Playground Safety Week
April 19 through April 25

Along with the beautiful spring weather comes increased opportunities for children to play outdoors. Outdoor play environments at child care programs can offer experiences that will enhance children's physical, emotional, social and intellectual development. Playgrounds deserve special attention to ensure that the area is safe for children as they explore and play. Below is a checklist that can help you review your playground for safety requirements:

- Areas surrounding playground equipment have at least 12 inches of loose fill, such as wood chips, mulch, sand or pea gravel, to help protect children from the impact of a fall.
- There is at least a 6-foot use zone in all directions around all pieces of equipment.
- Guardrails surround all elevated platforms and those guardrails are at least 29 inches high for preschool-age children and 38 inches high for school-age children.
- All openings in guardrails and between ladder rungs are less than 3.5 inches apart or more than 9 inches to prevent entrapment areas.
- The play area is free of hazards including exposed concrete footings under equipment and exposed/raised tree roots or rocks that could cause a child to trip.
- Equipment is free of sharp edges, loose bolts or dangerous hardware like open "S" hooks or protruding bolts.
- Children play only on equipment designed for their age group. Equipment is clearly marked for use only by the appropriate age group.
- The playground is inspected each morning before the children play to ensure that equipment is good repair and that fences and gates are closed and secure. Adults report any problems to the appropriate person immediately.
- Children are not permitted to wear clothes/jackets with drawstrings or long straps, flip-flops, open-toed sandals or clogs to help prevent strangulation, slips and falls.
- Adults supervise children on the playground at all times. Adults position themselves to see the entire playground and near larger pieces of equipment to provide assistance when children need help.

For more information on playground safety visit the CPSC website: [http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PUBS/playpubs.html](http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PUBS/playpubs.html)
ECDI Spring Training Sessions

The Richmond Early Childhood Development Initiative offers training to early childhood professionals in center-based and family child care programs.

Training Session # 5 - Building Blocks for Family Child Care (Family Child Care Programs)
May 9, 2009 from 7:45 AM - 3:00 PM  Location: Children’s Hospital

- Participants will get hands-on experience planning appropriate learning activities using Virginia’s Foundation Blocks for Early Learning; participate in a special presentation from the Library on Developing Early Literacy Skills; and complete a Make-It-Take-It session on View, Do and Read from PBS. Participants will need to bring their lunch. (Cost: Free)

Training Session # 6 - Safe Sleeping Environments for Infants and Toddlers (Center-based, Family Child Care)
June 6, 2009 from 8:45 AM -12:00 PM  Location: Richmond Department of Social Services, Marshall Plaza

- This session is designed for all teachers and caregivers who work with children birth - 2 years. The session will share information on how to create safe sleeping environments for infants and toddlers and review research and guidance on how to reduce the risk of Sudden Death Syndrome (SIDS) in child care programs. (Cost: Free)

Advanced registration is required and space is limited. Call Mickie McInnis, Quality Child Care Coordinator, 804-646-3331, to reserve your spot. Training certificates will be provided.

Save the Date - Director’s Networking Group

The Richmond Early Childhood Association (RECA) has partnered with Smart Beginnings Greater Richmond and the City of Richmond Early Childhood Development Initiative to develop the Richmond Area Director’s Networking Group. This group meets in the evening several times a year for dinner and networking. It is a time for discussing current issues, sharing management techniques, hearing about current public policy and forming new relationships.

The next session will be held at Children’s Hospital on Thursday, May 14, 2009, from 6 - 8 PM. The event is free for all Richmond area program directors. You must register by May 8, 2009 by contacting Susan Rawls at 804-784-2049 or email Susan at stmdover.school@comcast.net.

Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens presents:
No Child Left Inside, Restoring Nature to Early Childhood

Join the national dialogue about the critical relationship between direct exposure to nature and healthy childhood development. Learn about the physical, cognitive, emotional, social and creative assets that young children gain through outdoor experiences, and how direct, authentic experiences in nature can be created for children wherever they live, play and learn. Educators are invited to a special symposium at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden to celebrate Children and Nature Awareness Month. The symposium is Wednesday, April 29 from 8 AM - 4 PM. The cost is $25 which includes lunch. Advanced registration is required. Training certificates will be provided.

Related event on April 28th for Teachers: Dinner in the Garden for Teachers will be held on Tuesday, April 28 from 5 - 8:30 PM. Presented in cooperation with the Center for Life Sciences Education, VCU. Keynote by Jane Kirkland followed by walks and talks in the Children’s Garden. This event including dinner is FREE and enrollment is limited to 150. Advanced registration is required. Training certificates will be provided.

For event details and on-line registration for either event visit: www.lewisginter.org.
**Important Notice** to ALL Early Childhood Professionals

Due to statewide budget restrictions, the *Professional Development Catalog for Child Care Professionals* published by the Virginia Department of Social Services will no longer be mailed to you. The Spring 2009 catalog—which includes class schedules, registration information and additional professional development information—is available online at [http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/professionals_resources.html](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/professionals_resources.html) (click on Professional Development Catalog). Spring catalogs will be available online at the beginning of February. Fall catalogs will be available online at the beginning of August. For more information, please call (804) 523-2298 or email VDSSclasses@ccwa.vccs.edu.

Richmond Early Childhood Association Presents

**Start Smart: Building Brain Power in the Early Years**

Dr. Pam Schiller will lead a workshop for early education professionals on brain development. Dr. Schiller is a freelance early childhood author and consultant. She is the past-president of the Southern Early Childhood Association and Texas Association for the Education of Young Children. She served as Head of the Early Childhood Department at the University of Houston, where she also directed the Lab School. Dr. Schiller has written numerous articles for early childhood journals and is the author of five early childhood curriculums, eleven children’s books and more than thirty teacher and parent resource books. This event will be held from 8:30 AM - 12:30 PM on Saturday, April 25, 2009 at the Reveille Weekday School, 4200 Cary Street Road, Richmond, Virginia, 23221. Registration is $25 for RECA members, $35 for non-members and $15 for students with a valid ID. Please send your name, address, phone number, email address and registration fee to: Start Smart Workshop, Michele McTague, 12325 Boxford Lane, Midlothian, Virginia, 23114. Training certificates will be provided.

**Join the Summer Reading Program** sponsored by the Richmond Public Library and earn free books for your program!

The Summer Reading Program begins on Saturday, June 20, 2009 with kick-off parties at many Richmond Library branches. Special events include performances by Barefoot Puppets and the Richmond Jazz Society at all local library branches. The program ends on August 1, 2009 with a finale event at the Main Library from 10 AM - 4 PM. Go to [www.richmondpubliclibrary.org](http://www.richmondpubliclibrary.org) or visit by your local library for event dates and details.

To participate, child care providers serving children birth - 5 years will choose the books they want to read to the children and list those books on the reading log. To complete the program, providers will need to read at least 30 books. That’s only about a book a day!

There are several ways to sign up and receive the reading log to participate.

- Sign up at the Main Library’s Family Resource Center Provider Event on May 26, 2009 from 5 - 7 PM. To register for this event, call 804-646-4147.
- Visit the Main Library Children’s Department and ask for Krista at any time to sign up.
- If you already attend story times at a Richmond Library branch, or you receive library visits to your program, sign up with the children’s librarian.

To learn more about the Summer Reading Program, contact Krista Dawson, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Richmond Public Library, 804-646-4147.
The Importance of Family Involvement in a Child Care Setting

Thirty years of research shows that family has a powerful influence on children's achievement in school. When families are involved in their child's education, children earn higher grades, receive higher scores on tests, attend school on a more regular basis, graduate from high school at higher rates, and are more likely to demonstrate positive attitudes and behaviors than students with families who are not as involved. For these reasons, increasing family involvement is an important goal for any child care setting. How can we make this happen? Educators must actively engage and partner with each family when providing care and education for their child. Programs can provide parents and caregivers with opportunities and the support they need to be involved. Staff should be trained to understand the importance of daily communication and forming relationships with children and parents to have a successful partnership for the child. You can encourage family involvement by creating a welcoming and inviting environment for children and parents.

Here are strategies to help include families in your program:

- Develop an orientation process where all new families have the opportunity to receive written information about the program philosophy, curriculum and operating procedures.
- Hold family activities such as pot luck dinners, make-and-take sessions, children's performances and open houses which are excellent ways to involve the whole family. To increase participation, provide activities that are convenient, social and include food.
- Establish and encourage daily two-way communication between the program staff and families. The program should have an open door policy for the parents to visit.
- Program staff are trained and hold regular teacher-parent conferences to discuss each child's progress. Staff actively seek opportunities to work with the parents on developmental, behavioral or social concerns.
- Program staff recognize and respect the diversity of the children and families enrolled.
- Programs partner with the community to promote opportunities for family involvement by connecting families to other resources in their community.

Programs that present a variety of opportunities for family participation increase the chances that parents will feel welcome and motivated to become involved in their child’s program. We want to help families make those connections early so parents will be more likely to remain involved in their children’s education, enhancing their chances for success in school and in life.

Article submitted by:
Mary France, Parent Education Developer, Richmond Early Childhood Development Initiative
She has been working in communities with children and families for over 25 years. You may contact Mary France at 804-646-1870.
Shining Stars: Charting the Future for Today's' Children
Virginia's Fifth Annual Early Childhood Conference July 13-15, 2009
Wyndham Virginia Beach in Virginia Beach, Virginia

Who should attend: Early Childhood Educators; Head Start, Title I, VPI and Even Start Providers; Early Childhood Special Educators, Early Intervention Providers and Administrators. For more information and to register: http://ttaconline.org/staff/s_events/s_event_detail.asp?cid=1437.

Now Enrolling for Richmond Head Start and Virginia Preschool Initiative
Registration for children ages 3 and 4 for Richmond Public Schools Head Start, Virginia Preschool Initiative and VCU Head Start is underway. Registration will be held through June 11 from 9 AM - 3 PM at these locations:

Every Thursday at these schools:
- Bellemeade, Bellevue, Blackwell, Broad Rock, Carver, Clark Springs, Fisher, Fox, Martin Luther King (Round Bldg. A), Miles Jones, Munford, Overby-Sheppard and Ruffin Road.

Every Wednesday at these locations:
- East End District Initiative Building, 701 North 25th Street, Richmond, 23223
- RPS Parent Resource Center, Richmond Technical Center – North Building, 2015 Seddon Way, Room 205, Richmond, 23230
- North Richmond YMCA, 4207 Old Brook Road, Richmond, 23227
- Southside Community Service Center, 4100 Hull Street Road, Richmond, 23224

Parents must bring: child's certified birth certificate, child's Social Security card, proof of city residence, child's physical examination (dated within the last 12 months) and child's up-to-date immunization.

Parents registering their child for Head Start must also bring family proof of income, child's dental exam record (dated within the last 6 months) and child's medical and dental insurance card.

Families of children with disabilities are encouraged to apply. For more information, call 254-6181 (English) or 254-6180 (Spanish) or email: preschoolregistration@richmond.k12.va.us.

Special Needs Training for Early Care and Education Professionals
The Richmond Public Schools Preschool Grade Level Alliance is offering workshops on a variety of topics supporting children with special needs and their families.

Attendees will be able to choose from the following workshops:
- Autism
- Approaching Parents with Concerns
- Behavior Management Programs
- Special Needs Indicators
- The Referral Process

This event will be held on Saturday, April 18, 2009 from 9 AM - 1 PM at the Westover Hills Elementary School, 1211 Jahnke Road, Richmond, Virginia 23225.

Call 804-775-6481 by April 10, 2009 to register for this event.

Training certificates will be provided.