

# 4 OUTDOOR PLAY AREAS

Outdoor play spaces are frequently an afterthought when planning or evaluating child care environments. As a result, many child care playgrounds include one or more pieces of play equipment but offer little else. If the outdoor space is considered an extension of the classroom, it will be designed to support a range of activities: physical activity, exploration, fantasy play, sand and water play, interaction with nature and safe plants, as well as space for quiet contemplation.

## 4.1

### PLAY AREA IS WELL-LOCATED

- Classrooms are open to outdoor play space
- If no direct access from classrooms, distance to play area is short and does not require crossing traffic
- Convenient access to bathroom, sink, drinking water

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.2

### PLAY AREA PROVIDES SUFFICIENT SPACE

- Minimum 75 square feet per child of usable outdoor play space for 50% of the total center population
- Separate play spaces for infants, toddlers and preschool children

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.3

### PLAY AREA HAS SEPARATE ZONES

- Areas for quiet activities and active play
- Areas for large group play and individual or small group play
- Distinct area for fixed play structures
- If center is located in housing complex or office building, the active zone is away from building
- Good teacher sightlines
- Accessible area for children with disabilities

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

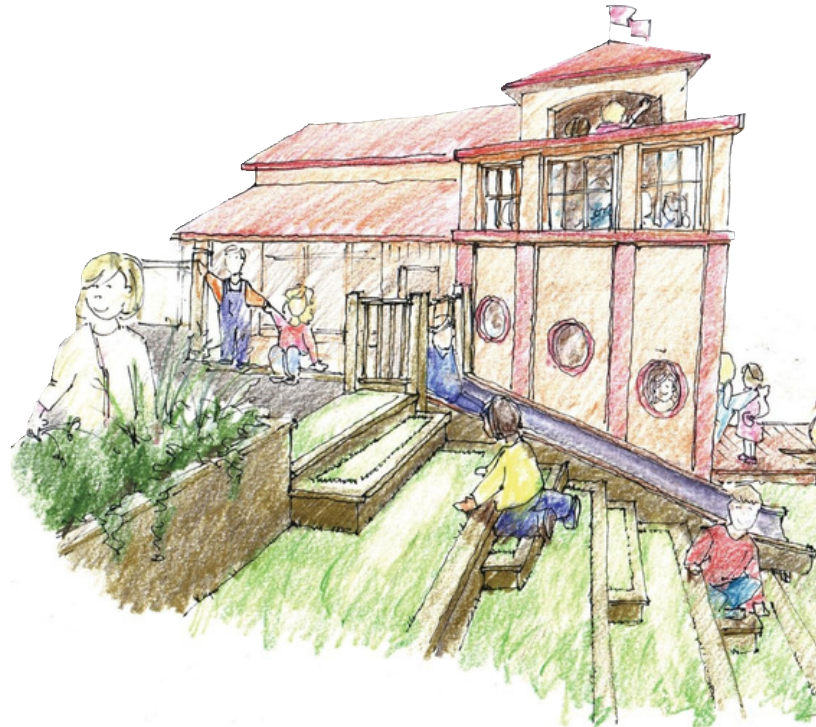
COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.4

### CLEAR PATHWAYS DIRECT CHILDREN THROUGH THE PLAY AREA AND AROUND ACTIVITY AREAS/EQUIPMENT

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_



### KEY

**0**  
Does not exist in the center, but should

**1**  
Inadequate: requires improvement or repair

**2**  
Fair: should be improved

**3**  
Good: good quality or in good condition

**4**  
Excellent: first-rate or top quality

**N/A**  
Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home

**PR!**  
Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items

  
Health & Safety

  
Center Quality

  
Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics

## 4.5

PLAY STRUCTURES AND EQUIPMENT PROVIDE DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY

- Appropriate size and scale for age group
- Provide a variety of options for climbing, jumping, balancing and sliding

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.6

AGE APPROPRIATE RIDING TOYS ARE AVAILABLE

- Several types for each age group
- Clearly delineated hard surface riding path separate from quiet activities

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.7

A RANGE OF OTHER OUTDOOR PLAY OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVIDED

- Sand and water play
- Garden area with access to sun and water
- Dramatic play area with props and enclosure (canopy, play house, tent)
- Large flat surface for running, circle and ball games
- Art area with outdoor easels or chalk surfaces, tables or other flat surfaces
- Block and building activities

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.8

IF THE PROGRAM SERVES INFANTS AND TODDLERS, AGE APPROPRIATE AREAS/ACTIVITIES ARE PROVIDED

- Safe and interesting places to crawl, pull up and climb
- Self-contained and protected from other children
- Playground surface does not feature materials that are hazardous if ingested such as small chips, bark, fiber, or gravel

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.9

NATURAL FEATURES ARE INCLUDED WHENEVER POSSIBLE

- Gardening opportunities for children
- Tree, shrubs, child-safe plants
- Rocks or boulders
- Small hills or slopes
- Bird feeders or houses

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.10




SUFFICIENT STORAGE IS AVAILABLE FOR OUTDOOR AND SEASONAL EQUIPMENT

- Storage for large equipment such as riding toys and strollers
- Secure and weatherproof
- Well-organized and easy to use
- Smaller point of use storage units placed around playground for toys and “loose parts”

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

### KEY

<b>0</b> Does not exist in the center, but should	<b>1</b> Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	<b>2</b> Fair: should be improved	<b>3</b> Good: good quality or in good condition	<b>4</b> Excellent: first-rate or top quality	<b>N/A</b> Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	<b>PR!</b> Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
--	--	--------------------------------------	---	--	---	---	---	--	--

## 4.11

### PLAY AREA IS ACCESSIBLE FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

- Slope of paths and ramps meets accessibility guidelines
- Activity areas are barrier-free

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

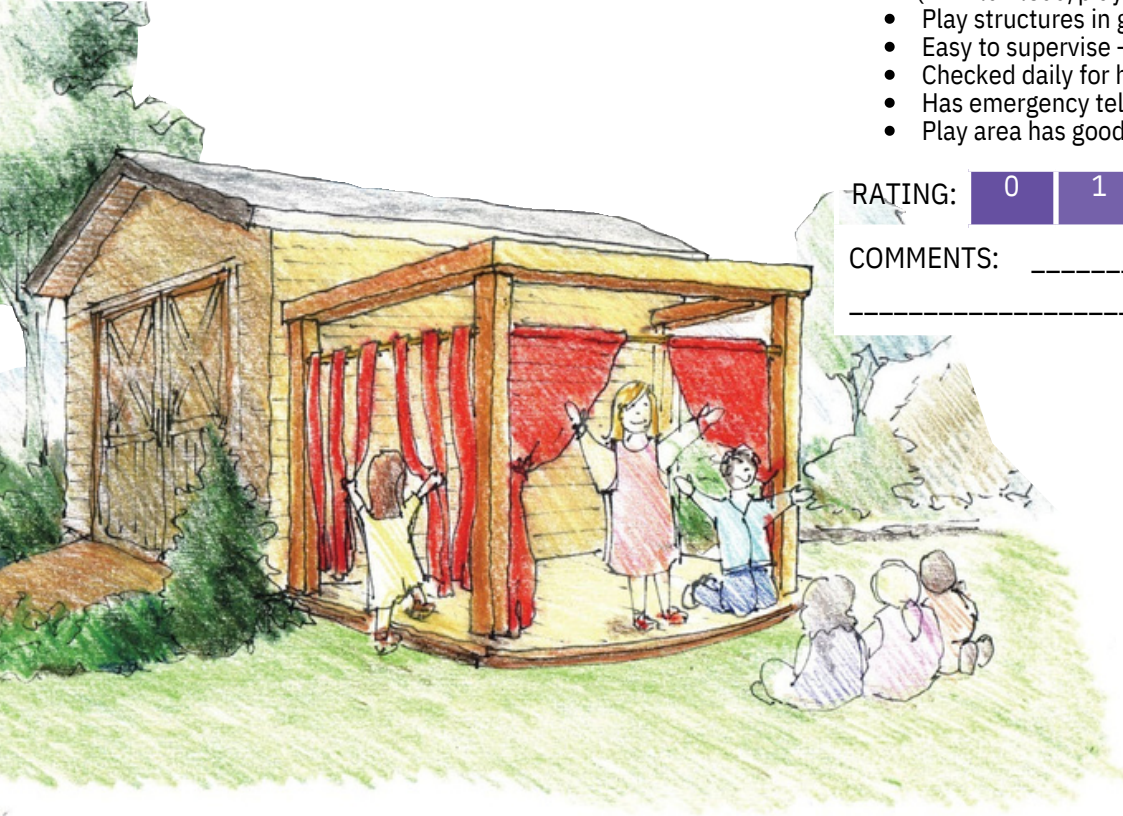
COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.12

### GROUND SURFACES ARE VARIED, INCLUDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF GRASS, DIRT OR SAND, HARD SURFACE FOR RIDING TOYS, SUITABLE SAFETY SURFACING UNDER ANY EQUIPMENT, ETC.

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



## 4.13

### PLAY AREA IS CLEAN

- Litter free
- No animal waste
- Garbage and recyclables kept in closed receptacle outside play area
- Sandboxes covered when not in use
- Wading pools and water tables emptied and cleaned after use
- Free of insect nests and signs of rodents
- Mats, tiles, and pour-surfaces are well-maintained to prevent tripping hazards

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## 4.14




### PLAY AREA IS SAFE

- Complies with National Program for Playground Safety guidelines on equipment, fall zones and safety surfaces ([www.uni.edu/playground](http://www.uni.edu/playground))
- Play structures in good repair and inspected regularly
- Easy to supervise – clear sightlines, no large obstructions
- Checked daily for hazards
- Has emergency telephone and first aid kit
- Play area has good drainage, does not collect water

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

#### KEY

<b>0</b> Does not exist in the center, but should	<b>1</b> Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	<b>2</b> Fair: should be improved	<b>3</b> Good: good quality or in good condition	<b>4</b> Excellent: first-rate or top quality	<b>N/A</b> Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	<b>PR!</b> Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
--	--	--------------------------------------	---	--	---	---	--	---	---

### 4.15

SHADE IS AVAILABLE TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM THE ELEMENTS

RATING:       N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4.16

COVERED PLAY AREA IS AVAILABLE SO CHILDREN CAN BE OUTDOORS IN ALL WEATHER

RATING:       N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4.17

PLAY AREA IS SECURE

- Fenced with appropriate height for the area (minimum four feet), with self-closing gates and a childproof mechanism
- Play area is for exclusive use of the center’s children, teachers and parents
- Center entrance does not pass through play area

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4.18

PLAYGROUND STRUCTURES ARE IN GOOD REPAIR

- No loose, broken or missing parts
- Free of splinters and rust
- No open S-hooks on equipment
- No protruding bolts
- Free of cracks and holes
- Concrete footers on equipment are covered

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4.19




PLAY STRUCTURES ARE SAFE

- No gaps in equipment where clothing could be caught (generally a gap between 3 1/2 – 9 inches)
- No head entrapments or pinch hazards
- Climbing structure platforms have a maximum height of 24 inches for infants and toddlers and 48 inches for children under 5 years
- Climbing structure platforms have guardrails
- Climbing structures have more than one way on and off
- Steps, ramps and ladders end at a platform that holds more than one child
- Swings are separate from climbing structures and are at least 18-24 inches apart
- Only bucket style swings with straps are used for infants and toddlers
- Preschool slides are a maximum height of 6 feet
- Infant/toddler slides have a gradual slope
- Slides have non-metal surface

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_

#### KEY

<b>0</b> Does not exist in the center, but should	<b>1</b> Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	<b>2</b> Fair: should be improved	<b>3</b> Good: good quality or in good condition	<b>4</b> Excellent: first-rate or top quality	<b>N/A</b> Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	<b>PR!</b> Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
--	--	--------------------------------------	---	--	---	---	---	--	--

## 4.20

### APPROPRIATE FALL/SAFETY ZONES AROUND PLAY EQUIPMENT

- Stationary equipment such as climbers have a fall zone at least 6 feet in all directions
- Slides higher than 4 feet have a fall zone (use zone) of safety surfacing equal to the slide height plus 4 feet (for example a 6 foot slide would have a fall zone extending 10 feet from the end of the slide)
- Swings have use zones of safety surfacing at least double the height of the swing beam (for example a swing on a 10 foot pole requires 20 feet of fall zone surfacing and clearance in front and 20 feet in the back).

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

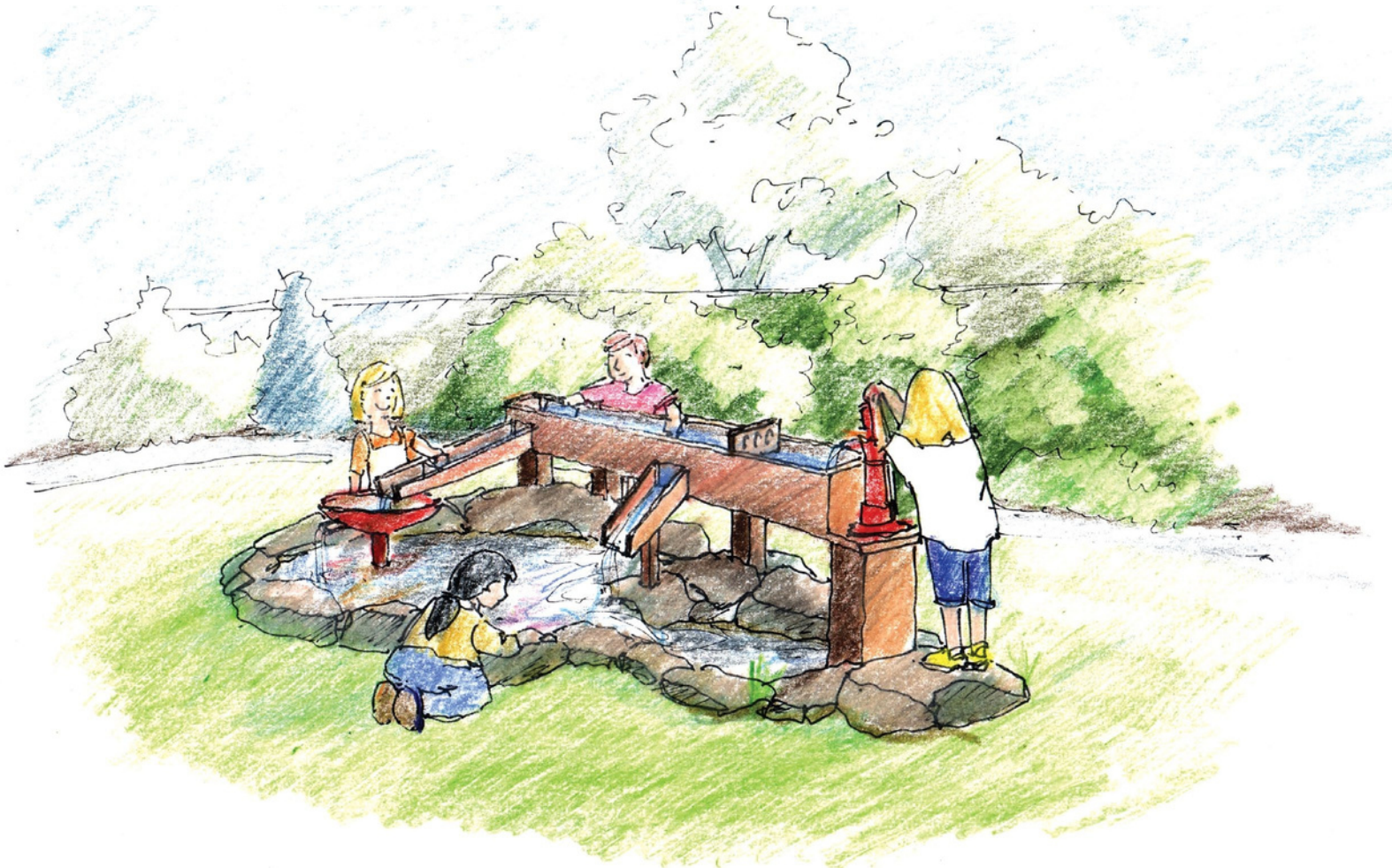
## 4.21

### SUITABLE MATERIAL USED AT ADEQUATE DEPTH IN ALL FALL/USE ZONES




- Equipment 6 feet or higher has at least 12 inches of wood chips, double shredded bark, engineered wood fiber or fine pea gravel or has a synthetic surface such as poured-in-place surfacing or rubber mats/tiles
- Equipment 4-6 feet high has one of the above surfacing materials or may also have 12 inches of sand or medium gravel
- Border around loose-fill surfacing
- No equipment is placed on asphalt, cement, dirt, grass or rocks

RATING:  0  1  2  3  4  N/A  PR!

COMMENTS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



#### KEY

<b>0</b> Does not exist in the center, but should	<b>1</b> Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	<b>2</b> Fair: should be improved	<b>3</b> Good: good quality or in good condition	<b>4</b> Excellent: first-rate or top quality	<b>N/A</b> Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	<b>PR!</b> Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
--	--	--------------------------------------	---	--	---	---	--	---	---