



Safe Playgrounds

CHECK Your Playground & Equipment for Safety

How Can We Provide Safe Playgrounds?

Outdoor playgrounds can be exciting places where children explore their environment while developing motor & social skills;

However, they also can pose serious safety hazards.

This tip sheet discusses common playground hazards and recommends actions that parents and others can take to increase playground safety.



What Makes a Playground

Unsafe?

▶ an estimated 200,000 children per year are injured on playgrounds.

▶ About 60 percent of these injuries are caused by children falling from playground equipment onto a hard and unyielding surface such as asphalt, concrete, or even the ground.

▶ Most playground injuries are caused by preventable hazards. These hazards include:

Inadequate fall zones under and spaces between

fall zones need to be covered with wood chips, mulch, or rubber and extend at least 12 feet in all directions.

Absence of guard rails.

Elevated surfaces such as platforms, ramps, and bridgeways should have guard rails to prevent accidental falls.

A project of The Florida Partnership for Parent Involvement

Center of Excellence ♦ Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute ♦ Florida Children's Forum
Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters ♦ Hillsborough County head start ♦ Hillsborough County Even Start

Dangerous protrusions and entanglements.

Objects such as nails, screws, bolts, pipe ends, and sharp or pointed hardware can impale or cut children.

Hooks or parts that catch strings and clothing can cause strangulation. Open S hooks allow swing seats to slip off their chains and can cause children to fall.

Hazardous entrapment areas.

Openings between posts, ladder rungs, deck levels, or entryways are fine for foot-first entry, but they can also entrap children's heads.

Ideally, openings on playground equipment should measure less than 3 inches or more than 9 inches.

Dangerous swing seats.

Hard wood or metal swing seats can hit children passing too closely to or jumping off a swing.



Heavy animal-type swings are particularly dangerous because they act as battering rams; bumpers attached to these swings do not reduce the risk of injury.

Other dangerous playground equipment.

Equipment such as suspension bridges, merry-go-rounds, swinging gates, and seesaws (teeter-totters) may have moving parts that can pinch or crush children's fingers or other body parts.



Age-inappropriate equipment.

Equipment for children in preschool should have guard rails on elevated surfaces higher than 20 inches, and it should be separated from equipment for school-age children. Small children may not have the coordination and balance to climb on equipment designed for older children.

Inadequate supervision or lack of supervision.

It is estimated that more than 40 percent of playground injuries are directly related to lack of proper supervision. Most children are unable to foresee danger. Parents and school staff need to be alert to potential hazards.

For more information contact:



The Center for Parent Involvement (FCPI) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education; Goals 2000, Educate America Act from 1994-1999. Guided by an advisory board of parents and professionals, the FCPI's goal was to tap the power of parents.

The FCPI gathered information on parent needs, coordinated the information, and created a series of resources organized by theme, including fact sheets for parents and professionals, "Beyond the Basics" resources, and resource identification lists. Many of the resources have been translated into Spanish language versions, and every effort has been made to preserve the meaning and flavor of the original English documents. This series of materials provides a wealth of current information for both parents and providers; the complete set of resources can be obtained in PDF format on the Department of Child and Family Studies Website at www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi. The staff of the FCPI are hopeful that their work will continue to help children get ready to learn for many years to come.

The series' themes include:

- Family Empowerment
- Parent Involvement
- Parenting Support
- School Readiness
- Violence in the Lives of Children
- Transition to Kindergarten

The Center was one component of a project led by Hillsborough County Center of Excellence in collaboration with the Department of Child & Family Studies at USF's de la Parte Institute and the Florida Children's Forum. Other project partners include HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters), Hillsborough County Head Start and Hillsborough County Even Start. For more information about these projects, call 813.974.4612.

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