



# Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

CENTER ON THE FAMILY ★ UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

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## 10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

1. Build trusting relationships
2. Provide consistent care
3. Support children's health
4. Provide a safe environment
5. Provide positive guidance
6. Provide a language-rich environment
7. Foster curiosity and development through play
8. Individualize care and learning activities
9. Partner with parents
10. Pursue personal and professional growth

## This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Foster Curiosity and Development through Play

### Big Body Play

“Children learn by playing” is a familiar refrain in the Early Childhood field. Through play, children enhance their language, problem-solving skills, creativity, and ability to take another's perspective. In *Caring for our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards*, it is stated that “Free play, active play, and outdoor play are essential components of young children's development. All children, birth to six years, should participate daily in two to three occasions of active play outdoors”... and ...“two or more adult led activities or games that promote movement indoors or outdoors.”

One kind of active play—physical, rough-and-tumble play—often happens spontaneously among young children but is frequently discouraged by parents and providers who are concerned that someone will get hurt. In the Book *Big Body Play: Why Boisterous, Vigorous, and Very Physical Play is Essential to Children's Development and Learning*, Frances Carlson describes the benefits of big body play and recommends strategies for managing the risks. She states that, “When young children have the opportunity to play in rough, active, highly physical ways, they get their heart rates up; they stretch their limbs; they strengthen their bones, muscles, and ligaments; they burn calories and maintain a healthy weight; and they learn new physical skills which contribute hugely to their fundamental health and optimal growth.” Other researchers have confirmed that children are more ready to focus and learn after a period of robust physical play because it promotes brain connections.

In order to encourage family child care providers to offer children more opportunities for big body play, this newsletter will describe big body play that is appropriate at different ages, explore some concerns about big body play, how to recognize the difference between healthy rough-and-tumble play vs. aggression, and how to manage risks by providing appropriate supervision in prepared, safe and open spaces.



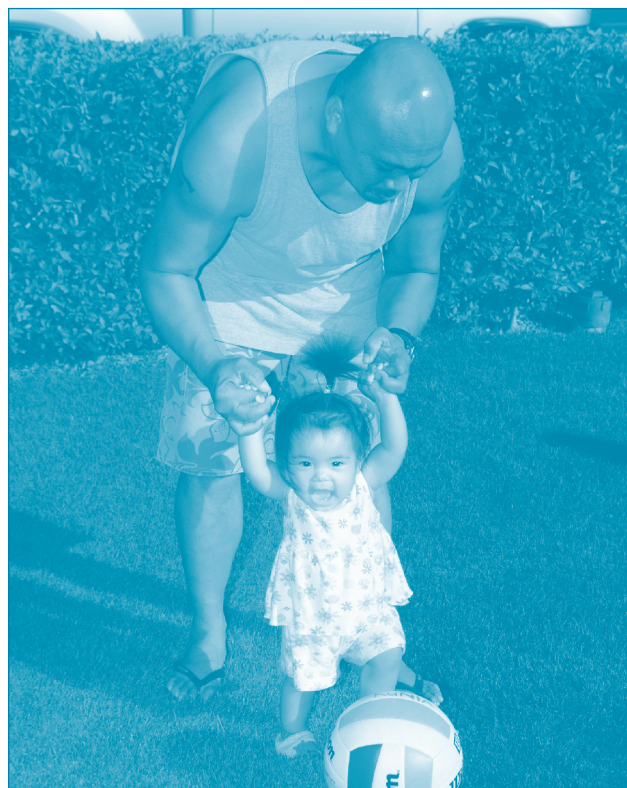
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# Big Body Play in Early Childhood

The following guidelines for physical activity for young children have been adapted from the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) Active Start.

**Infants (birth – 8 months).** Avoid keeping infants in restrictive devices for long periods that prevent exploration. To develop muscle strength and coordination infants should interact with caregivers in daily physical activities that are dedicated to exploring movement and environment without the use of supportive equipment such as excersaucers, bouncers or infant seats. Supervise infants in safe settings that encourage and stimulate movement experiences and active play for short periods of time, several times a day, such as:

- Tummy time
- Bouncing
- Rolling over
- Reaching out for something
- Kicking
- Scooting



**Explorers and Young Toddlers (8 – 24 months).** Possibilities for big body play expand during this period. Action games such as “Ring Around the Rosie” and “London Bridge” are toddler favorites. They need plenty of safe open space for:

- Crawling
- Pulling up on furniture and letting go
- Walking with and without support
- Pushing objects
- Tip toeing
- Carrying objects from place to place
- Running
- Climbing

**Toddlers and Preschoolers (24 months – 4 years).** Both Toddlers and Preschoolers need at least 60 minutes per day and up to several hours of unstructured physical activity and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time, except when sleeping.

They need access to indoor and outdoor areas that meet safety standards for engaging in large muscle activities and rough and tumble play such as:

- Tumbling
- Pedaling
- Running
- Throwing
- Balancing
- Chasing
- Climbing
- Jumping
- Tagging
- Rolling on objects (such as balls)
- Wrestling (Preschoolers)
- Fleeing and chasing

This kind of play often occurs in several spontaneous bursts throughout the day, lasting from 5 to 15 minutes at a time.

## Adult Fears Associated with Rough-and-Tumble Play

While big body play occurs naturally and joyfully by most young children, adults frequently put a stop to it quickly based on the following fears:

- Fear of fighting
- Fear of escalation
- Fear of injury

Most children can usually distinguish between real fighting and rough-and-tumble play. As children play, look for clues in their facial expressions, and ask yourself these questions:

- Are children smiling or grimacing?
- Are all the children willingly engaging or are some children using force to inflict harm on others?
- Do children come back again and again to extend the play and describe their play partners as their friends? Or are some children trying to get away?

## Ensuring Children's Safety During Rough-and-Tumble Play

To ease parents' fear of injuries, you will need to explain how you will ensure that big body play is a safe and positive experience for their children. Some keys to managing the risk of injury are:

- Open spaces
- Prepared environment
- Understanding and supporting each child's physical abilities
- Very close supervision
- Rules of play

The number one thing you can do is to create space in your environment—both indoors and outdoors—for children to be physically active. Move furnishings to create open areas, remove items with sharp corners and rough edges, provide cushioning to soften

falls, and limit the number of large furnishings and outdoor equipment that interfere with running and other active play.

When you know a child's physical, as well as social-emotional capabilities, you'll understand what his limits are for rough-and-tumble physical play and you can prevent it from escalating to unsafe levels. As you supervise the play closely, you'll know when to become a referee and call for a break for an individual child who needs to rest or for all the children to catch their breaths. You can establish rules of play such as:

1. No hitting
2. No pinching
3. Keep hands below the neck and above the waist
4. Stop as soon as the other child says "STOP"
5. No rough play while standing – kneeling only
6. Rough play is optional – stop and leave when you want.

You might consider using a coach's whistle and training the children to listen for it so they know when a break is being called and it's time to transition to a quieter activity such as taking a drink of water.





## Citations:

American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. (2011). *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance standards; Guidelines for early care and education programs*. 3rd edition. Washington, D.C.

Carlson, F. (2011). *Big body play: Why boisterous, vigorous, and very physical play is essential to children's development and learning*. National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, D.C.

National Association for Sport and Physical Education (2002). *Active start: Physical activity guidelines for children birth to five years*. In NAEYC Beyond the Journal • Young Children on the Web • May 2006. [Available on-line 2/2/15] <http://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200605/NASPEGuidelinesBTJ.pdf>

Prosch, N. (2013). *Physical activity from birth—5 years*. IGrow. South Dakota State University Extension [Available on-line 2/2/15] <http://igrow.org/up/resources/04-1004-2013.pdf>

## Reflection Sheet and Award Book

- To receive the award book for this month, fill out your caregiver's reflection sheet and return it to the Center on the Family in the postage paid envelope by the deadline posted.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.
- Update your address or contact information if any changes have taken place.



**REMINDER:** Registered QCC participants can use their participation in the program to fulfill the relicensing requirement of “increased knowledge.” Ask your DHS Licensing Social Worker about the requirements today.