



## PROGRAM SAFETY CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

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 in mind, this Program Safety Checklist as well as with the Safety Communication Tool for Parents and the Safety Guide for Parents will help families assess program safety and reinforce important safety messages at home.

### HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM SAFETY CHECKLIST:

When choosing a recreation-based program, parents/guardians should assess all aspects of quality and safety. This checklist is broken down into two parts. The first part provides questions that a parent/guardian should ask before enrolling their child(ren) into a recreation-based program. The second part provides information about monitoring safety policies and procedures once your child is participating in the program.

## ▶ PART 1: BEFORE ENROLLMENT

Ideally, before enrollment, parents/guardians should visit the program. You should feel welcome and the supervisor/staff member(s) should be available to answer your questions. Take this checklist with you when you visit to ensure you cover all of the important questions.

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

### SUPERVISION:

- What current training/certifications are required for staff (i.e. HIGH FIVE®, Standard First Aid, CPR)?
- Are criminal background checks required? Are they up to date?<sup>1</sup>
- What is the ratio of program leaders to participants?<sup>2</sup>

### PROGRAM FACILITY/LOCATION:

- Is the location secure? Are the doors kept open or locked? Are the entrances monitored?
- Do program leaders have access to a telephone at all times in case of emergency?

<sup>1</sup>This may be a legislated requirement, depending on jurisdiction and program type.

<sup>2</sup>This may be a legislated requirement, depending on jurisdiction and program type.



- Are fully stocked first-aid kits available in all program areas?
- Are medications stored appropriately and safely?
- If applicable, is the outdoor play equipment in good repair? How often is it inspected?

**POLICIES & PROCEDURES:**

- What are the drop off and pick up procedures to ensure children are safe, accounted for and not released to the wrong person?
- What is the protocol for children using the washroom (i.e. scans, buddy system)?
- How is food handled and served?
- What is the allergy and anaphylaxis policy?
- What is the policy for administering medications?
- What are the facility's Emergency Action Plans and where are they posted (i.e. fire, earthquake, tornado, etc.)?
- What are the procedures for handling and reporting minor accidents or incidents?
- What happens if a child goes missing?
- Where can a parent/guardian access copies of all policies and procedures (i.e. parent handbook, website)?
- What is the procedure if a child becomes ill during the program?

**PROGRAM ACTIVITIES:**

- Are programs age- and ability-appropriate?
- How is safe play in active games promoted (i.e. clear rules, supervision, equipment is in good repair, consequences for rough play)?
- Are program plans posted in advance? Will parents/guardians be notified if a program changes?
- If a child has special needs or needs extra support, how will they be accommodated?
- How will program leaders accommodate a child that does not want to participate in a particular activity?
- What are the off-site field trip procedures?
- How do program leaders evaluate their programs?
- Are families welcome to observe the program at any time?

**PART 2: DURING THE PROGRAM**

Once your child is participating in a program, continue to monitor and assess the program using the checklist above.

- Talk with your child(ren) EVERYDAY about the program activities. Did they enjoy them? Ask what they liked the most and least.
- Observe whether your children are happy when you pick them up from the program. Do they talk openly and with enthusiasm about their day?
- Ask who they played with? Do they know their friend's name? Can they identify what makes it fun to play with that person?
- Review the program's Emergency Action Plans with your child. Reassure your child that, in the event of an emergency, you will be with them as soon as you can, but that the program is a safe place to be.
- Reinforce what your children are learning with regards to safety in the program. Ask the program leaders what safety messages you should be sharing with your children.
- Check in with program leaders regularly. Ask them about your child(ren). Do they have any concerns?



- Observe how leaders interact with the group and with your child(ren). Note if policies and procedures are not being followed (i.e. staff to child ratio, outdoor supervision). Are the interactions positive?

***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!***

*This checklist was adapted from resources developed by HIGH FIVE®, a quality assurance standard for children's recreation and sport, founded by Parks and Recreation Ontario.*

