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TRIAL LAWYERS



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Dear Safety Volunteer:

Not long ago, I realized that my background as a Doctor and a Personal Injury Lawyer should be put to better use to teach others about how to prevent injuries. While I have always been open about the fact I hope no one is ever injured badly enough to need my help as a lawyer, I now want to take a more active role in preventing injuries in our community. Particularly injuries to kids.

As a parent, the worst possible loss any of us can have in life is the injury or death of a child. Unfortunately, nearly 200,000 injuries occur in playgrounds every year in America, including one death a month. Most of these are preventable injuries, if only someone had taken the time to inspect the equipment and ask that it be fixed before a child is injured. Together we can stop these injuries.

You will find in this packet everything you need in order to examine the safety of the playgrounds in your area, and complete the Report Card. There are also sample letters that you can send to the officials who govern these playgrounds. The process is simple:

1. Select the Playground or Playgrounds you want to examine;
2. Make your inspection and fill out the Report Card; and
3. Write your letters notifying the park officials, school officials, or government officials of your findings.

Since many of our country's playgrounds are maintained by municipalities, and governments straining under budget restrictions, you may want to encourage local associations, and civic groups to engage in volunteer repair efforts.

It is important that you know, I rarely represent children. I have never sued a school or government for faulty playground conditions. That is not what this is about. It is simply about helping you, and others to prevent injuries to kids before they happen. My effort to help you is in cooperation with the Keenan Kids Foundation, a non-profit foundation dedicated to preventing childhood injuries and in helping disadvantaged and abused children.

Thanks again for your willingness to help decrease the preventable injuries and deaths that occur in our playgrounds. For other safety and prevention tips see www.doctorlawyer.net

Respectfully,

Dr. Aaron DeShaw, Esq.

1. Camera or video camera
2. Clipboard to hold your Report Card
3. Measuring tape
4. Copy of the Report Card



keenan's *kids* foundation

- 1. CONDITION of equipment:**
 - a. Check for broken or missing components, or any damaged structure.
 - b. Is the paint on equipment chipping or peeling?
 - c. Are the swing seats constructed of heavy or rigid materials (wood, metal, etc.)?

- 2. SURFACES must be smooth:**
 - d. Are the equipment surfaces smooth? Check for sharp points, corners, edges, nails, splinters etc.

- 3. TRIP hazards eliminated:**
 - e. Are there any trip hazards? Check for exposed footings, anchoring devices, or environmental obstacles.

- 4. TIPPING of equipment prevented:**
 - f. Check the foundations of slides, monkey bars, swings, etc.: is the equipment properly secured to prevent tipping?

- 5. FALL ZONES adequate:**
 - g. Check for equipment foundations in a fall zone surrounding or under the equipment—look closely for buried foundations that still may pose a threat.
 - h. Does the surface material extend at least 6' from the equipment?
For slides: surface must extend the height of the slide + four feet
For swings: surface must extend twice the height in front as well as behind the swings

- 6. GAPS or SPACES absent:**
 - i. Are there any gaps or spaces in the equipment? Examine all S-hooks on swings: you should not be able to insert a dime or credit card into the space; look for gaps or protrusions in slide areas, elevated walks, etc. that could snag clothing or allow a child's limbs to be caught while playing.

- 7. ELECTRICAL WIRES:**
 - j. Check the playground for any electrical wires supplying or passing through the play area. Are there any exposed wires in or around the playground?

- 8. DANGEROUS TREE LIMBS:**
 - k. Are there trees in or around the playground? Look closely for evidence of dead or dying branches overhanging or surrounding the play area.

- 9. SURFACE AREAS:**
 - l. What is the surface under and around the play equipment? (Circle below)
Wood Chips Sand Grass Cement/Pavement Other _____
 - m. Does the surface cover the play area uniformly? Check for erosion in high traffic areas, or grass/dirt exposed through playground surface.

- 10. HAZARDS REMOVED:**
 - n. Are there any animal swings, swinging trapeze bars, or unsecured climbing ropes?

Grading System:

As you will see and hear on the training DVD or video, there are no gray areas concerning playground safety. Therefore, the grading system is either "P" for pass, or "F" for fail. If the equipment or area poses a risk of serious injuries to a child, you must grade that equipment area with an "F."



keenan's kids foundation

REPORT CARD

PLAYGROUND _____

Subject	Grade
1. CONDITION of equipment	_____
2. SURFACES must be smooth	_____
3. TRIP hazards eliminated	_____
4. TIPPING of equipment prevented	_____
5. FALL ZONES adequate	_____
6. GAPS or SPACES absent	_____
7. ELECTRICAL WIRES secured	_____
8. DANGEROUS TREE LIMBS removed	_____
9. SURFACE AREAS safe and uniform	_____
10. HAZARDS REMOVED	_____

Intro: Every playground is the responsibility of a local park's authority, and/or a recreation department. The title may be different around the country, but some departments are, in fact, in charge of every playground. You can locate the appropriate department by calling the local government and simply pressing the issue until you find the name of the department and address. You need to be persistent and not give up.

The suggested letter is on the next page.

RE: Playground Located at _____
(name of park and address)

Dear _____:

On _____ (date here), the undersigned surveyed and inspected the playground located at _____ (address here).

Please find enclosed the Report Card indicating the defects and dangerous conditions we found, together with photographs that will help you locate such defects and make the necessary changes.

Over 200,000 children are injured every year on a playground and nearly one child dies each month. Many of these injuries and deaths are preventable and we would encourage you to correct these defects quickly.

Thank you for your attention.

Intro: Every playground is the ultimate responsibility of a city council, municipality, bureau and county commission. Simply call "411" and ask for the local governing agency. Once located, obtain the name and address.

The suggested letter is set forth on the next page.

RE: Playground Located at _____
(name of park and address)

Dear _____:

Please find enclosed the letter we sent to the _____ *(list name of recreation department and/or parks authority, whatever the designation may be)*. As you can see, it contains a Report Card which lists the current dangerous conditions that exist in the playground located at _____ *(name of park and address here)*.

Because nearly 200,000 injuries, including one death per month, occur in our playgrounds, we must give serious attention to correcting all dangerous conditions on our playgrounds.

We thank you for your immediate attention to this matter.