

NCEF Assessment Guide

OUTDOOR ATHLETIC FACILITIES AND PLAYGROUNDS

Use the following questions to think about ways of increasing safety and security in your school. For more information, see *Mitigating Hazards in School Facilities*, <http://www.ncef.org/safeschools/index.cfm>.

Location _____ Date _____
(Make as many copies as needed)

See also [SCHOOL GROUNDS AND SITE ACCESS CONTROL](#).

1. Natural Surveillance

■ Are athletic facilities and playgrounds in direct view of front office staff or other staff in the building? Options for improving natural surveillance include placing play areas on higher ground, installing lighting for night games, removing visual obstacles, or installing windows.

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

2. Boundaries and Setbacks

■ Do play areas have clearly defined boundaries and are they protected by fencing?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

■ Are student gathering places set back from streets, driveways, and parking areas by at least 50 feet? A generous setback makes it harder for intruders to sell drugs to students, lure them off campus, or victimize them with drive-by shootings. One urban school solved this problem by building a basketball court on the roof; others incorporate completely contained inner courtyards. This recommendation may be unworkable for schools built on small lots.

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

3. Separation from Vehicular Traffic

■ Are play areas well separated from vehicular traffic?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

■ Can emergency and maintenance vehicles readily access play areas and ball fields, while all other vehicles are restricted by fencing, bollards, gates, landscaping, or other features?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

4. Play Areas and Equipment

■ Are pre-kindergarten and kindergarten play areas separated from play areas for older children?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

■ Are emergency escape gates installed in walls or fences enclosing pre-school or kindergarten outdoor play areas?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Are school grounds free of loose rocks, bricks, or other potential projectiles?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Are hard-surface play areas located far enough from classrooms to protect windows and avoid being a classroom distraction?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Are windows near hard-surface play areas protected?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Do surfaces around playground equipment have a minimum depth (usually one foot) of wood chips, mulch, sand, pea gravel, safety-tested rubber, or rubber-like mats?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Do protective surfaces extend a minimum of 6 feet horizontally in all directions from play equipment? For swings, does the surfacing extends in back and front twice the height of the suspending bar?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Are play structures more than 30 inches high spaced at least 9 feet apart?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Are playground equipment and areas well maintained, with no tripping hazards such as exposed concrete footings, stumps, or rocks; no sharp points or edges; and no open "s" hooks or protruding bolt ends? More than 200,000 children in the United States go to emergency rooms annually with playground equipment injuries, mostly involving falling.

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Are outside drinking fountains vandal-resistant by design, such as by being wall-mounted and made of durable materials?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

5. Joint Use Facilities

- Are access points between joint-use facilities and the school limited and secure?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- During non-school hours, can sections of the building that are unoccupied or off limits be sealed off from public use?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Are separate or limited-access amenities such as restrooms, water fountains, garbage cans, and vending areas provided near after-hours or community recreational areas? This bars unwelcome visitors from entering an unsupervised area of the school and engaging in illicit behavior. It can also help deter littering, etc.

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

6. Bleachers, Field Houses, and Outbuildings

- Are bleachers well maintained, with no signs of rust, rot, or splintering? Risers between bleacher seats should prevent entrapment and keep children from falling through, and handrails and guardrails for bleachers or seating areas should be adequate.

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Are field houses and other outbuildings securable to prevent intruders from gaining entry?
 - Exterior door hinge pins are not removable from the outside.
 - Hasp screws are one-way or cannot be accessed while the padlock is in place.
 - Deadbolt locks are used.
 - Sliding windows have lift and slide protection.
 - Other windows are kept locked or protected when the building is unoccupied.
 - Alarms should be considered in high-value or high-crime circumstances.

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

7. Water Fountains

- Are water fountains wheelchair accessible?
 - Water fountains should be located on an accessible path.
 - The spout should be at most 36 inches off the floor, with at least 27 inches of clearance for wheelchair users' legs beneath the apron of the fountain.
 - Avoid foot-operated fountains, which don't work for wheelchair users. Push-bar or lever designs work well.

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Are water fountains vandal resistant in materials and placement, solidly mounted, and well secured. Are splash guards made of soft, bendable material?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

8. Vending Machines and Public Telephones

- Are vending machines and public telephones located in well-monitored activity areas rather than in isolated areas?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Are outdoor vending machines adequately secured for local conditions?
 - If subject to vandalism, vending machines can be enclosed in a recessed area that can be closed off by a roll-down security grill or in wire cages with hand openings for operating the machines.
 - Wire cages can look menacing, however, and should be used as a last resort.; it's preferable to temporarily remove or relocate machines to a location easier to control.
 - Many health experts advocate doing away with vending machines.

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Do vending machines and public telephones impede natural surveillance or cause foot traffic conflicts?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

- Is a pay phone, emergency call station, or similar device available outside the building for after-hours emergencies?

Yes No Not applicable Further study Note:

Additional notes and comments:
