

## **Module 4: Safety - Background Reading**

### **School/Playground - Why Kids Are at Risk**

More than 53 million children in the United States spend almost one-fourth of their total waking hours in school or on school property. So it's not surprising that an estimated 10 to 25 percent of the more than 14 million unintentional injuries sustained by children each year occur in and around schools. The most common sites of injury are on playgrounds, in physical education classes and organized sports activities, and around school buses.

#### **Playground risks:**

Playground injury is the most common school-related injury among children ages 5 to 14. Falls account for 80 percent of the most severe playground equipment-related injuries (typically head injuries and fractures), and the risk of injury is four times greater if a child falls from playground equipment that is more than 1.5 meters high (approximately 5 feet).

Strangulation, typically occurring when children's clothing becomes tangled or when kids become trapped in equipment, is a serious playground risk. Strangulation accounts for nearly 56 percent of all playground equipment-related deaths.

Whatever the cause, kids are at greater risk of injury when unsupervised. Lack of supervision is associated with 40 percent of playground injuries. A recent study found that children play without adult supervision more often on school playgrounds (32 percent of the time) than on playgrounds in parks or childcare centers. Young children who play on equipment designed for older kids are also at increased risk.

#### **Sports-related risks:**

Sports injury can be serious: almost 75 percent of all school-related spinal cord injuries occur during sports. Among organized school sports, football has the highest injury rate, followed by basketball, baseball, wrestling and gymnastics. Most organized sports-related injuries (60 percent) occur during practice rather than during games. Yet a recent Safe Kids survey indicated that most kids and parents do not take the same safety precautions during practice as they do for a game. The majority of sports injuries result from falls, collisions, being struck by objects or overexertion.

Although risk of injury is proportionally greater for students playing school sports, physical education classes result in a greater total number of injuries. For more information on how to help your kids play safely, check out our [Sports Safety Tips & Resources](#).

#### **School bus-related risks:**

School buses are one of the safest ways to travel to and from school. Still, an estimated 4,500 children were injured in school bus-related incidents in 2001. Ninety percent of those nonfatal injured were occupants. However, pedestrians account for more than 40 percent of the school bus-related deaths.

Many injuries occur when children are boarding or exiting the school bus, because the driver has a "blind spot" that extends approximately 10 feet around the bus. Children – especially younger children – may not be aware of this blind spot and may mistakenly believe that if they can see the bus, the bus driver can see them. Most school bus-related pedestrian deaths occur in the afternoon – 38 percent between 3 p.m. and 4 p.m.

#### **Other risk factors:**

- Older children (ages 10 to 14) account for 46 percent of school-related injuries.
- Boys are three times more likely to sustain a school-related injury than girls.
- Half of all school-age pedestrians killed in school bus-related crashes are between the ages of 5 and 7.

# Module 4: Safety

## Safety Self Assessment

(referred to as *safety scavenger hunt* in the module)

Go on a site safety scavenger hunt. Find each of the following safety items, on the sheet write down where they are in relationship to your program area.

■ Fire Alarm Pull	
■ Fire Extinguisher	
■ First Aid Kit	
■ Locked Medicine Box	
■ Information on your evacuation Plan	
■ Emergency Contact Information for program participants	
■ Pick Up or Approved Release Information	
■ Allergy Information for program participants	
■ Emergency Phone Numbers	
■ Emergency Procedures, Lock down, evacuation, non compliant parent	
■ Safety Plugs in All Outlets	
■ Locked Cleaning Supplies	