

## **Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing Family Child Care Home Playground Safety Tips**

- A minimum outdoor area of 500 square feet must be maintained with at least a 4 foot high fence. Any major changes to the outdoor play area must be approved by Licensing.
- All playground equipment must be age appropriate for the children in your care.
- Direct supervision must be maintained at all times-bring phone onto playground or do not answer, if you must answer door or take a child to the bathroom-you must bring all children inside with you.
- Supervise and teach your children safe play. Teach them not to walk or play close to a moving swing and not to tie ropes to playground equipment. Pay close attention to the clothing worn during outside play-many children have been strangled when a drawstring from their clothes got caught on playground equipment or they became entangled in a rope.
- All fencing must be complete and maintained free of protruding nails or other obvious hazards.
- All stationary playground equipment must be firmly anchored. All hardware must be checked regularly for loose or missing parts.
- Swing's "S" hooks must be securely tightened closed, preferably using an appropriate "S" hook tool.
- \*Swings should be made of lightweight rubber or plastic. Chains on swings must be free of rust or enclosed in plastic casing.
- A minimum distance of 6 feet should be maintained around playground equipment including swing sets.
- Ropes are not recommended on playground equipment. Any ropes being used must be anchored.
- \*Trampolines are not recommended for use in child care.
- Barbecue grills should be kept out of reach of children or maintained in a safe manner: gas grills-covered or turned with knobs facing away from a child's access. Charcoal grills-all trays should be free of charcoal and lighter fluid.
- Children's slides must be plastic. Metal slides are not allowed due to burning danger.
- If dogs are present in home always check playground area for feces or holes that may pose a tripping hazard. \*It is strongly recommended that dogs be kept in a separate area away from the children who may antagonize and tease the animals. You must always be within arms reach of the FCC child when there is an animal present.

- Head entrapments occur when the spaces between bars or ladder rungs are small enough to allow the child's body to fit through but not the head. Openings should be less than 3 ½ inches or greater than 9 inches.
- Tire swings should have sufficient clearance and have holes bored to allow for proper drainage. Caution: spiders, wasps and snakes like to nest in tires!
- \*Choose ground cover with caution-if choosing mulch, keep in mind the size of the pieces (long cut mulch can be used as "weapons" by children), sand is easily washed away by rain and can create a "sandbox" effect and bring cats from all around. Grass, cypress mulch or eucalyptus mulch may be used for ground cover in the playground. You may consult licensing if you need technical assistance in choosing a ground cover. Grass or cypress mulch is preferred in the areas considered a "fall zone". These are the areas directly under swings, slides and other climbing equipment. In these fall zones we recommend a sufficient amount of material that would soften the impact of a fall. Once again, licensing has reference guides that would assist you in planning your playground.
- Vehicles, boats and lawn tools are never allowed on the playground area.
- Exercise equipment must be secured or removed to prevent child access.
- **Playgrounds should be inspected on a regular basis. Inspect for hazardous debris, ants, sharp or toxic plants, wasp or spider nests and loose or dangerous playground equipment and hardware.**

### Water Safety Information

- The Law\*\*requires that where recreational swimming activities are conducted onsite at the Family Child Care Home, two adults, one of whom must be a caregiver at the FCCH, one adult must be present in the pool and one adult must have a valid certificate of completion of the Red Cross Community Water Safety Course approved by the local licensing agency or be lifeguard certified. *This law applies to all children under the age of 13.* The caregiver must have a "Drowning Emergency Plan" on file and safety equipment (showing assist and reaching assist) on location at the pool.
- All water hazards (pools, spas, lakes, ponds) must be adequately fenced on all 4 sides and securely locked at all times. (Fence must be at least 4 feet high).
- Wading pools pose a drowning hazard and are a health hazard as it promotes spread of bacteria among children. Waterplay using sprinklers and spray bottles or "Rubbermaid" type tubs placed up off the ground at child's reach with appropriate empty fill toys and utensils are encouraged.
- Low lying areas that easily flood should be used with caution in the rainy season- rain puddles pose a drowning hazard and are also a haven for mosquitoes.

\*Licensing recommendation only

\*\*subject to change with passage of new state and county ordinance