

Field Trip / Excursion Risk Assessment Guidelines

Recreational Programs – A Variety of Risks

School programs today are being designed to include an extensive variety of recreational programs that provide the students an opportunity to develop their skills and try new activities that they may not normally get a chance to experience. Although these programs provide valuable learning opportunities, increase self-esteem and teach important life skills to the students, they also can open the Division up to a wide range of liability exposures and potential lawsuits. Under the accepted legal doctrine of “in loco parentis” (in place of the parent), teachers and school administrators are charged with duties and responsibilities similar to those of a child’s legal guardian. School officials assume a broad range of responsibilities for the supervision and care of a student under this doctrine. Breaches in this doctrine such as inadequate supervision, failure to use ordinary or reasonable care, or failure to protect students from a known danger may result in a substantial lawsuit.

The Division’s insurance carrier strives to provide General Liability coverage for the many and varied recreational programs. They are able to provide coverage for the majority of these programs, however, there are a number of documented high-risk activities that they are unable to cover – severe losses have resulted in few or no insurance companies providing coverage for these particular activities. In other instances, they are able to provide coverage for some higher risk programs, subject to stringent loss prevention procedures being implemented.

The following lists should assist school personnel in developing respective program itineraries. They are not all inclusive, so it is recommended that you contact the Division if in doubt about a particular activity.

INSTRUCTIONS

Prior to submitting a field trip request, school personnel are required to:

1. Review the “Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools (most current issue)”. A copy is available in each school and can be found at

http://injurypreventioncentre.ca/documents/policies/SG_PA_Final_2014.pdf

2. Review and follow the “General Loss Control Recommendation” in the following section.

3. Identify which “category of risk” the proposed field trip is associated with and follow the corresponding grade level recommendations, supervision guidelines, instructional considerations and equipment/facility requirements outlined in the “Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools (most current issue)”.

General Loss Control Recommendations

The doctrine “in locos parentis” places a great deal of responsibility on school personnel to ensure recreational programs and their varied activities have been designed and taught with student safety in mind. When developing a program, consideration is to be given to matching the activities with the students that it has been designed to teach.

Each class will differ with respect to maturity levels, gender mix, age, physical capabilities as well as overall general interest. It is important to remember that two of the best loss prevention recommendations that anyone can practice are common sense and reasonable behavior. Below are some additional loss control recommendations that will help to lower the risk of injuries to the students and the potential lawsuits against the Division:

- On-going review of the “Safety Guidelines for Physical Activities”.
- Contact the Division’s insurance carrier to discuss unique and/or higher risk activities.
- Use of waiver / parental consent forms.
- Screen instructors to ensure they have adequate training and qualifications.
- Cease the activity if the regular instructor is unable to be present.
- Ensure independent instructors/contractors have their own liability insurance in effect and obtain confirming certificates of insurance.
- Screen participants (general health, maturity, etc.).
- Establish and communicate general rules and regulations, including procedures for those who violate established guidelines.
- Establish and communicate emergency procedures.
- Ensure staff or outside providers have adequate first aid training and supplies.
- Regularly inspect and maintain facilities, premises and equipment, particularly prior to the event.
- Make use of personal protective equipment and related safety equipment.
- Ensure that such protective/safety equipment is in good repair and is an appropriate fit.
- Adhere to the manufacturer’s recommendations on any piece of equipment.

- Maintain records including inspections, purchases, maintenance, repairs, injury reports, insurance claims and so on.

Excluded Activities

Participation in the following activities is prohibited:

- Aviation Activities – i.e. aircraft or helicopter rides from school property
- Hot air balloon rides
- Parasailing
- Sky-diving
- Any other aviation or aircraft related activity
- Excursions requiring the use of non-commercial aircraft i.e. private planes
- Automobile Activities – i.e. demolition derbies, auto races
- Snowboard Terrain Parks
- Paintball
- Laser Tag
- Bungee Jumping
- Mechanical Bulls
- Use of fireworks or other pyrotechnic devices
- Ice climbing / mountain climbing

High Risk Activities / Programs

High-risk activities or programs include those which create a high potential for injury accidents and represent areas of concern for our Insurers with respect to potential liability claims. These activities are to be given a great deal of thought and planning prior to implementing them. Qualified and/or certified instructors are to be present at all times. If the regular instructor is unable to attend the class and a substitute instructor must be brought in, then it is recommended that the activity cease until such time as the regular instructor can once again be present.

Careful participant selection with respect to maturity level and general overall health as well as class size is to be considered. All rules and regulations are to be reviewed with the students on an ongoing basis and strict behavior guidelines and discipline actions must be maintained. The use of careful worded waiver forms and/or parental consent forms for these activities is recommended. As well, it is particularly important to document in detail any incident or accident that occurs.

High risk activities NOT recommended include the following:

- Excursions to natural disaster areas – i.e. earthquakes, floods, hurricane, tornado zones
- Excursions to war zones – imminent or existing
- Excursions to regions with political or civil instability
- Dunk tanks

- Diving into or sliding on foam, mud, ice or snow
- Demolition of derelict vehicles, equipment or buildings
- Use of air-filled “Fun Structures”

These High Risk activities require careful consideration and assessment of risk factors and are not for every grade or student:

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| • Archery | • Fishing |
| • Cliff rappelling / rappelling | • Mountain biking |
| • Climbing walls | • Scuba Diving |
| • Downhill skiing | • Skateboarding |
| • Firing ranges | • Snowboarding / snow blading |
| • Gymnastics and Trampoline | • Tack Football |
| • Ice Fishing | • Tobogganing |
| • Ice skating | • White water rafting / kayaking |
| • Ice hockey | • Winter Camping |
| • In-line skating | |

Moderate-Low Risk Programs

Moderate to low risk programs offer the students a wide range of activities with a limited amount of risk of serious injury. Instruction by qualified instructors, supervision, the use of protective and safety equipment such as helmets, life jackets, eyeglasses, etc. and a careful review of the rules and safety guidelines will help to ensure a safe environment for students to enjoy these activities. It is important to document all incidents or accidents that occur in case of future litigation. Some of these activities include:

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| • Bowling | • Horseback riding (trail riding) |
| • Canoe Tripping – Flat water / Moving Water | • Martial Arts – Karate / Judo / Kung Fu / Tae Kwon Do |
| • Court sports | • Non-physical educational / cultural programs |
| • Cross country skiing | • Orienteering |
| • Curling | • Sports field programs – Soccer / Football / Field Hockey / Baseball / Softball / Rugby / Lacrosse |
| • Dance | • Summer campouts |
| • Diving | • Swimming |
| • Golf | • Track and Field |
| • Gymnasium programs (common) | |
| • Hay rides / sleigh rides | |
| • Hiking on trails | |

Reference: *Education Act*, SA 2012, c E-0.3, ss.1, 11, 31, 32, 52, 53,196, 197, 222
 Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12
 Safety Guidelines for Physical Activity in Alberta Schools
 Safety Guidelines for Secondary Inter-School Athletics in Alberta
 Physical Education Safety Guidelines