



# Supervision

*Prepared by the Health & Safety Specialists at Child Care Aware® of North Dakota*

Supervision is basic to the prevention of harm. Caring for Our Children, a comprehensive set of health and safety standards for out-of-home care settings, defines supervision as “keeping infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-aged children within sight and hearing at all times”. The rationale is that to prevent harm or to rescue in an emergency, an adult must be able to hear and see the children. This may seem to be overly cautious to some, but providers must remember that parents have entrusted the well-being of their children to their provider. Parents have a contract with child care programs to properly supervise their children, and this responsibility should not be taken lightly.

Caring for children in a child care setting is different from caring for one’s own children in the child’s home. Settings are usually made up of several children, in the same age group or in a group of mixed ages, in a home or a facility full of activity shared by children who have various personalities and different rules of behavior.

## Supervision Recommendations:

As children grow and develop, each new stage presents different risk factors for child care providers to consider.

| RISK FACTORS  | BEST PRACTICE   |
|---|---|
| <b>EATING</b>   |   |
| Children left alone while eating could choke.   | Children should always be in a provider’s sight while eating and should not be left unattended.   |
| Propping a bottle for a baby to drink may cause choking.  | Always hold an infant when feeding with a bottle.   |
| Allowing children to walk, run, lie down, or play while eating or drinking may cause choking or injury.   | Children should sit when they are eating or drinking. Infants should be properly secured in highchairs, toddlers should be in low chairs or booster seats, older children should sit in chairs.   |
| <b>SLEEPING</b>   |   |
| Children may be afraid, ill or need attention. Children may hurt other children.  | Children need to be within sight and hearing during rest times so the provider is available to reassure children or intervene if needed.  |
| While supervision cannot prevent SIDS, it can prevent deaths due to suffocation and entrapment while they are sleeping in cribs/playpens. Toddlers and preschoolers are independent and adventurous by nature. They will explore their surroundings when left unsupervised. | Visual checks should be done every 10-15 minutes. Place babies completely flat on their back in a crib with no soft bedding. Keep babies’ heads/faces uncovered. Each sleeping room should have a hearing monitor, and the receiver should be carried by the provider, or the provider should stay in the same room with the receiver. Sleeping rooms should be safety proofed in case children explore the environment if on cot/mat or get out of the crib/playpen. |
| Fire is an unexpected risk. Providers must be able to reach children quickly to get them to a safe setting.   | When possible, remain in the sleeping area with the children. If not possible, remain on the same level as the children sleeping. Preferably keep children on main level to make evacuation safer/faster.   |
| <b>PLAY</b>   |   |
| Infants can roll off a surface, choke, have breathing difficulty, or be injured by older, mobile children.  | Infants should be in sight at all times. They should not be placed on furniture. Highchairs, car seats, swings or bouncy chairs should be used only for their intended purpose and for short amounts of time while being directly supervised by the provider. (see Child Care Aware® handout on restrictive equipment)  |
| Most toddlers do not have well developed coordination. Their shaky balance triggers falls against hard objects. Since toddlers are adventurous, they love to climb up on furniture, stairs, slides, and swings before they are physically skilled.                          | Toddlers should be in sight at all times. Keep heavy objects stable – secure shelves, large TVs, and furniture to avoid tipping. Talk with toddlers about staying safe.   |

| RISK FACTORS   | BEST PRACTICE  |
|--|--|
| <b>PLAY (continued)</b>  |  |
| School-age children want independence and won't seek permission for activities. They may venture out on their own. They may leave the yard, climb a tree, or cross the street.               | School-age children should be within hearing and vision at all times. Establish rules together and discuss them regularly.   |
| <b>DIAPERING/TOILETING</b>   |  |
| Infants/toddlers can fall/roll off an elevated surface.  | Always keep your hand on a child on an elevated surface.   |
| Preschool/school-aged children may need assistance with toileting, have opportunity to explore things in the bathroom or take part in unsafe behavior when using the bathroom independently. | Children should let the provider know when they are using the bathroom. Provider should be within hearing in case the child needs help. Provider should also note the time the child is in the bathroom. After the child leaves the bathroom, the provider should ask child if he/she washed his/her hands and check the bathroom to make sure toilet is flushed, toilet seat is unsoiled, and supplies are stocked. |

### Other important considerations

- In family child care, it is usually necessary for providers to leave children for short periods of time since they work alone, for example to use the toilet. When children are out of sight, they must still be within hearing range. Children should be in a nearby safe place (for children under age two an approved crib/playpen), involved in low-risk activities when not in view and providers should return to the children as soon as possible. Examples of low-risk activities to occupy children include puzzles, coloring, short educational video, Lego's or books – keep in mind the children's development/risk factors when selecting activities.
- Listening to what children talk about is as important as having them in sight so providers can influence subject matter and intervene when guidance is needed.
- Conducting periodic head counts is recommended for all settings to ensure all children are present.
- Statistics show that more than a third of those who sexually abuse children are under the age of 18; therefore, supervision is not only necessary to prevent injuries, but to also prevent children from abusing other children. (For more information, visit [www.stopitnow.org](http://www.stopitnow.org))
- Children of all ages should always be closely supervised and never left unattended during high-risk activities such as eating, water play (swimming pools, sprinklers, sand/water table activities), outdoor play (jungle gyms, wagons, trikes, and bikes), on field trips, etc.
- Children who are outside must always be accompanied by an adult. If the provider needs to go inside for any reason, the provider should take the children along.
- Providers should arrange their environment to ensure the best supervision possible; ideally, providers should be able to see all areas of a room. Move around the room to evaluate the room from all angles. Assessing the setting on a monthly basis allows providers to adjust to children's changing abilities. The use of devices such as mirrors and baby monitors can aid supervision in challenging settings. Removing the back of shelving and replacing with plexi-glass as well as purchasing gates with plexi-glass panels can also improve supervision. Using furniture that is not taller than the children, such as low shelves, is recommended.
- Good communication with parents is very important. However, it is best to limit conversation and/or postpone until a time when you are not responsible for caring for children. Politely asking parents to resume the conversation later will show parents you have children as your first priority.

### Liability recommendations

Running a child care business creates greater risks of injuries. Providers can never eliminate these risks, but can work to minimize risks, protect the business and themselves in the event of a major incident. It is highly recommended that child care providers purchase business liability insurance. (Contact Child Care Aware® of North Dakota for more information on liability insurance.)

#### Resources:

Caring for Our Children, National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2019

Healthy Young Children: A Manual for Programs, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, 2014

[tomcopelandblog.com](http://tomcopelandblog.com)

Family Day Care Rating Scale, Thelma Harms and Richard M. Clifford, Additional Notes 2002

Stop It Now! [www.stopitnow.org](http://www.stopitnow.org)

Revised 10/23