



# Tabletop Exercise #5

## Student Playground Injury

CSDSIP Tabletop Exercise Series | September 2021

Working in K-12 schools can bring with it a bevy of challenges. Effective emergency planning can help your team operate efficiently no matter what happens throughout the year. Tabletop Exercises help you ensure healthy operations by bringing together key stakeholders to test your emergency management plans. CSDSIP is back with another scenario-based tabletop exercise based on real life incidents to test your school's emergency response skills. Each exercise is intended to improve your team's critical thinking abilities in realistic scenarios, help coordinate the right people to assist in an emergency and provide knowledge and tools to build confidence handling emergency scenarios.

### Tabletop Exercise 5

A student was injured on a playground. What do you do?

**When:** September, Mid-morning

**Where:** Elementary School Playground

**Incident:** Student was standing on the swing seat and fell off breaking his arm.

**Event details:** During mid-morning recess a group of 28 3<sup>rd</sup> graders are out playing on the playground. The paraprofessional assigned to supervise is helping a student on the sidewalk. Across the playground another student is standing on the swing seat swinging back and forth. The chain on the swing snaps and the student falls hitting his head and injuring his arm.

**What was the response?** The paraprofessional comes over to check on the student. The student stands up and the paraprofessional walks him to the nurse's office. The nurse evaluates that the student has broken his arm and is concerned about his head injury. The nurse contacts EMS to come and transport the student to the emergency room. The principal contacted the student's parents. After investigation of the playground equipment, it was determined that the S-hook had a gap and came detached from the frame causing the swing to fall. Maintenance records revealed that this issue had been reported but never fixed, opening the school up to greater liability.

#### Critical Thinking:

1. What current emergency policies and procedures are necessary in this scenario?
  - a. Was the response adequate to the magnitude of the incident?
2. Is any individual or department trained on what to do in a similar scenario?
  - a. Would you have involved anyone else?
3. What would your school have done differently?
4. What lessons can be learned from this scenario?



# Recommendations

## Playground Injury Exercise

### Recommendations:

The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act (CGIA) was enacted to shield taxpayers from increased taxes by limiting tort lawsuits against public entities. However, the immunity granted by the CGIA can be waived in certain situations. One waiver of immunity applies to a dangerous condition of a public facility located in a park or recreation area maintained by a public entity.

In 2014, the Colorado Supreme Court ruled that an entire playground, considered as a whole, can qualify as a public facility under the CGIA. And in 2017, the Colorado Supreme Court held that a non-negligently constructed and maintained piece of playground equipment cannot be a “dangerous condition” under the CGIA. As a result, schools have increased liability exposure related to the maintenance and safety of their playgrounds, and proper installation, inspection, and maintenance of playground equipment are imperative to ensuring a safe environment and preserving immunity under the CGIA, thereby limiting Member exposure.

**Playground Inspections** - Your playground and equipment should be inspected daily. Do a quick visual sweep to ensure that trash and debris are removed. Schools should keep playgrounds in good condition by inspecting and maintaining the equipment throughout the year. Any conditions that are unsuitable should be reported to the maintenance department immediately and affected areas may be restricted from use.

**Supervision** - While it is impossible to completely prevent accidents from occurring on playgrounds, good supervision can help reduce the risk of injury. Establish supervision guidelines, rules, and procedures to help overcome the challenge of controlling the play environment. Watch for unsafe behavior such as standing on a slide. It is important for students to know the playground rules and why they are being enforced. There should be an adequate amount of supervision to allow for response to an injury without leaving other students unsupervised.

# Resources

## Playground Injury Exercise

### **Resources:**

[CSDSIP Playground Safety Series](#)

[Routine Inspection & Maintenance Checklist](#) (High Frequency)

[General Maintenance Checklist](#) (Low Frequency)

[Public Playground Safety Handbook](#) (CPSC)

[CDE Emergency Guidelines for Schools](#)

### **Conclusion:**

Playgrounds are an important component of the learning environment and through proper safety inspections and routine maintenance they may support your educational mission. Join us next time for another tabletop exercise