERY time you serve food?
- ✓ Has the trash been emptied? It’s not overflowing & the lid can close easily?
- ✓ Are all unused outlets covered?
- ✓ Is the current menu & lesson plan posted?
- ✓ Are the children “presentable”? (shoes tied & faces clean)
- ✓ Are the cubbies & changing table free of clutter?
- ✓ Are the cots/mats labeled correctly & sanitized weekly?
- ✓ Are the sheets laundered as needed? (at least weekly)
- ✓ Do you have a feeding schedule for each child? Are all bottles labeled appropriately?
- ✓ Is the teacher’s cabinet locked? All KOOROC items locked up?
- ✓ Are all broken/damaged toys removed and reported to the director?
- ✓ Do you have any maintenance requests for your room? (lights burned out, repairs, and filter for A/C need to be cleaned)
- ✓ Is there a build-up of dust on your shelves or any other surface?
- ✓ Are sinks & bathrooms cleaned daily/sanitized after each use?
- ✓ Are supplies stocked for sinks & bathrooms?

One of the easiest ways to maintain a room is to help the children help you. Teach your children about taking care of the things in their classroom. The more they think of the room as theirs, the more likely they are to take care of it. Before you know it, they will start pointing things out to you that need to be removed or cleaned.