

Playground Fence Rules

Family Day Care Home: 290-2-3-.13(2)(c)- Such outside play areas shall be protected from traffic or other hazards by fencing or other barriers at least four feet in height and approved by the department. Fencing material shall not present a hazard to children. A fence shall be provided around swimming pools to make them inaccessible when not in use.

Group Day Care Home: 290-2-1-.12(y)3- Play areas shall be protected from traffic or other hazards by a four (4) foot or higher secure fence or other barrier approved by the Department.

Child Care Learning Center: 591-1-1-.26(4) - Playgrounds shall be protected from traffic or other hazards by a four (4) foot or higher secure fence or other barrier approved by this Department. Fencing material shall not present a hazard to children and shall be maintained so as to prevent children from leaving the playground area by any means other than through an approved access route. Fence gates shall be kept closed except when persons are entering or exiting the area.

Rule Type: Core Rules

Intent of the Rule

To prevent children from leaving the fenced outdoor play area by preventing them from getting over, under, or through the fence; to prevent injuries by keeping the children in the licensed outdoor play area where staff can supervise them and by ensuring the fence does not present a hazard to the children.

Clarification

A fence alone will not prevent a child from leaving the outdoor play area but can help prevent a child from entering a hazardous area, such as a parking lot or public roadway by presenting a physical barrier and allowing the staff to supervise the children in a defined area. The fence itself should be free of hazards such as inadequate height, sharp edges, large openings, splinters, etc. Safe fencing is a key factor in keeping children safe in the outdoor play area.

Indicators

- ✓ The fence/barrier should be constructed of solid, sturdy material such as chain link or smooth wood and should be at least four feet high in all areas. Chain link, wooden, iron, and plastic/PVC picket are types of approved playground fencing.
 - Recommendation: Inspect playground fencing daily before children use the area. Daily inspection allows a facility to make necessary repairs before children are exposed to hazards.
 - TIP: Secure the bottom of the fencing material to the ground to prevent entrapment of a child's hand, foot, etc.
- ✓ Look for common hazards such as openings 3 ½ inches or larger, holes in the fence, height less than four feet, loose wires, exposed sharp edges, protruding bolts, splintered wood, rust, etc. Remember to check the fence/barrier around air conditioning units and other such potential hazards.
 - TIP: Ensure the spaces between the building and the fence, as well as the openings in the fence, measure less than 3 ½ inches.
 - TIP: Bolts that connect the fence wire to the anchoring poles should point to the outside of the fence if possible. If it is a shared fence where children will be on both sides, then the bolts should be trimmed to within two threads of the nut. When cut, the bolt edges become very sharp. The sharp edges must then be covered with a safety cap or filed smooth.

- Recommendation: Measure the fence weekly in several different places to ensure the minimum four foot height is maintained along the entire fence.
 - TIP: When measuring a fence, always start at the bottom of the fencing on the inside of the fence line and measure straight up to the top of the fencing. If a barrier is placed on the inside of the fence line, measure from the top of the barrier to the top of the fence line.
- ✓ Though it is not required, when it's time to buy new playground fencing, a provider may choose to consider six foot fencing instead of four foot fencing to avoid height issues related to typical sagging and sinking that occurs over time. Always check local zoning or building department requirements when purchasing a new fence to ensure compliance with the local ordinances and regulations.
- ✓ When adding a barrier to the bottom of the fence, place it along the outside of the fence line so the barrier does not interfere with meeting the four foot height requirement or cause injury. If the barrier must be added along the inside of the fence line, be careful to eliminate any areas where a child's foot could slip into the gap between the barrier and the fence and cause an injury.

Core Rule Guidance

Examples of Rule Severity	Low	Medium	High	Extreme
Family Day Care Home: 290-2-3-.13(2)(c) Group Day Care Home: 290-2-1-.12(y)3 Child Care Learning Center: 591-1-1-.26(4)	Fence not four feet high, hazardous, etc.; Gate open without an incident; Potential entrapment hazard	Not completely enclosed, child did not leave premises; actual entrapment occurs - did not result in injury	Not completely enclosed, child left premises; Fence not four feet, child left premises; Fence hazardous, resulting in an injury, Gate open with an incident; Entrapment with an injury	Incident resulting in death, extreme or permanent injury.

Resources:

<http://www.playgroundsafety.org/>

<http://www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/122149/325.pdf>

<http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Safety-Education/Safety-Guides/Sports-Fitness-and-Recreation/Playground-Safety/>

<http://www.safekids.org/playgroundsafety>

http://www.dec.al.gov/documents/attachments/CCLC_Rule_Guidance.pdf

http://www.dec.al.gov/documents/attachments/FDCH_Rule_Guidance.pdf