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News from the Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund



May 2018 eNEWS

## Rhode Island Child Care Awareness Day at the State House

Sponsored by the Permanent Legislative Commission on Child Care, advocates, community partners, supportive legislators, educators, parents, and dozens of babies and toddlers took to the State House to advocate for high quality child care and proposed tiered reimbursement rates on May 16, 2018 for the 7th Annual Child Care Awareness Day.



To help showcase what a quality child care space looks like, the Facilities Fund team converted the Bell Room at the State House for use by more than 40 tiny advocates. Thanks to a generous donation of materials and furnishings by Kaplan Early Learning Company, we were able to transform this grand, marble space to a welcoming environment for learning and play.



Even Senator Michael McCaffrey (left) and Representative Scott Slater (right) wanted to join in on the fun.

If you are interested in learning more about what furnishings should be including in your early learning space, take a moment to peruse our **[Child Care Center Equipment and Furnishings](#)** resource guide.

## Certified Playground Safety Inspector Course

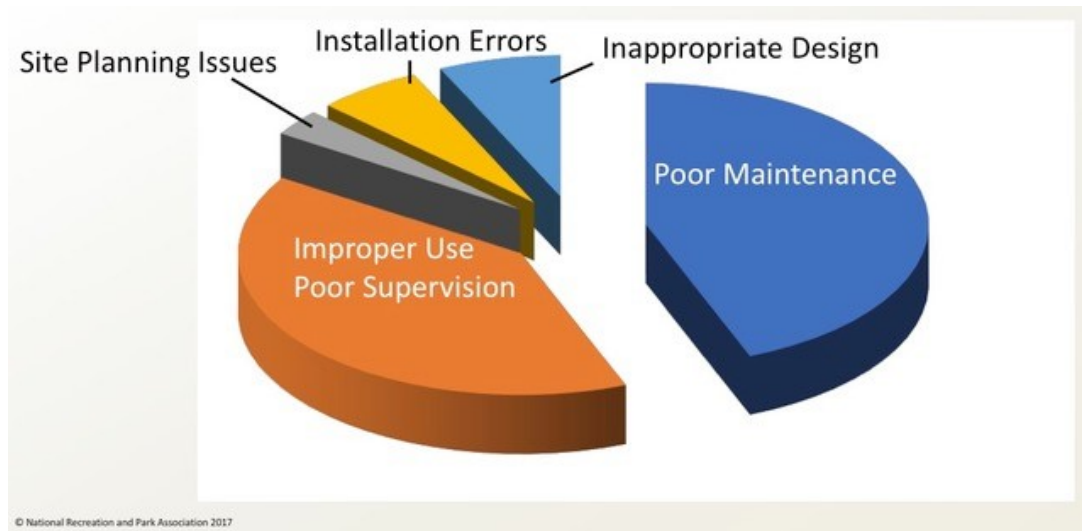
For the second time in three years, the Child Care Facilities Fund, in partnership with the Rhode Island Recreation and Parks Association, hosted the National Recreation and Park Association *Certified Playground Safety Inspector's Course* from May 2nd to May 4th.



This three day, intensive, hands-on training for over twenty five people (which included landscape architects, designers, buildings and grounds maintenance staff, playground manufacturer representatives, operators/caretakers, and insurance adjusters) covered topics such as:

- Identifying Playground Safety Hazards
- Emerging Safety Concerns
- Current Standards and Guidelines
- Accessibility
- Safety Surfacing
- Risk Management
- Safety Design

Time was also spent better understanding the factors that contribute to playground injuries, as highlighted here:



Poor maintenance was the number one item that contributed to playground injuries, but also one of the easiest to avoid if a "standard of care" is developed for your playground. The best way to avoid hazards due to poor maintenance is to check your play space frequently and carefully for anything out of the ordinary.

On a daily basis the site should be quickly scanned for the following types of hazards before use:

- Trash
- Signs of vandalism, including damage and graffiti
- Animal waste
- Missing or loose hardware
- Visible signs of equipment damage
- Notable changes in fall surfacing

In addition, before the playground is used, a staff member should ensure that the fencing and gate(s) are secure and all pathways are cleared. In adverse weather, the site may also require clearing of snow, ice, or standing water before use.

On a weekly or more frequent basis, the site should be more carefully checked for the following types of possible hazards:

- Chains that are kinked, twisted, or broken
- Loose components
- Cracks or cuts on equipment, including portable equipment such as riding toys
- Rot on wooden elements
- Inadequate surfacing underneath play components

You should also ensure that there are signs located on or around any play structure to guide playground supervisors on the age appropriateness of equipment. In addition, all relevant paperwork should be readily available (certificates of compliance, product data, most recent inspection/audit, etc.).

## **Tips for Creating an Enriching Outdoor Learning Space - See How One Center Implemented Change**



[Educare Central Maine](#) wanted more than just a new playground at their school. They wanted to create an outdoor space that would challenge and engage their children. This space would encourage movement, and offer “as many opportunities as possible for children to connect, discover and explore their natural environment more,” said Rhonda Kaiser, School Director for Educare Central Maine.

In fall of 2016, Kaiser and staff began working with a licensed landscape architect to develop a plan to ensure the play space was designed to best serve their children and staff.

Now, the children have an enriching outdoor space that gives them a chance to immerse themselves in a sensory-rich environment. The space includes sand and water features, walkways, grass and a mix of flowers and berry bushes. There are also places for children to use their imaginations as they escape into a tunnel or climb the stumps to the top of the hill.

The playground is designed to support optimal learning opportunities for children within the first, essential years of brain development.

[Read More Here](#)

**Coming Soon - New Online Learning Module on  
Child Care Development and Financing**



One of the biggest hurdles in developing an early childhood center is knowing where to start. We are currently developing our third online learning module dedicated solely to facilities development and financing, focusing on:

- Identifying the essential steps in the real estate and financing process
- Understanding the importance and components of early feasibility and planning
- Building an appropriate project development team
- Selecting and acquiring a site
- Raising money
- Completing construction

This session will be released in the early summer months- stay tuned. Until then we currently have two online modules available, each worth 3 early childhood professional development hours.

## Learn More About Our Online Learning Here

***Have you missed any of our previous eNEWS editions? Do you want to reference something you saw in an article from the past?***

***Our entire eNEWS catalog is available on our website. Be sure to [check it out here!](#)***

### ***About RICCELFF***

*The Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund (RICCELFF) is an innovative public-private partnership dedicated to expanding access to quality child care and early education opportunities throughout Rhode Island. The RICCELFF provides the capital and technical expertise that child care and early learning centers need to improve the quality and capacity of their physical space. The RICCELFF provides a combination of training, technical assistance, grant funding and flexible, affordable financing for a wide range of indoor and outdoor projects including minor renovations or construction of new, state-of-the-art facilities and playground spaces. [Click here](#) to learn more about what the RICCELFF can offer your program.*

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