



SAFETY CHECKLIST

INCLUDING PARTICIPANTS OF ALL ABILITIES

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 participants of all abilities in mind, this Safety Checklist will help activity providers to ensure the safety of all participants.

INTRODUCTION

As a program leader you are conscious of the importance of safety in designing activities. In fact, safety is probably at the forefront of your planning. But what about safety when it comes to accommodating participants with a disability?

Many activity providers are hesitant to adequately include participants who have a disability, and safety is often part of the concern. Remember, children, including those with a disability, build character and resiliency by falling down and getting up again. It is important to respect the concept of Dignity of Risk – where participants with a disability are given the opportunity to explore their physical limits in the same manner as any other person.

Too often children and youth with a disability are assigned the position of spectator or score keeper, and may never have the opportunity to meaningfully contribute to the activities you have planned. The benefits of inclusion far outweigh the obstacles. Successful inclusion will not only promote tolerance and respect within your program, but it will lead to meaningful social interaction and friendships while encouraging fairness, diversity and full participation for everyone.

It is important to identify and address safety concerns related to physical activity for everyone but for a child with a disability, it may be necessary to look at some additional safety measures. There may be some sports or activities that are not suitable for persons with certain types of disabilities.

HOW TO USE THIS SAFETY CHECKLIST

This Safety Checklist is broken down into two parts. The first part provides activity providers with some overarching things to consider when developing physical activity programs for children with a disability. The second part provides tips that are specific to certain disabilities.



▶ PART 1: SAFE ACTIVITY PLANNING FOR CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY

- The following are some safety measures to consider when developing programs that include participants with a disability:
- Are the activities appropriate for the age, development level and type of disability of the person in question?
- What are the person's specific safety needs?
- Are there specific health concerns related to the person's disability that might worsen by participating in the activity?
- Is the activity a safe level of intensity for the person in question?
- Is the equipment safe?
- Some activities may require a high level of supervision and this may be even more important when participants with a disability are involved.
- Are all participants, including those with a disability, aware of the emergency procedures at your facility?

▶ PART 2: QUICK PRACTICAL SAFETY TIPS

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

- Use sound cues to identify where play is (e.g. use a ball with a bell in it, available through Canadian National Institute for the Blind).
- Noisy environments are disorienting for children or youth with a visual impairment.
- Identify the child's preference for guidance (normally hold either elbow).
- Use tethers - a cord that connects 2 participants for guided running.
- Use a tapper - a pool noodle tapped on the head of a swimmer to indicate he/she is 2 strokes from the wall.
- Use of bright coloured equipment to ensure the safe participation of low vision children.

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH AMPUTATIONS

- Avoid activities where winning is determined based on time as this creates undue stress for participants with an amputation.
- Use substitute runners in games (e.g. in baseball, a child with amputation bats but another runs for him/her).
- Minimize body contact because participants with an amputation may have less balance.
- Ensure smooth playing surfaces.

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH AN INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

- Use activities that apply simple strategies and few rules.
- Ensure that the participant understands the rules and give ongoing support.
- Use the buddy system to provide participants with additional support.
- Encourage cooperative games.

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

- Use visual cues (i.e. a flag in addition to a whistle to indicate stop or start of play).
- Put simple instructions on cue cards.
- Use a demonstration in addition to verbal instructions.



- Seek out support for proper communication (e.g. sign language interpretation).
- Speak directly to the child/youth who may be able to read lips.

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO USE A WHEELCHAIR

- Ensure the entire facility is wheelchair accessible.
- Ensure adequate space between equipment to enable participants in a wheelchair to maneuver safely.
- Identify the need for upper body strength when choosing activities (e.g. floor hockey with the stick taped to the wheelchair may be safer and more appropriate than basketball or volleyball).

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

- Create a relaxed atmosphere, be clear with instructions.
- Break tasks down into small steps and allow sufficient time.
- When giving instructions be sure to tell them what to do, show them how to do it, and help them along the way.

FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITH CEREBRAL PALSY

- Do not use a whistle as there is a tendency to be startled with loud, sudden noise.
- Provide rest periods.
- Avoid contact activities due to lack of balance.

*PLAN FOR SEFETY BUT ALLOW
"DIGNITY OF RISK." EXCESSIVE
SAFETY CONCERNS HINDER
THE PERSON'S ABILITY TO
EXPERIENCE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.*

**TO LEARN MORE OR BE CONNECTED WITH SOMEONE IN YOUR AREA WHO CAN HELP,
CONTACT THE ACTIVE LIVING ALLIANCE FOR CANADIANS WITH A DISABILITY – ALA@ALA.CA OR 1-800-771-0663.**