

Outdoor Play – Fun and Safe!

Slide #1 Welcome

Welcome to this course titled, “**Outdoor Play – Fun and Safe!**”

This course is developed as part of the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) alignment process, to prepare providers and licensors in their understanding of the “why”, the “what” and the “how” of complying with the updated Foundational Quality Standards for Early Learning Programs (referred to in each course as the Foundational Quality Standards).

Slide #2 Helpful Hints

DCYF is pleased to present this e-Learning course! To help provide a positive learning experience for you, please take a moment to review the following “Helpful Hints” summary, detailing what you can expect from this course. A complete listing of Helpful Hints has been added to the Resources section of your learner’s screen for reference.

- If you would like to access and review the full course text, please visit the Resources section of your learner’s screen. You can view, print, or download a full version of the course text that is narrated within each module. The full text will be included in each course and listed as the first resource in the Resources section of your course frame.
- The time to complete the course will depend on the course topic and the pace at which you advance through the slides.
- To help you get the most out of the course, settings are in place to prevent users from skipping ahead through the slides. You can advance through the course when the narration for each slide concludes by selecting the “Next” button, or, go back to review material already presented by selecting the “Previous” button.
- Web links and additional resources will be utilized in some of the courses to enhance your learning experience. We hope you will take time to explore them to further develop your knowledge about the topics being presented.

Slide #3 Introduction

This course is designed to introduce you to the updated Washington Administrative Code or WAC, as well as outline strategies and examples of WAC compliance. Updated WACs will be detailed in each course as a reference and a full listing of the WAC is included in the Resources section of your learner’s screen. You can print or download this resource at any time, either as a reference while you complete this course, or as a resource after the course is completed.

Slide #4 Learning Outcomes

This course will help early learning professionals understand how to meet, assess for, and demonstrate ongoing compliance with the Foundational Quality Standards.

Upon completion of this educational module, participants will:

- Understand the value of using outdoor space for a variety of developmentally appropriate activities
- Understand the importance of, and requirements for, providing shaded areas for outdoor play
- Be familiar with the specific safety requirements for gates, barriers, and outdoor play space materials
- Understand the difference between family home and center outdoor early learning program space guidelines

Slide #5 Guiding Principles

As we cover the material in this course, please keep in mind the following Guiding Principles. We will revisit these at the end of the course to “check in” with you and give you an opportunity to assess your understanding and application of the course content.

The Guiding Principles that follow are adapted from The Guiding Principles for Outdoor Teaching and Learning¹.

- Playing outdoors is essential to the healthy growth and development of children of all ages.
- Children need a safe outdoor space with room to explore, create, and learn.
- There are measures early learning providers must take to keep children safe while playing outdoors.
- A licensor’s role is to ensure that appropriate safety measures are in place in outdoor early learning program spaces. This can be achieved through technical assistance and regulatory measures.

Slide #6 Terms and Definitions

Take a moment to review and familiarize yourself with the following terms and definitions. For your reference, a listing of these terms has been added to the Resources section of your learner’s screen. You can access the list at any time by visiting the Resources section of your learner’s screen. You can download the file to keep as a future reference or print as a desk guide.

ASTM International is the American Society for Testing and Materials International, an international standards organization that develops and publishes voluntary consensus technical standards for a wide range of materials, products, systems, and services.

CCA is a chromated copper arsenate, a wood preservative and insecticide that contains roughly twenty-two percent arsenic, a known carcinogen. The United States restricted the use of CCA on residential lumber in 2003, but it can still be found on older decks and playground equipment.

Retrieved from <http://drhelensilton.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/The-guiding-principles-for-outdoor-teaching-and-learning..pdf> in October, 2018.

CDC stands for the Centers for Disease Control, a federal agency that conducts and supports health promotion, prevention, and preparedness activities in the United States, with the goal of improving overall public health.

CPSC is the Consumer Product Safety Commission.

Early learning professionals are all early learning providers, child care licensing staff, and other professionals in the early learning field.

RCW means Revised Code of Washington.

SB 5357 is the bill establishing a pilot project to license outdoor early learning and child care programs.

WAC means Washington Administrative Code.

Slide #7 Importance of Outdoor Play

Research continues to show the negative effects of decreased outdoor play time for children. In an article about the rise of sensory issues in preschoolers for the Washington Post, Valerie Strauss wrote,

...the opportunities for free play – especially outdoors is becoming less of a priority. Ironically, it is through active free play outdoors where children start to build many of the foundational life skills they need in order to be successful for years to come. In fact, it is before the age of 7 years — ages traditionally known as “pre-academic” — when children desperately need to have a multitude of whole-body sensory experiences on a daily basis in order to develop strong bodies and minds. This is best done outside where the senses are fully ignited and young bodies are challenged by the uneven and unpredictable, ever-changing terrain.²

This learning session will examine two sections in the Foundational Quality Standards that focus on an early learning program’s outdoor environment and equipment. Both WAC 110-300-0145 and WAC 110-300-0146 provide specific and detailed information about the requirements for creating and maintaining a safe outdoor learning environment.

To thoroughly address these two Foundational Quality Standards, we will review and discuss sections from the WAC relating to outdoor play on the following slides.

¹ Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2015/09/01/the-decline-of-play-in-preschoolers-and-the-rise-in-sensory-issues/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.1ba77d3f6e8e, October 2018

Slide #8 WAC 110-300-0145

WAC 110-300-0145 Outdoor early learning program space.

(1) An early learning provider must visually inspect outdoor program space and equipment daily to ensure outdoor areas and equipment are free of hazards.

(2) Outdoor play space must contain a minimum of seventy-five square feet of licensed usable space per child accessing the play space at any given time. An early learning provider may develop an alternate plan if an early learning program does not have enough outdoor play space to accommodate all enrolled children at once (for example, rotating groups of children to play outdoors or using an off-site play area). The department must approve alternate plans to use off-site play spaces.

The general intent of this section of the Foundational Quality Standards is present in Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition, National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs (Caring for Our Children).³

Caring for Our Children was used as a resource and guide during the development of these foundational standards. DCYF included additional language to specify the responsibility of early learning professionals for ensuring an outdoor play space is safe and hazard free, requiring that early learning providers visually inspect the outdoor environment and equipment daily.

Slide #9 WAC 110-300-0400

A thorough daily inspection of an early learning program's outdoor environment can help prevent accidents and injuries to children that may result from damaged equipment or other unsafe conditions.

Early learning professionals should inspect outdoor play equipment for the following types of hazards when assessing for safety or compliance with this WAC requirement: missing or broken parts; protrusion of nuts and bolts; rust and chipping or peeling paint; sharp edges, splinters, and rough surfaces; stability of handholds; visible cracks; stability of non-anchored large play equipment (for example, playhouses); and wear and deterioration.

² Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition. National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs http://nrckids.org/files/CFOC3_updated_final.pdf

Slide #10 WAC 110-300-0400 continued

The location of an early learning program may impact how much outdoor play space is available. Section two of this WAC describes the specific space requirements for outdoor play areas and provides an alternative solution if an early learning program has limited outdoor spaces for children to play. To meet and remain in compliance with this requirement, an early learning program must have **75 square feet of licensed, usable space for each child** that will be accessing the play space at any given time. If space is a concern for early learning programs, adaptations may be made or alternatives may be available.

Slide #11 WAC 110-300-0400 continued

For example, an early learning program in a downtown urban area may demonstrate compliance by rotating groups of children to the outside play area at different times throughout the day. As an alternative, early learning programs can also use outdoor areas that are not on the same site as the early learning program, but it is important to note that the plan and space must be preapproved by DCYF, before being used by enrolled children. Working together, licensors and providers can ensure that children enrolled in early learning programs have adequate and safe outdoor play spaces.

Before we move on, if you are an early learning provider, take a moment to reflect on a typical day at your program.

Does someone check the outdoor play space and equipment before children go outside to play?

Does that individual document the results of the visual check?

If not, you might consider doing so each day as a means to ensure equipment is checked for safety, as well as a way to demonstrate ongoing compliance with this update to the Foundational Quality Standards.

Slide #12 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

If you are a licensor, it will be your role to determine a provider's compliance with this requirement. What other ways can you think of that a provider might be able to demonstrate compliance with this requirement? Be sure to share your ideas with other licensors. By sharing ideas, licensors can build their resources and ideas needed for determining compliance and for providing technical assistance to support providers in offering safe outdoor play spaces for children.

Slide #13 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

Sections (3) through (5) of WAC 110-300-0145 outline specific requirements for outdoor early learning program spaces regarding shade, activities, and moving safely to and from outdoor early learning areas. While some of these requirements are in place in current child care regulations, updates have been made.

WAC 110-300-0145 Outdoor early learning program space.

(3) An early learning program must have shaded areas in outdoor play space provided by trees, buildings, or shade structures.

(4) Outdoor play space must promote a variety of age and developmentally appropriate active play areas for children in care. Activities must encourage and promote both moderate and vigorous physical activity such as running, jumping, skipping, throwing, pedaling, pushing, pulling, kicking, and climbing.

(5) When the licensed outdoor play space is not immediately adjacent to the early learning program site, an early learning provider must use a safe route when moving to and from the licensed outdoor play space.

An update that is new for both family home and center providers is section (3). This section requires that: *An early learning program must have shaded areas in outdoor play space provided by trees, buildings, or shade structures.* DCYF has placed a high priority on providing shaded areas for children of all ages in outdoor play areas due to health and safety risks.

To assist early learning programs in being able to meet this requirement, DCYF developed this regulation with cost in mind, and has allowed for the use of structures or landscape that may already be present in outdoor play spaces.

Slide #14 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

Shade in outdoor space is necessary to promote health and safety by helping prevent sunburns and potential development of skin cancer later in life, as well as heat exhaustion, in young children. To highlight the importance of this update to the Foundational Standards, DCYF references both the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Mayo Clinic.

According to the CDC, a few serious sunburns can increase a child's risk of skin cancer later in life. Unprotected skin can be damaged by ultraviolet (UV) rays in as little as 15 minutes. The CDC advocates protection from UV rays any time a child is outdoors.⁴

To visit the webpage that outlines the CDC recommendations about sun safety for children, follow this link: cdc.gov. The CDC has also published Shade Planning for America's Schools, which can be downloaded free of charge at cdc.gov.

³ Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/children.htm, November 2018

Slide #15 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

DCYF also highlights the Mayo Clinic's position that young children are also at a higher risk of heat exhaustion because the body's ability to regulate its temperature is not fully developed.⁵ Visit [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org) for a print-friendly version of information about heat exhaustion. Each of the three resources mentioned in the previous section are in the Resources section of your learner's screen.

To meet compliance with this section of the WAC, early learning programs must have shaded areas available for children in their outdoor play spaces. Shaded areas can be provided by trees, buildings, or special shade structures. Early learning providers must consider the angle of the sun in the sky with the shade provided by trees, buildings and shade structures when planning their outside play time.

Slide #16 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

In section (4), an important update was added to include the phrase "*must encourage and promote moderate and vigorous physical activity.*"

The update also includes specific examples of these types of activities, such as: running, jumping, skipping, throwing, pedaling, pushing, pulling, kicking, and climbing.

The outdoor environments of an early learning program should provide enough space for different types of developmentally appropriate physical activities to take place simultaneously. This is an important consideration as not all children develop at the same pace. Having adequate outdoor space, and the ability to provide a variety of activities at the same time, will enable children to engage in physical activities that both meet and challenge their current developmental abilities.

Slide #17 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

Section (5) of this WAC addresses utilization of safe routes to and from indoor and outdoor spaces when the licensed outdoor play area is not immediately adjacent to the early learning program space.

Early learning professionals can assess the route for safety or compliance by taking into consideration any nearby hazards such as busy roadways, bodies of water, or other potential dangers such as tripping hazards.

Additional considerations are the ages of the children and the number of providers present during the transition from the indoor to outdoor play space.

⁴ Retrieved from <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/heat-exhaustion/symptoms-causes/syc-20373250>, November 2018

Some methods early learning providers can use to assess for and make accommodations for potential hazards include: checking the route for hazards prior to children's arrival each day, adding content to their safety curriculum to teach children how to safely cross roads, having children hold onto a rope or pair up when transitioning from one space to another, or, having one provider at the front of the line and another provider at the back of the line helps ensure that all children are accounted for.

Licensors can observe for these methods when conducting site visits to help determine compliance with this WAC requirement.

Slide #18 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

Sections (6) through (10) of WAC 110-300-0145 address outdoor early learning program space enclosures. In developing this WAC, DCYF included requirements from Caring for Our Children, as well as other important language to ensure the health and safety of children enrolled in early learning programs. Items (6) through (9) outline the requirements for fencing, barriers, and gates for outdoor early learning environments.

WAC 110-300-0145 Outdoor early learning program space.

(6) Licensed outdoor play areas must be enclosed with a fence or barrier that is intended to prevent children from exiting and discourages climbing. If the outdoor play area is enclosed by a barrier that is not a fence, the barrier may be a wall constructed with brick, stone, or a similar material.

(7) Licensed outdoor play areas must be enclosed to deter people without permission from entering the area.

Slide #19 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

WAC 110-300-0145 Outdoor early learning program space.

(8) Fences, barriers, and gates must be in good condition, have no gap through which a sphere with a diameter of three and one-half inches can pass, and have a minimum height of forty-eight inches or conform in height to applicable local codes.

(9) The opening between a fence post and gate or fence post and building must have no gap through which a sphere with a diameter of three and one-half inches can pass.

Slide #20 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

The language of sections (6) and (7) reflect current WAC regulations, with an update that includes a statement regarding outdoor play areas enclosed by a barrier that is not a fence. An example of such a barrier is a wall constructed of brick, stone, or similar materials. This barrier must be constructed in a manner that prevents children from exiting and discourages them from climbing the barrier.

The licensed outdoor play area of an early learning program must be enclosed, whether with a fence or other type of barrier, to deter people without permission from entering the area. Having such a barrier in place helps provide an outdoor learning area where early learning professionals can observe and encourage children to run, play, and explore safely and independently.

Slide #21 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

Sections (8) and (9) include updated requirements for fences, barriers, and gates in outdoor early learning spaces. This section requires that each must be in good condition and have no gaps that a sphere more than 3 ½ inches in diameter can pass through.

That same requirement applies to the distance between a fence post and gate or between a fence post and a building. This spacing is essential in order to prevent children's heads from getting stuck or entrapped. Examples of fences, barriers and gates that are not in good condition include those containing protruding nails or bolts, broken boards, leaning fence panels or sections, sharp or jagged edges, crumbling or loose stones, bricks, or rocks, as well as gaps that are large enough to allow a sphere with a diameter of greater than 3 ½ inches to pass through.

These are things all early learning professionals can observe for in early learning outdoor spaces when determining compliance or assessing for safety.

Updated language has also been added regarding the minimum height of a fence or barrier. This WAC requires that the fence or barrier enclosing an outdoor play space must be at least 48 inches tall or conform to applicable local codes if they differ from those set forth by DCYF. It is important for fences and barriers to meet these standards of quality because young children can be injured if caught in the small space of a gate or barrier. They can also climb through very small openings and over low walls or gates.

Slide #22 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

WAC 110-300-0145 Outdoor early learning program space.

(10) An early learning provider must not install any wooden fence, playground structure, or furniture if it contains chromated copper arsenate (CCA), creosote or pentachlorophenol. If wooden fences, structures, and furniture are suspected of having CCA, they must be tested. If CCA is present, fences, structures, and furniture must be removed or sealed with an oil-based outdoor sealant annually or as needed within six months of the date this section becomes effective.

Slide #23 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

Section (10) prohibits the installation of fences, playground structures, furniture, or materials containing chromated copper arsenate (CCA), creosote, or pentachlorophenol in early learning program outdoor areas.

If a structure is tested and found to contain any of these substances, it must be removed or sealed with an oil-based outdoor sealant annually or as needed within six months of the date this section of the Foundational Quality Standards goes into effect.

In their publication Handbook for Public Playground Safety, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) provides details on the use of these chemicals. CCA has not been processed for use on playgrounds since December 31, 2003 because of the risk of exposure to arsenic. The handbook also states that creosote and pentachlorophenol are “too toxic or irritating” and should not be used.⁶

Slide #24 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

This section of the WAC is important for keeping children safe and healthy by preventing exposure to dangerous substances. An early learning program demonstrates ongoing compliance by utilizing outdoor play space materials that are free of any prohibited chemicals or by sealing any existing chemical-containing structures with an approved sealant at least once per year. Early learning providers who test play equipment for CCA will need to keep records of the test results on-site for review by their licensor, as is required per WAC 110-300-0465(4)(d).

For play equipment that tests positive for CCA, early learning providers may find it helpful to keep documentation of the type of sealant used and the date the sealant was applied, as a means of demonstrating compliance with this WAC requirement.

Slide #25 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

Reemphasizing the importance of the safety of children enrolled in early learning programs, the last two sections of this WAC also contain much of the language that was included in Caring for Our Children⁷ regarding gating and exits.

WAC 110-300-0145 Equipment and surfaces in outdoor early learning space.

(11) Within six months of the date this section becomes effective or prior to licensing, exiting mechanisms on gates from a licensed outdoor play area to unlicensed space must be equipped with a self-closing and self-latching mechanism (shuts automatically when released from an individual's control). A gate that is not an emergency exit must be locked or self-closing and self-latching.

(12) Outdoor play areas must have two exits that must not be partially or entirely blocked, with at least one exit located away from the building.

Slide #26 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

The requirements in section (11) have been added to help ensure that children are kept safe and secure when playing outdoors. Gates in early learning programs are often used by families, staff and visitors when arriving and departing from the program. If a gate is not fully closed or latched each time it is opened, this leaves a possibility for children to be able to exit the outdoor space of the program without the assistance or knowledge of program staff. For early learning providers who are licensed at the time this regulation goes into effect, DCYF has allowed a time frame of six-months to comply with this requirement. Early learning programs becoming licensed after this regulation goes into effect will need to meet this requirement prior to being issued a license.

Section (12) of this WAC requires that all outdoor early learning environments must have two exits that are not blocked in any way. DCYF has added the language about keeping exits unblocked at all times to ensure that children and adults are able to safely exit an outdoor play area in the event that an emergency situation arises. Additionally, to meet compliance of this WAC, one of the exits must be located away from the building.

Slide #27 WAC 110-300-0145 continued

Before we move on to the next section of the Foundational Quality Standards, let's take

a moment to add to your resource library by visiting, exploring, and bookmarking the following websites that have specific information about safe outdoor environments for early learning programs and ways to enhance those environments.

- Child Care Aware of America's Outdoor Childcare Environment site can be accessed through this link childcareaware.org
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) maintains a page on their site where they regularly post articles and blogs about outdoor learning environments. It can be accessed by navigating to naeyc.org
- The Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center has published some one-page tip sheets on the importance of and ways to enhance outdoor play spaces. The PDFs can be downloaded by accessing the following links:
 - [10 Tips to enhance your outdoor play space eclkc.ohs](http://eclkc.ohs)
 - [Outdoor Play Benefits eclkc.ohs](http://eclkc.ohs)
- In addition, visit this site eclkc.ohs for a list of 14 outdoor learning environment resources

Slide #28 WAC 110-300-0146

The next Foundational Quality Standard we will review is WAC 110-300-0146, which outlines the requirements for meeting, assessing, and demonstrating ongoing compliance standards relating to equipment and surfaces for outdoor early learning spaces. The updated WAC gives very specific details about where equipment may be placed, and the types of ground cover required.

WAC 110-300-0146 Equipment and surfaces in outdoor early learning space.

(1) Playground equipment and surfacing used by an early learning provider must comply with applicable CPSC guidelines, as now and hereafter amended including, but not limited to, installing, arranging, designing, constructing, and maintaining outdoor play equipment and surfacing.

(a) Climbing play equipment must not be placed on or above concrete, asphalt, packed soil, lumber, or similar hard surfaces;

⁵ Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition. National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs http://nrckids.org/files/CFOC3_updated_final.pdf

⁶ Retrieved from https://www.astm.org/SNEWS/DECEMBER_2007/word_dec07.html, November 2018

Slide #29 WAC 110-300-0146 continued

WAC 110-300-0146 Equipment and surfaces in outdoor early learning space.

(b) The ground under swings and play equipment must be covered by a shock absorbing material (grass alone is not acceptable) such as:

- (i) Pea gravel at least nine inches deep;**
- (ii) Playground wood chips at least nine inches deep;**
- (iii) Shredded recycled rubber at least six inches deep; or**
- (iv) Any material that has a certificate of compliance, label, or documentation stating it meets ASTM standards F1292-13 and F2223-10, as now and hereafter amended.**

Slide #30 WAC 110-300-0146 continued

The language of this first WAC item, section (1), has been updated to include specific reference to CPSC guidelines. While many early learning programs are likely already meeting these standards, DCYF has added this requirement to ensure the health and safety needs of enrolled children are being met. The language in subsections (a) and b(i) – b(iii) can be used by all early learning professionals in determining if the outdoor early learning environment of a program meets these standards.

- (a) Climbing play equipment must not be placed on or above concrete, asphalt, packed soil, lumber, or similar hard surfaces;
- (b) The ground under swings and play equipment must be covered by a shock absorbing material (grass alone is not acceptable) such as:
 - (i) Pea gravel at least nine inches deep;
 - (ii) Playground wood chips at least nine inches deep;
 - (iii) Shredded recycled rubber at least six inches deep;

It is important that playground equipment and surfaces are constructed in a way that allows children to play and explore while minimizing the risk of injury.

The CPSC guidelines on safe playgrounds, along with additional information, can be found by visiting the following site: cpsc.gov. This site contains a variety of resources for safety of outdoor play areas, including prevention of burns on play equipment, checklists that can be used to monitor for safety of equipment, as well as handbooks

on playground safety. When you visit this site, please note there are resources for both public playground safety and outdoor home playground safety. Early learning programs should follow the guidelines that apply to the type of program they are offering, center-based or home-based care.

Slide #31 WAC 110-300-0146 continued

Subsection b(iv) of this WAC item references the American Society for Testing and Materials or ASTM International. The mission of the ASTM is “to be the foremost developer and provider of voluntary consensus standards, related technical information and services having globally recognized quality and applicability that:

- *Promote public health and safety, the environment and the overall quality of life;*
- *Contribute to the reliability of materials, products, systems and services; and*
- *Facilitate international, regional and national commerce.”⁸*

Early learning professionals can determine that outdoor play space ground covering meets the requirements of this section of the WAC by checking documentation that the product meets ASTM standards F1292-13 or F2223-10 or by checking the manufacturer’s specifications for the particular piece of equipment.

Early learning providers need to consider the ages of the children in their care when choosing the appropriate ground surface material. Pea gravel and other small grade gravels may pose choking hazards for infants and toddlers.

Slide #32 WAC 110-300-0146 continued

The final three sections of this Foundational Quality Standard provide specific requirements regarding the placement of permanently anchored equipment, maintenance and construction of handmade equipment, and limitations to bouncing and inflatable equipment in early learning programs.

WAC 110-300-0146 Equipment and surfaces in outdoor early learning space.

(2) Permanently anchored outdoor play equipment must not be placed over septic tank areas or drain fields, and must be installed according to the manufacturer's directions.

(3) Handmade playground equipment must be maintained for safety or removed when no longer safe. Prior to construction of new handmade playground equipment, the provider must notify the department and have plans and a materials list available upon request.

Slide #33 WAC 110-300-0146 continued

WAC 110-300-0146 Equipment and surfaces in outdoor early learning space.

(4) Bouncing equipment including, but not limited to, trampolines, rebounders and inflatable equipment must be inaccessible and locked. This requirement does not apply to bounce balls designed to be used by individual children.

Section (2) requires that outdoor play equipment be installed according to the manufacturer's directions. This is important because equipment that is installed incorrectly may collapse or malfunction, causing injury to both children and adults. WAC 110-300-0465(4)(c) requires that early learning providers keep records available for department review, including furniture, sleep, and play equipment forms and specifications. This documentation will assist early learning professionals in determining and demonstrating compliance with this requirement.

Slide #34 WAC 110-300-0146 continued

Section (3) addresses handmade play equipment, which includes new language that is high priority to DCYF. The first portion of this WAC requires early learning programs to maintain handmade playground equipment for safety, requiring removal when no longer safe. Equally important for children's safety, this WAC also requires that early learning programs must notify DCYF of plans to construct outdoor play equipment prior to the construction of such equipment. Early learning programs must also have available the plans and a list of materials for the proposed play equipment, for DCYF review as needed.

Slide #35 WAC 110-300-0146 continued

Section (4) contains updated language to include requirements that bouncing equipment, such as trampolines, rebounders, and inflatable equipment, be inaccessible and locked to prevent children from accessing or using these types of equipment. This update was added due to the amount and types of injuries that occur when children engage in the use of this type of equipment. All early learning professionals should note, as is specified in this WAC, this restriction does not include bounce balls that are used by individual children. Please refer to manufacturer's directions for use.

The importance of controlling access to bouncing equipment is demonstrated by data

published in a 2013 Consumer Products Safety Commission, or CPSC, Safety Alert. According to the Alert, there were **94,900 trampoline accidents that resulted in emergency room visits.**

Slide #36 Outdoor Preschool Pilot

We have completed our review of the Foundational Quality Standards for Early Learning Programs as it relates to outdoor play space and equipment and surfaces. However, you might be interested to know that the State of Washington is at the forefront of the outdoor early learning and environment education movement!

The state legislature passed SB 5357⁹ in 2017 which established a “pilot project to license outdoor early learning and child care programs.” At the time the bill was passed there were approximately 40 outdoor early learning programs who were not subject to licensing regulations because they operated only part-day programs. As a testament to the dedication to high quality child care in Washington, many of those programs “expressed interest in hosting full-day programs and participating in the state’s Early Achiever’s program.”¹⁰ The four-year project will wrap up in July 2021 with final recommendations about the implementation of licensing outdoor early learning programs.

If you are interested in learning more about outdoor early learning programs in Washington, you can visit the DCYF website at dcyf.wa.gov.

Slide #37 Nature Based Outdoor Learning

There are many wonderful benefits to outdoor early learning and child care programs.

Let’s discuss some ways that licensed center-based and family home-based programs can add these same benefits to their daily routines through the addition of natural components in their outdoor play areas. The addition of a small grassy hill for rolling, bins of natural materials for exploration and discovery, and safe plant life for aroma and taste adventures, are just the beginning.

Rusty Keeler, in his book, *Natural Playscapes, Creating Outdoor Play Environments for the Soul* (Keeler, 2008), points out that when children have access to the natural world, their quality of life is improved. Research is showing that when children spend time in green spaces, their stress levels are lowered, there is a decreased rate of attention deficit disorders, and a reduction in the number of behavioral issues.

Let’s think about how early learning providers can make positive changes regarding children’s outdoor environments. Keeler describes the “ingredients” of a good natural playscape through many different senses which we will explore on the following slides.

Slide #38 Sense of Touch

Let's start with the sense of touch.

Think about the many different textures that children can touch. Sand, grass, wood, plants, shells, and rocks are just a few. Children need a variety of textures in their outdoor space at their fingertips. Natural materials need to range from soft to hard, squishy to firm, allowing children to "feel" their way to learning.

Slide #39 Sense of Smell

The second sense to think about is the sense of smell. Scientists have pointed out over the years that one of the strongest memory senses is that of smell.

Remember your first time of smelling rain, fir trees, ocean winds, or flowers? Aromas in the outdoor world can create a sense of place and mood in the environment and they provide an avenue of learning and identification for children.

Small herb gardens and fragrant trees and flowers, can boost this experience in any play yard.

Slide #40 Sense of Listening

Now, let's think about the sense of listening. Take time to close your eyes when in your outdoor environments. Open your ears to the symphony of sounds surrounding you.

Can you hear the birds, the leaves moving in the trees?

You may want to consider adding musical instruments or talking tubes for children to explore their sense of listening.

You may also want to couple loud sounds with loud play, and soft sounds with soft play.

Slide #41 Sense of Taste

The sense of taste can also be explored outside. Children are curious wonders. Set up safe taste adventures outside. Grow fruit and vegetables for children to taste. Eat meals and snacks outside when possible. Talk about where the food comes from. Help children make connections to food beyond the grocery store shelf.

⁷ Retrieved from <http://apps2.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5357&Year=2017&BillNumber=5357&Year=2017>, October 2018

⁸ Retrieved from <https://del.wa.gov/Outdoor-Preschool>, October 2018

Slide #42 Sense of Looking

Now, let's explore what we can see, or the sense of looking.

Approach your outside environment at the child's eye level. What can you see? Lie on your back and look up at the sky. Get on your hands and knees and explore the ladybug crawling on a fallen leaf. Nature is full of beauty and surprises. Take time to notice the details. Invite the children to explore with you. Take note of their perspectives and feedback. Incorporate what you learn from the children into your outdoor adventures.

Slide #43 Sense of Soul

The sense of soul. When children are outside in natural environments they have a whole-body experience.

They use some or all their senses to bring the information into their brain, couple it with true feelings of the heart, and relate with compassion and understanding. Children need time in nature to absorb and feed their souls.

Slide #44 Closing

You already know that outdoor play is an invaluable part of a child's daily routines and activities!

You also know that it is **not** necessary for a child to be enrolled in a special outdoor early learning program to be able to benefit from outdoor play.

Slide #45 Guiding Principles

This concludes the content portion of this course! Thank you for your participation!

Before this course ends, please take a moment to reflect and set personal goals related to the following Guiding Principles and ways that each of the principles relate to early learning professionals.

As a reminder, here are the **Guiding Principles** of this educational module:

- Playing outdoors is essential to the healthy growth and development of children of all ages.
- Children need a safe outdoor space with room to explore, create, and learn.

- There are measures early learning providers must take to keep children safe while playing outdoors.
- A licenser's role is to ensure that appropriate safety measures are in place in outdoor early learning program spaces. This can be achieved through technical assistance and regulatory measures.

What take-a-ways do you have? How will you change your practices or environments because of participation in this learning module?

Slide #46 Knowledge Check!

Let's complete a quick check of what you learned about outdoor early learning environments with a couple of true or false questions.

Slide #47 Knowledge Check!

According to the Foundational Quality Standards, there are no specific requirements about barriers surrounding outdoor early learning areas.

- True
- False

Additional Feedback:

(6) Licensed outdoor play areas must be enclosed with a fence or barrier that is intended to prevent children from exiting and discourages climbing. If the outdoor play area is enclosed by a barrier that is not a fence, the barrier may be a wall constructed with brick, stone, or a similar material.

(7) Licensed outdoor play areas must be enclosed to deter people without permission from entering the area.

(8) Fences, barriers, and gates must be in good condition, have no gap through which a sphere with a diameter of three and one-half inches can pass, and have a minimum height of forty-eight inches or conform in height to applicable local codes.

(9) The opening between a fence post and gate or fence post and building must have no gap through which a sphere with a diameter of three and one-half inches can pass.

Slide #48 Knowledge Check!

The Foundational Quality Standards mandate that outdoor early learning environments provide shaded areas for children.

- True
- False

Slide #49 Course Evaluation

Please take a moment to answer the following end-of-course evaluation questions by selecting the appropriate choice.

This course improved my understanding of the course content.

- True
- False

Slide #50 Course Evaluation

The information presented in this course was clearly connected to the session and Learning Outcomes.

- True
- False

Slide #51 Course Evaluation

There are opportunities for application of this course content in my role as an early learning professional.

- True
- False

Slide #52 Course Evaluation

I would recommend this course to others who work in the field.

- True
- False

Slide #53 End of Course

This concludes this course. If you have questions following this session, please contact your supervisor or licenser.

We hope this course has been helpful in providing information about the WAC and how programs can meet the new standards with compliance.

Our goal is that early learning professionals have finished this module with an increased understanding and knowledge of the updated WAC. All participants should feel adequately prepared to either assess programs for, or be able to demonstrate, ongoing compliance with these two sections of the Foundational Quality Standards for Early Learning Programs.

Be sure to visit the Learning Management System to review and select additional learning modules that are part of this series.