



PLAYGROUND REOPENING GUIDANCE



BACKGROUND



Playgrounds are vital to the health and resilience of kids and communities. However, due to necessary COVID-19 public health measures, playgrounds across the United States closed this spring.

KABOOM! stands in solidarity with these decisions for the safety and well-being of kids and their families. As playgrounds across the country reopen, it is paramount that health and safety remain the priority, and the strategies to reopen playgrounds be grounded in equity.

We must ensure that communities facing decades of disinvestment have access to the resources to make playgrounds open and accessible to kids and communities again.

To ensure that all kids — regardless of race, ethnicity, income and zip code — can return to the playground safely, playground reopening strategies must address inequities that exist by prioritizing financial and staff support resources. The need for an equity-based approach is heightened by the disproportionate impact of playground closures on kids living in under-resourced communities of color.

Many kids living in these disinvested neighborhoods already have fewer recreation options than kids who may have been less impacted by these closures — for example, kids with outdoor playspaces in yards, or close access to parks and trails.



Developing the Guidance for Reopening Playgrounds



As public health authorities determine when playgrounds can reopen, the question is how to do so safely while emphasizing public health goals. To help answer this, the KABOOM! Playground Reopening Taskforce developed an actionable resource for playground owner/operators as they plan for reopening.

Members of the KABOOM! Playground Reopening Taskforce include experts in public health, community development, parks and recreation and facilities experts. The guidance accounts for a thorough review of the latest guidelines on COVID-19 published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

This guidance also complements and builds from existing guidance by the CDC, and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) on playground cleaning and maintenance that playground owners and operators should consult and integrate as appropriate for their contexts.

KABOOM! recognizes that individual playground users will make their own determinations about whether to visit the playground. For playground owner/operators, we outline the following suggested guidelines with supporting resources to help prepare their spaces for kids and adults to play safely.

STEPS

to Prioritize Safe Play on Playgrounds During the COVID- 19 Pandemic



STEP 1

**Prioritize Equity in Reopening
Playgrounds**

STEP 2

**Prepare the Playground Equipment and
Space**

STEP 3

Enable Safe Playground Use

STEP 1

PRIORITIZE EQUITY IN REOPENING PLAYGROUNDS

- If a system has multiple playgrounds, ensure that playgrounds in all neighborhoods have appropriate signage, hand cleaning amenities, and other safety measures.
- Public agency resources should give first priority to playgrounds in communities that:
 - Have had the highest COVID-19 case counts. To review case counts by city or county, [CDC has links to state and local health departments](#) and [Johns Hopkins University of Medicine has a county level map](#).
 - Have the fewest resources available to implement these actions.
- Consult community members about their needs in order to ensure healthful and safe use of playgrounds. Recommendations include collecting community feedback through virtual community meetings, social media, online surveys, and physical mailings to homes, as well as collaborating with networks of nonprofits active in your neighborhood.



STEP 2

PREPARE THE PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT AND SPACE

- Set reasonable, responsible limits on usage. Determine the number of users who can share the playground while maintaining a physical distance of six feet from one another. These limits should be clearly shared with signage and outreach to playground users, and self-enforced by adults bringing kids to the playground. Judgments on user capacity should factor in the design and layout of the playground structure. Here are two starting approaches:
 - Reduce capacity by two-thirds. Take the total established playground capacity and multiply by 0.33, so that the total capacity is one third of the previous norm for the playground footprint.
 - Ensure users can maintain 6 feet of physical distance. Take the total square footage of the playground footprint and divide by 113 square feet per user to reach a user number that allows each person on the playground to have a 6 foot radius around them. As an example, this would mean that a 2,500 square foot playground would accommodate a maximum of 22 users.
- Clean playground equipment using soap and water before reopening. Follow CDC guidance to "continue existing cleaning and hygiene practices for outdoor areas." If using disinfectant to clean high-touch areas like handrails, ensure any disinfectant has dried before kids play on the equipment.
- Ensure safety surfacing is maintained and all equipment is compliant with safety standards described by American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F-1487.²

STEP 3

ENABLE SAFE PLAYGROUND USE AND PRACTICE SAFE BEHAVIOR

- Post accessible and visible playground signage, in English and other predominant languages of playground users, geared toward both kids and adults reminding users to:
 - stay home if they are feeling sick
 - wash or sanitize hands frequently
 - keep physical distance from other users outside of their household
 - come back to play another time if there are more people at the playground than the posted capacity
 - cover coughs and sneezes with a disposable tissue or cough and sneeze into the elbow rather than hands, and throw tissues away after use; wash or sanitize hands after coughing or sneezing
 - wear cloth face coverings or masks (except children under age two)
- Provide hand washing or hand sanitizing resources for playground users near the playground footprint. Where this is not possible, encourage playground users to bring their own personal hand sanitizer for use during and after playing.
- Train staff and volunteers to support safe and healthy behaviors by playground users and to make community members feel welcome. Where feasible, periodic site visits by staff and volunteers to encourage safe use is recommended.
- Engage the community of playground users by sharing written guidelines for safe use with caregivers and kids directly and with the network of educators, kid-focused local nonprofits and health professionals so that playground users can take good care of themselves in accordance with information shared.
- Utilize the communications methods that usually connect best with playground users, which may include website posts, social media sharing, community meetings, and posting on community bulletin boards.

STEP 3

ENABLE SAFE PLAYGROUND USE AND PRACTICE SAFE BEHAVIOR *Continued*

- Key guidance to share with the community of playground users includes:
 - Avoid the playground if any member of the household is sick.
 - Stay proactive: wash hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and bring hand sanitizer to the playground for use when it is not possible to wash hands. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
 - Stay informed: with the information provided either by your local public health department or physician, assess the risks that you and those persons in your care are encountering when accessing a public playspace.
 - Stay physically distant: ensure 6 feet of distance between playground users who are not from the same household.
 - Guidance for masks:
 - Ensure that adults and children older than two wear cloth face coverings when visiting the playground.
 - Caregivers and/or playground staff should encourage all children to wear their cloth face coverings properly, and that there are no hanging strings or loops that could catch on equipment.
 - Caregivers and/or playground staff should monitor how masks are being worn. If, because children are unable, or do not want to wear cloth face coverings, or if play is vigorous and the cloth face covering is moving around the face or neck, it would be prudent not to require a child or children to wear the cloth face covering(s).
 - If this is the case, though, it is very important that physical distancing (6 feet or more) be maintained among children using equipment.
 - Stay safe together: discuss your thoughts with your kids and have them help you develop a “safe way to play” plan.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

1. Financial and Supplementary Resources for Supporting Play Equity

- a. [Friends of the Park resources](#) from Park Pride
- b. [Build a Playground Toolkit: Fundraising](#) from KABOOM!
- c. [7 Online Donation Tools to Delight Your Donors](#) from Nonprofit Hub

2. Tools for Staff Education

- a. National Guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - i. [Cleaning and Disinfection for Community Facilities](#)
 - ii. [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#)
- b. Statewide Guidelines:
 - i. [Texas Parks and Wildlife: guidelines for park reopening and users](#)

3. Tools for Public Education and Parents and Caregivers

- a. [Protecting Child Health and Wellbeing During COVID-19](#) from the NRPA
- b. From the CDC
 - i. [How to Protect Yourself & Others](#)
 - ii. [Helping Children Cope](#)
- c. [How teachers can talk to children about coronavirus](#) from UNICEF
- d. From the American Academy of Pediatrics
 - i. [Getting Children and Teens Outside While Social Distancing for COVID-19](#)
 - ii. [Cloth Face Coverings for Children During COVID-19](#)
 - iii. [Information for Families](#)
- e. American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry
 - i. [Talking to Children About Coronavirus](#)(PDF)
 - ii. [Coronavirus/COVID-19 Resource Library](#)
- f. [Finding the Right Words to Talk with Children and Teens about Coronavirus](#) from the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

4. Sample signage

- a. [Keeping Play a Priority \(and Staying Safe\) During COVID-19](#) from Voice of Play
- b. From the CDC
 - i. [Wash Your Hands Poster](#) (PDF)
 - ii. [Stop the Spread of Germs](#)(PDF)
- c. [Slowing the Spread Infographics](#) from the NRPA





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