Active Play – Reducing Risk and Promoting Health
Thursday, October 30, 2014
1:00 to 2:30 PM
ECELS-Healthy Child Care Pennsylvania Webinar

Moderator
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ECELS Pediatric Advisor and Child Care Health Consultant

• Encouragement of large muscle play
• Daily routines, equipment and settings
• Required clothing and footwear, supervision, teacher participation
• Types and plans for active play
• Appendix O: Daily and Monthly Playground Inspection and Maintenance Form
• Appendix P: a form to schedule staff supervision for active play

ECELS Resources
www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org/tools/checklists

Betsy Caesar
MEd, CPSI
President of Playcare, Inc.
Objectives

- Explain the importance of active play to support social-emotional, cognitive and physical development of young children
- Describe a variety of active play experiences for young children
- List hazards that cause the most common injuries in active play environments and how to correct them
- Implement a play for active play maintenance

The Importance of Active Play

ECELS- Betsy Caesar Presenter
President, Playcare, Inc

Children’s Work is Play

- Strong connection between the mind and the body. Young children primarily learn by doing; nearly always in motion
- Small motor manipulation or gross motor activity
- Actively exploring their world
- Caregiver role: support and enrich creative exploration.

Focus of this portion of the webinar: How children learn and grow through gross motor activity

Play Throughout the Day

- Children are driven to move
- Movement helps to stimulate developmental growth
- Integrate active play throughout a child’s day
- Indoor activities (e.g. circle games or jumping in place) allow children to experience freedom of movement
- Use indoor active play areas, not only on days when the weather prohibits outdoor activity

Outdoor Active Play

- Playgrounds sometimes described as “Freedom with a fence around it”
- A good outdoor play area: provides children a safe place to move, explore and create in an unstructured, open ended manner
- Caregivers supervise to support, not interrupt free play
- Sometimes creative intervention is required (as seen in next slide)
OUTDOOR PLAY

A chance for children to:
- move freely
- make their own choices
- breathe fresh air
- feel the wind and experience all weather conditions
- interact with natural materials and animals
- make things big
- make a mess

The Dirty Dozen:
12 Playground Hazards

Tyrone Scott II, MBA, CPSI

Hazard One:
Improper Protective Surfacing

- Almost 80% of playground injuries result from falls
- Must protect children, especially their brains from falls from heights
- ASTM F1292 explains requirements to be considered appropriate

Unacceptable Surfaces

- Concrete
- Blacktop
- Grass
- Packed Earth (Dirt)
- Carpet

Acceptable Surfaces

- Engineered Wood Fiber
- Wood Chips
- Sand
- Pea Gravel
- Shredded Rubber
- Titles and Poured-in-Place Rubber

***** Loose fill materials should be maintained 12 inches deep and be free of standing water.*****

Hazard Two:
Inadequate Use Zone

- The use zone is the area around and under a piece of playground equipment where a child might fall
- Typically this area should be covered by a safety surface extending 6 feet in all directions from the edge of the equipment.
- Slides and swings need larger use zones
Inadequate Use Zone

Hazard Three: Protrusions and Entanglements
- Protrusions are pieces of equipment that stick out and are capable of impaling or cutting a child
- An entanglement is a protrusion that can catch clothing, possibly strangling a child

Protrusions and Entanglements
- Bolts that extend more than 2 threads past the nut
- Open “S” hooks
- Hardware that leaves gaps (especially dangerous in slides)

Hazard Four: Entrapment in Openings
- Openings between 3.5” and 9” are potentially dangerous
- The higher the opening, the more dangerous

Hazard Five: Insufficient Equipment Spacing
- Equipment < 30” can share a 6 ft use zone
- Equipment > 30” must have 9 ft use zones
- Slide exits, swings, merry-go-rounds and other equipment that build momentum may not overlap use zones
- Merry-go-rounds and swings should be located away from other equipment

Insufficient Equipment Spacing
Hazard Six: Trip Hazard
- Exposed concrete footings
- Abrupt changes in surface elevation
- Tree roots and stumps
- Rocks
- Cords
- Unsecure carpets

What Do You Think?

Hazard Seven: Lack of Supervision
- About 40% of injuries are a result of poor supervision
- Early educators must engage children on the playground to ensure their safety
- Sight and sound are not enough!

Hazard Eight: Age-Inappropriate Activities
The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission does not recommend the following for children less than 5 years of age:
- Free standing arch or flexible climbers
- Chain and cable walks
- Log rolls
- Track rides
- Sliding poles

Hazard Nine: Lack of Maintenance
- No missing or broken components
- All hardware should be secure
- All parts should be stable and not be deteriorating
- Surfacing must be maintained
- Check for vandalism

Hazard Ten: Crush, Shearing and Sharp Edge Hazards
- Sharp edges can cut children
- Moving components can pinch children or even crush a finger
Hazard Eleven: Platforms with No Guardrails

- A guardrail helps a child stabilize while playing
- A barrier keeps a child from accessing a dangerous point or falling or jumping off of a point too high for a guaranteed safe landing

Platforms with No Guardrails

Preschool children need:
- A guardrail on platforms >20"
- A barrier on platforms >30"

School-age children need:
- A guardrail on platforms >30"
- A barrier on platforms >48"

Platforms with No Guardrails

Barriers should not allow children to “escape”
Barriers should contain children and guide them

Hazard Twelve: Equipment Not For Public Playgrounds

- Heavy swings (animal swings)
- Multiple occupancy swings
- Free swinging ropes
- Trapeze bars
- Exercise rings

Child Development

The playground supports all aspects of child development......

Child Development

The playground supports all aspects of child development......
- Social
Child Development

- Emotional

Child Development

- Intellectual - Cognitive

Child Development

Physical
- Children physically rejuvenate themselves while in active play
- Using muscles and breathing deeply brings added oxygen into all body parts
- During active play children's bodies produce endorphins that have a positive effect on their mood and activity levels

Crawling to Running

- Crawling, toddling, walking, running, hopping, skipping and drifting
- #1 favorite activity on playgrounds = tag
  - Children are natural runners, bursting with energy
  - Develop the playground so that children can run freely without bumping into other children or physical obstructions
  - At least 1/3 of the playground should be open space.

Climbing

- Climbing is 2nd favorite activity on playgrounds = climbing
- Provide age-appropriate climbing opportunities as children develop their strength, balance and agility

Sliding

- Sliding provides the sensation of free fall while children are developing full body balancing skills
Swinging

- Swinging can be either high and fast or gentle and soothing
- Children develop the ability to pump - a great way to develop coordination and control their own level of activity

Spinning

- Spinning stimulates vestibular development by stimulating fluids in the ear canal
- Helps to develop the child’s sense of balance

Balancing

- Balance beams provide a real challenge to young children as they learn to control their entire body in the process of achieving success

Rocking

- Rocking, like swinging can be gentle or fast. It too helps develop the child’s sense of balance

Active Play without Commercial Play Equipment

- Children can do many activities outside that don’t require commercial play equipment
- Since children grow and learn through creation, some of the best playground materials are loose parts.

Construction Play

- Any kind of building material allows children to create their own worlds while being engaged in active play
Working with Tools

Investigating the environment while using safe “grown-up” tools

Ball Play

• Develops hand eye coordination and agility
• Balls should be available to all ages of children so that they can run after them, bounce them, throw them and learn to play cooperative games with them

Parachute Play

• Develops arm strength, hand eye coordination and cooperative learning skills

Tricycle Riding

• Going fast while using leg muscles to pedal is one of the favorite early childhood activities

Relaxation

• At the end of the play period children have expended their pent up energy and are ready for a to focus on more sedentary cognitive/intellectual activities.

Q&A - Comments
ECELS Resources
www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org/tools/posters

Wrap-Up
- For University of Pittsburgh CME credit, by 11/13/2014 fax your completed evaluation form to ECELS at 484-446-3255. Form is on ECELS website at www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org in the webinar listing
- Send by email any unanswered questions or comments you’d like to share with ECELS or the presenters: ecels@paaap.org