

## Supervision Facilitates Safety

Inadequate and improper supervision are two leading causes of accidents that can result in a child's injury, and often in litigation. In *Children and Injuries*, author Joe L. Frost suggests that inadequate or improper supervision is a common source of litigation brought against early education teachers, administrators, and programs where unintentional injuries have occurred.

Whether children are on the playground or inside your facility, proper supervision is the key to providing them with a safe environment.

According to *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards*, adults must be able to hear and see children to properly supervise, and if necessary, rescue them. Taking that a step further, caregivers should always stay within arm's reach of the children they are supervising. This is especially important when supervising children on elevated playground equipment such as slides, platform stairs, and climbing walls.

Ongoing staff training is the key to proper and vigilant supervision. The quality of playground supervision depends on the supervisor's knowledge of safe play. For example, playground supervisors should be aware that not all playground equipment is appropriate for all children. If you use offsite playgrounds, supervision involves directing children to equipment appropriate for their age.

It's important to know of children's medical or emotional conditions, and whether they take medications. Also find out if the parents have elected to take the child off the medication.

Your employees and volunteers require proper supervision as well. This is especially important if your agency is involved in offsite programs. It is vital to conduct background and reference checks on all employees and volunteers. Never leave a child alone with an adult or older child, particularly with an unscreened volunteer. Establish clear policies as to what is acceptable behavior of your staff and discuss supervision policies and expectations frequently. Depending on an employee's level of experience, additional supervision and performance management meetings may be necessary to support learning opportunities and highlight safety concerns.

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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](mailto:safety1st@markelcorp.com).