

TIP SHEET

Outdoor Playspace Protocols



Horizons for Homeless Children keeps a list of all shelters approved for outdoor shifts. Please contact your regional staff if you do not know if you are on the approved list or if you would like to find out about being added.

Going outside is a great experience for any Playspace Shift when it is possible at your shelter. That being said, there are certain guidelines and equipment that need to be in place before any Playspace shift can take place in an outdoor setting.

The Physical Outdoor Space Guidelines

- Each outdoor area must be completely **enclosed by a gate** in good working order with secure gates that young children cannot open on their own.
- The area must be kept clean of trash, cigarette butts, broken glass, food scraps, large tree branches, and any other hazards which may harm young children.
- Any outdoor playground equipment must be inspected annually by maintenance staff for structural soundness and safety issues. Any safety issues must be addressed before the next Playspace shift. All equipment must be well maintained, safe and in good working order.
- Any outdoor play toys must fall within Horizons guidelines to be used during Playspace shifts. Please note Horizons **does not allow for bikes** to be used during Playspaces as we cannot provide the proper equipment nor supervision for such an activity. We also **do not allow the use of wagons or pogo sticks**. All outdoor toys must be developmentally appropriate for children 0-8. Any toys that do not fall within our guidelines must be removed from the area used by the Playspace Activity Leaders during the outdoor Playspace shift.



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Outdoor Shift Weather

- All outdoor shifts can only take place on days when the temperature is **above 50 degrees**.
- All outdoor shifts can only take place on days when no rain or snow is falling.
- Weather conditions should be checked prior to going outside, including checking for any local weather alerts.

Outdoor Shift Ratios

- Outdoor shifts are much more dynamic environments which require more close supervision of children. As with indoor shifts, there must be a minimum of 2 adults present at all times. If you want to split and have only half the children go outside, you must have minimum of 2 adults inside and 2 adults outside with the children and also meet ratios. The ratios for outdoor Playspace shifts are:
 - 1:1 for infants and toddlers
 - 1:2 for preschoolers
 - 1:3 for school age

Outdoor Shift Staff & Parent Notifications

- Prior to going outside, **shelter staff must be notified and parents must be asked if they are okay with their children going outside.**
- Parents should make sure children have correct attire including coats if necessary, sun screen, bug spray, etc. Lotions and sprays such as bug spray and sunscreen can only be applied by a parent/guardian.

