

## School Talk

Pilot data suggest promoting physical activity for kids and reducing TV time, may prevent the development of overweight children and adolescents.

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## Playground Supervision and Duty of Care You Could Be Sued!

For a school or teacher, the threat of a lawsuit due to inadequate playground supervision is an unpleasant event that most wish to avoid.

Generally speaking, lawsuits against a school or teacher arise from an accusation that playground supervision was deficient, and because of those deficiencies, a student was unnecessarily injured.

The phrase lawyers use when talking about playground supervision is "negligence" because of a violation of the "duty of care" to keep children safe. A claim of negligence reflects the accusation that supervision was lacking and contributed to the injury the child sustained. Duty of care refers to the manner in which a reasonably prudent parent or educator would act in supervising children.

Playground research indicates that in 40% of all playground injuries, the element of supervision is a contributing factor to the injury.

### Pitfalls to Avoid

Supervisors should avoid: Umpiring games, clustering together, and joining into games with children. Remember, a playground supervisor's role is to keep kids safe, not to be a play facilitator.

### Tips for Supervising

Divide the playground into manageable areas for supervision. Strictly enforce off limit areas. Close areas if you are short of supervisors. Get in close proximity to confrontations, intervene immediately and see that inappropriate behavior is extinguished. Do not allow food or choking hazards in the play area.

### Be Aware Of:

- Inappropriate games (ie. Tackle football)
- Chase Games near playground equipment
- Keep games to appropriate team sizes (ie. 30 kids on one soccer field is too many and can lead to injury)

### Duty Tips

- Know the playground rules and boundaries and enforce them consistently
- Arrive early to supervision area
- Eliminate inappropriate behavior quickly

### BE.....

- Aware
- Calm
- On time
- Strict
- Consistent
- Fair

Require all parents or visitors to check in through the office. Report strangers immediately.

Accidents can and do happen but they are significantly reduced with well trained supervisors and proper planning. Research indicates that "people make the difference on playgrounds". This difference occurs only when supervisors are properly trained and the school establishes rules and procedures for safe play.

Download a free copy of Peaceful Playgrounds Supervisor Training at: <http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/support.htm> Feel free to share it with staff and colleagues.