

Engaged Supervision

Children's need for play has been globally recognized as a basic childhood right, and children are natural explorers and risk takers. That's OK. In fact, numerous developmental and health advantages have been linked to children's need for outdoor risky play. Giving children the chance to explore freely in a well-organized and child-safe space is an effective way to manage behavior and encourage learning.

But even if the children are here to play, we are not.

If your job involves children, you must always remember our promise to all parents – every child is supervised at all times. Here are some basic steps to make sure you are practicing engaged supervision:

Don't Play to Win

Sometimes the best way to keep children engaged and supervised is to participate in activities yourself. Even then, your primary role is as a supervisor and observer—if you find yourself getting carried away with the action, take a breath and remind yourself why you are really there.

Playing to win, hot-dogging, show-boating, etc. are not part of your task or job description. Not only can such activity draw your attention away from supervision, but by playing too vigorously you can easily cause yourself an injury—taking you out of commission for the job you were hired to do.

Maintain Proper Ratios

Engaged supervision requires having enough people to do the job effectively. So maintain proper supervision ratios at all times (speak to your supervisor if you are not sure what those ratios are), and if you find yourself suddenly short staffed, do not be afraid to change up your programming to avoid activities that are risky or harder to supervise.

Team Talks are intended to provide ready-to-use content for facilitated safety discussions on key topics. Whether you use this copy as an exact script, or as a set of talking points for creating your own talk, is up to you. We hope it provides a useful starting point for discussion. As always, we would love to hear feedback on how your talk goes, and what more we can do to support you in creating a true culture of safety.

The Redwoods Group

Position Yourself to Supervise

It might sound simple, but one of the most important things you can do to keep an eye on kids in your program is making sure that you are able to have your eyes on the kids at all times. That means paying attention to how you position yourself—if talking to one child requires you to turn your back on the group, then reposition yourselves so you can have a conversation without letting others out of your sight.

You were hired to engage and positively influence the development of children. That's a job that requires every bit of your attention, and it requires you to stay safe too. If you are hurt while supervising, this will affect your ability to be a positive role model. Thanks for staying focused. Thanks for staying safe.

Let's take a short quiz on Engaged Supervision for review.

True or False: When working with children, your number one priority is supervision.

TRUE

Let's discuss: How can you engage with program participants to reduce the likelihood of them, or you, getting hurt?

NOTES