

AURORA CHILDREN'S CENTRE

Outdoor and Playground Safety Policy and Procedures

Date Policy and Procedures Established: August 2016

Date Policy and Procedures Updated: June 7, 2021

Purpose

Outdoor play is an integral part of the daily schedule and plays an important role in the development of children's overall well-being. In order for children to thrive in outdoor play, it is crucial that there be sufficient toys and equipment for children to engage in active play and that educators engage as active participants in the play.

Children thrive in programs where they can engage in vigorous physical play in natural outdoor spaces and playgrounds that present manageable levels of challenge. In addition to providing physical benefits, active play outdoors strengthens functioning in cognitive areas such as perception, attention, creative problem solving, and complex thinking.

While these environments need to be safe, it is also important for them to provide children with interesting opportunities for a reasonable degree of risk-taking.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the responsibilities of Aurora Children's Centre (herein after referred to as "ACC" or the "Centre"), staff, students and volunteers in ensuring that the outdoor and playground spaces provide a safe and well-supervised environment for children's play and meet Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standards.

This policy is intended to fulfill the obligations set out under Ontario Regulation 137/15 for a playground safety policy for childcare centres.

Policy

General

- ACC will ensure that there are enough play materials available that are appropriate for the children's age and learning and developmental needs during outdoor play.
- The maximum capacity of the playground will not be exceeded at any time.

Playground Inspections/Checks

- A Playground Safety Log will be kept by the Assistant Supervisor, providing information regarding playground injury reports, daily inspections, monthly inspections, annual inspections, and action plans related to the findings of the inspections. The Health and Safety designate conducts the monthly and annual inspections and presents any findings to the Assistant Supervisor.
- Prior to the children playing, the Front-Line staff of the first classroom will check the entire playground for hazardous debris or litter, damage caused by vandalism, including operation of gates, as well as strings and ropes of any kind and removing them, as well as damage and wear. These steps will be repeated for the afternoon. This inspection will be recorded in the Playground Inspection Binder. Any deficiencies will be reported to the Assistant Supervisor immediately.
- Outdoor play space, fixed play structures and surfacing checks will be conducted on a daily, monthly, and annual basis.
- All playground inspections will be documented. All documentation and reports will be filed in the Playground Inspection Binder.
- ACC/CC will ensure that where the playground has fixed equipment, the certified playground inspection is conducted by a third-party inspector who:
 - Has declared non-conflict of interest including declaration of non-affiliation with playground equipment and protective surface manufacturers, suppliers and/or other contractors involved in the retrofit, upgrade or repair of the playground equipment and protective surfaces.
 - has proof of current Professional Errors and Omissions insurance coverage; and
 - has proof of playground inspector certification.
- Any areas deemed unsafe will be removed or cordoned off as unsafe area.

Repairs and Maintenance

- All items identified in the checklists as requiring repair will be documented in the repair log and repaired or addressed in a timely manner (the form in Appendix C may be used for this purpose). Note: the amount of time required will depend on the scope of the work and who is required to conduct the repairs.

- Documentation on the repair log will also include:
 - the date the issue was identified.
 - documentation of what steps and efforts have been taken to address any identified items which cannot be repaired immediately due to circumstances out of the childcare centre's control; and
 - the date the related repairs were completed.

- Where outdoor space or playground repairs cannot be completed immediately, the area or space requiring repairs will be sectioned off to prevent children from using that area in order to protect their safety and reduce the risk of injury. Children will be always supervised during outdoor play to ensure that they do not approach or use spaces that are sectioned off pending repairs.

- Any repairs requiring alterations or renovations to the playground premises will not begin until site or playground plans are approved by a Ministry of Education Director.

- A Playground Repair Log will be maintained by the Assistant Supervisor with dates maintenance issues were found and dated when these have been repaired/fixed.

Compliance with the CSA Standards

- Any outdoor play space, fixed play structure or surfacing under those structures that is constructed or renovated will meet the requirements set out in the Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standard CAN/CSA-Z614-14, "Children's Play spaces and Equipment".

- Written confirmation of compliance with the CSA standard will be obtained from a Certified Playground Safety Inspector, upon completion of any repairs or renovations which have resulted in a non-compliance with the CSA standard as outlined in a playground inspection report.

Supervision

- Staff will adhere to the set outdoor play time as written on the posted Classroom Schedules to prevent exceeding the playground capacity at any time.

- Playground capacities are posted at the playground entrance/exit and in the Playground Inspection Binder.

- Children will be always supervised during outdoor play.
- Staff will position themselves throughout the playground and rotate their position where required to ensure children can be visually supervised while engaging in play.
- Reduced ratios will never be used on the playground.
- Infant and toddler children will be separated from other children during outdoor activities.
- Staff will ensure that all gates are securely always closed.

Documentation and Report Retention

- All documentation and reports related to the outdoor space or playground will be:
 - Kept for three years from the date they were created and/or updated (whichever date is most recent); and
 - Made available for Ministry of Education staff to always review.

Playground Safety Procedures

Timeline	Steps to Follow
<p>Daily: before using the outdoor play space/ playground</p>	<p>1. Staff must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. walk around the entire outdoor play space or playground to look for and identify hazards and defects as indicated in the daily playground inspection checklist (the form in Appendix A may be used for this purpose); ii. remove any garbage, hazards or defects using gloves. iii. complete the playground inspection checklist, sign and date it; and iv. file the playground inspection checklist in the Playground Inspection Binder. <p>Where hazards or defects cannot immediately be removed or repaired, Staff must:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. report the hazards or defects to Assistant Supervisor/Supervisor who will log and maintain the information in the repair log and take appropriate action to initiate any repairs. ii. Section off the area with the hazard/defect if it poses a hazard to children. <p>2. In preparation to exit the childcare centre to use the outdoor play space or playground, staff must:</p>

Timeline	Steps to Follow
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. ensure all emergency medication accompanies children, where applicable. ii. ensure all emergency contact information is readily available for children. iii. ensure the attendance record is readily available. iv. ensure that the allergy and dietary restriction lists are readily available. v. ensure appropriate steps related to environmental factors have been implemented (e.g.: children are appropriately dressed for the weather, there are no entanglement risks, bug nets are in place, etc.); and vi. conduct head counts prior to leaving the indoor play activity area, and while transitioning them to the outdoor play space or playground.
<p>Daily: while using the outdoor play space/ playground</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. position themselves in areas that ensure that all children and areas of the playground can be properly always supervised. ii. ensure that there is always access to drinking water. iii. complete head counts of children every hour ; iv. implement the goals and approaches of the program statement, such as engaging with the children in play; and v. refrain from using personal cellular phones (except in emergency situations) or using outdoor time to socialize with other staff, students, or volunteers during outdoor play. <p>Where a child is injured on the playground, staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. administer first aid, where appropriate. ii. contact emergency services, where appropriate. iii. notify the parent of the child. iv. complete an accident report and provide a copy to the child's parent; and v. follow the serious occurrence policy and procedures, where appropriate.
<p>Daily: When returning from the outdoor</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff must:

Timeline	Steps to Follow
play space/ playground	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. conduct head counts prior to returning indoors from the outdoor play space or playground, while transitioning indoors, and upon returning to the indoor play activity space. ii. Ensure that attendance records, emergency medication and children's emergency contact information is brought indoors with the group.
Monthly	<p>1. Staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. walk around the entire outdoor play space or playground to look for and identify hazards and defects as indicated in the monthly playground inspection checklist (the form in Appendix B may be used for this purpose); ii. remove any hazards or defects, where possible. iii. complete the monthly inspection checklist (including verification of seasonal issues), sign and date it; and iv. file the playground inspection checklist in the Playground Inspection Binder. <p>Where hazards or defects cannot immediately be removed or repaired, Staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. report the hazards or defects to Assistant Supervisor/Supervisor who will log and maintain the information in the repair log and take appropriate action to initiate any repairs. ii. Section off the area with the hazard/defect if it poses a hazard to children. <p>2. Supervisor must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. review outdoor injuries and accidents that have occurred to look for trends. ii. take appropriate action to prevent similar injuries and accidents from happening in the future. <p>3. Supervisor must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. review the repair logs and follow up on any outstanding identified issues still requiring repair.
Annually	<p>1. Where the playground has fixed equipment, Supervisor must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. ensure a certified playground inspector conducts an annual playground inspection.

Timeline	Steps to Follow
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ii. discuss the findings of the playground inspection with the certified playground inspector, including items that need to be repaired or replaced; and iii. obtain a copy of the playground inspection report. <p>2. Where the playground does not have fixed equipment Staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. walk around the entire outdoor play space or playground to look for and identify hazards and defects as indicated in the annual playground inspection checklist. ii. remove any hazards or defects, where possible. iii. complete the annual inspection checklist, sign, and date it; and iv. develop a written plan to address any hazards and/or defects, including a timeline to address the issues identified during the inspection. <p>3. Where hazards or defects cannot immediately be removed or repaired, Staff must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. report the hazards or defects to Assistant Supervisor/Supervisor who will log and maintain the information in the repair log and take appropriate action to initiate any repairs. ii. section off the area with the hazard/defect if it poses a hazard to children.

Glossary

Canadian Standards Association (CSA): a non-profit, voluntary association engaged in standards development and certification activities. The current standard in Ontario for licensed childcare centre playgrounds is CAN/CSA Z614-14 - Children's Play spaces and Equipment. This standard specifies design and maintenance criteria to reduce the risk of injury.

Certified Playground Inspector: An individual who holds a current certification with the [Canadian Playground Safety Institute](#).

Fixed play structure: a structure anchored to the ground that is designed for children to climb on (e.g. a climber).

Licensee: The individual or corporation named on the licence issued by the Ministry of Education responsible for the operation and management of the childcare centre.

Staff (Employee): Individual employed by the licensee.

Regulatory Requirements: Ontario Regulation 137/15

Outdoor Play Space

Playground Safety Policy

24(4) Every licensee shall ensure that, at each child care centre it operates, any outdoor play space, fixed play structure or surfacing under those structures that is constructed or renovated on or after August 29, 2016 meets the requirements set out in the Canadian Standards Association standard CAN/CSA-Z614-14, "Children's play spaces and equipment", as amended from time to time. O. Reg. 126/16, s. 18 (2).

(5) Every licensee shall ensure that at each childcare centre it operates,

- (a) a playground safety policy is developed that reflects the Canadian Standards Association standard mentioned in subsection (4) and indicates the roles and responsibilities of employees regarding safety on playgrounds.
- (b) daily, monthly and annual inspections of the outdoor place space, fixed play structures and surfacing are conducted in accordance with the requirements set out in the Canadian Standards Association standard mentioned in subsection (4);
- (c) a plan is developed on how issues or problems identified in a playground inspection will be addressed; and
- (d) a playground repair log is maintained.