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Reducing Risk for YMCAs

Bounce House and Inflatable Safety

Owning, renting or using bounce houses and inflatable jumps or slides requires special precautions by the YMCA. Serious injuries can result from their usage.

There have been multiple lawsuits due to injuries of children at off-site venues where local Ys often take kids on field trips, including a boy who fell more than eight feet from the top of an inflatable slide that was unsupervised and a child who fell through a tear in the canvas of an inflatable. They both landed on their heads and suffered brain injuries.

Some YMCAs prohibit the use of bounce houses and trips to these venues. No waiver of liability is valid for children getting hurt in these devices. The YMCA and venue are responsible for everything that happens.

Tips for using bounce houses safely whether you own, rent or go to an off-site venue:

1. Always follow the manufacturer's guidelines and warnings.
2. Check the life span of the equipment and discard those past their prime.
3. Limit usage to kids from 4-12 years old (teens are too big for bounce houses).
4. Avoid using the giant inflatables, as their height is dangerous and a fall could be deadly.
5. YMCA supervision is required at all times, whether on- or off-site.
6. Capacity depends on the age and size of kids; go below capacity.
7. Group kids together by height and weight so they are balanced.
8. No shoes, jewelry, glasses, sharp objects, food or drinks allowed.
9. No flips, somersaults, wrestling, piling on, pushing or piggybacking.
10. Follow all safety rules from manufacturer.
11. Do not impede or block bounce house exits.
12. Set up inflatable on lawn or padded surface; firmly secure it to ground. Check for sharp objects, sprinkler heads or objects that could puncture the bounce house.
13. Never use inflatable on a windy or stormy day.
14. Inspect off-site jump centers for condition of equipment, layout and hazards before you take kids there. Plan your supervision of the site.

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