

## **Section F: Ministerial Requirements for the Daily Program**



## 1.0 Definitions

“**Care provider**” means a person approved by an agency to provide a family home child-care program in the person’s home.

“**Daily routine**” means a written schedule of events that happen in a predictable order each day. These include arrivals and departures, snacks and meals, nap/quiet periods, free play and small and large group gatherings (e.g., story time). A typical routine will vary based on the ages of the children and group size.

“**Developmentally appropriate practice**” is a way of working with children to create early learning environments that are respectful of children’s emerging competencies and foster children’s optimal development in all domains. Developmentally appropriate programs recognize that activities and materials in the learning environment reflect the competencies and interests, cultural background and experiences, of the children present. Embedded within this framework is an understanding that the development of positive relationships between families, children, child care staff and communities, is a key factor in creating optimal early learning environments. Individual personality, learning style, family background and health history all affect the rate of development for children (NAEYC, 2009).

“**Early Learning Curriculum Framework**” means Nova Scotia’s Early Learning Curriculum Framework “*Capable, Confident and Curious*” which is used in all pre-primary programs and funded child-care centres and views children as curious, creative, full of potential, capable, and confident.

“**Free play**” means children are permitted to make their own choices for play. Adult interaction is in the context of facilitation and support provided to children to foster meaningful and child-initiated experiences (Harms, Clifford and Cryer, 1998).

“**Inclusion**” supports the right of all children, regardless of their diverse abilities, to participate actively in natural settings within their communities. A natural setting is one in which the child would spend time if he or she did not have a disability (NAEYC/DEC, 2009).

“**Loose Parts**” means materials that can be moved, taken apart, lined up, and put back together in multiple ways and encourage creativity and open-ended learning.

“**Majority**” means over fifty (50) percent of the day, while in care.

“**Open-ended materials**” means play materials that may be used in multiple ways for multiple purposes and include items such as paint, sand, tape, water, blocks and found materials such as cloth remnants, scraps of yarn, and cardboard tubes.

“**Play Structure**” means a free-standing structure in an outdoor play space that has one or more components, is securely anchored to the ground, and is not intended to be moved.

“**Program Plan**” means a written document that identifies the activities and experiences that are both planned for, and emerge, based on the children’s interests and ideas.

“**Regulations**” means the *Early Learning and Child Care Regulations* made under the *Early Learning and Child Care Act* (the “Act”), as amended from time to time.

“**Routine-based planning**” means a program planning process where goals and strategies identified for children with identified needs are embedded directly into the daily routines of the child care facility and family home child-care program.

“**Staff**” means paid employees of a licensee and does not include care providers.

“**Transitions**” means the time during the daily routine when children move from one activity to the next. For example, the transitions from indoor play to outdoor play or from the rest period to free play in the afternoon.

## 2.0 Objectives

2.1 The objective of these requirements is to set out the requirements with respect to the daily program in child-care programs in accordance with Subsection 18(4) of the *Early Learning and Child Care Regulations*.

2.2 These requirements will assist licensees that implement the provincial early learning curriculum framework in delivering programs that are developmentally appropriate, inclusive and successful in meeting the needs of all children.

2.3 The requirements for outdoor play structures, made in accordance with Subsection 22(7) of the *Regulations* will assist licensees in ensuring that outdoor play structures, when provided by a licensee, are age appropriate, safe (appropriately risked); and well-maintained.

2.4 The requirements for outdoor play structures will assist care providers in ensuring that

outdoor play structures, when provided by a care provider, are age appropriate, safe (appropriately risked); and well-maintained.

## **3.0 Scope**

**3.1** These requirements apply to every child-care program offered in a child-care facility and a family child-care home.

**3.2** Regulated child-care facilities that implement a specific and recognized curriculum approach that has an established set of standards for practice, may request to have these approved as a comparable means of partially or fully meeting requirements set out in Sections 4.0, 5.0, and Subsections 6.2 and 6.3.

**3.3** Play structures are not required in an outdoor play space; however, if outdoor play structures are provided, they must comply with the requirements set out in Section 8.0 or 9.0, as applicable.

## **4.0 Daily Routines and Transitions**

**4.1** The daily routine provides a general overview of how the day will be structured, recognizing that there will be flexibility and that the focus of the day is on supporting children's development and well-being through meaningful play-based activities, both indoors and outside.

**4.2** The daily routine is posted in the children's activity room and is visible to all staff, volunteers and parents.

**4.3** Children are allowed and encouraged to engage in free play for the majority of the day and the following criteria are met:

- a. A minimum of 45 minutes of uninterrupted free play occurs in the morning when the majority of children have arrived.
- b. A minimum of 45 minutes of uninterrupted free play occurs in the afternoon before the majority of children have left in the afternoon.

**4.4** The daily routine provides a minimum of 30 minutes for uninterrupted outdoor play in the morning and afternoon when the majority of children are in attendance (as above). On occasion, staff and care providers may adjust these times to support the

interests and well-being of the children. For example, if children are engaged in play experiences that require an extended period of time to complete or special activities have been organized such as a summer day trip to the park. Decisions to adjust the routine must be documented on the daily plan, be in the best interests of the children, and be developmentally appropriate.

## 5.0 Program Planning

5.1 Program plans document the daily and ongoing activities and planned and emergent experiences for each group of children. Program plans are:

- (a) posted in each activity room, or readily available for review by staff and parents; and
- (b) retained for one year.

5.2 Program plans indicate that, for indoor and outdoor play, staff and care providers facilitate:

**a. Child-initiated play experiences**

For example, children have opportunities to play with loose parts, open-ended materials and to make their own choices for play.

**b. Adult-initiated experiences**

For example, adults lead small and large group experiences where they engage children in meaningful discussion, stories, games, and movement activities.

5.3 Routine-based plans are developed for children who require additional support to participate in the program.

## 6.0 Learning Environments, Materials and Equipment

6.1 Children's activity rooms and outdoor play spaces are clean and in good repair.

6.2 Children's activity rooms and outdoor play spaces are equipped with materials and equipment to facilitate developmentally appropriate experiences.

**Please see the *Materials and Equipment Checklists in Licensed Child Care Facilities* for a list of materials and equipment for the children's activity areas and outdoor play spaces.**

**6.3** Materials and Equipment Checklists are completed annually and available for review.

**6.4** Indoor and outdoor play spaces support:

- (a) individual and group play;
- (b) active and quiet play; and
- (c) child-initiated and adult-initiated play.

**6.5** Materials and equipment are sufficient in quantity and quality for all the children present.

**6.6** Open-ended materials and loose parts are available for use throughout the children's indoor and outdoor play spaces.

**6.7** Materials and equipment are in good repair and organized in a manner that allows for independent access by the children.

**6.8** Additional toys and materials are stored in areas that can be easily accessed from the children's activity room.

## **7.0 Environmental Conditions**

**7.1** Children should play indoors when the temperature falls below -25C (-13F) with or without a wind chill factor, or when the wind chill factor is -28C (-15F) or colder regardless of the temperature (Canadian Pediatric Society, 2015).

**7.2** When the UV Index reported by Environment Canada is moderate (3 or higher):

- (a) children have hats with brims and lightweight clothing that covers and protects their skin;
- (b) children apply (with support from an adult as needed) adequate sunblock with a SPF of at least 30 on all exposed skin before going outside, following the application instructions set out by the manufacturer.

**7.3** When the UV Index reported by Environment Canada is high (6-7), staff and care providers must reduce time in the sun between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

**7.4** When the UV index reported by Environment Canada is extreme (8-11+), staff and care providers must avoid time in the sun.

**7.5** In extreme weather conditions such as heavy rain or thunderstorms; extreme wind conditions; sleet or hail; freezing rain/icy conditions; extreme cold; and extreme heat and humidity, staff and care providers can adjust outdoor play times. This must be documented, and the decisions must be in the best interests of the children.

**7.6** There is access to shade in the outdoor play space. Shade may be integrated into outdoor play spaces through the inclusion of structures and landscaping designs such as:

- a. Trees
- b. Wooden or fabric canopies
- c. Fabric sails
- d. Sun shelters/tents

## **8.0 Commercial Play Structures**

**8.1** As of April 1, 2011, play structures installed by a licensee must be designed for commercial use and installed according to the manufacturer's specifications ("commercial play structures"). Documentation must be available to verify that the play structure is designed for commercial use and installed and maintained according to the manufacturer's specifications.

**8.2** Licensees with an existing outdoor play structure installed at a facility prior to April 1, 2011 must ensure that the play structure:

- (a) meets the requirements of this Section 8.0; or
- (b) meets all of the requirements for Non-commercial Play Structures in Section 9.0; and any replacement of the existing outdoor play structure or additions of new structures must comply with this Section 8.0.

**8.3** Commercial play structures must be age appropriate.

**8.4** Commercial play structures must be safe and well-maintained.

## **9.0 Non-Commercial Play Structures**

**9.1** "**Non-commercial**" means designed for residential or backyard use and does not meet Canadian Standards Association "Children's Playspaces and Equipment Standard."

**9.2** Non-commercial play structures must be age appropriate.

**9.3** Non-commercial play structures must be safe and well maintained.

**9.4** Non-commercial play structures meet the following applicable requirements:

**(a) Critical fall height** - Play structures for toddlers and preschoolers must be under 1.5 m (5 ft) high. Play structures for school age children may be more than 1.5 m (5 ft).

There must be appropriate protective surfacing for all play structures.  
(see below).

**(b) Protective surfacing** - Play structures with a critical fall height of 45.72 cm (18 inches) or higher must be on a protective surface. Protective surfaces must be maintained to provide adequate protection to children in case of a fall.

- ✓ Play structures with a critical fall height of 1.5m or lower must have a minimum of 6 inches of loose fill protective surfacing.
- ✓ Play structures with a critical fall height of 1.5 m or higher must have a minimum of 9 inches of loose fill protective surfacing.
- ✓ Loose fill protective surfacing can include: pea gravel, sand, wood mulch, shredded tires.
- ✓ When synthetic material (e.g. rubber tiles, poured in surfacing) is used, documentation from the manufacturer must be available to verify the material is appropriate for its intended use and installed as required.
- ✓ Protective surfacing extends 1.8 m (70.87 inches) beyond all sides of stationary play structures (fall zone).

**(c) No encroachment zone** - Swings have a no encroachment zone that extends 1.8 m (70.87 inches) beyond the swing fall zone.

**(d) No head entrapments** - All spaces should be smaller than 9 cm (3.54 inches) or larger than 23 cm (9.05 inches).

**(e) Entanglement** - There are no apparent areas where draw strings or other pieces of clothing could become entangled on play structures where there is uncontrolled motion (e.g. grooves on a slide).

**(f) Swings** - The following additional requirements are met:

- ✓ s-hooks are tightly closed; bolts and chains are in good repair;
- ✓ seats are spaced 76 cm (29.92 inches) apart from each other and the side supports;



- ✓ two swings per bay; and
- ✓ seats are made of impact-absorbing material (e.g., rubber).

**9.5** Where children's health and safety is not impacted, a tolerance of  $\pm 2\%$  can be applied to the dimensions used for play structures and fall zones in these requirements.

## 10.0 Pools

**10.1** Any wading pool used by a facility or family child-care home must:

- (a) be made of a rigid model construction design;
- (b) have a depth of less than 12 inches of water;
- (c) only be used under the constant supervision of an adult;
- (d) be emptied and disinfected after each use; and
- (e) be properly stored to prevent water collecting in the pool.

**10.2** When there is a backyard pool onsite, child-care facilities and family home child-care programs must:

- (a) meet provincial and municipal requirements regarding the installation and use of a swimming pool; and
- (b) be separate from the outdoor play spaces used by the children.

### ► Best Practice

Backyard pools, including large inflatable pools, pose serious risks for drowning to children and **are not recommended**.

For more information on pool safety visit the Health Canada website at

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/injury-prevention/swimming-safety.html>

### ► Please Note

Licensees and care providers are responsible to ensure that decking and accessory buildings around the pool area must meet provincial building code standards and must not support climbing.

## 11.0 Trampolines

11.1 Large outdoor trampolines are not permitted at any child care facility or family home child-care program.

## References

Bredenkamp, S., & Copple, C. (Eds.). (2009). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, Serving Children Birth Through 8*. (Third Edition). Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.

Canadian Standards Association (CSA). (2014). *Children's Playspaces and Equipment Standard*. Mississauga, ON: CSA.

Child Safety Link – <https://childsafetylink.ca/home-safety/playground-safety/>

Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) – this document can be accessed through this link: [http://npdci.fpg.unc.edu/resources/articles/Early\\_Childhood\\_Inclusion](http://npdci.fpg.unc.edu/resources/articles/Early_Childhood_Inclusion).

Government of Nova Scotia. (2018). *Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia's Early Learning Curriculum Framework*. Province of Nova Scotia – this document can be accessed through this link: <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/nselearningcurriculumframework.pdf>

Harms, T., Clifford, R.M., & Cryer, D. (2005). *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Leduc, D. (2015). *Well-being: A Guide to Health in Child Care*. (Third Edition). Ottawa, ON: Canadian Pediatric Society

For more information on Sun Safety, visit the Cancer Care Nova Scotia website at: <https://www.nshealth.ca/news/staying-safe-sun>