

Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines Information Document

When are the Safety Guidelines updated?

The Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines (Safety Guidelines) are updated annually every September. The Safety Guidelines are dated based on the September of that school year (e.g. the 2016 Safety Guidelines apply to the 2016/2017 school year), and the date appears on both the top and bottom of all pages (Generic Section, activity pages, Appendices) on the Safety Guidelines homepage and on the top of all pages on the app. In rare and special circumstances, small sections of the Safety Guidelines (e.g. the Concussion Protocol) may be updated during a school year. Should this occur, the following communications will be in place, notifying users of the revision:

- A communication will be sent by Ophea to all school boards via the Safety Contacts;
- A notice will be posted on the Safety Guidelines homepage (<http://safety.ophea.net>); and
- Any documents in PDF format will have the revised date at the top; any web-based documents will have a notice of the revision date at the top of the page.

Do I have to follow Ophea's Safety Guidelines?

The Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines are recognized as the minimum standards for risk management for physical activity in schools. The Safety Guidelines were developed, and are annually revised, using expert knowledge in both the education field as well as the provincial sport sector.

All publically funded school boards in Ontario are required to have safety guidelines for physical activity. Most choose to either follow the Safety Guidelines exactly, or adapt/localize them to their board's needs. In some cases boards develop their own minimum standards.

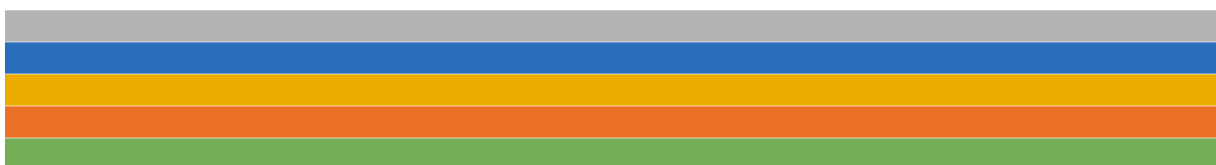
If an educator, coach or intramural supervisor was to choose not to follow the safety guidelines in place in their board, and an injury occurred, and a court case ensued, the judge would look to the industry standard of risk management, which includes the Safety Guidelines. The judge would ask the educator, coach or intramural supervisor for their rationale for not following their board's safety guidelines.

Educators/coaches/intramural supervisors are advised to check with their Principal, H&PE Contact or Safety Contact to determine if their board localizes the Safety Guidelines.

For boards that use or localize the Safety Guidelines, Ophea advises them that they may raise the standard but are **strongly encouraged** not to lower it.

Is it mandatory to review the Safety Guidelines on an annual basis?

Yes. If a board uses the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines, it is the educator's/coach's/intramural supervisors' responsibility to review the most recent versions of the Safety Guidelines (Generic Section, activity pages and Appendices) at <http://safety.ophea.net> or via the current version of the Safety Guidelines app. These documents inform the implementation of activities in Health and Physical Education classes, curricular field trips (that involve physical activity), inter-school practices and competitions and intramural clubs/activities.



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How long do schools have to implement changes to the Safety Guidelines?

It is assumed that schools/boards will implement the changes to the Safety Guidelines as soon as possible, but educators/coaches/intramural supervisors must seek direction from their own board (e.g., Superintendent, H&PE Contact). In cases where revisions to the Safety Guidelines represent a significant cost to school boards, a phase-in period of 1-3 years is usually provided. The date by which the change must be implemented is stated in the Safety Guidelines. Exceptions may apply (such as Policy/Program Memorandums or bills/laws dictated at the provincial government level) where immediate implementation is required. In all cases, schools must be able to demonstrate they are making all reasonable efforts to implement the revisions to the Safety Guidelines.

Can I do an activity that is considered “not appropriate”?

Schools are not advised to conduct an activity that is not supported by the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines. Should an injury occur, and should the injury incident proceed to the courts, the courts will determine the standard of care. To do this, they will cite safety documents and policies that are used by responsible others – in this case, other schools and school boards. This is called “peer impression”. It would be found that the majority of schools and school boards in Ontario follow the Safety Guidelines and therefore are not allowing the activity in question. This finding would go a long way in determining the standard of care for the school in question. It would be necessary to produce a rationale for offering the activity that would stand up against the rationale used by the provincial standard and all the schools in the province that follow it.

However, some activities are “appropriate” for specific age groups, but are considered “not appropriate” for others. In order to conduct an activity that is considered to be “not appropriate,” the following must take place:

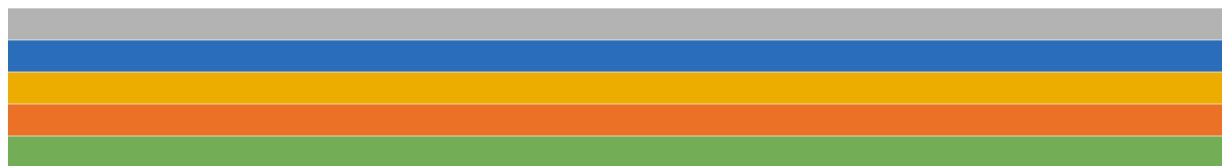
- Permission must be received from a school board official; and
- Modifications must be made to make the activity safer. Ways to do this could include:
 - increasing the degree of supervision (e.g., modifying the ratio from 1:12 to 1:8)
 - limiting participation to those students with existing skills in place (e.g., in an intramural club or school team)
 - using the corresponding Interschool activity page (if available), and/or modifying the activity so that the skills/rules of the game are of a lower intensity/complexity.

Can’t find the activity that you’re looking for?

Refer to the Safety Guidelines of an activity that it resembles. For activities that do not resemble an activity in the safety guidelines, approval from the appropriate school board official is required. As part of this process, the teacher must demonstrate that all appropriate precautions will be taken in the interest of student safety.

Does Ophea approve external activity providers or activity facilities?

No. It is the responsibility of the educator to provide any relevant Generic Sections and activity pages to an activity provider *prior to* them coming on school site or *prior to* visiting a facility. It is the responsibility of the activity provider to prove to the board that the minimum safety standards outlined on the activity page will be met. If the activity provider cannot meet these minimum standards, it is a school or board decision to determine whether they will be permitted to provide the activity on the school site or to the school at the provider’s own facility. If the facility/activity provider has a *higher* standard than that of the Safety Guidelines, the higher standard applies.



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How do I ensure that I have the right qualifications to instruct or coach an activity?

The first step is to review the activity page to determine the necessary qualifications.

If certification through an external body is required (e.g., ORCKA, NCCP), it is the educator's responsibility to pursue those qualifications. If an educator is uncertain about whether their qualifications meet those specified on the activity page, the educator can consult with the certifying body to ensure fulfillment of the requirements or equivalency as appropriate. It is the responsibility of the educator to demonstrate to the Principal/designate or school board official that the qualifications have been met.

Please note: Ophea does not oversee adherence to supervision qualifications.

Are laser tag, ice fishing, go karting, bubble soccer, water parks, etc. appropriate curricular Physical Education activities?

The Curricular modules of the Ontario Physical Education Safety Guidelines are based on *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8: Health and Physical Education, 2015 (revised)* and *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 9-12: Health and Physical Education, 2015 (revised)*. For any activities which are not featured in the Safety Guidelines, and/or which do not have a basis in the H&PE Curriculum, consider the following:

- Determine the educational value of the activity compared to the entertainment value. The activity must meet an educational expectation as outlined in the above curriculum.
- Approval for the activity must be received from a school board official.
- Identify possible risks of the activity and ways to minimize them.

