



Protocol for Public Preschool Recreation Programs

15 September 2023

The Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS) is the principal state association providing professional leadership, development, advocacy and resources for those working and volunteering in the parks and recreation field.

The Society's members include managers of municipal and state recreation and park systems, recreation therapists and wellness specialists, higher education professors and students, managers and programmers of commercial recreation facilities, suppliers and manufacturers of recreation and park products and services, and citizen members of community recreation and park boards across the Commonwealth.

PRPS assists and represents recreation and park professionals in solving community problems and meeting the recreational needs of all Pennsylvanians.

On behalf of recreation and park professionals and political subdivisions of the Commonwealth, PRPS submits the following protocol as an official standard for providing public preschool recreation programming.

This protocol addresses the core concerns of professional recreation providers and the Department of Human Services (DHS) Office of Child Development and Early Learning, while not conceding the DHS's authority to regulate municipal preschool summer camps and other preschool programming.

1. Program Duration

All programs will run less than 90 consecutive days on a maximum three hours per day schedule, with fully adequate insurance coverage. No overnight operations allowed.

2. Exclusivity

Although program participants may not have exclusive use of any indoor or outdoor recreational facilities they will be closely and exclusively supervised by the highly qualified and well-trained program staff.

3. Minimum Age

All program participants will be at least 3 years of age and toilet trained.

4. Parental Consent/Authorizations

Parental consent forms will require the parent/guardian to provide the following:

- a. necessary contact information;

- b. disclosure of any disabilities, allergies and vaccination histories;
- c. contact information and relationship of those persons who are allowed to pick up the children from the program premises.

5. Food & Drink

There will be ready access to tap or bottled water. Food and snacks, if provided, are managed in accordance with parent/guardian provided dietary restrictions.

6. Industry Certifications and Training

The Recreation and Park profession maintains a system of national certifications to ensure commitments to the highest standards of ethical and professional practice in the delivery of park and recreation programs. PRPS endorses the educational standards for certifications and encourages all Pennsylvania recreation and park professionals and agencies to seek, obtain and adhere to their standards. See the *Appendix* for a brief description of these certifications.

7. Staffing and Personnel

While individual titles vary, the following list describes the operational roles in a public preschool recreation program or camp. A staff to child ratio of 1:8 shall be maintained at all times.

a. Organizational Director

The Organizational Director is a professional who creates or organizes a program/camp. This person is responsible for program/camp registration, employment and other duties related to the preparation of the program/camp prior to it beginning. This person is not necessarily delivering the program/camp or on-site at the program/camp on a daily basis.

- 1) Must be 21 years or older and have completed training in preschool recreation program development and management; first aid; and in child, fire, and environmental safety;
- 2) Comply fully with all applicable Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) training and certification requirements.

b. Program Instructors/ Camp Supervisors

The Program Instructor/Camp Supervisor is an individual who directly administers and oversees a program/camp. This person is on-site during the delivery of the program/camp and is responsible for the daily well-being of the participants, running the program/camp and is in charge of other on-site employees (where applicable).

- 1) Must be 18 years or older and have completed training in preschool recreation program delivery; first aid; and in child, fire, and environmental safety;
- 2) Comply fully with all applicable Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) training and certification requirements;

c. **Assistant Program Instructors/ Assistant Camp Supervisors**

The Assistant Program Instructor/Assistant Camp Supervisor is an individual who assists the Program Instructor/Camp Supervisor in delivery of a program/camp. This position exists only if needed.

- 1) Must be 18 years or older and have completed training in preschool recreation program delivery; first aid; and in child, fire, and environmental safety;
- 2) Comply fully with all applicable Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) training and certification requirements.

d. **Program/Camp Counselors**

The Program/Camp Counselor is an individual who assists the supervisory staff and is under their direct supervision at all times, but whose primary responsibility is to participate in activities with the preschool participants. This position would exist only if needed.

- 1) Must be 16 years or older and have completed training in preschool recreation program delivery; first aid; and in child, fire, and environmental safety;
- 2) Comply fully with all applicable Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL) training and certification requirements.

e. **Lifeguards**

Certified Lifeguards shall be employed for all programs involving aquatic instruction and activities, and shall enforce industry standards for water safety.

f. **Training Documentation**

All training documentation shall be maintained by the Organizational Director.

8. Personnel Supervision

- a. The Organizational Director shall supervise the Program Instructor/Camp Supervisor(s), who shall be on-site at all times; and
- b. The Program Instructor/Camp Supervisor(s) shall directly supervise the Assistant Program Instructor(s) /Assistant Camp Supervisor(s) and Program/Camp Counselor(s) in the presence of all preschool participants.

9. Safety and Security Provisions

a. **Supervision**

- 1) Program Instructor(s)/Camp Supervisor(s) shall oversee the children's activities and be in their presence at all times.

b. **Program Procedures**

- 1) Listing of authorized persons to drop off/pick up children;
- 2) Emergency drills (evacuation and lost/missing children);

- 3) Security procedures to prevent “escape” and/or abduction;
- 4) Incident reporting and investigation procedures;
- 5) Use of safety restraints when transporting children on field trips; and
- 6) Aquatics, when applicable: mandatory life vests for non-swimmers with a Program/Camp employee in the pool at all times.

c. Facilities

- 1) All playgrounds and related apparatus used by program participants will be inspected and certified by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI);
- 2) All facilities shall be in compliance with local codes;
- 3) Ready access to fire and emergency personnel.

10. Provisions for Health and Well-Being of Participants

- a. Implementation of all standard Human Resources hiring and employment prerequisites and requirements;
- b. Accommodation of special needs and provisions for children who become ill;
- c. Identification of unvaccinated children and appropriate advice to parents;
- d. Verification that participants are healthy enough for physical activities;
- e. Identification of allergies;
- f. Administration of medications and Epi-Pens (with parental consent);
- g. Provision of adequate shelter from inclement weather with ready access to lavatory facilities;
- h. Supervision of children by at least 2 staff members when going to the lavatory; and
- i. Application of sunscreen when needed.

11. Compliance Documentation

All the compliance documentation will be maintained by the Organizational Director subject to inspection by DHS; and

12. Compliance with Other State and Federal Laws

All public preschool recreation programming will fully comply with all other applicable federal and state laws.

Appendix: Recreation and Park Industry Certifications

Certified Park and Recreation Professional (CPRP)

The CPRP certification is the national standard for all parks and recreation professionals at the forefront of their profession. Attaining the CPRP designation shows that they have met education and experience qualifications, and illustrates commitment to the profession as well as knowledge and understanding of key concepts within parks and recreation.

Certified Park and Recreation Executive (CPRE)

The CPRE certification is the national standard for managerial, administrative and executive parks and recreation professionals. This mastery-level credential focuses on the practical knowledge and current real-world skills necessary in today's changing park and recreation environment.

Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI)

The CPSI is the industry leading certification program in playground safety. The certification program provides the most comprehensive and up-to-date training on playground safety issues including hazard identification, equipment specifications, surfacing requirements and risk management methods.

Aquatic Facility Operator (AFO)

The AFO is the premier certification program in swimming pool operations. It provides the most comprehensive and up-to date training for pool operators and includes information on water chemistry, disinfection, mechanical systems, operations, healthy pools and safety. Other certifications in aquatics include an Aquatics Management Professional Certificate (AMP), Aquatic Facility Technician (AFT).

Certified Pool Operator (CPO)

A Certified Pool/Spa Operators certification from the National Swimming Pool Foundation provides individuals with the basic knowledge, techniques, and skills of pool and spa operations. An Advanced Service Technician (AST) Certification provides service professionals with the knowledge and skills to fully service residential pools and spas.

Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists (CTRS)

The CTRS certification by the National Council for Therapeutic Recreation Certification signifies that a recreational therapist has the essential knowledge, skills, and abilities for the practice of recreational therapy.

Agency Accreditation

The Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) provides quality assurance and quality improvement of accredited park and recreation agencies throughout the United States. CAPRA is the only national accreditation of park and recreation agencies, and is a valuable measure of an agency's overall quality of operation, management, and service to the community.

Academic Accreditation

The Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT) accredits baccalaureate programs in parks, recreation, tourism, sport management, event management, therapeutic recreation, and leisure studies, within the United States and its territories, Canada, and Mexico. COAPRT is the only accreditation of recreation, park resources and leisure services curricula recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.