



INTRODUCTION

From 2012-2015, 5,084 elementary school-age students (grades K-6) were injured on school playgrounds, accounting for 67.1% of all student injuries in Utah elementary schools.

Playground injuries are the most common school-related injuries for children in grades K-6 in Utah.

STUDENT INJURY REPORTING SYSTEM

Since the early 1980s, the Utah Department of Health, Utah State Office of Education, and local school districts have collected data on student injuries in Utah public schools. All 41 Utah school districts and more than 800 public schools have participated. The Student Injury Reporting System (SIRS) tracks injuries that occur while traveling to and from school and during school time or school-related activities. Injuries that meet the following criteria are entered into the SIRS database:

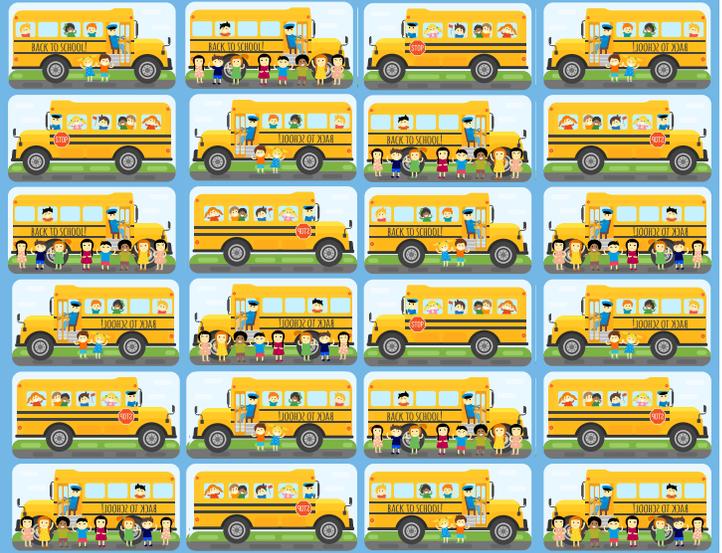
1. Injury caused the loss of at least one-half day of school, and/or
2. Injury required medical attention and treatment from a school nurse, physician, or other health care provider.

Because the SIRS is voluntary, injuries may be underreported. A goal of the SIRS is to increase the number of reported injuries, which may suggest that student injuries are increasing when in reality only the reporting of injuries is increasing.

SIRS helps to identify where, when, how, and why students get hurt at school. This information helps education officials pinpoint risk factors at individual schools and develop safety guidelines and prevention programs that can minimize the physical and financial impact of injury on the individual, family, school, and community.

67.1%
of student
injuries in Utah
elementary
schools
occurred on a
playground.

Each year nearly
1,700 Utah children
in grades K-6 are
injured on school
playgrounds; enough
to fill 24 school buses.



WHO

More playground injuries were sustained by 5th graders compared to any other grade (17.2%).

WHAT

The top three playground injuries received were possible fracture/broken bone at 50.2%, cut/laceration (14.4%), and bump/bruise/contusion (9.3%).

WHEN

Most elementary school playground injuries (83.6%) occur during lunch recess and recess.

WHY

The most common activities during which injuries occurred were playing on bars (26.5%), running (23.5%), and walking (6.0%).

HOW

Falls were the cause of 37.8% of all playground injuries, followed by tripping or slipping (29.7%) and collisions (23.7%).



PLAYGROUND INJURIES

Example 1: A kindergartner was playing on the monkey bars during recess and jumped down. He fractured his wrist when he landed on the dirt. The wood chips had all been displaced from the area.

Prevention:

Ensure that appropriate surface materials are under and around playground equipment. Maintain surfacing weekly.

Example 2: A 5th grader was sliding down the slide head-first during lunch recess. He landed on his head; bruising and cutting his head.

Prevention:

Teach and enforce proper safety rules for using playground equipment. Establish consequences for rule-breaking. Supervise and be aware of what students are doing at all times.

Example 3: A 1st grader was swinging with his backpack on before school. He jumped out of the swing and his backpack got caught. He fell on his elbow and received stitches.

Prevention:

Backpacks and bags should not be allowed in the playground area. In addition, loose clothing and drawstrings on clothing should be tucked in prior to playing on the playground to avoid entanglement.

SAFETY TIPS

- Establish playground safety rules (such as no pushing, crowding, or shoving) with consequences for breaking rules.
 - This includes establishing a school climate that demonstrates respect, support, and caring and does not tolerate harassment or bullying.
- Always have trained adult supervisors present who:
 - Are **ACTIVELY** supervising. This does not mean playing with the children, but enforcing the rules and following safety protocol.
 - Enforce the consequences when children break safety rules.
 - Spread out and avoid congregating in groups.
 - Walk around the entire perimeter of the playground.
 - Find areas that enable sight from one end of the playground to the other.
- Develop a playground inspection and equipment maintenance checklist.
 - Schedule regular inspections and promptly repair broken playground equipment.
 - Make sure guardrails are in good condition to help prevent falls.
 - Look out for things in the play area that can trip children, like tree stumps or rocks.
 - Check that playgrounds have soft material under them such as wood chips, or mulch.
- Provide first aid training for school staff as outlined by state guidelines.





LAWS

Schools that participate in the SIRS submit online forms to the Utah Department of Health Violence and Injury Prevention Program (VIPP) where the data are then stored and analyzed. To register your school with the Student Injury Database, VIPP needs to receive an email from the Principal of your school, which includes the Principal's name, email, name of the school district, name of the school, address, and phone number. VIPP also needs to know if there are new users or any changes to user information. Please send this information to: studentinjury@utah.gov or call (801) 538-7057.

Utah Administrative Code R392-200 provides a list of health and safety requirements for public schools in Utah on things such as equipment condition, first aid training, prescription medications, etc. Details on these requirements can be found at www.rules.utah.gov/publicat/code/r392/r392-200.htm#T7.

RESOURCES

Children's Safety Network

www.childrenssafetynetwork.org

Concussion ABCs

www.cdc.gov/headsup/schools/index.html

Public Playground Safety Handbook

www.cpsc.gov/PageFiles/122149/325.pdf

National Program for Playground Safety

www.playgroundsafety.org

Safe Kids Worldwide

www.csafekids.org/tip/playground-safety-tips

Utah Department of Health

www.health.utah.gov/vipp/kids/student-injuries/playground-safety.htm

Our Mission: VIPP is a trusted and comprehensive resource for data and technical assistance related to violence and injury. This information helps promote partnerships and programs to prevent injuries and improve public health.

(801) 538-6864 | vipp@utah.gov
www.health.utah.gov/vipp