

# Michigan Child Care Matters

Play Equipment Issue 102

## From the Division Director

Although most of the writings in this issue of Michigan Child Care Matters are related to play equipment, I have decided to write my article on the topic of change.

I personally have always had very mixed feelings about change. On the one hand, I am a person who likes predictability and if I am to be honest, I have to admit that in many circumstances I have probably been guilty of resisting change and doing what I could to prevent it from happening. On the other hand however, I do get excited about doing and learning new things and challenging myself by going to places I've never been. I have learned over the course of my two plus decades of working for the state of Michigan that my conflicting feelings about change are actually pretty common, and that most people seem to have very similar feelings about the phenomenon.

Regardless of how any of us feel about change, it is a fact of life that change is inevitable. For this reason, and because 2015 appears destined to bring with it considerable change to child care and child care licensing in particular, this article will summarize at least some of the changes that are likely to impact child care in Michigan.

To begin, I will mention the Child Care and Development Act of 2014 (P.L. 113-186) which was signed into law by President Obama this past November. It had been 18 years since the last time the Child Care and Development Block Grant was reauthorized and the changes included in this re-authorization represent not only an expansion of benefits but also many improvements that will have a positive impact on children and families. Although I will not provide a detailed summary regarding the comprehensive changes this reauthorization includes, suffice it to say that it does demonstrate an encouraging commitment to child care at the national level and a goal to ultimately improve the overall quality of child care for all children nationwide.

Another change specific to Michigan that has received a great deal of media attention over the past couple months is our upcoming transfer of child care licensing from its current home in the Department of Human Services (DHS) to the Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA). The transfer is a part of Executive Order 2015-4, which was signed by Governor Snyder on February 6, 2015. This move will include the transfer of not only the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing's Child Care program, but the Adult Foster Care/Home for the Aged and Camp



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All articles within Michigan Child Care Matters include one of the symbols below to identify for which type of provider the content is appropriate.

 Article is appropriate for **all** child care providers.

 Article is appropriate for **center** child care providers.

 Article is appropriate for **home** child care providers.

## U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

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The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) is an independent federal regulatory agency. It is responsible for protecting consumers from risks of serious injury or death by providing information related to thousands of types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction.

The CPSC monitors products that are commonly used in and around homes, schools and businesses. About 15,000 types of consumer products, mainly for household use, fall under its jurisdiction. CPSC does not test specific products for safety nor does it give approval to specific brands of products. It provides information to consumers on what product safety features to look for, and offers consumers recommendations to help them make informed decisions about the safety of products.

There are many ways the CPSC works to reduce the risk of injuries and deaths from consumer products. It works with manufacturers to develop voluntary standards to make products safer for users. Some standards are voluntary and some are mandatory. CPSC will mandate and enforce standards, even banning dangerous products if no feasible standard would adequately protect the public from harm. If a product already on the market is shown to be dangerous or poses any risks to the public, the CPSC will coordinate the recall and make sure the manufacturer either repairs the product or offers refunds to consumers. The majority of recalls are voluntary, negotiated between the CPSC and the manufacturer, although some recalls are mandatory.

When a voluntary recall is needed, the manufacturer looks to the CPSC regulations. The goal of a voluntary recall is to get as many products out of the marketplace as possible to minimize danger to the consumer. When deciding how to structure a recall, the manufacturer is not alone and can work with the CPSC to structure the recall. No two recalls are the same. The parameters of the recall depend on the severity of the hazard posed by the product.

Once a recall is initiated, CPSC will issue a press release that is distributed and then posted to its website. In addition, parents can sign up for email alerts about recalls from the CPSC and register all durable children's products with the manufacturer.

CPSC is also responsible for conducting research on potential product hazards and obtaining data on injury-related issues. There were an estimated 77,900 nursery product-related injuries among children younger than 5 years old that were treated in U.S. hospital emergency departments in 2012.

- Cribs/mattresses, high chairs, infant carriers/car seat carriers, and strollers/carriages were associated with about 67 percent of the injuries. Falls were the leading cause of injury, and the head, followed by the face, were the body parts injured most frequently. Internal organ injuries, contusions/abrasions, and lacerations accounted for 73 percent of the injuries.
- Cribs/mattresses, bassinets/cradles, playpens/play yards, infant carriers/car seat carriers, and baby baths/bath seats/bathinettes were associated with 89 percent of the fatalities reported. Causes of death included positional asphyxia, strangulation, and drowning, among others. In some instances, the fatalities were attributed to the product; while in other cases, the fatalities resulted from a hazardous environment in or around the product.

Consumers, child service providers, health care professionals, government officials and public safety entities can submit reports of harm involving consumer products through [www.SaferProducts.gov](http://www.SaferProducts.gov). Manufacturers (including importers) and private labelers identified in the reports will receive a copy of it, and have the opportunity to comment on them. Completed Reports and manufacturer comments are published online at [www.SaferProducts.gov](http://www.SaferProducts.gov) for anyone to search.

Licensing rules prohibits child care centers and homes from using equipment, materials and furnishings recalled or identified by the CPSC as being hazardous. The current list of unsafe children's products that is provided by the department must be conspicuously posted. A conspicuous place means a location where parents, staff and others can easily see it. The list of unsafe children's products is available on the last page of each edition of this newsletter. Posting the list found in this newsletter will ensure compliance with this rule and the Children's Product Safety Act.

Additional information regarding equipment safety can be found on the Consumer Product Safety Commission website ([www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)).

\* Information from this article was taken from [www.allgov.com](http://www.allgov.com) and [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov). ❖

## New Nursery Product Standards Provide Safer Spaces for Baby

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U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission



When preparing for the arrival of a brand new little one, parents, grandparents and caregivers strive to create the safest environment possible for their baby. Today, there is a wide variety of nursery products available to choose from such as cribs, play yards, cradles, bassinets, and strollers. And that's just to name a few! The good news is there is a federal agency that has made great strides in recent years to create safer spaces for babies. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has strengthened, and continues to strengthen, the safety standards for about 25 durable nursery products. In fact, the CPSC has already approved 13 new mandatory federal standards, including full-size and non-full-size cribs, children's bed rails, baby bath seats, baby walkers, bassinets/cradles, bedside sleepers, hand-held infant carriers, infant swings, strollers, soft infant and toddler carriers, play yards, and toddler beds.

Here's what CPSC has been doing to help keep babies safe:

**CRIBS:** All cribs sold in the U.S. must have a manufacture date after June 28, 2011, and must meet new federal requirements before being sold. These rules, which apply to both full-size and non-full-size cribs, prohibit the manufacture or sale of traditional drop-side rails, strengthen crib slats and mattress supports, improve the quality of hardware—all through more stringent testing requirements.

**PLAY YARDS:** As of February 28, 2013, testing for play yards became more rigorous. Play yards must meet new safety standards that prevent entrapments, eliminate sharp-edged cracks and side rail collapse or forming a V when folded to prevent strangulation.

**STROLLERS:** A new standard for strollers and carriages becomes effective on September 25, 2015. Hazards addressed in the standard include the prevention of head entrapments, falls, pinching, cuts and amputations.

Here's what you can do:

1. Remember Bare is Best! Never add clutter, such as pillows, quilts or comforters, to any crib or play yard.
2. Always place baby on his/her back on a firm tight fitting mattress with a fitted sheet.
3. Positioning devices are unnecessary and can also be deadly.
4. Always keep ALL cords and monitor parts out of the reach of babies and young children – at least 3 feet away.
5. Stay informed about recalls by signing up to get free and direct email notifications on products at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov).

For more information on crib and nursery product safety visit [CPSC.gov/cribs](http://CPSC.gov/cribs) and to report a safety incident with a baby product, visit [SaferProducts.gov](http://SaferProducts.gov). ❖



## Separating Children by Age During Outdoor Play

Catherine Edgar, Licensing Consultant  
Genesee County



Playground injuries occur each year in both child care homes and centers. A large number of these injuries occur when children attempt to use playground equipment that is not age-appropriate. Separating playground areas by age is a good way to reduce these injuries.

Both child care center and home registrants/licenseses must ensure that children in care only use age appropriate equipment. One way to do this is to divide your outdoor play space into different areas, based on the ages of the children. Most outdoor playground equipment is designed for one of two groups of children: ages 2 to 5 years and ages 5 to 12 years. This equipment can be separated by a fence, a buffer such as a bench or shrubs or even just an open area. Since not all outdoor play equipment has the age range listed prominently on it, registrants/licenseses may need to contact the manufacturer of the equipment to determine the proper age range. Child care center licenseses should be able to determine the age range of their equipment as noted on their Playground Inspection Certification Summary (BCAL-5047), which is completed by a certified playground safety inspector.

It is recommended that infants and toddlers also have a separate outdoor play space with appropriately sized equipment and materials to serve their developmental needs. This keeps the infants and toddlers off of the larger equipment and also keeps them from getting injured by an older child using equipment such as swings, slides and hanging bars. The infant and toddler area should be a safe place where they can move and explore through crawling and walking. A way that child care home providers can achieve this is by using a child-proofed deck/porch or a small area defined by a movable fence.

It is important that all staff and volunteers at the child care are made aware of the age range for each piece of equipment on the playground so they can properly monitor children playing on the equipment. Signs can be posted in the playground area to identify the age range for each piece of equipment or for each separate area.

Perhaps the most important key to making the outdoor play area safe for children in care is appropriate supervision. You and your staff and volunteers must pay close attention to the ages of the children in care on the playground as well as the age range of each piece of equipment. Appropriate supervision requires walking around the play area, being aware of the whereabouts of the children at all times and adhering to proper caregiver-to-child ratios. Many times children on a playground are of mixed ages so it is important that you go by the age of the youngest child in the group to determine proper ratio. Separating the playground equipment by age ranges also helps to maintain proper caregiver-to-child ratios as the younger children are kept together.

Outdoor play equipment offers children vital opportunities to play, and research shows a clear link between outdoor play and brain development. To make the most of this, make sure that staff are aware of the age ranges of all of your outdoor play equipment, separate the areas whenever possible and closely supervise children so that they only use age-appropriate equipment. By doing this, you can safely provide children in care with all of the important benefits that outdoor play has to offer. ❖

## In a Good Space

Cynthia Jalynski, Licensing Consultant  
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Tiara McKay and Rebecca Wagster, Licensing Consultants  
Kalamazoo County

**T**he physical environment, or the way the space is arranged, has an important impact on children's behavior. Your approved child use space serves as the physical environment for children for most of their waking hours. Although it is important for the space to be attractive to the eye, it is equally, if not more important, that it functions effectively.

If children in your child care program are misbehaving, check to see whether the environment is contributing to the problem. Take a close look at your space, indoors and outdoors. Setting up a safe place to play and providing appropriate toys can keep children interested in learning and can reduce behavior problems.

Think about the layout of your rooms. Do they look like large, open spaces with equipment lined against the walls? If so, consider the benefits of organizing the rooms into separate activity areas. This is something licensing consultants often suggest to child care providers when they see a chaotic environment where children aimlessly run around and caregivers spend a lot of time disciplining them. Many behavior challenges, like running in the classroom, are quickly resolved simply by dividing the room into smaller sections.

Here are some ideas to help create a physical environment that encourages positive behavior:

- Get down to the children's level and move around the space. Look for any hazards you might not notice from your own level.
- Make sure your space is safe for children. The structure, premises, and furnishings must be maintained in a clean, safe and comfortable condition. Dangerous and hazardous materials must be stored out of children's reach, including materials such as cleaning supplies, medications, personal care items, weapons, sharp objects, plastic bags, lighters, matches, and items that pose a choking hazard such as batteries, coins, and small toys (small doll accessories, Legos and small game pieces).
- Different activity areas may include spaces like a reading area, a building area equipped with blocks and Legos, or a kitchen area for imaginative play. Space with a specific purpose helps children know what's expected and promotes security. A large, undefined area with too many choices may make children feel overwhelmed. In this case, children may spend a lot of time wandering around the room, trying to figure out what to do and where to find what they need.
- Organize your space well. The way you arrange your space makes a difference in how children behave. If a space is wide open, children will likely run around wildly. Pay attention to where behavior problems occur. Set up shelving units and other furniture to divide the room into separate learning and play areas. Sturdy items that aren't likely to tip over or interfere with the caregiver's ability to provide good supervision are best. Different colored rugs are another way of designating how space will be used, such as a blue one in the building area and a red one for reading. This will cut down on running, and it will help children find activities more easily. It can also decrease behaviors like being easily distracted or trouble with staying on task.

- In smaller areas with fewer children, they are less distracted by the activity around them. Less stimulation means children are better able to focus on the task at hand. It enhances concentration and learning and encourages cooperative play in a pleasant environment.
- Organize your equipment to make things easy for children. You will have fewer problems if children can find toys and supplies without direct adult assistance. Place toys on low shelves. This encourages choice and independence. You may also want to avoid placing blocks or dramatic play next to a quiet reading area so that one child's activity is not imposing upon another's.
- Small storage bins on shelves are a great way to organize equipment on shelves, especially when they're clearly labeled. When toys are dumped into a large storage box or chest, children waste a lot of time digging to find what they need, rather than engaged in an activity.
- Picture labels tell children where to find things and where they go. The result is more self-sufficient children, who are better able to assist with clean-up and keep the room tidy. It's a useful life skill to learn and children take pride in their ability to help out. It also leaves caregivers with more time for quality interaction and teaching.
- Make sure there are enough toys. Problems often arise when children do not have enough toys or materials to play with. There should be ample equipment to meet the needs of the number of children served at your child care facility. Purchasing favorite toys in multiples can help prevent a lot of behavior problems.
- Make sure your toys match the children's ages and abilities. Infants need toys that they can shake, drop, mouth, roll, and explore with their bodies. Toddlers need toys that they can push, pull, grab, fill, dump, or yank without causing damage. Preschool and school-age children need more complex materials that keep them interested for longer periods and challenge their learning skills.
- Teach children how to handle the equipment. Explain and model how to carefully handle books, toys and other materials and give young children plenty of opportunities to practice. In the event that the equipment becomes broken, repair it or replace it, including toys with missing pieces.
- Small changes to the way equipment is stored and organized helps keep children interested and engaged in the classroom materials. This can be accomplished by rotating equipment and changing the theme of play areas. A play kitchen may become a post office or a campsite and reinforce what children are learning throughout the year.

The right physical environment will reduce and prevent behavior problems. With fewer negative behaviors, there is more opportunity for learning and fun.❖

## Play Equipment: How Much is Enough?

Jackie Sharkey, Area Manager  
Clinton Twp/Pontiac



Children need enough equipment and toys to provide them with an array of learning opportunities. How do you know if what you have is enough?

In child care centers, sufficient materials and equipment must be available to provide a minimum of three playspaces per child in the licensed capacity. A playspace means a piece or pieces of equipment of age-appropriate toys, play equipment and materials that one child can use independently for 15 minutes. A minimum of two playspaces must be accessible per child in attendance on any given day during child-initiated activity time.

Children must also have access to equipment and materials in the following areas on a daily basis:

- Large and small muscle activity.
- Sensory exploration.
- Social interaction and dramatic play.
- Discovery and exploration.
- Early math and science experiences.
- Creative experiences through art, music and literature.

In child care homes, a variety and number of easily accessible activity choices must be available to each child, safe, in good repair, appropriate for each child at his or her stage of development, and based on the licensed/registered number of children. The activity choices should include:

- Books.
- Blocks and accessories.
- Large muscle equipment.
- Manipulative toys.
- Musical equipment.
- Dramatic play materials.

A variety of toys and equipment will keep children engaged in constructive activities. Below are ideas for equipping programs for children birth through school-age:

### Infants (Birth to 12 months)

#### Furnishings

- |                                     |                        |                |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| • Cribs (including emergency cribs) | • Infant bouncy seats  | • Nesting pool |
| • 1-6 passenger buggy or strollers  | • Floor mat/cushions   | • Baby gates   |
| • Bottle warmer/crock pot           | • Refrigerator         | • High chairs  |
| • Changing table with pad           | • Cubbies/bins         | • Wall mirrors |
| • Adult rocking chair               | • Child access shelves | • Area rugs    |
| • Adult-sized seating               |                        |                |

## Infants (Birth to 12 months) continued

### Large Muscle

- Tunnel/crawl through structure
- Sturdy items to pull up on
- Outdoor pad or blanket
- Riding toys without pedals
- Activity gyms
- Crawling ramps
- Soft mat climber
- Mats
- Push/pull toys
- Exersaucer
- Soft balls
- Small balls

### Dramatic Play

- Washable baby dolls
- Plexi-glass wall mirrors
- Toy telephones
- Soft puppets
- Soft animals
- Pots and pans

### Blocks/Construction

- Large, soft blocks (cloth/vinyl)

### Creative Art

- Large plastic mess mat
- Finger paint
- Large nontoxic crayons
- Construction paper
- Smocks

### Sensory/Sand and Water/Science

- Fish/aquarium
- Nature pictures/books
- Plants
- Bubbles
- Individual water bin with accessories

### Books/Language/Music

- Portable CD player with children's music
- Infant instruments
- Cloth/vinyl/board books

### Perceptual Motor Games/Small Muscle/Math

- Busy boxes
- Stacking post and rings
- Containers to dump and fill
- Books with shapes and numbers
- Grasping toys
- Nesting cups
- Teething toys
- Mobiles
- Plastic keys
- Rattles

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## Toddlers (1 year to 2½ years)

### Furnishings

- Adult rocking chair
- Baby gates
- Toddler cots
- Cribs (including emergency cribs)
- Adult-sized seating
- Toddler table with built-in seats
- 1-6 passenger buggy or strollers
- Table/sinks
- High chairs
- Toddler tables
- Toddler chairs with arms
- Changing table with pad
- Steps for changing
- Refrigerator
- Large colorful rug
- Area rugs
- Wall mirror
- Double-sided library
- Child access shelves
- Cubbies/bins

### Large Muscle

- Mats
- Small parachute
- Simple climber
- Push/pull toys
- Cardboard boxes
- Tunnel
- Variety of balls
- Soft balls
- Rocking toys
- Small slide
- Helmets
- Riding toys
- No pedal trikes
- Low-wheeled riding toys with pedals

## Toddlers (1 year to 2½ years) continued

### Dramatic Play

- Play kitchen, food and utensils
- Handheld, unbreakable mirrors
- Dress-up clothes and costumes
- Toys for various themes (doctor's kit, veterinary kit, tea set, shopping cart)
- Washable baby dolls
- Large doll
- Doll accessories
- House/furniture
- Soft puppets
- Soft animals
- Toy telephones
- Child-sized furniture
- Pots and pans
- Plastic cooking sets
- Tableware
- Plexi-glass wall mirrors

### Blocks/Construction

- Cloth/vinyl blocks
- Cloth blocks
- Interlocking blocks
- Snap blocks
- Cardboard blocks
- Plastic blocks
- Wood blocks
- Large soft blocks
- Farm/barn set with animals
- Large train
- Toy people
- Large trucks/cars

### Creative Art

- Large plastic mess mat
- Finger paint
- Smocks
- Construction paper
- Large crayons
- Water color markers
- Large pieces of chalk
- Block/disc tempera paint
- Water color paint
- Liquid tempera paint
- Paintbrushes
- Play dough and accessories
- Sponge painting set
- Easel
- Easel paper
- Drying rack
- Drawing paper
- Collage materials (glue/paste, cards, wrapping paper, stickers, cotton balls, pompoms, yarn, ribbon, nature items)

### Sensory/Sand and Water/Science

- Plants
- Bubbles
- Individual sand/water bins or table
- Dinosaur set
- Fish/aquarium
- Nature pictures/books
- Dump trucks and bulldozers
- Dump/fill buckets
- Large shells
- Pinecones
- Treasure hunt items
- Floating toys
- Plastic color paddles
- Plastic fish
- Fishing rods
- Sponges
- Dishes
- Magnets
- Magnet wands
- Magnifying glasses
- Sand set with bucket, scoop, rake, sieve, trowel and molds

### Books/Language/Music

- Cloth/vinyl/board books
- Flannel board/books
- Toddler instruments
- Scarves, ribbons
- Portable CD player with children's music

### Perceptual Motor Games/Small Muscle/Math

- Busy boxes
- Stacking post and rings
- Containers to dump and fill
- Books with shapes and numbers
- Grasping toys
- Nesting cups
- Teething toys
- Mobiles
- Plastic keys
- Rattles

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## Preschoolers (2½ years - 5 years)

### Furnishings

- Refrigerator
- Cubbies/storage bins
- Child access shelves
- Room dividers/shelves
- Large rug
- Double-sided library
- Audio center cabinet
- Computer table
- Loft system
- Area rugs
- Cots/mats
- Small play tables
- Child-sized tables and chairs
- Steps for the sinks

## Preschoolers (2½ years to 5 years) continued

### Large Muscle

- Helmets
- Hula hoops
- Balance beam
- Various sized balls
- Bean bags
- Large parachute
- Jump ropes
- Low basketball hoop
- Ring toss
- Tumbling mats
- Tricycles
- Pedal wheel toys
- Larger wagons
- Kites
- Playhouse climber

### Dramatic Play

- Small dollhouse
- Large dollhouse/furniture
- Doll figures and accessories
- Variety of dolls
- Dress-up clothes/costumes
- Play kitchen, food, utensils
- Handheld unbreakable mirror
- Cash register/play money
- Theatre play props
- Toy animals
- Child-sized furniture
- Themes (doctor's kit, veterinary kit, tea set, shopping cart)
- Fantasy items (dinosaurs, story characters)
- Leisure items (camping, sports)
- Toys for various plastic cooking sets

### Blocks/Construction

- Homemade blocks
- Play vehicles
- Tunnel/bridge set
- Town/street play mat
- Train set
- Large trucks/cars
- Toy people
- Farm/barn set with animals
- Waffle blocks
- Snap blocks
- Large hollow blocks
- Wood blocks
- Large soft blocks
- Cardboard blocks
- Interlocking blocks
- Plastic blocks
- Unit blocks
- Street signs
- Tool set
- Workbench
- Safety goggles
- Tool box
- Scrap wood
- Planks
- Derrick/pulleys
- Tools/hat/belts

### Creative Art

- Drawing paper
- Collage materials (glue/paste, cards, wrapping paper, stickers, cotton balls, pompoms, yarn, ribbon, nature items)
- Water color markers
- Large pieces of chalk
- Block/disc tempera paint
- Regular sized crayons
- Play dough and accessories
- Sponge painting set
- Water color paint
- Liquid tempera paint
- Paintbrushes
- Washable markers
- Easel and easel paper
- Large plastic mess mat
- Finger paint
- Smocks
- Construction paper
- Large crayons
- Drying rack
- Child scissors
- Thick pencils
- Clay
- Paper plate
- Staplers
- Tape
- Hole punchers

### Sensory/Sand and Water/Science

- Plants/rocks/insects
- Bubbles
- Dinosaur set
- Fish/aquarium
- Nature pictures/books
- Individual sand/water bins or table
- Sand set with bucket, scoop, rake, sieve, trowel and molds
- Water pump or water/sand wheel
- Dump trucks and bulldozers
- Large shells
- Pinecones
- Alphabet molds
- Weather charts
- Thermometer
- Rain gauge
- Treasure hunt items
- Floating toys
- Plastic fish
- Fishing rods
- Dump/fill buckets
- Sponges
- Dishes
- Magnets
- Magnet wands
- Magnifying glasses
- Plastic color paddles
- Gardening materials
- Cooking materials

## Preschoolers (2½ years to 5 years) continued

### Books/Language/Music

- Sequencing/shape/pattern cards
- Instruments
- Portable CD player with children's music
- Flannel story boards
- Listening center
- Variety of books
- Other dance props
- Scarves
- Ribbons
- Tactile letters

### Perceptual Motor Games/Small Muscle/Math

- Jumbo stacking blocks
- Interlocking blocks
- Lacing buttons/beads
- Threading spools
- Wire mazes
- Latch/lock box
- Preschool and floor puzzles
- Containers to dump and fill
- Cash register
- Balancing scales
- Rulers
- Geometric shapes
- Links and gears
- Games (dominoes)
- Color/shapes bingo
- Pattern cards
- Pegboards
- Sorting kit
- Counting bears computer software

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## School-agers (5 years and older)

### Furnishings

- Refrigerator
- Area rugs
- Large rug
- Cubbies/storage bins
- Child access shelves
- Double-sided library
- Audio center cabinet
- Computer table
- Loft system
- Room dividers/shelves
- Tables
- Chairs
- Couch
- Dry erase board

### Large Muscle

- Badminton supplies
- Plastic rubber cones
- Toss and catch games
- Low basketball hoop
- Large basketball hoop
- Volleyball net and ball
- T-ball pole and accessories
- Floor hockey sticks
- Floor hockey puck
- Frisbees
- Helmets
- Hula hoops
- Balance beam
- Ring toss
- Tumbling mats
- Various sized balls
- Bean bags
- Jump ropes
- Large parachute
- Kites
- Bikes

### Dramatic Play

- Doll house/furniture/figures
- Dress-up clothes/costumes
- Fantasy items (dinosaurs, story characters)
- Large play kitchen/accessories
- Variety of dolls
- Doll accessories
- Action figures
- Writing materials
- Props for theatre play
- Mirrors
- Writing materials
- Leisure items (camping, sports)

### Blocks/Construction

- Waffle blocks
- Snap blocks
- Wood blocks
- Large soft blocks
- Interlocking blocks (Legos, Mega blocks, Duplos)
- Plastic blocks
- Unit blocks
- Hollow blocks
- Homemade blocks
- Large trucks/cars
- Toy people
- Tunnel/bridge set
- Town/street play mat
- Train set
- Street signs
- Workbench
- Safety goggles
- Tool box
- Planks
- Derrick/pulleys
- Woodworking
- Tools, tool belts, hats
- Carpentry tools
- Scrap and soft wood
- Plastic crates
- Tri-wall cardboard
- Plastic/wood wheels, nuts, bolts
- Lincoln Logs
- Connectors
- Matchbox cars

## School-agers (5 years and older) continued

### Creative Art

- Crayons, markers, chalk, pencils
- A variety of paints
- Paintbrushes
- Easel and easel paper
- Drying rack
- Play dough and accessories
- Drawing paper
- Pottery
- Stapler, tape, glue/paste
- Scissors
- Hole punchers
- Beads of various sizes
- Sewing
- Weaving loom
- Clay
- Collage materials - cards, wrapping paper, stickers, cotton balls, pom poms, yarn, ribbon, nature items, feathers, felt, sequins, glitter

### Sensory/Sand and Water/Science

- Sand/water table
- Treasure hunt items
- Boats
- Dump trucks and bulldozers
- Sand set with buckets, scoops, rakes, trowels, sieves, molds
- Plastic scoops and funnels
- Floating toys
- Plastic fish and fishing rods
- Dump/fill buckets
- Dishes
- Sponges
- Magnets
- Magnetic wands
- Magnifying glasses
- Plastic color paddles
- Large shells
- Pinecones
- Dinosaur set
- Rocks, insects
- Rain gauge
- Cooking materials
- Gardening materials
- Prism
- Alphabet molds
- Water pump or water/sand wheel
- Weather charts
- Thermometer

### Books/Language/Music

- Portable CD player and music CDs
- Listening center
- Ribbons, scarves and other dance props
- Instruments
- Variety of books/magazines
- Tactile letters
- Sequencing, shapes and patterns cards
- Flannel board with easel
- Flannel board stories
- Felt letters and shapes
- Magnetic letter set
- Small chalkboards
- Letters and numbers stamp set
- Letter and word cards
- Word games
- Board games

### Perceptual Motor Games/Small Muscle/Math

- Plastic and metal building toys (Legos, gears, Tinker Toys, erector sets)
- Beads and string
- Models (airplanes, cars)
- Number and math cards
- Pick-up sticks
- Jacks Marbles
- Pattern activity kit
- Weight kit
- Measurement kit
- Calculators
- Play money
- Puzzles
- Demonstration clock
- Stopwatches
- Math card and board games (Uno, Monopoly)
- Chess
- Checkers ♠

## Want to Receive Credit for Reading Michigan Child Care Matters?

Licensing has developed tests based on the content of this newsletter. You can receive up to one clock hour of annual training for reading three newsletters and passing the associated tests each calendar year. Each article will include a symbol (see page 2) in the title of the article to identify the content as appropriate for center child care providers, home child care providers or all child care providers. For more information on how to access these tests, go to [www.michigan.gov/mccmatters](http://www.michigan.gov/mccmatters).

## Commercial vs. Residential Play Structures

Thanh Biehl, Licensing Consultant  
Washtenaw County



Play structures and playground equipment are wonderful additions to outdoor spaces and a fun way for children to build up their skills and coordination. Outside play provides opportunities for children to develop gross and fine motor skills. It also increases their social and emotional development as they interact with other children. However, with any physical play, it is important that children are safe while playing on play structures and equipment. The size, height and complexity of the play structures are designed for specific age groups. Child care centers need to be sure that the play structures and equipment are age and size appropriate.

Playground equipment can typically be divided into two main categories: residential and commercial. The immediate difference between residential and commercial equipment is the quality of materials used.

- Residential playgrounds, though safe, are typically made out of lumber and do not have safety guidelines set up by different associations. Residential equipment is intended for home use and not for use in child care centers. It does not follow the same protocol of safety as commercial equipment with exception to some basic guidelines which attempt to reduce the possibility of entanglements or head entrapments. Residential equipment does not meet the guidelines outlined in Consumer Product Safety Commission's Handbook for Public Playground Safety.
- Commercial playground equipment utilizes heavier gauge steel for its railings and climbing components. Heavier gauge metals and high grade fasteners are commonly found in commercial equipment.

All equipment present on a center playground must comply with the Consumer Product Safety Commission's Handbook for Public Playground Safety.

There are distinct differences between commercial and residential playgrounds. The difference is that commercial structures adhere to more stringent safety construction standards required by The American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), as well as Consumer Product Safety Commission, National Program for Playground Safety, ADA Accessibility Guidelines, and National Child Care Association. Manufacturers of residential equipment are not required to meet the same safety standards that are in place for manufacturers of commercial play equipment.

Child care centers must follow federal guidelines and state licensing requirements to ensure playground safety. All equipment must be commercial equipment and the center must maintain documentation that shows compliance. Residential climbing equipment should not be present on a center playground or, if present, must not be used. Centers can have residential non-climbing equipment such as water tables, picnic tables, play houses (with no attached slides, elevated play surfaces, etc.), but this type of equipment must be kept out of the use zone for other playground equipment.

Equipment manufactured for and used by children under the age of 2 was not addressed in CPSC's 1997 Edition of the Handbook for Public Playground Safety. Centers were not required to have this type of equipment inspected. Climbing equipment manufactured for and used by children under the age of 2 may be residential climbing equipment. This

type of equipment is often made in one piece, is portable and can be used indoors or outdoors. Portable equipment for children under the age of 2 must be out of the use zone for other playground equipment.

Centers licensed prior to January 2, 2014, can continue to use any residential climbing equipment manufactured for and used by children under the age of 2 obtained prior to January 2, 2014, but cannot add new equipment for this age group without an inspection.

Centers licensed after January 1, 2014, are required to obtain documentation of compliance with the CPSC's 2010 Edition of the Handbook for Public Playground Safety for all playground equipment, including equipment for children under age 2.

Is residential playground equipment appropriate for child care centers? When compared to the quality and safety standards applied to commercial equipment, the answer is no. Furthermore, licensing rules prohibits the use of residential playground equipment at child care centers. To ensure the safety of children, hiring a playground safety inspector, certified through the National Playground Safety Institute of the National Recreation and Park Association or National Program for Playground Safety, is the best way to know if play structures and playground equipment meets safety guidelines. For more information, go to [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare) > Licensed Providers > Inspections for Child Care Centers > Playground Inspections. ❖

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From the Division Director, from page 1

licensing programs as well. The transfer will result in many changes for our staff, some of which are not known at the time of this writing, and will officially go into effect on April 10, 2015.

A final change that I will mention in this article is of a slightly more personal nature. After more than 10 months serving as the Interim Division Director of BCAL's Adult Foster Care/Home for the Aged and Child Care Licensing programs, I will be returning to my former position as Area Manager for Adult Foster Care in the Grand Rapids office. Although I have enjoyed my time in Lansing and my involvement with our Child Care Licensing program providers and staff and appreciate the opportunity I was given to help lead our programs, I am looking forward to returning to my former position.

With all of the changes we are currently experiencing, it would be easy to worry about our future and the uncertainty of what is to come. We have a new federal law, a new department affiliation and a new Division Director; and all of these changes are occurring within a relatively brief period of time.

Despite all of these changes and the uncertainties that they bring, I am extremely optimistic about the direction we are heading in. I am also encouraged when I consider the opportunities that 2015 will bring and see the potential for child care in Michigan to continue on its current path toward becoming a national leader in the area of quality.

In closing, I would like to encourage all of you to continue your work to provide high-quality child care for all of Michigan's families. Stay focused on the key indicators of quality. Remain committed to learning more and growing professionally. Hold fast to the knowledge that child care really does matter, not only to the children and parents who are directly served, but to all of us who make up the larger community as well. ❖

**Jerry Hendrick**  
Child Care Licensing  
Interim Director

## Creating a Natural Outdoor Playground for your Home or Center

Kate DeKoning, Licensing Consultant  
Grand Traverse County



*“Of all the spaces that children inhabit, the playground is the one space that is most theirs. If we build a playground, take out the natural features, fill it with adult made equipment, and cover it with artificial surfaces, we are creating another space that is programmed by adults and does not allow children the opportunity to do what they do best ... explore.”*  
Betsy Caesar, Playcare, Inc.



sunny and shady areas. Hard surfaces are needed for riding toys and soft surfaces are needed for running, jumping, skipping, or just sitting. Consider using rocks or stumps that have different heights as the border of a sandbox, the different heights will provide places to sit and also places to climb.

**A**natural playground is an outdoor play area that blends natural materials, features and vegetation. Natural playgrounds contribute to the overall physical, cognitive and emotional development of children and help them experience more diverse play.

Natural playgrounds are also less expensive than playground equipment!

The first and most important step in planning a natural playground is to evaluate your current space. Are there existing natural features you can include, such as trees, rocks, hills, or paths? If not, where could you place some of these features? Just like you can draw a picture of your inside space to help plan furniture placement, you can draw a picture of your outside play area to help the planning process.

Your natural playground needs to have good drainage (water play is an important feature of a natural play area). It should also have both

Water play areas and sand play areas are two large components of a natural playground since they provide such flexible play opportunities. You can also add a musical corner by hanging pots, pans and other sound making devices from a fence. Art can be done outside as well as inside, even in the winter (try snow painting with spray bottles of liquid water color). A natural playground should have a quiet shady spot for reading or resting. A dramatic play area can be created with a lean-to, a playhouse, a grotto or even a platform. Gardens provide a way for children to learn about the life cycle of plants and vegetables.

Safety and supervision are always concerns, inside and outside. Are there hills or other hidden corners that might require an extra person for supervision? Is the play area secure with a fence or natural barrier to prevent children from wandering away or darting into a parking lot or road? Is the playground clean and free of material that may have splintered or broken? When you are filling your natural playground with trees, rocks and play areas, make sure you leave enough space for children to move around freely so they don't bump

into each other. Adults are an important part of children's play in a natural playground, guiding the children, assuring their safety and participating in the play without directing it.

Loose parts are probably the most important feature in a natural playground. They are objects that children can move around the area by themselves to create and enhance their play. A board may be a ramp for cars one day and a bench the next. A PVC pipe may be part of water play or a tower in the sandbox. Constructive play is what teaches children the important skills of cooperation, critical thinking, creativity, cognitive concepts and develops flexible problem solving. Having a wide variety of loose parts (see box) available encourages children to control their environment and challenges them to use materials in new and creative ways. The open-ended manipulation of these tools means children will rarely get bored. Open-ended use also means that loose parts can be used freely through-out the natural playground without being confined to one particular spot.

Science can be added to almost any area of a natural playground by including magnifying glasses, measuring tapes, rain gauges, and balance scales. Explore the nooks and crannies between rocks or under a log, lie on your back and watch the clouds move and change.

Outdoor play supplies need storage that is child friendly, easily available and well organized. Outdoor shelves can be made with bricks and boards and smaller loose parts can be stored in buckets. Larger loose parts (boards, branches, hay bales) might find a home against a fence. You may want to consider a small shed or covered area for some of the outdoor materials. Avoid toy boxes where play supplies can get lost on the bottom.

A natural playground can be used by children of all ages and can evolve with the children as they grow. By keeping activities open ended, a natural playground encourages creative thinking, cooperation and a child's sense of attachment to nature. It allows and even invites children to dig in the sand or dirt, to explore how water flows and moves, to experiment with balance and weight, and to observe all that nature brings to the outdoors. ❖

### **Loose Parts for Outdoor Exploration**

- Large plastic and wood building blocks
- Milk crates
- Old tires (make sure they are safe and clean)
- Wagons
- Pails and buckets of varying sizes
- Large and small containers for water
- Smooth boards of varying sizes
- Dress up clothes, scarves
- Pots and pans
- Small play animals, people, vehicles
- Sticks, stones, poles, logs, hay bales
- Gardening tools
- Water hose and water table or container
- Art supplies

## DIY Fun! Activities and Toys for Child Care

Adapted from the Homemade Fun Publication

Clinton Township Staff, Macomb County



**W**hen you picture your child care setting, do you see happy children sharing, playing and learning? In order to make that picture a reality, your environment must have enough space for children to play in comfortably, consistent expectations that they play in safe ways and enough toys and activities from which to choose.

Some toys such as wooden blocks, trucks and dolls are expensive but are worth the money. Many other things can be made at very little cost.

By making the following items or doing the following activities, you give the children in your program inexpensive choices that meet their developmental levels:

### Art Activities

#### *Water Fun – toddler and preschool age*

Cover a low table with a plastic tablecloth. Put several inches of warm water, a few drops of dish soap and a few drops of food coloring in plastic dish pans. Let the children play in them with plastic egg beaters, dolls, measuring cups, funnels, etc.

#### *Coupon Books – preschool and school-age*

This can be a great gift. Talk about what coupons are and how they can be used. Let children cut out, decorate and decide what each of their coupons could be for as a holiday gift or “just because.”

#### *Cookie Cutter Play-Dough Magnets – preschool and school-age*

4c flour                      1 ¼ c warm water  
1 c salt                        assorted food coloring

Mix together, tint with a few drops of food coloring or leave white for painting later. Knead for 10 minutes. Tell everyone to flatten or make a pancake out of their dough. Cut shapes with cookie cutters. When tired of playing, keep the last shape and bake in a 300 degree oven for

one hour. Paint them when cool. When dry, glue a piece of magnet strip on the back.

#### *Complete a Picture – school-age*

Put a few random lines or marks on a page. The children have to incorporate the existing lines in a picture of their choosing.

#### *No Mess Paints – toddler, preschool and school-age*

Collect empty plastic roll-on deodorant bottles. Pop the plastic ball out. Fill with tempera paint. Replace the plastic ball. Let the children roll the paint onto paper.

### Music and Movement

#### *Toes on Shapes – preschool age*

Cut out and laminate big shapes (use 12 X 18 construction paper). They can vary with the season. Start out with as many shapes as you have children. Play music and the children have to keep moving and dancing. When the music stops, they must each have at least their toes on a shape. Take a shape away each time. Unlike musical chairs, no one is ever out in this game. They just get closer and closer as there are fewer shapes left in the game. Encourage them to find creative ways to make sure everyone's toes fit on the last remaining shape.

#### *Dress Up Relay – preschool and school-age*

Make piles with an equal number of pieces of clothing in each (large shirt, tie, mittens, hats, etc.). Each person on a team must put on all the pieces of clothing and take them off and then go to the back of the line until everyone has had a turn.

### Assorted Activities

#### *Surprise Box – preschool and school-age*

Put an object in a box that is big enough so that the object can move. Let the children shake and rattle the box trying to guess what's inside.

Continued on page 20

## Indoor Climbing Equipment

Catherine Edgar, Licensing Consultant  
Genesee County



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You are probably aware of the need for a soft groundcover to be placed underneath of outdoor climbing equipment, slides and swings, but what about indoor climbing equipment, such as Little Tikes or Step 2 pieces?

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) warns child care providers that indoor climbing equipment should never be used over wood or cement floors, even if these floors are covered in carpet. Carpet has been found by the CPSC to not provide adequate protection to prevent injuries due to falls.

If you choose to use indoor climbing equipment at your home or center, it is recommended that you have a thick mat or pad underneath of the



equipment and extending out far enough to protect from both falls and jumps. A mat or pad should be at least an inch thick for fall heights up to 1 foot. A pad or mat of at least 4 inches in thickness is recommended for fall heights of 3 feet or higher. Be aware that mats and pads can pose a tripping hazard so it is best to have the indoor climbing equipment at a safe enough distance from other activities.

Indoor climbing equipment should also be placed at a safe distance from walls, furniture and toys to prevent injuries from falls onto these items. Like outdoor play equipment, make sure that the equipment children are using is age-appropriate. Many injuries on climbing equipment occur when a child is either too young or too old for the equipment being used. If the piece of equipment does not list the age range on it, contact the manufacturer of the piece of equipment to determine the proper age range so that you are using it correctly.

Indoor play equipment can provide a good source for large motor activities for children in care. The placement of the equipment along with adequate padding underneath it, and of course proper supervision, will help ensure children are happy, healthy and injury free. ❖

Remember—Trampolines, both large and small, are prohibited for use by children at child care homes and centers, even with parental permission. This includes bounce houses. The only exception is children can be taken on field trips where trampolines and bounce houses are being used with written parental permission.



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## Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Infant/Child Product Recalls (not including toys)

These recalls have been added since Issue 101 (Winter 2014):

- Mima recalls Moon 3-In-1 high chairs due to fall and impact hazard.
- IKEA recalls crib mattresses due to risk of entrapment.
- Dream On Me recalls Incredible play yards due to strangulation hazard.
- Graco recalls 11 models of strollers due to fingertip amputation hazard.

Details on these product recalls may be obtained on the CPSC's website ([www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)). Post this page in your facility to be in compliance with the Children's Product Safety Act (2000 PA 219).

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DIY Fun! Activities and Toys for Child Care, from page 18

### *Cereal Box Magnet Puzzle – preschool age*

Cut out the front of a cereal box and cut it into puzzle shapes. Glue pieces of magnet strip on the back. Place the pieces on the front of the refrigerator and have children put the puzzle together.

There are many ideas out there for high quality and low budget toys and activities. Providing many options for children does not have to cost a lot of money; it just takes some imagination and some items that you probably already have in your home or center. It allows you and the caregivers to bring out your and their creative side.❖

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