



Self-Supervised Kids Fact Sheet (References on Reverse)

Q1: Who supports age-appropriate self-supervision in Canada and why?

The Canadian Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health¹, Canadian Public Health Association², Public Health Agency of Canada³, BC Children's Hospital, University of British Columbia, BC Injury Research and Prevention Unit, ParticipACTION⁴, and Attachment Network of Manitoba⁵ all recognize the importance of active and outdoor risky play. **Some of these groups collaborated on a website, OutsidePlay.ca**, to help parents recognize what traits they want to cultivate in their children, learn how some parenting decisions discourage those traits, and create a plan to foster more independence and risky play⁶.

Q2: What are the disadvantages of unnecessary limits on self-directed outdoor play?

- Children are less physically active and less able to do things on their own.
- Children have less-developed motor skills, social skills, and conflict resolution skills.
- Less frequent active outdoor play is associated with **increased risk of depression and anxiety**⁷.
- Overreliance on driving means more **traffic, air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions**.
- Parents must spend a significant amount of time supervising or transporting even older children, often by car. One study found that saving time was the predominant reason for driving children to a school within 2 miles of home⁸.

Q3: Are self-supervised children at greater risk of abduction or being hit by a motor vehicle?

These concerns are widespread, but according to the Canadian Public Health Association, "...safety concerns (about children playing outside independently) appear to be largely unfounded as **the odds of child abduction by a stranger are extremely rare (1 in 14 million)**, and **children are 8 times more likely to be involved in a motor vehicle accident as a passenger than as a pedestrian**⁹." To combat this, the Public Health Agency of Canada has identified a need to "**Remove stigmas and stereotypes around letting children play outdoors alone**¹⁰."

Q4: What is the legal text that addresses the supervision of children under 12 in Manitoba?

Section 17(2)(g) of the Manitoba Child and Family Services Act states: "...a child is in need of protection where the child... **being under the age of 12 years, is left unattended and without reasonable provision being made for the supervision and safety of the child**¹¹." Parents have been told that this means children under 12 need direct adult supervision at all times¹², including while walking to school. Green Action Centre received the same answer when we requested clarification from the Manitoba Parent Zone website, which is hosted by Healthy Child Manitoba.

Q5: What are the issues with setting self-supervision for children based on age limit?

According to a CBC Interview with Dr. Mariana Brussoni, developmental psychologist and injury prevention expert with UBC and the BC Children's Hospital Research Institute, "**A simple age limit is inappropriate, because it gives a false sense of security...Children do not magically reach the maturity to manage solo at the same age — for some it may be younger, others older... Every child is different... (and) risk needs to be introduced incrementally**¹³."

Q6: Where else is self-supervision supported?

In May 2018, the Public Health Agency of Canada released their **Common Vision** document on physical activity promotion¹⁴. This includes an identified need to promote outdoor independent and risky play. In the USA, the state of Utah passed the "Free Range Kids Bill" in April 2018, clarifying that **it is not inherently neglectful to let children do independent activities like walking to school or to a local park**¹⁵. Individual municipalities are also taking action. Ithaca, NY, has declared itself a "free range kid city", with the mayor stating: "**Given the choice between living here, where your kids can run outside and find a bunch of friends to play with, and another city where just allowing your kids to walk home from the park could get you arrested, we know that families will joyfully choose Ithaca**¹⁶."

Q7: What can you do?

Become an advocate for laws and policies that support active outdoor play! According to the Public Health Agency of Canada's **Common Vision** document, "Parents, educators and caregivers can encourage children to actively play outdoors in nature, even with all its adventures and risks... They can team up with education and childcare administrators to work with municipal and provincial/territorial governments and across sectors to **examine policies, by-laws and insurance standards that have been known to act as barriers to healthy outdoor play** that will never be entirely free of risk, but which is generally safe¹⁷." The Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health have additional recommendations for individuals and institutions online¹⁸. You can also sign the **Change.org petition for a free-range parenting law in Manitoba**¹⁹, which has reached more than 8,500 signatures! Other resources that you may find useful can be found on the reverse.

Additional Resources

- [OutsidePlay.ca](#) may be useful for helping individual parents understand the benefits of outdoor and risky play, and to create a customized roadmap for allowing kids more freedoms.
- The [Let Grow Project](#)²⁰ is a simple, low-cost, opt-in initiative to build independence and resilience in kids.
- The [2015 ParticipACTION Report Card Highlights](#)²¹ are easy to digest, and illustrate the urgency of the problem, with relevant facts, figures and evidence about the dangers of not playing outside. It draws heavily from the research informing the Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play²².
- The decline of play | Peter Gray | TEDxNavesink: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bg-GEzM7iTk>
- Japan's independent kids I The Feed: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7YrN8Q2PDU>
- Green Action Centre has a comprehensive **Background Document on Self-Supervised Kids in Manitoba** available to champions for this issue who want to go deeper into the context and research. Please reach out to us at asrts@greenactioncentre.ca if you would like support in making the case to your school, parent council, or any other group.

References

¹ The Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health Supports Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play, <http://www.phn-rsp.ca/aop.php>

² Risky play is essential for child development, Canadian Public Health Association, <https://www.cpha.ca/risky-play-essential-child-development>

³ A Common Vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living in Canada: Let's Get Moving, Public Health Agency of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/lets-get-moving.html>

⁴ The Biggest Risk is Keeping Kids Indoors, ParticipACTION, https://participaction.cdn.prismic.io/participaction%2F45e84385-dc07-48a3-af13-3cd43a44a9eb_participaction-2015-report-card-highlight.pdf

⁵ 10 Things Your School Age Child Wants You To Know, Attachment Network of Manitoba, https://attachmentnetwork.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/APN_SA_low-rez.pdf

⁶ OutsidePlay.ca, <https://outsideplay.ca/>

⁷ The Biggest Risk is Keeping Kids Indoors, ParticipACTION, https://participaction.cdn.prismic.io/participaction%2F45e84385-dc07-48a3-af13-3cd43a44a9eb_participaction-2015-report-card-highlight.pdf

⁸ Why Parents Drive Children to School: Implications for Safe Routes to School Programs, <https://activelivingresearch.org/why-parents-drive-children-school-implications-safe-routes-school-programs>

⁹ Risky Play is essential for child development, Canadian Public Health Association, <https://www.cpha.ca/risky-play-essential-child-development>

¹⁰ A Common Vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living in Canada: Let's Get Moving, Public Health Agency of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/lets-get-moving.html>

¹¹ The Child and Family Services Act, [https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/c080e.php#17\(2\)](https://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/ccsm/c080e.php#17(2))

¹² 'Doing our children a disservice': Winnipeg mom petitions for 'free range parenting' in Manitoba, CTV News <https://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/doing-our-children-a-disservice-winnipeg-mom-petitions-for-free-range-parenting-in-manitoba-1.4164578>

¹³ Here are the rules about putting kids on a bus alone: there aren't any, CBC, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/5-children-ride-bus-alone-debate-vancouver-adrian-crook-free-range-helicopter-parenting-1.4280001>

¹⁴ A Common Vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living in Canada: Let's Get Moving, Public Health Agency of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/lets-get-moving.html>

¹⁵ Why Utah now has first 'free-range' parenting law, BBC, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-43997862>

¹⁶ City proclaims Ithaca's kids are free to play, Ithaca Voice, <https://ithacavoices.com/2018/11/city-proclaims-ithacas-kids-are-free-to-play/>

¹⁷ A Common Vision for increasing physical activity and reducing sedentary living in Canada: Let's Get Moving, Public Health Agency of Canada, <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/healthy-living/lets-get-moving.html>

¹⁸ Active Outdoor Play Statement from the Council of Chief Medical Officers of Health, <http://www.phn-rsp.ca/aop-position-jae/index-eng.php>

¹⁹ Bring Free Range Parenting Law to Manitoba, Change.org, <https://www.change.org/p/heather-stefanson-bring-free-range-parenting-law-to-manitoba-5abde5d2-3014-4821-823c-e7d4dbe5de3ehttps://www.change.org/p/heather-stefanson-bring-free-range-parenting-law-to-manitoba-5abde5d2-3014-4821-823c-e7d4dbe5de3e>

²⁰ The Let Grow Project, <https://letgrow.org/program/lgproject/>

²¹ The Biggest Risk is Keeping Kids Indoors, ParticipACTION, https://participaction.cdn.prismic.io/participaction%2F45e84385-dc07-48a3-af13-3cd43a44a9eb_participaction-2015-report-card-highlight.pdf

²² Position Statement on Active Outdoor Play, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4483712/>