



# Playground Safety

## Having Fun and Staying Safe

April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2016



# Tech Tips



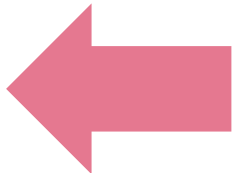
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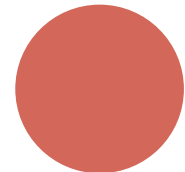
If you experience audio issues, dial **(866) 835-7973** and **mute computer speakers**

You are muted



Use the Q & A to ask questions at any time

This session is being recorded



# Presenters

Heather Olsen



Amy Hill





# Playground Safety: Having Fun and Staying S.A.F.E

Presented by:  
Heather Olsen, Ed. D.  
Associate Professor, University of Northern Iowa  
Executive Director, National Program for Playground Safety

# Status of Playground Safety in the U.S.

- Playground injury trends
- Description of Agencies/Organizations addressing guidelines and standards of playgrounds
- Overview of a 20-year project promoting playground safety
- SAFE™ Playground Injury Prevention Model

# **An Overview Of Playground Injuries**

# Why Worry About Playground Safety?

In the U.S. between 2001 and 2008, an average of 218,851 children received emergency care for injuries that occurred on playground equipment. Injuries acquired were serious enough that emergency medical treatment was necessary.

CPSC October 29, 2009

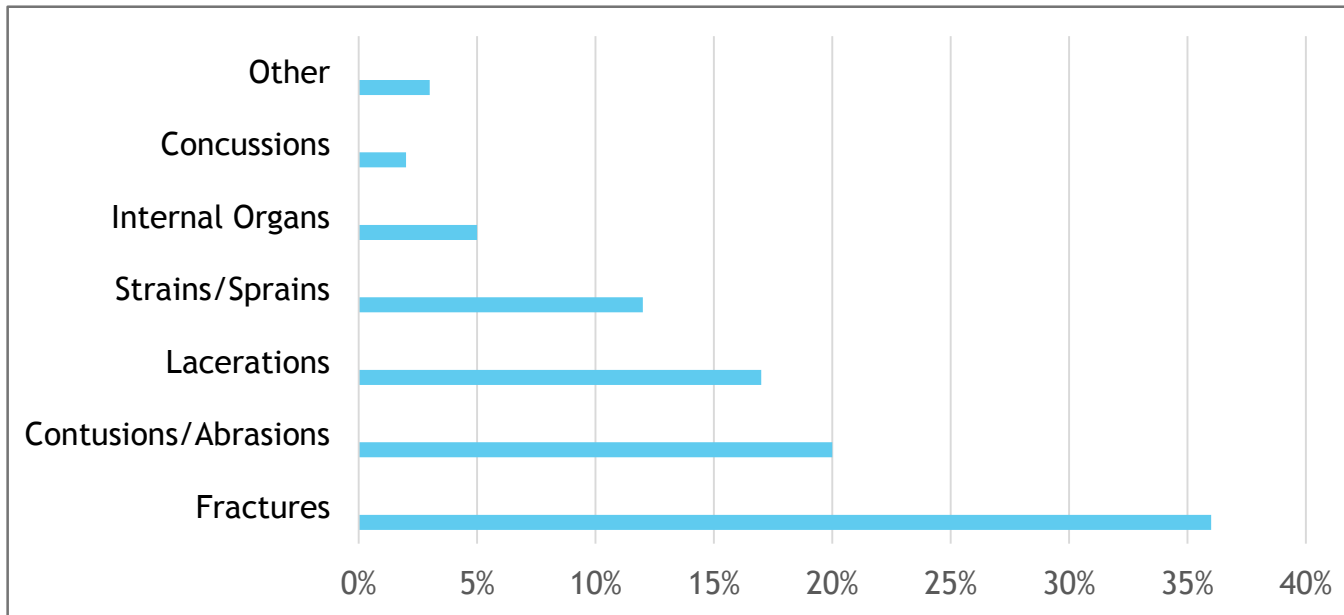
# **40** deaths were associated with playground equipment between 2001 and 2008

- Average age was 6 years-old; median age was 4 years-old
- 27 deaths were the result of hangings or other asphyxiations
- 7 deaths were the result of head or neck injuries

CPSC October 29, 2009



# What are types of injuries children are having at playgrounds?

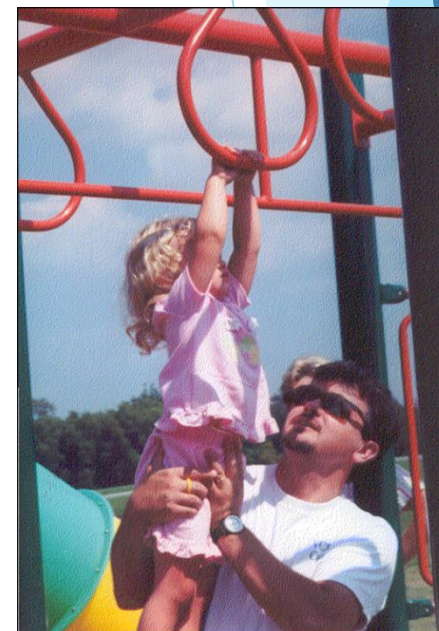


CPSC October 29, 2009

# On what type of equipment are children being injured?



- 23% -climbers
- 22% -swings
- 17% -slides
- 9% -overhead ladders



CPSC October 29, 2009

# Why do these injuries occur?

- Falls to surface
- Gaps and entanglements
- Unsecured fixtures
- Splinters, cuts, gashes
- Broken/missing parts
- Obstacles in the pathway

CPSC October 29, 2009

# Effect Of Playground Injuries

# How do these injuries affect environments?

## Social

Injuries are long lasting to an individual

Family life

School and home interactions

Extra care for children

## Economic

\$1.2 billion dollars are spent  
on playground injuries

Consider the injury cost,  
family cost for loss of work,  
and litigation costs for a  
broken arm

## Political

Distrust of the agency you  
work for

Negative rather than positive  
publicity

Governmental distrust

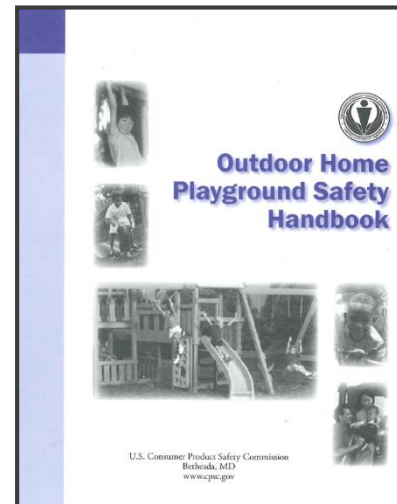
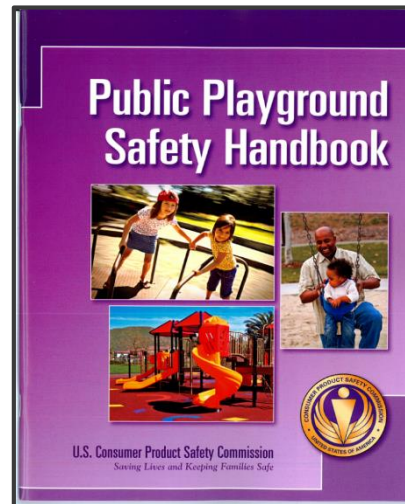
# **Recommendations for playground injury prevention**

# Playground Guidelines and Standards



# Consumer Product Safety Commission

[www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) (800) 638-2772 Ext. 300



# ASTM International

Creates standards for the technical specifications of playground equipment

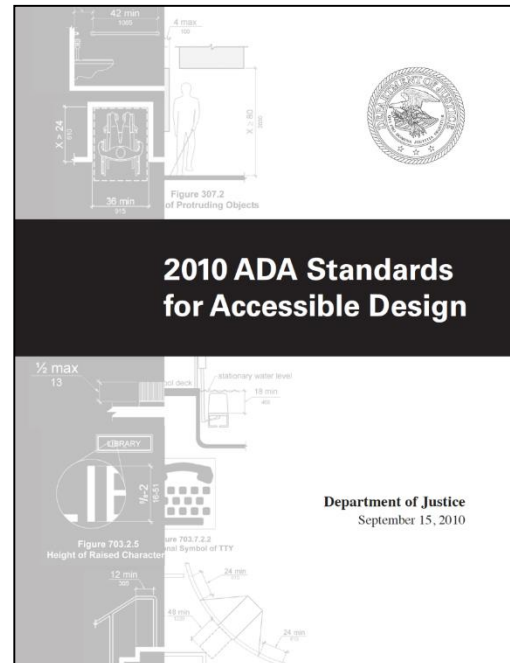
- ▶ 1487 – Playground equipment standard
- ▶ 1292- Surfacing Standard
- ▶ 1951 – Accessibility
- ▶ 2049 – Standards for Fences and Barriers



# Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design

[www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov)



# National Program for Playground Safety

Established in 1995 with a funding grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1995-2005) to raise awareness for the need for playground safety and injury prevention.

NPPS's role continues to advocate and education at the local, state, and national level.

2006-today operating with services and products.

Promoting and advocating for SAFE™, inclusive, and high quality play areas for children.

# Children love to spend time outdoors!

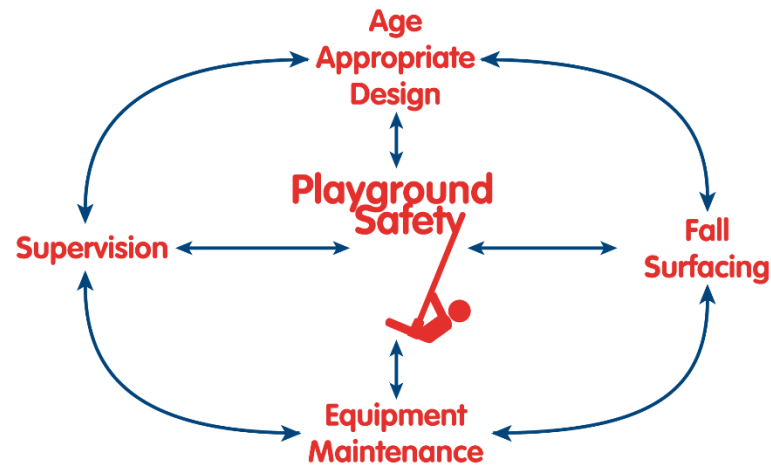




We have a responsibility to provide children  
SAFE™ time outdoors!



# Risk Factors In A Play Environment



# NPPS's Report Card

**America's Playgrounds SAFETY REPORT CARD**

DOES YOUR PLAYGROUND MAKE THE GRADE?

Evaluate the risk factors in your playground by using the following format. A complete explanation of the criteria is on the back of the sheet.

	YES	NO
<b>SUPERVISION</b>		
Adults present when children are on equipment		
Children can be easily viewed when on equipment		
Children can be viewed in crawl spaces		
Rules posted regarding expected behavior		
<b>AGE-APPROPRIATE DESIGN</b>		
Playgrounds have separate areas for ages 2-5 and 5-12		
Signage indicating age group for equipment provided		
Platforms allow change of directions to get on/off structure		
Platforms have appropriate guardrails		
Equipment design prevents climbing outside the structure		
Supporting structure prevents climbing on it		
<b>FALL SURFACING</b>		
Appropriate surfacing provided		
Six-foot use zone has appropriate surface		
Appropriate depth of loose fill provided		
Concrete footings are covered		
Surface free of foreign objects		
<b>EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE</b>		
Equipment is free of broken parts		
Equipment is free of missing parts		
Equipment is free of protruding bolts		
Equipment is free of noticeable gaps		
Equipment is free of head entrapments		
Equipment is free of rust		
Equipment is free of splinters		
Equipment is free of cracks/holes		

**Scoring system**  
For every "Yes" your playground receives one point. Total up the number of points for each section.

**Supervision** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Age appropriate** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Fall Surfacing** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Equipment Maint.** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Total** \_\_\_\_\_

**23-20 = A** Congratulations on having a SAFE playground. Make sure you maintain this level of excellence.

**19-16 = B** Your playground is on its way to providing a safe environment for children. Work on the areas checked "No".

**15-12 = C** Your playground has potential for being hazardous for children. Take corrective measures.

**11-8 = D** Children are at risk on this playground. Start today to make improvements!

**7 and below** Do not allow children on the playground. Call 1-800-554-PLAY.

Copyright © 1999 National Program for Playground Safety 1-800-554-PLAY

- National Study Conducted in 1999 & 2004
- Visited playgrounds in every state
- Visited
  - Schools
  - Childcare Centers
  - Parks

Free download at [NPPS's Report Card](#)



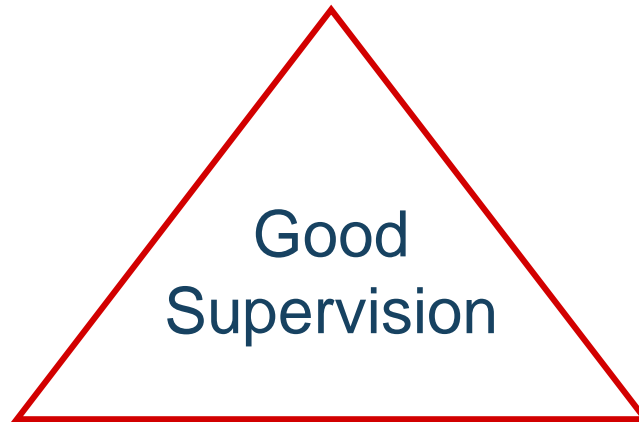
# **S**upervision

**Risk Factor #1**

# Supervision Model

A= Anticipation

B= Behavior



C= Context

# Supervision Kit



# **Appropriate Developmental Design**

**Risk Factor #2**



- 30% under age of 5
- Head/face injuries account for 49%
- 10% of all injuries in commercial child care facilities



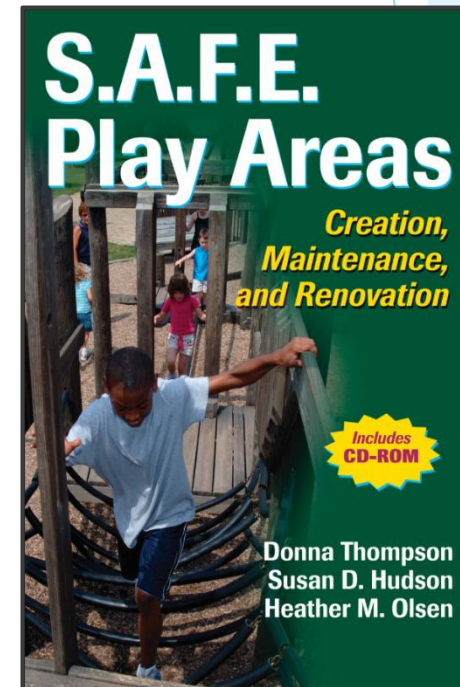
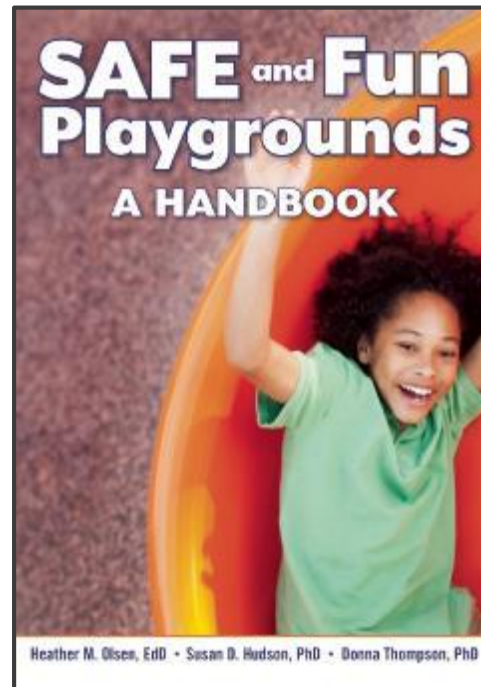
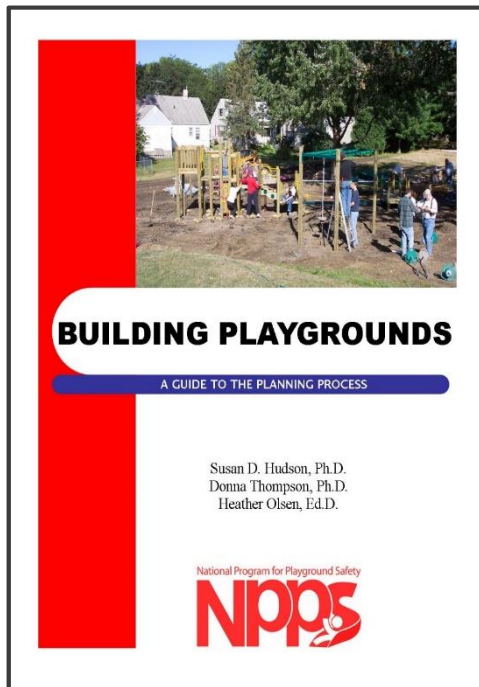
Outdoor play environments need to be planned with an understanding of best practices for children.

# One Size Does Not Fit All Children

- ▶ Consider the Physical, Emotional, Social, and Intellectual abilities of children.
- ▶ Playground equipment standards (ASTM/CPSC)
  - 6 months – 23 months
  - 2-5 years of age
  - 5-12 years of age



# Planning Is Critical





# **F**all Surfacing

**Risk Factor #3**

# How are children getting hurt?



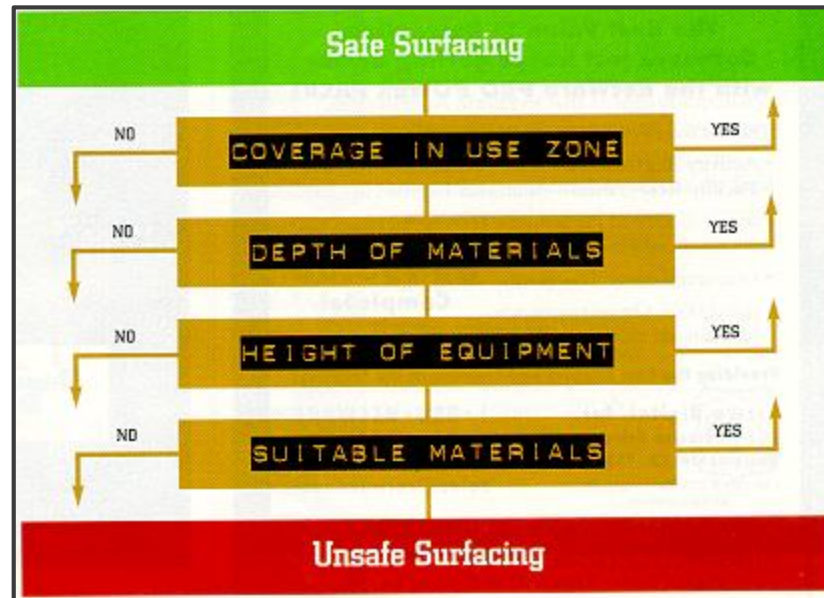
- 70 % of reported incidents.
- Equipment over 8 feet has close to 3 times the injury rate of equipment under that height  
(Laforest, et al & Villan, et al)

# CPSC & ASTM Warning



Installation over a hard surface such as asphalt, concrete, or packed earth may result in serious injury or death from falls (ASTM & CPSC).

# SAFE™ Surfacing Decision-Making Model



# **E**quipment Maintenance

**Risk Factor #4**

# Adopting A Maintenance Policy

This policy constitutes the ground rules for who, what, when and where of maintenance.

The policy also is a written statement demonstrating the “Standard of Care” for outdoor play areas.





A head entrapment problem.



Potential sharp point.

Educate parents on hot surfaces.



# Crush and Shearing Points



Places to look:

- Moving parts
- Loose parts
- Riding toys

# Entanglement and Impalements

S-hooks should be completely closed so a dime can not pass through the opening.



# Suspended Hazards

Strangulation  
hazard





Environment maintenance includes loose parts, toys, and play materials.

# Environments need to be inspected on a regular basis

**Playground Inspection Checklist**

Name of Playground \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check the box after each step is completed and note where maintenance is needed.

	<u>Needs</u>
	<u>Maintenance</u>

**General Upkeep**

- Look for miscellaneous debris, broken glass, needles, litter, ropes, etc. \_\_\_\_\_
- Check for missing or full trash containers. \_\_\_\_\_
- Search for damage to the equipment. \_\_\_\_\_
- Check for obstacles in equipment use zones. \_\_\_\_\_

**Surfacing**

- Check for inadequate levels of surfacing materials. \_\_\_\_\_
- Check for areas of compaction, kick-out, or wear. \_\_\_\_\_
- Look for potential drainage problems. \_\_\_\_\_
- Examine sidewalks, paved surfaces, steps, and platforms for loose surface materials and debris. \_\_\_\_\_

**General Hazards**

- Check for sharp points, corners, and edges. \_\_\_\_\_
- Look for protrusions and projections. \_\_\_\_\_
- Check for missing or damaged protective caps or plugs. \_\_\_\_\_
- Search for potential clothing entanglement hazards such as gaps. \_\_\_\_\_
- Look for pins or crush points and exposed moving parts. \_\_\_\_\_
- Check for potential trip hazards. \_\_\_\_\_
- Check for low hanging tree branches. \_\_\_\_\_

**Equipment Deterioration**

- Check wooden equipment for splinters, checking, large cracks, warping, and rot. \_\_\_\_\_
- Look for rust, corrosion, or chipped paint on metal structures. \_\_\_\_\_
- Inspect for holes and cracks in plastic structures. \_\_\_\_\_
- Check for unstable or exposed anchoring. \_\_\_\_\_


**Hardware Security**

- Check for loose or worn connecting, covering, or fastening devices. \_\_\_\_\_
- Look for open S-hooks. \_\_\_\_\_
- Examine all moving parts for wear. \_\_\_\_\_
- Check for kinked, twisted, or broken chains. \_\_\_\_\_

Completed By \_\_\_\_\_

National Program for Playground Safety 1-800-554-PLAY

**America's Playgrounds**  
**SAFETY REPORT CARD**



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Equipment is free of cracks/holes		

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**Scoring system**

For every 'Yes' your playground receives one point. Total up the number of points for each section:

Supervision \_\_\_\_\_

Age appropriate \_\_\_\_\_

Fall Surfacing \_\_\_\_\_

Equipment Maint \_\_\_\_\_

**Total \_\_\_\_\_**

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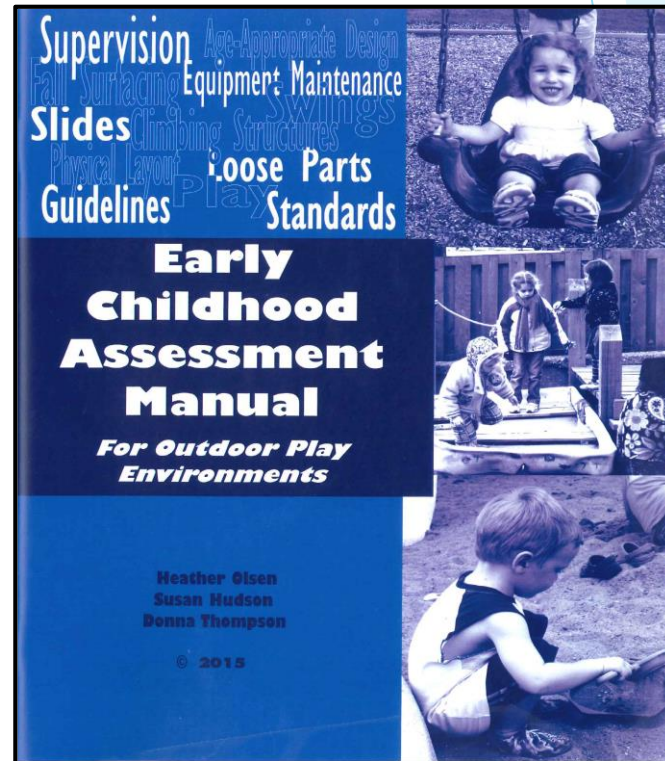
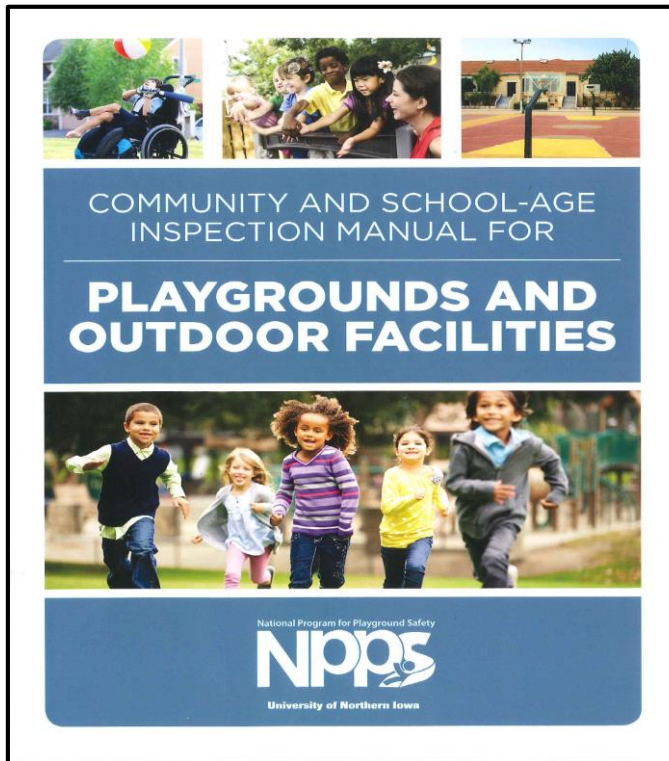
# Become a Kid Checker



**kid checker**

	Supervision	Age Appropriate	Fall Surfacing	Equipment Maintenance	
<p>Help us determine if your playground is safe!</p> <p>Check YES or NO in each box to determine whether or not your playground has problems.</p> <p><b>The National Program for Playground Safety</b></p> <p><small>Developed by the National Program for Playground Safety</small></p>	<p><b>RED</b></p> <p><small>Use this color for a RED flag</small></p>	<p>Are adults at the playground?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>Adults should always be at the playground if there are kids.</small></p>	<p>Are the play areas separated?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>If play areas are provided for preschoolers (ages 2-5), there should be a separate play area for school age children (ages 6-12).</small></p>	<p>Does the surface have appropriate materials?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>Appropriate materials are sand, pea gravel, wood products, expanded rubber, rubber mulch or poured-in-place rubber.</small></p>	<p>Are all the spaces less than 3 1/2 inches or greater than 9 inches?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>Spaces that are between 3 1/2 inches and 9 inches can cause entrapment.</small></p>
	<p><b>WHITE</b></p> <p><small>Use this color for a WHITE flag</small></p>	<p>Can adults see children in crowd spaces?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>Crowd spaces are places where children can't see.</small></p>	<p>Is the equipment at the correct height?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>Equipment should be below 8 feet for children ages 2-12.</small></p>	<p>Are the materials 12 inches deep?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>Soft pea gravel, wood products or expanded rubber should be 12 inches deep.</small></p>	<p>Is the equipment in good condition?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>The equipment should not have any broken parts.</small></p>
	<p><b>BLUE</b></p> <p><small>Use this color for a BLUE flag</small></p>	<p>Are there rules posted?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>Rules should be posted on the playground to tell children what to do and what not to do.</small></p>	<p>Are signs posted about supervision and separation of equipment?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>There should be signs about adult supervision and separation of play areas (2-5 and 6-12).</small></p>	<p>Is the playground environment clean?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>The playground area should not have trash on the ground.</small></p>	<p>Is the equipment surface smooth?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO</p> <p><small>The playground should have no rust or splinters on the equipment.</small></p>

Once you have completed each box, please turn this page over to find out what to do about problems.



Resources to help keep environments SAFE™

# Recap: Playground Safety Simple Safety Tips

- Educate children, families, and local programs who serve children through trainings, social media, activities, and outreach programs.
- Check playgrounds to ensure environments are SAFE™
- Continue the conversation of playground safety at the local, state, and national level
- Use resources that are available



# Resources

- To download the NPPS's Safety Report Card, Kid Checker program, and Playground Safety Educational Resources:  
-[www.playgroundsafety.org](http://www.playgroundsafety.org)
- To download the Consumer Product Safety Commission's guidelines  
-[www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/122149/325.pdf](http://www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/122149/325.pdf)
- To learn more about playground injury data  
-[www.childrensafetynetwork.org/injury-topics/playground-safety](http://www.childrensafetynetwork.org/injury-topics/playground-safety)
- To participate in online certification training  
-[www.playgroundsafety.org](http://www.playgroundsafety.org)
- To learn more about playground injury data  
-[www.childrensafetynetwork.org/injury-topics/playground-safety](http://www.childrensafetynetwork.org/injury-topics/playground-safety)
- To follow playground safety on Facebook and Twitter

# Safe at Play Program

Ann & Robert H. Lurie  
Children's Hospital of Chicago  
Injury Prevention and Research  
Center  
April 27, 2016



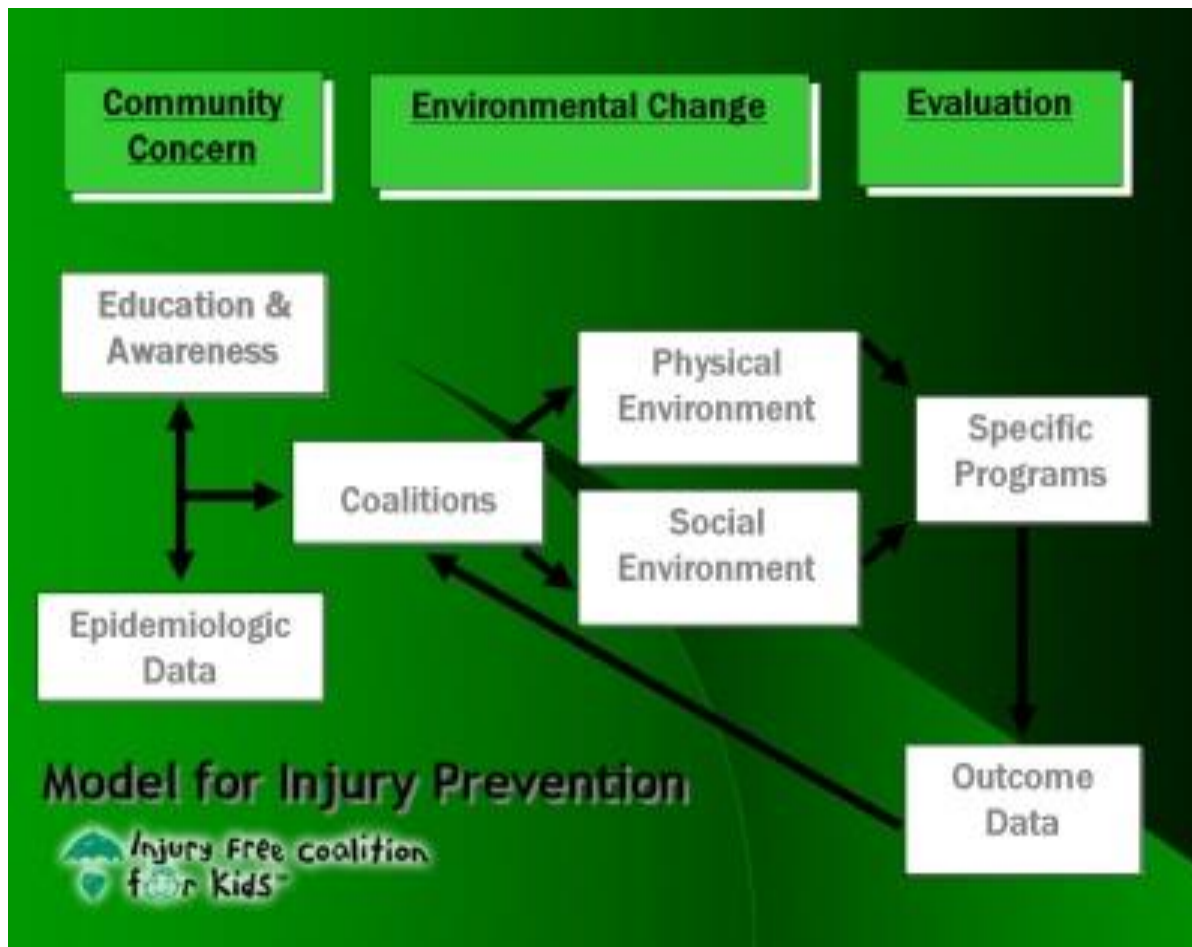
# Why Is a Children's Hospital Interested in Playgrounds?



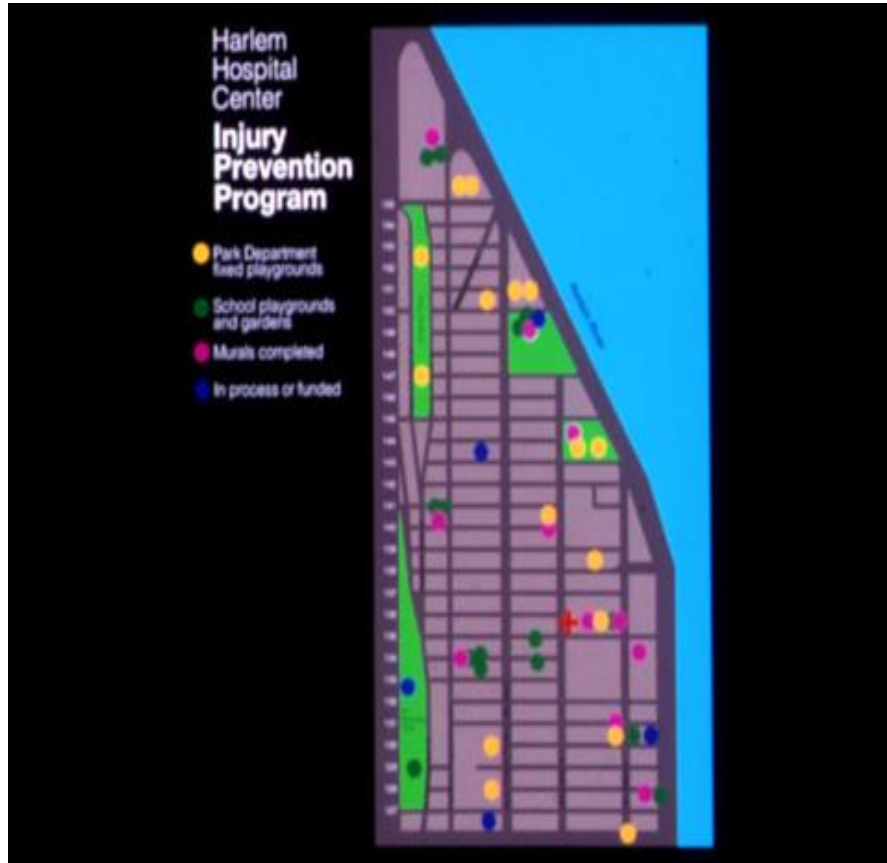
# Injury Free Coalition for Kids

- IFCK national program comprised of hospital-based, community oriented programs
- Started at Harlem Hospital by Dr. Barbara Barlow, a pediatric trauma surgeon
- Efforts anchored in research, education and advocacy
- All sites are physician led programs driven by the Coalition's mission: preventing injury to children
- Currently 30 sites located throughout the country
- Lurie Children's has been a site for more than 20 years

# Injury Free Coalition for Kids Model



# Harlem Hospital Program











# Playground Changes Made by Harlem Hospital

- Existing playgrounds were inspected, photographed, and graded by Consumer Product Safety Standards, and
- Reports were sent to school and parks and recreation officials. The reports spurred the Department of Parks and Recreation to replace outdated, unsafe equipment in all the public parks in Harlem
- Cement and asphalt surfaces underneath play equipment were replaced with more appropriate surfacing
- New playgrounds for the community schools and day care centers were built with a combination of private and public funds to provide alternative play areas to the streets.

\*Excerpted from - A National Program for Injury Prevention in Children and Adolescents: The Injury Free Coalition for Kids. *Journal of Urban Health*. 2005.



# Safe Playgrounds and Pedestrian Injury

- Traffic injuries were a leading cause of severe childhood injury in this population (16%), second only to falls (24%).
- During intervention period pedestrian injuries declined by 45%
- Interventions included renovating playgrounds, Safety Street program, Urban bicycle program
- Authors' conclusion - Creating safe and accessible play areas may be effective in preventing traffic injuries to children in these communities

\*Durkin, MS, Laraque, D, Lubman, I, Barlow, B. Epidemiology and Prevention of Traffic Injuries to Urban Children and Adolescents. *Pediatrics*. 1999; 103(6).

# Concern About Overall Health of Children

- Physical play is associated with a decreased risk of obesity, improved self-esteem and improved academic performance (studies published in Active Living Research, Pediatrics and Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine)
- Playgrounds can play an important role in supporting physical activity and maintaining a health BMI in children, especially in dense urban environments like Chicago (studies published in Pediatrics and Health Place)
- Quality and accessibility of playground influence their safety and use (studies in Health Place, Journal of Community Health, Preventive Medicine)
- Poorly maintained playgrounds are less likely to engage children have been shown to contribute to higher injury rates (studies published in Psychological Science and Pediatrics)

- Playground Surveys and Inspections
- Playground Builds

## Two Components of Safe at Play



# State of Chicago Park District Playgrounds in 2005

- Many were more than 20 years old
- Most contained wood chip surfacing that was difficult to keep at appropriate depth – wood chip surfacing placed over concrete initially
- Funding of new/replacement playgrounds complicated
  - Chicago Park District subscribed to 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 formula
- Worked with Community Liaison at Chicago Park District to perform playground inspections as part of “building a case” for new playgrounds

# Playground Survey Project



- IPRC staff wanted to look at playgrounds city-wide not selected playgrounds
- Permission from Chicago Park District to work on this survey
- Partnered with Friends of the Parks
- Funding from Kohl's Cares
- Began surveying Chicago Park District Playgrounds in 2005
  - 500+ playgrounds in the Park District system
  - Use tool developed by the National Program for Playground Safety but changed slightly
  - Some years –all playgrounds surveyed
  - Some years – just failing playgrounds from prior year re-surveyed
  - Last year – oldest “new” playgrounds were surveyed



# State of Chicago Parks in 2005



# State of Chicago Parks in 2005



# What the survey looks for

- Age-appropriate equipment
  - Height and type
- Appropriate surfacing
  - Depth of wood chips or condition of rubber
- Equipment condition and maintenance issues
  - Stability
  - Broken/Missing equipment
    - Rotting wood
    - Head Entrapment
    - Entanglement/protrusion hazards
  - Swing s-hooks properly closed



# Chicago Playground Safety Report Card

Playground Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Region: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_ GPS Longitudinal coord \_\_\_\_\_ GPS Latitudinal Coord \_\_\_\_\_

Yes No Comments

AGE-APPROPRIATE DESIGN			
1. Playgrounds have separate areas for ages 2-5 and 5-12			
2. Platforms have appropriate guardrails			
3. Platforms allow change of directions to get on/off structure			
FALL SURFACING			
4. Suitable surfacing materials provided throughout playground such as loose fill (wood chips) or rubberized surfacing			
5. Height of all equipment is 8 feet or lower			
6. Appropriate depth (12 inches) of loose fill provided			
7. Six foot use zone has appropriate surfacing			
8. Concrete footings are covered by surfacing			
9. Surface free of foreign objects			
EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE			
10. Equipment is free of head entrapments – spaces measuring between 3.5 and 9 inches			
11. Equipment is free of broken parts			
12. Equipment is free of missing parts			
13. Equipment is well-anchored and stable			
14. Equipment is free of protruding bolts and nails			
15. Equipment is free of rust and peeling paint			
16. Equipment is free of splinters			
17. Equipment is free of cracks/holes in plastic equipment			
18. Swing links are strong – S-hooks are properly closed			
PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT			
19. Tree limbs are well-trimmed and not close to equipment			
20. There are no tripping hazards such as tree roots, uneven concrete, etc.			
21. Playground is properly fenced from street traffic			
22. Equipment is located away from electrical posts			
TOTAL NUMBER OF YES/NO RESPONSES			=
TOTAL RAW POINTS	+	-	=
TOTAL SCORE			=
FINAL PERCENTAGE (Total SCORE/RESPONSES )			

# Data Collection

- Done in summer months
- 2-3 data collectors
- Alerted Chicago Park District when a major maintenance issue was present
- Have used Android phones and paper/pencil to collect data
  - Paper/pencil was quicker – issue at playgrounds with WiFi

# Data Entry and Results

- Each playground received a score through a percentage basis
  - 70% or higher received a passing score
  - 69% and lower received a failing score

# Field Photos of Common Safety Issues

- Head Entrapments



- Rotting Wood





# Field Photos of Common Safety Issues



# Highlights of Results

- 2015 - Surveyed first round of "Chicago Plays" (62)renovated playgrounds – all received a passing score
- 2014 – Surveyed all playgrounds re-done (53) before "Chicago Plays" – all received a passing score
- 2011- Surveyed just failing playgrounds
  - 154 of 2010 failing playgrounds were surveyed
  - Mean playground score of failing playgrounds improved from 2010 – 61% to 67% in 2011
- 2010 – All (459) surveyed
  - 73% mean score
- 2009 – All (467) surveyed
  - 72% mean score

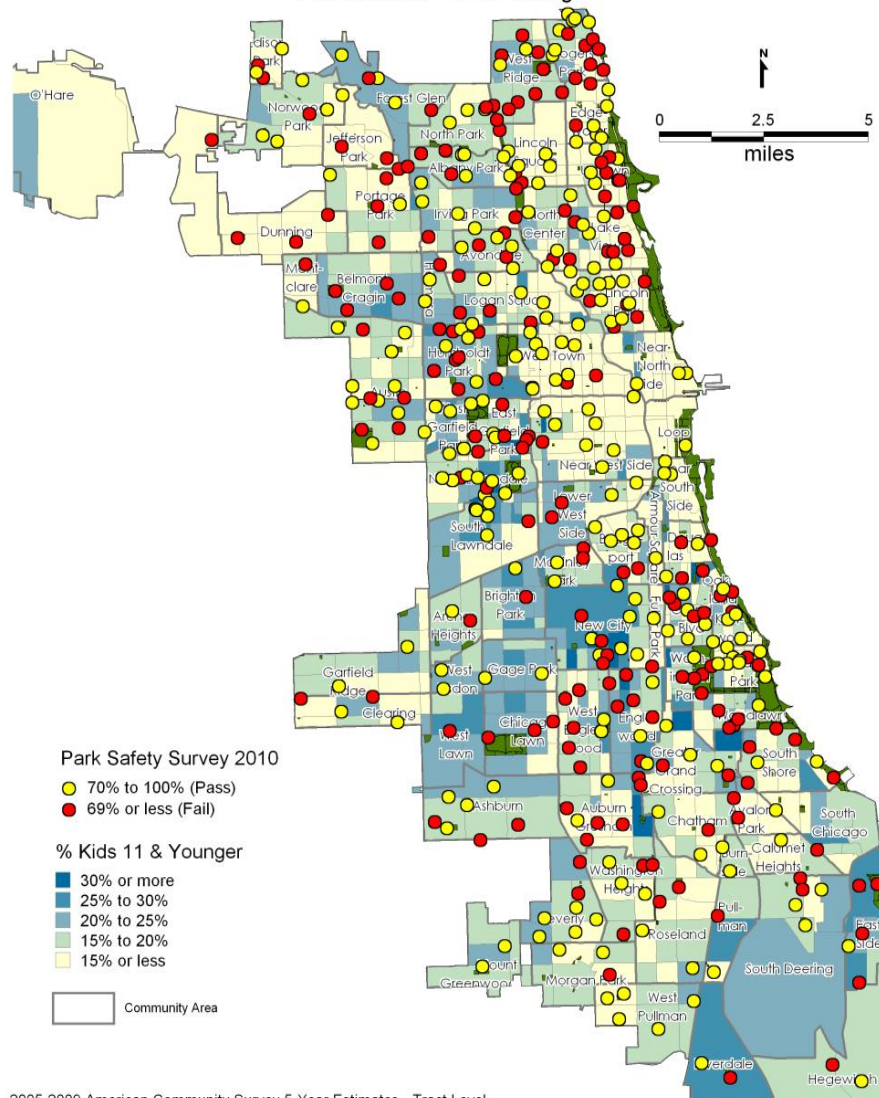
# Pediatrics Study Published

- February, 2013 – Study published
- Examined results in depth with statistical analysis
- Used GIS to reveal visually any disparities between neighborhoods
  - Some findings
    - Playgrounds were more likely to fail because of problems with fall surfacing and equipment maintenance
    - Neighborhoods with a higher percentage of children, especially minority children, and a higher percentage of the population living in poverty had both fewer playgrounds and more failing playgrounds

Allen, E, Hill, Amy, Tranter, E, Sheehan, K. Playground Safety and Quality in Chicago. *Pediatrics*. 2013; 131; 1-9.

# 2010 Maps – Population of Children

## Playground Safety Survey Percent Kids 11 and Younger

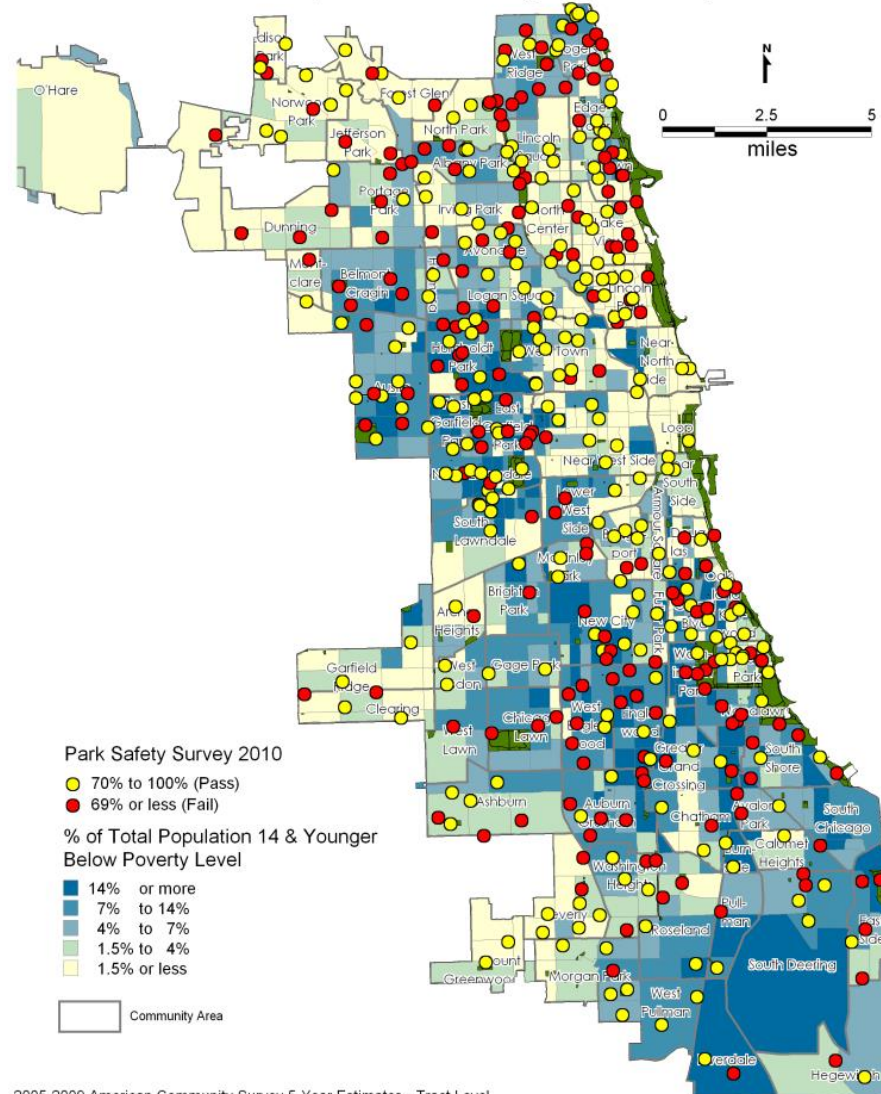




# 2010 Maps – Population of Children Below Poverty Line

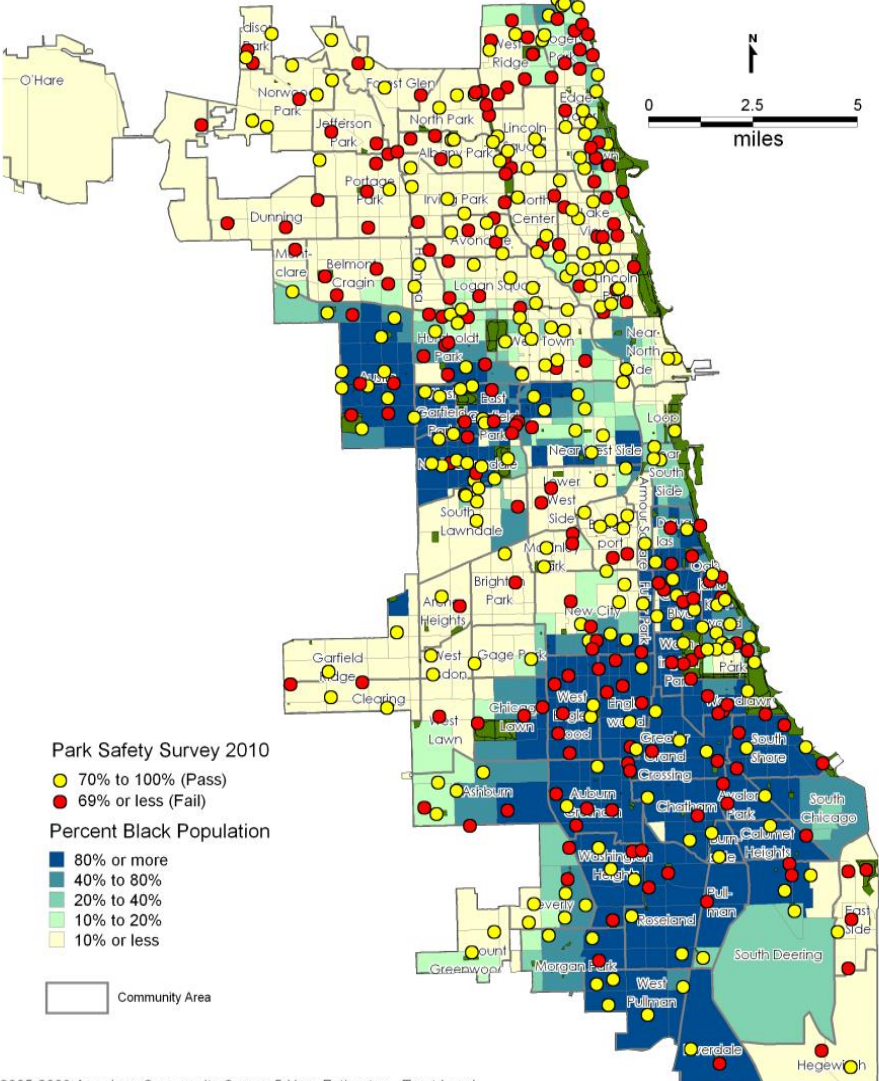
## Playground Safety Survey

Percent of Total Population 14 and Younger Below Poverty Level



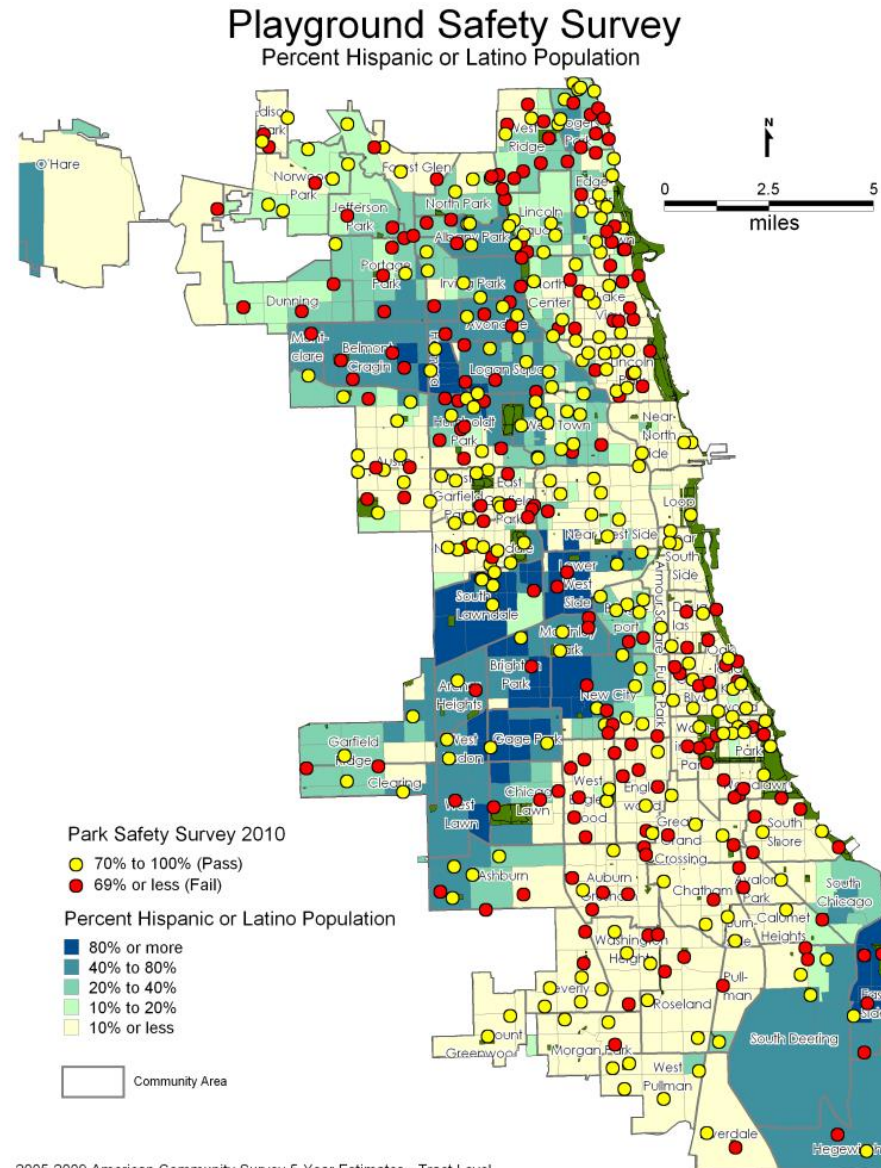
# 2010 Maps – African American Population

## Playground Safety Survey Percent Black Population



2005-2009 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates - Tract Level.

# 2010 Maps – Latino Population





# Chicago Plays – Game Changer

- Chicago Plays - Launched by Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Park District in March, 2013
- 5 Year Renovation project for 300 aging playgrounds throughout city
- Went from renovating 15 playgrounds per season to 60 playgrounds
- Survey scores were used for initial decisions for priority

# Other Progress with Park District

- Responding to immediate requests for maintenance from surveyors
- Training on playground maintenance for “riggers” in Spring, 2012

# Playground Inspections

- Certified playground safety inspector
  - Certified by the National Recreation and Park Association
  - Perform more detailed inspections at schools, parks and childcare centers
  - Issue a written report
  - Needed for NAEYC Accreditation so primarily focused on childcare center and pre-schools
  - Approximately 30 playgrounds inspected per year

# Playground Builds



# Playground Builds

- Completed 20 playgrounds since 2002
- Diverse neighborhoods and sites
  - Childcare centers
  - Chicago Park District sites
- Developed a “hybrid” community build process
  - Facilitates community/organizational buy-in but makes sure professional crew does all post setting/concrete footings and site prep

# Before and After





# Thanks!





# Questions



Please enter your questions in the Q & A box

# Thank you!

**Please fill out our short evaluation:**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BWN32ZK>

**Register for our next webinar:**

*Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect to Create a World  
Where Every Child Can Thrive*

May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016

2:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET

[http://edc.adobeconnect.com/e78m1mc5xy5/event/event\\_info.html](http://edc.adobeconnect.com/e78m1mc5xy5/event/event_info.html)