

Keeping Our Neighborhoods Safe: Information on “Children at Play” Signs

Understanding How Warning Signs Are Used

Warning signs are most effective when used sparingly and only to advise motorists of an unusual or unexpected condition ahead. When used too frequently, their effectiveness decreases. A common neighborhood request is to install generalized warning signs with messages such as “SLOW CHILDREN AT PLAY” or similar variations. These requests often arise from parents’ concerns about children playing near the street or from the public perception that these signs provide an added layer of protection.



Understanding the Guidelines for “Children at Play” Signs

The City of Dallas must comply with state and federal requirements for traffic control devices, as outlined in the Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (TMUTCD). The “Children at Play” sign is not a recognized sign in either the Federal or Texas MUTCD.

The primary reason this sign is not approved for use is that research has shown it does not reduce pedestrian accidents or lower vehicle speeds. The NCHRP report “Synthesis of Highway Practice No. 139: Pedestrians and Traffic Control Measures” (1988) states that “Non-uniform signs such as ‘Caution – Children at Play,’ ‘Slow – Children at Play,’ ‘Slow – Children,’ or similar legends should not be permitted at any time and the removal of any non-standard signs should carry a high priority.”

These types of signs can give parents a false sense of security, and in some cases, children may misinterpret the signs to mean it is acceptable to play in the street. Children should never be encouraged to play within street travel ways.

To address safety concerns, the City can review options allowed under TMUTCD Section 2C.56, including the Playground Sign (W15-1), which may be used to provide advance warning of a designated children’s playground located adjacent to the roadway.

For more information, please contact the City of Dallas Transportation and Public Works Field Operations. We want to work with you to ensure your safety. For additional information, please call 214-670-3123.

