

Mind Who's Watching the Kids

Proper supervision of children at a child care center is part of the contract agreement parents depend on when they enroll their children in a center. Failure to provide proper supervision can lead to a number of allegations against a center that can result in costly insurance claims and damage a center's reputation. One common scenario involves leaving children alone with a teenaged child of a center employee, or with a teenaged volunteer. This can be dangerous because adolescents do not possess the maturity or decision making skills necessary to supervise children.

According to *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards*, teachers should be at least 18 years old and have training and experience in childhood education. Volunteers and aides should be at least 16 years old and be able to participate in on-the-job training. All should be able to carry out assigned tasks completely while under supervision, understand and respond appropriately to children's needs, and possess sound judgment and emotional maturity.

Because adolescents do not have proper training or the maturity required to supervise children, their emotional and physical reactions to situations can easily be misunderstood by preschoolers or toddlers. This can lead to allegations of physical, sexual, or mental abuse against a center. You can avoid these allegations by maintaining your supervisory contract with parents, and never leaving a child alone with another child.

If you have a safety or risk management question or a suggestion for a topic, please contact Markel's Risk Management Department at safety1st@markelcorp.com.