



# PROGRAM SAFETY GUIDE 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 Safety Guide for Parents as well as the Program Safety Checklist and Communication Tool for Parents will help families assess program safety and reinforce important safety messages at home.

## HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM SAFETY CHECKLIST

This Safety Guide helps parents/guardians of children in recreation-based after school programs by providing general information about the kinds of safety policies and procedures that may be in place in quality recreation-based after school programs. This guide also provides information on injury prevention and awareness. It gives parents/guardians the opportunity to reinforce important safety messages and to establish similar safety routines for home.

### INTRODUCTION | PARENTS/GUARDIANS SHOULD:

- Review each subject area and follow the web links provided for more detailed information.
- Reinforce these messages at home by talking with your child and consider establishing similar rules/procedures for home (Please see the Communications Tool for Parents for more information).
- Ask program leaders if there are specific safety messages parents can reinforce at home (i.e. fire safety week).
- Revisit the Safety Guide as your child(ren) grow and/or change programs to ensure they are reinforcing age-appropriate safety messages.

## ▶ PART 1: POLICIES AND PLANS

After school recreation-based programs will have formal policies and plans, usually posted onsite, on the web or provided to parents in a handbook. When choosing a program, be sure this information is made available to you. Parents/guardians can develop similar plans for home use.

### FACILITY SAFETY CHECKLIST:

Your child's program will have a Facility Safety Checklist that is completed each program day to ensure that the indoor and outdoor environment is safe. Develop a Home Safety Checklist and ask your children to participate in developing the content

<sup>1</sup> This guide is not a comprehensive list of all safety policies, but will provide general information for parents/guardians seeking to learn more. Parents/guardians should always thoroughly review the policies and procedures for all programs in which they enroll their children.



(i.e. test smoke alarms, fire drills, safety of indoor play spaces, safe storage of chemicals, learning to contact emergency phone numbers, etc.)

For more information on fire safety and creating a home evacuation plan, contact the safety ministry for your province.

**EMERGENCY ACTION PLANS:**

Your child’s program will have Emergency Action Plans that will ensure everyone is safe at all times. It is recommended that families spend time developing and reviewing a Home Emergency Action Plan that includes evacuation, what to do in a violent storm, when and how to contact 911, what to do in a power outage, stranger danger, etc.

For more information on developing your own Emergency Action Plan check out the Government of Canada’s Get Prepared Campaign.

**PLAYGROUND SAFETY:**

Review the playground safety rules for your child’s program. Stress the importance of playing responsibly. Younger children should always be supervised when they are at the playground. Children should know to tell a parent when they find something unsafe in their playground.

For more information, please visit the parent section of the Safe Kids Canada web site.

**WATER SAFETY:**

Review all water safety messages with your children and strictly enforce them at all times. Children should never play in or near a pool or any body of water unsupervised. A telephone and first aid kit should be available at all times. Programs need an Emergency Action Plan and to enforce safe play with flotation devices and so should you. If possible, ensure that your child has opportunities for swimming instruction. Children must always abide by the lifeguards’ instructions. Everyone must wear a life jacket in a boat.

For more information, on general water safety review the Swimming & Water Safety section of the Canadian Red Cross web site.

**PART 2: INJURY PREVENTION AND AWARENESS**

**FIRST AID KIT:**

Ensure your child has been given an opportunity to see what is in a first aid kit and how it is used. Check your first aid kit at home. Make sure it is complete and that all family members know where to find it. Be sure to take your kit with you when you travel.

For more information on first aid kits please visit: [www.redcross.ca/article.asp?id=32983&tid=001](http://www.redcross.ca/article.asp?id=32983&tid=001)

**CONCUSSIONS:**

There is increased understanding about the long-term effects of concussions. Concussions are brain injuries and must be treated properly to minimize chance of long term effects or reoccurrence. Children should understand the symptoms of concussions: headache, nausea, ringing in the ears, sleepiness, loss of vision, seeing double, dizziness and dazed feeling, sensitivity to light and sound, amnesia, irritability, poor concentration and coordination. As a parent/guardian, you should also understand the signs of concussions.





Discuss how to prevent concussions. Enforce sensible rules around physical play including keeping their head up to avert collision, never hitting anyone in the head, and wearing an approved and properly fitted helmet that fits correctly when bike riding and playing other high risk sports (check helmets for any damage or cracks). Helmets should be designed for the activity (e.g. only use a hockey helmet for playing hockey or skating or a bike helmet for biking.)

For more information on concussions and best practices, please visit the Think First web site.

**PHYSICAL INJURIES:**

Cuts and scrapes are common for children, but steps can be taken to prevent more severe, acute injuries like fractures or sprains. Specifically, review playground safety and make sure that children wear appropriate safety gear for all sports and recreational activities (i.e. helmets, knee and elbow pads). Provide children with the opportunity to test their skills in a safe and supervised environment.

For information on general injury prevention, please visit the Government of Canada’s Healthy Canadians Injury Prevention web site.

**APPROPRIATE CLOTHING FOR ACTIVITIES:**

It is important that children are dressed appropriately when participating in physical activity. In any situation, ensure that children’s clothing is safe (i.e. laces are secured; no loose scarves or drawstrings that could catch on playground equipment). Ensure that sports equipment is the correct size and fit, appropriate for the activity, and checked for wear. When participating in activities requiring helmets, only CSA approved helmets should be worn to prevent head injuries and concussions.

To find out more about which helmets are appropriate for individual activities such as biking, ice and snow sports, and field sports, please visit the Think First web site.

*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.*

