

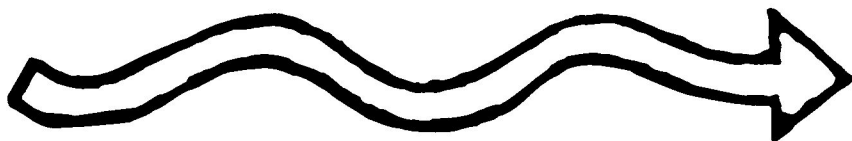


# HANDOUT

## 1-4-5

# SIX DIMENSIONS OF HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS FOR CHILDREN: SAFETY-CHALLENGE

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organized games  
Safety

free play in gym

climbing trees  
Challenge

Imagine that you are the director of an after-school program that uses a school playground every day.<sup>5</sup> The playground has three huge elm trees that are perfect for climbing. One tree has several branches suitable for building a tree fort. Do you let the children in your program climb these trees? Would you let them build a tree fort in the branches?

School-age children are eager to learn new skills and test their physical strength and courage. They thrive on challenges; climbing trees and building tree forts are developmentally appropriate for them. But can child care providers allow children to take the risks inherent

in these activities? And if certain activities such as climbing trees must be prohibited, can other activities be provided that are challenging but have an acceptable level of risk?

The balance between safety and challenge may be one of the most difficult dimensions to evaluate. A level of risk that one staff member or parent considers acceptable may be considered dangerous by others. State licensing regulations and liability concerns play a large part in determining the kinds and levels of challenges a program can provide.

Because people evaluate risks differently, it is useful to discuss the issue with staff so that everyone's

perspective is understood. Use the agree-disagree statements on the next page to start discussion about safety-challenge issues.

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5. The Safety-Challenge material is adapted from Jim Greenman, *Caring Spaces, Learning Places: Children's Environments That Work* (Redmond, Wash.: Exchange Press, 1988), p. 77.