



## PROGRAM SAFETY CHECKLIST

# FOR PARENTS OF A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

Every child should feel safe! Providing children with a safe environment in which to learn and play while offering consistent messages about safety will help them gain the skills they need to act responsibly throughout their lives.

The *Active and Safe After School Initiative* has developed a series of tools to raise awareness about safety in after school, recreation-based programs. Developed with parents/guardians of children with a disability in mind, this Safety Checklist will help families assess program safety and reinforce important safety messages at home. For more information on the Active and Safe After School Initiative resources please visit [www.phecanada.ca/safeafterschool.ca](http://www.phecanada.ca/safeafterschool.ca)

**INTRODUCTION:**

Deciding on the right after-school program is a challenging task for any family, but it may be even more complicated for parents of children with disabilities. In order for your child to participate safely in any physical activity, it is important to meet with the program leader in advance and ask questions. Ask to observe the program to see what it is like and also ask to speak to other parents/guardians of kids with disabilities to see what their experiences have been like. Be discreet in these discussions but do not be afraid to ask difficult questions and to honestly express the needs of your child to ensure safe and meaningful participation.

**HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM SAFETY CHECKLIST:**

When choosing a recreation-based program, parents/guardians of a child with a disability should assess all aspects of quality and safety. This checklist should help to guide you through your decision by providing some typical questions for parents to ask. If the answer to a question is “no” then it doesn’t mean that your child should not participate, it just means you need to provide the program leaders with more information about your child and his/her disability and needs.

If available, review the program handbook or other parent guides which may have additional information about the program policies and procedures.

**SUPERVISION:**

- What are their qualifications or experience leading children with disabilities?
- Has the program leader run a program like this before? If so, for how long?
- Does your child have a friend or peer helper with whom the activity could be modified and who they could participate alongside? Is this individual specifically assigned to your child?
- Is the program leader fully aware & prepared to deal with your child’s specific disability?
- Could the program leader connect you with other parents?



**PROGRAM FACILITY/LOCATION:**

- Have you visited the environment(s) where your child will be playing? Do you have concerns? Do you have any suggestions on how the environment can be altered to suit the needs of your child?
- Have you seen the equipment used for the activities? Is the equipment suitable for your child? Are there alterations that would make the equipment and environment more suitable to your child?
- Are there obstacles/hazards that may impede your child's safety & success in the program?

**POLICIES & PROCEDURES:**

- What clothing is required to participate? Is the program leader requiring participants to wear appropriate footwear? Has every form of jewellery been removed in order to encourage safe participation in the given activity?

**PROGRAM ACTIVITIES:**

- Are there ways the program leader could make the program more suitable for your child?
- Is the program leader willing to adjust the given program so that your child can fully engage in the activity safely?
- Is your child able to engage for the full time allotment for physical activity? If not, how long can your child sustain physical exertion? Be specific.
- Has this program had children with disabilities in their program before? If so, what kind of disability?
- Have you (the parent/guardian) witnessed the program in action?
- How many young people participate in the after school program?

***If you have any concerns about your child's safety, speak with the program supervisor or director immediately. Working together, we can all ensure our children play safe!***