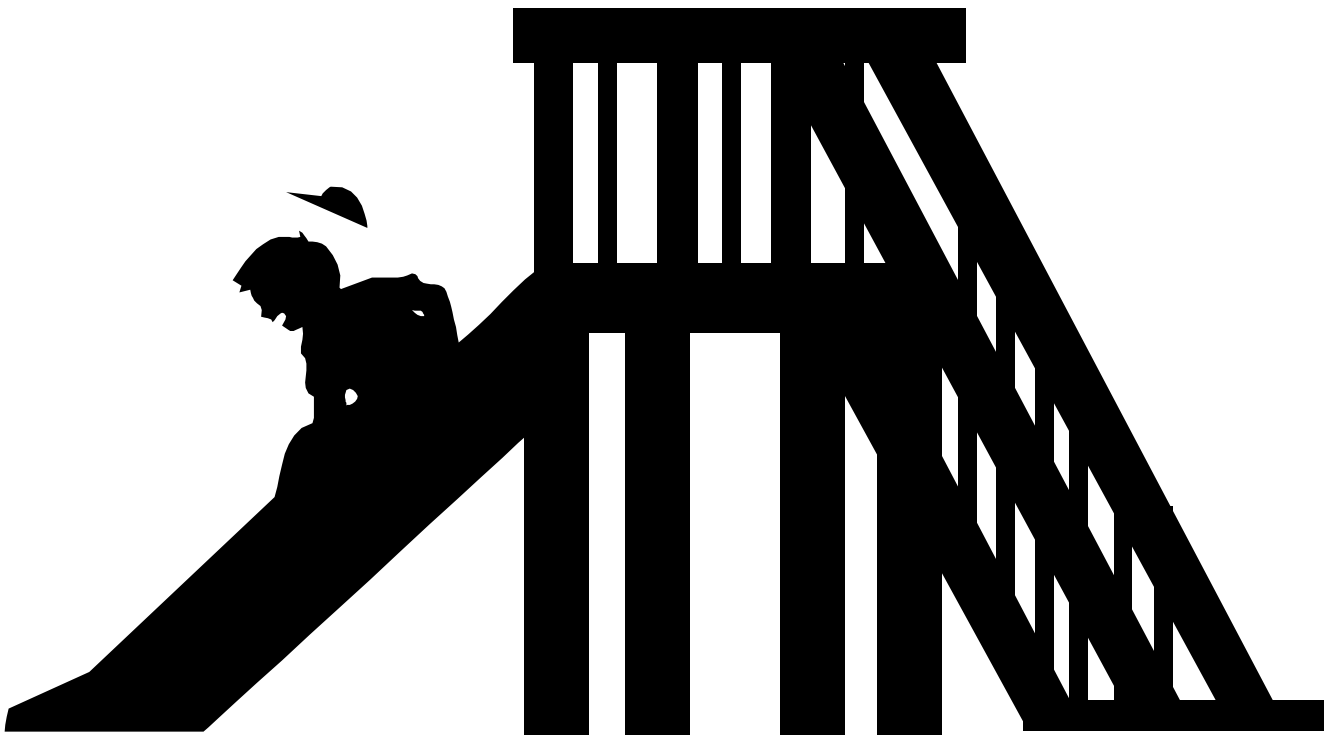


Playground Observation Tool



Developed by the
Capital Area Interagency Coordinating Council's Inclusion Committee
August 2001

History of the Tool

The ***Playground Observation Tool*** was developed as a project of the Capital Area Interagency Coordinating Council's (CAICC) Inclusion Committee.

The mission of the CAICC is to function as a community resource linking families, professionals, and community organizations to ensure quality early intervention services for each eligible child, birth to school age. By providing educational and networking opportunities, the Council will promote the development of a societal attitude that embraces each person as an individual, family member, and respected and valued contributor to society.

The charge of the CAICC's Inclusion Committee is to help promote inclusive practices in our community. We believe that inclusion means creating opportunities for all people to be together to learn from each other, to recognize that we are more alike than different and to acknowledge that our differences make us unique. By focusing on the needs of differently-abled young children and their families, our committee strives to provide opportunities that enable families to participate together in their communities. By providing a climate that represents this, all people may learn to embrace one another. The Inclusion Committee's role is to serve our local community as a resource. To be a link connecting and supporting families with young children, professionals working with young children, community organizations, and the Capital Area Interagency Coordinating Council.

CAICC'S Inclusion Committee saw a need in the community to identify playgrounds where children of all abilities could play. Too often playgrounds that are identified as 'accessible' are not able to be used by children with a variety of special needs. For example, a playground may have reserved parking for people with disabilities, but children in wheelchairs are unable to get through the mulch to any of the play equipment. The CAICC's Inclusion Committee took on the task of developing a tool that would provide information about the usability of playgrounds in the communities in Dauphin, Cumberland, and Perry counties.

How can you help?

We are interested in gathering information about the playgrounds in the capital region and using the information to develop an easy to use resource for early intervention/early childhood providers and families of young children.

We invite you to help us gather information by completing the survey and sending your ideas to the Inclusion Committee. Grab your kids and head to your neighborhood play area. Use this tool to tell us what you like and what you would like to see changed about the places where kids come together to play.

It's never too late to send in new ideas about your neighborhood playground. We will be doing updates as we get new information.

Give your completed observation tool to your early intervention provider or mail it to:

Director of Childhood Services
Capital Area Children's Center
44 S. 38th Street
Camp Hill, PA 17011

The ***Playground Observation Tool*** is just one activity of the CAICC! If you want to be involved, leave a voice message at 717/732-8400 ext. 8480 and someone will contact you.

Instructions for using the Playground Observation Tool: To get the best information, make your observations at a time when there are a lot of children using the playground. Schedule enough time to observe all of the areas. This may range from 1-½ hours for a large area to ½ hour for a smaller area.

General Information

Date of Visit: _____
Person Completing the Form (optional): _____

Playground Name: _____
Address: _____

Playground Operated by: _____
Contact Person & Phone Number: _____

Directions to the Playground:

Area of Park Being Observed (e.g. entire playground, tot-lot only, pavilion area, etc): _____

What types of areas are available in the playground? Please check all that apply.

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| _____ Swing area | _____ Climbing area | _____ Sliding board |
| _____ Sandbox | _____ Activity boards | _____ Seating/rest area (picnic area) |
| _____ Wheeled toys/bike path | _____ Infant/Toddler lot | _____ Bathrooms |
| _____ Other _____ | | |
| _____ Other _____ | | |
| _____ Other _____ | | |

Describe any unique features of the playground:

Entrance to the Playground

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

_____ **Parking** – is it close to the entrance, is there enough, is there access to curb cuts
what is the surface of the lot: _____

_____ **Entrance** – is it level, are there gates, is the width of the path adequate (5 ft minimum), is there fencing, are there hand rails, is there a common entrance for all (not a typical vs. handicapped entrance)
what is the surface of the entrance _____

_____ **Signage** – is it in Braille or large print

_____ **Steps** – are there steps to get in to playground, does the size and height of the steps make it easy to enter, are there any railings

_____ **Safety** – is it close to a busy street, are there rules posted

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1

There is no evidence
That this area would
Be accessible to most
Children with disabilities

2

There is little evidence
That this area would
Be usable to most
Children with disabilities

3

There is a great deal of
evidence that this area
would be usable & enjoyable
for most children with disabilities

4

5

COMMENTS:

Pathways/Surfaces

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

- _____ Is there turn around space for wheelchairs (5ft in diameter)?
_____ Are the paths wide enough so that 2 wheelchairs pass each other on the path (5ft)?
_____ Are there changes in surface materials to indicate a change in the play area?
_____ Are there bumps that might make you trip?
_____ Layout – are there clear areas and clear pathways between areas
_____ Are children always visible and able to be accessed (tunnels)?
- _____ What is the surface of the pathways (gravel, large stones, loose materials, mulch, wood chips, etc)? _____

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1	2	3	4	5
There is no evidence That this area would Be <u>accessible</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is little evidence That this area would Be <u>usable</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is a great deal of evidence that this area would be <u>usable & enjoyable</u> for most children with disabilities

COMMENTS:

Bathrooms

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

- _____ Are they clean?
- _____ Is there a sink, paper towels, soap, etc.?
- _____ Are they open during most playground hours?
- _____ Are they accessible to people in wheelchairs? (e.g., wide stalls, grab bars, ramps, etc)
- _____ Is it convenient to the playground, with a clear pathway to get in?
- _____ Is there an adequate number of stalls?
- _____ Is there a changing table in both the men's and women's bathrooms?

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1	2	3	4	5
There is no evidence That this area would Be <u>accessible</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is little evidence That this area would Be <u>usable</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is a great deal of evidence that this area would be <u>usable & enjoyable</u> for most children with disabilities

COMMENTS:

Rest/Picnic/Seating Area

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

- Is the area generally safe? (e.g. no splinters on tables, no broken benches, etc)
- Is there an adequate number of tables & seats?
- Are there accessible tables?
- Is there a mix of sun and shade?
- Is there access to drinkable water?
- Can you see the playground from the seating area?
- Is there fencing around the rest/picnic/seating area?
- Are there too many insects (bees)?
- Are there adequate trash & recycling containers?
- Are the paths accessible (surface & length)?
- Is there a seating area in the playground/adjoining it?
- Is there a pay phone available?

Describe the tables & seating in the area. Include the number of tables/seats.

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1	2	3	4	5
There is no evidence That this area would Be <u>accessible</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is little evidence That this area would Be <u>usable</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is a great deal of evidence that this area would be <u>usable & enjoyable</u> for most children with disabilities

COMMENTS:

Landscape/Location

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

- _____ Is the area generally safe? (e.g. well groomed, no poisonous plants, potholes, etc)
- _____ Is the landscape level?
- _____ Is there adequate drainage (are there grates)?
- _____ If there is a garden, are the paths accessible?
- _____ If there is a nature trail, are the paths accessible?
- _____ Is there a mix of sun and shade? (e.g., shade from trees, pavilions, roofed areas, etc)
- _____ Is it generally clean?

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1	2	3	4	5
There is no evidence That this area would Be <u>accessible</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is little evidence That this area would Be <u>usable</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is a great deal of evidence that this area would be <u>usable & enjoyable</u> for most children with disabilities

COMMENTS:

Activity Boards

(For example: chimes, Tic Tac Toe, voice pipes, steering wheels, mirrors, plastic bubbles, ball pits, etc)

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

- _____ Are there activity boards available for all ages (I/T to school age)?
- _____ Are there activity boards available that use many senses?
- _____ Are the activity boards easy to use for children with fine motor difficulties?
- _____ Are the boards accessible?
- _____ Do the activity boards promote interaction between children with and without disabilities?

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1	2	3	4	5
There is no evidence That this area would Be <u>accessible</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is little evidence That this area would Be <u>usable</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is a great deal of evidence that this area would be <u>usable & enjoyable</u> for most children with disabilities

COMMENTS:

Swings

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

- _____ Are the swings safe? (e.g. not broken, no sharp edges or splinters, etc)
- _____ Is the area around the swings safe? (e.g. enough tan bark or mulch underneath the swings, a large enough area so that children are not in the way of swings, etc)
- _____ Is there an adequate number of swings?
- _____ Are they in a separate area that is clearly defined (ex. Different surface texture)
- _____ Are there multiple types of seats that offer a range of support?
- _____ Do the swings promote interaction between children with and without disabilities (ex. Tire swing that 2-3 kids can ride)

Describe the swings that are available. Include the number & type of swings (e.g. 3 tire swings, 2 infant seats, etc). Describe the materials used in the swings & the suspension material.

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1	2	3	4	5
There is no evidence That this area would Be <u>accessible</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is little evidence That this area would Be <u>usable</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is a great deal of evidence that this area would be <u>usable & enjoyable</u> for most children with disabilities

COMMENTS:

Climbing Equipment

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

_____ Is the climbing equipment generally safe (e.g. height is appropriate for the age of the child, railings are available, equipment is stable)?

_____ Is there enough equipment for all the children who want to play?

_____ Are there multiple ways up and down?

_____ Can parents always see and get to their children if necessary?

_____ Is it easy to see the steps?

_____ Is it accessible (can you climb, walk, or use a ramp to go up)?

_____ Are there transfer platforms to help children get in and out of wheelchairs?

_____ Is there room for a wheelchair to turn around on the decks?

_____ Is there anything to play with once the child gets to the top of the equipment?

Describe the climbing equipment that is available. Include the height and material of climbing equipment (e.g. 2 tall towers accessed by steps & rope ladder, etc).

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1	2	3	4	5
There is no evidence That this area would Be <u>accessible</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is little evidence That this area would Be <u>usable</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is a great deal of evidence that this area would be <u>usable & enjoyable</u> for most children with disabilities

COMMENTS:

Sliding Board

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

_____ Is the way up the slide safe (e.g. easy to see steps, railing to hold on to, ladder rungs that are large enough for feet, etc)?

_____ Is the landing area safe (e.g. not near other equipment, soft material at bottom, away from most other children, landing areas is clearly marked, etc)?

_____ Can the parent and child use the slide together?

_____ Can adults get to the child if there is an emergency?

_____ Can adults see and monitor children on the slide?

Describe the sliding boards that are available. Include the number, type, height, and material of the slides (e.g. 1 small, straight plastic slide, 2 high, curved metal slides, etc).

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1

There is no evidence
That this area would
Be accessible to most
Children with disabilities

2

3

There is little evidence
That this area would
Be usable to most
Children with disabilities

4

5

There is a great deal of
evidence that this area
would be usable & enjoyable
for most children with disabilities

COMMENTS:

Sand box

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

- _____ Are the sand areas covered at night?
- _____ Is there enough sand?
- _____ Is water available near by for combined play?
- _____ Is the area safe (e.g., the equipment in good repair, etc)
- _____ Are there places to sit and play?
- _____ Is there the ability to crossover to other play areas?
- _____ Are there boundaries or a frame to the sand area?
- _____ Is the sand area large enough for several children to use together?
- _____ Are the sandboxes at multiple heights so that children with wheelchairs can access them?
- _____ Are there toys available in the sand box (e.g., shovels, buckets, sit-on bulldozers, etc.)

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1	2	3	4	5
There is no evidence That this area would Be <u>accessible</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is little evidence That this area would Be <u>usable</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is a great deal of evidence that this area would be <u>usable & enjoyable</u> for most children with disabilities

COMMENTS:

Wheeled Toys/Bike Paths

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

_____ Are there clearly defined paths & trails? (see pathway questions)

_____ Are the paths safely away from other equipment?

_____ Are there short loops that can be done rather than the entire path?

_____ Are there any obstacles, drop-offs, or dips in the path?

_____ Is the path well maintained?

_____ What is the surface of the pathways (gravel, large stones, loose materials, mulch, wood chips, etc)? _____

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1

There is no evidence
That this area would
Be accessible to most
Children with disabilities

2

3

There is little evidence
That this area would
Be usable to most
Children with disabilities

4

5

There is a great deal of
evidence that this area
would be usable & enjoyable
for most children with disabilities

COMMENTS:

Infant/Toddler Lots

Directions: For each item in the following list, please rate whether you think it is Exceptional (+), Adequate (ok), Deficient (-) or not applicable (NA).

_____ Are the I/T lots clearly separated from the 5-12 year old play areas? (fenced or contained somehow)

_____ Is there an equal number and type of play areas in comparison to the older kids' lot?

_____ Is the equipment sized for infants & toddlers?

_____ Is the equipment interesting to infants & toddlers?

_____ Are the ground materials & structural materials safe for infants & toddlers?

Directions: Circle the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your overall rating of the area.

1	2	3	4	5
There is no evidence That this area would Be <u>accessible</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is little evidence That this area would Be <u>usable</u> to most Children with disabilities		There is a great deal of evidence that this area would be <u>usable & enjoyable</u> for most children with disabilities

COMMENTS:

Summary of Playground Observation

Directions: Think about the entire playground and answer the following questions.

- | | | | |
|---|-----|----------|----|
| 1. Is the playground generally safe? Is it free from hazards?
DESCRIBE: | YES | SOMEWHAT | NO |
| 2. Is the playground adequately maintained? Is equipment in good repair?
DESCRIBE: | YES | SOMEWHAT | NO |
| 3. Can adults constantly monitor children without intruding on play?
DESCRIBE: | YES | SOMEWHAT | NO |
| 4. Is there a fence or natural barriers around the playground that will help children stay in the area?
DESCRIBE: | YES | SOMEWHAT | NO |
| 5. Can most children & families get into the playground and to most areas/equipment? (accessibility issue)
DESCRIBE: | YES | SOMEWHAT | NO |
| 6. Once in the playground or at the area/equipment, can most children and families use it? (usability issue)
DESCRIBE: | YES | SOMEWHAT | NO |
| 7. Are children playing together on the playground?
DESCRIBE: | YES | SOMEWHAT | NO |
| 8. Does the playground promote interaction between children with and without disabilities?
DESCRIBE: | YES | SOMEWHAT | NO |
| 9. Does the playground promote creative and pretend play?
DESCRIBE: | YES | SOMEWHAT | NO |
| 10. Is there a theme to the playground?
DESCRIBE: | YES | SOMEWHAT | NO |
| 11. Is the playground large enough for all the children who are playing? (Are there too many children in just one or two areas?)
DESCRIBE: | YES | SOMEWHAT | NO |

Recommendations for Families who are Using the Playground

Directions: As you make the following recommendations, think about your overall impressions of the entire playground. Check all that apply.

I think this area is well suited for the following ages of children:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Infants | <input type="checkbox"/> Toddlers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Preschool | <input type="checkbox"/> School-age Children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> All Ages of Children | |

I think this area is well suited for children who have difficulty:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> hearing | <input type="checkbox"/> judging their safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> seeing | <input type="checkbox"/> controlling their impulses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> moving their upper body (arms & hands) | <input type="checkbox"/> when over stimulated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> moving their lower body (legs) | <input type="checkbox"/> problem solving |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

I think this area presents a problem/challenge for children who have difficulty:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> hearing | <input type="checkbox"/> judging their safety |
| <input type="checkbox"/> seeing | <input type="checkbox"/> controlling their impulses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> moving their upper body (arms & hands) | <input type="checkbox"/> when over stimulated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> moving their lower body (legs) | <input type="checkbox"/> problem solving |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

The area would be usable if parents/adults:

- Provide lots of supervision for children who _____ (Ex. are younger, have a specific type of disability)
- Caution the child or bring the areas of difficulty to their attention
- Go through the playground with the child
- Are aware that there are multiple entrances/exits
- Go on a low traffic day
- Go only with one child (one adult to one child)
- Help the child getting on and off equipment
- Are aware that there is no fencing around the playground
- Other: (please describe below)

What I really like about this playground is:

My suggestion to improve this playground would be:

Thanks so much for all your help and ideas!
Please send the completed observation tool to the address on the front cover.

Prize Drawing!

If you are interested in being the in drawing, please complete the following information before returning the *Playground Observation Tool* to your early intervention provider or to the address on page 2 of the Tool.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

