

LSC

Maintaining Your Child Care Facility Investments



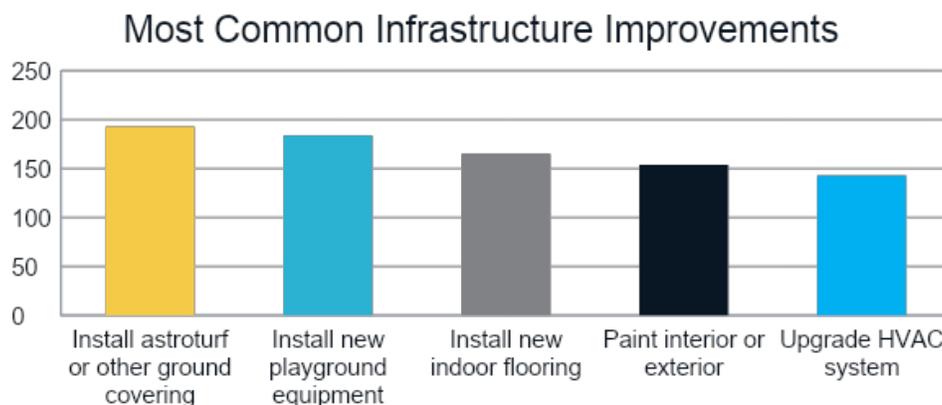
Contents

Introduction	3
Planning Your Maintenance Program	3
✓ Develop goals for your maintenance program.....	3
✓ Inventory your building's assets.....	4
✓ Develop an inspection plan.....	4
✓ Establish roles and responsibilities and clear lines of communication	4
✓ Plan to save and set aside funding in your annual budget	5
Child Care Facility Assets	5
Building Structure	6
Building Structure Maintenance Resources	9
Outdoor Play Area	10
Outdoor Play Area Maintenance Resources:	15
Capital Needs Assessment (CNA)	15
Energy Efficiency Projects	15
Sources	16
Appendix	17
Sample Playground Inspection and Maintenance Lists	17
Capital Needs Assessment Categories and Sample Criteria	17

Introduction

Developing and putting a maintenance plan into action will help keep your high-quality child care space safe, healthy, and in good repair, protect and extend the life of your investments, prevent costly issues that may arise when maintenance is deferred, and allow you to save and budget well in advance for regular upkeep and anticipated equipment replacement costs.

We've outlined guidance for developing a maintenance and inspection program as well as tips tailored to some of the most common uses of early childhood facility grant funding, based on data from the \$65 million Arizona Child Care Infrastructure program administered by [LISC Phoenix](#) in 2023.



Planning Your Maintenance Program

Many building elements need to be maintained and cared for to function well and prevent costly repairs. Postponing maintenance is one common way organizations try to save money. This practice is called “deferred maintenance,” and can lead to more frequent and higher repair costs over time, sooner-than-projected replacement costs, and equipment that may not deliver the quality of service that it should. These initial five steps will help you to get started on developing and implementing your own ongoing maintenance routines, policies, and procedures so you can avoid the costly consequences that can come from deferring maintenance of your business’s assets.

- ✓ **Develop goals for your maintenance program.** What are your objectives in creating a maintenance plan? Would you like to maximize efficiency, reduce ongoing costs, prevent costly system or equipment breakdowns, increase safety, and/or ensure compliance with codes and regulations? These are just a few examples of some common facility maintenance objectives that will help inform decision-making and help your team focus on outcomes and understand what they are working towards. Involve as many of your key stakeholders as possible in this process (teachers, administrators, community members, etc.).

- ✓ Inventory your building's assets. You need to decide what equipment to include in your preventive maintenance program. For example, were you able to use grant funding to upgrade your HVAC system, purchase outdoor equipment, install new flooring or outdoor surfacing? Keep an organized file of equipment manufacturer documentation, manufacturer's suggested maintenance information, and the age of the equipment to establish *useful life* estimates. This can feel tedious or overwhelming but is well worth it. There are even templates available for download that you can edit to meet your needs, for example, this [Asset Inventory Template](#)

Useful Life Estimates are used to determine how long an asset should be kept before it's replaced. Everything has an expected useful life: the roof material may have a useful life of 20 years, while flooring might last 12 years. Understanding useful life of a building asset can help you budget for its replacement and help in decision-making when a costly repair may be needed.

- ✓ Develop an inspection plan: 1) Establish priorities for aspects of your property that need routine check-ins and care, especially those that most impact your safe and sustainable operation as a child care provider. 2) Establish inspection and maintenance frequency.

After a purchase or a repair or renovation, you may receive operating manuals for the equipment and materials used in the project. Use these for guidance in setting up a schedule of preventive maintenance for each system. You can see an example facility maintenance timeline for a school building that can be modified from the EPA [here](#).

SECTION 2 BUILDING EXTERIOR & ENTRY		TRUE	FALSE	N/A	IMPACT	FIX
2A. BUILDING EXTERIOR						
12. Area is free of trash and debris.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	!	
13. Windows and trim are in good condition (no broken panes, trim not cracked/falling off, etc.). If trim is wood, verify it is not soft or rotting.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	!	
14. Exterior of building, including stairs, sidewalk, etc., is in good condition. <i>The following should be true:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Siding is intact • No cracks in building • No peeling or chipping paint or crumbling masonry • Asphalt and concrete in good repair with no cracks or gaps that cause tripping hazards • Stairs in good condition with stable handrails • If applicable, gutters are securely attached and in working order and are clear of debris 		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	!	

3) A child care facility check list can be a great tool to regularly assess the condition of your space, for example:

- [Sample editable Child Care Facility Maintenance Checklist](#)
- [Family Child Care Checklist](#)
- [Child Care Physical Environment Checklist](#)
- [Facility Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Routine Playground Inspection Checklist](#)

Plan to keep a record of completed inspections, scheduled maintenance, and repairs.

- ✓ Establish roles and responsibilities and clear lines of communication. Form a committed team and establish clear procedures for enacting your plan. And if you are in a leased space, know your lease terms and communicate special requirements based on child care use such as additional cleaning and greater wear and tear – include your landlord in establishing clear roles and lines of communication for regular inspection and maintenance of space.

- ✓ Plan to save and set aside funding in your annual budget for required upkeep and repairs (including playgrounds and above-standard cleaning). Be sure to include other miscellaneous service type items and agreements (landscaping, cleaning/janitorial, HVAC system servicing, etc.). For example, a maintenance agreement on your air conditioning system will probably include the cost of an annual servicing when filters are replaced, and ductwork is cleaned. Preventive maintenance like this extends the life of the system, reduces operating costs, and saves money on repairs over time. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, every dollar spent on preventive maintenance yields \$4 in savings by avoiding the costs of future repair or replacement of building systems!

When deciding how much to save for regular building maintenance and repairs in your annual budget, you can look to previous years' expenses to help guide you. You can also follow some simple rules of thumb, such as planning to set aside 1% - 3% of the building's value or \$5,000 - \$10,000 for center-based facilities/\$1,000 - \$2,000 for home-based facilities. Keep careful records of your maintenance and upkeep costs during the year to ensure you are budgeting appropriately and have not overlooked any expenses that you can anticipate and budget for. If you lease your space, be sure you have clear roles and responsibilities around maintenance and upkeep of space to help inform your budget.

Use your useful life estimates to plan for anticipated system/equipment replacement costs. This can help inform you of what you need to save for a *replacement reserve* budget. This budget item is like a savings account to cover what would otherwise be budget-breaking costs of replacing expensive items.

TIP: Consider also adding a line item to your budget for miscellaneous expenses beyond your facility costs. One of the best ways to prepare for any unexpected expense is to maintain an emergency fund. This cash reserve should be separate from your regular operating funds and should be easily accessible in case of unforeseen expenditures.

Don't forget to monitor progress and adjust accordingly. Your preventative maintenance plan should be a living document.

Child Care Facility Assets

The information below offers general guidance, estimates, and tips in conjunction with considerations and professional guidance specific to your unique space and programming. This is not an all-encompassing list but is based on common uses of facility grant funds.

Replacement Reserve As careful as you are about maintaining your facility and making repairs in a timely way, equipment and systems wear out and need to be replaced. Small items can be easily replaced using your repair budget, but for major expenses the best practice is to plan for them by setting aside a small amount in each year's operating budget to fund a "replacement reserve account." Working with your accountant, develop a plan to fund a replacement reserve in your annual operating budget.

The useful life estimates, inspections, and maintenance procedures for building assets will vary and you should always refer to contractor's/manufacture's information and instructions for your specific equipment, building materials, and systems. If you have a warranty for work completed or furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FF&E) purchased, ensure your plan conforms to warranty requirements to ensure ongoing compliance. Remember that if you are leasing a space, be sure to review your lease agreement and work with your landlord to have a clear understanding of which facility assets are your responsibility versus that of your landlord.

Building Structure

Painting- Interior

- Useful Life Estimate: Plan to repaint every three years, or annually in areas of particularly high use, and touch up as needed.
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Establish and use guidance on methods for displaying children's work that does not damage the wall. Inspect walls and trim for peeling paint and repair if found. Apply vinyl corner guards at 90-degree corners, particularly in high traffic hallways to help protect interior walls from damage.

Painting- Exterior

- Useful Life Estimate: Depending on the exterior structure material and climate, the estimated exterior paint should last between 5 – 10 years. In harsh heat and sun, you may want to plan to repaint every five years to protect surfaces from deteriorating (with touchups every year or two).
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Establish a cleaning routine and schedule to protect and extend the life of the paint. Maintain landscaping around the house to ensure air flow. Regularly check gutters and downspouts. Watch out for cracking and peeling so you can repair and touchup before a more extensive job is required. One of the main causes of structural deterioration is moisture penetration. Regular exterior painting can help mitigate that risk.

Furniture and Fixtures:

- Useful Life Estimate: Varies, but typically within a 5- to 10-year range.
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Regularly clean and inspect to ensure furniture and fixtures are in good condition without peeling paint or loose parts. Verify that all furniture and fixtures are sturdy and secured to a wall or floor, so they do not wobble or topple.

Appliances

- Useful Life Estimate: Varies on type, model, and extent of use. Generally, residential grade appliances will need to be replaced in approximately five years because of the heavy use in a child care setting. However, commercial grade appliances will typically last 10+ years.
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: You should have a regular schedule of preventative check-ups and maintenance, continually watching over the performance of your appliances. Don't overlook minor problems! If you or your staff notice something off about the behavior of an appliance, investigate it as soon as possible. Ask your installer

or sales representative if there are any known maintenance needs or common issues to be on the lookout for. Consider a yearly professional checkup for commercial grade equipment. Clean and sanitize regularly.

Floors

- Useful Life Estimate: This is highly dependent on several factors (type of flooring, materials, location, heaviness of traffic, etc.), but most types of popular flooring materials should last 20+ years except for carpeting which typically has a useful life of 5-10 years (assuming regular cleaning and maintenance) or less in high traffic areas.
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Implement a regular cleaning routine, protect your floors - particularly those high traffic areas (for example, doormats outside entrances to trap dirt, sand, and grit), and conduct routine inspections to check for and address cracks, peeling, torn carpet, etc. If you are installing carpet, consider using carpet tiles. These allow you the ability to clean or replace individual tiles for spills, etc. without having to replace the entire room – good for the budget and for the planet. Also, area rugs are easier to replace and move as needed for a softer surface in the classroom.

Roof

- Useful Life Estimate: Varies based on the quality, durability, and type of material; however, the average lifespan of a roof usually ranges between 25 to 50 years.
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: *Please note, it is best to hire a professional to handle tasks related to your roofing.* A maintenance inspection conducted by a professional is recommended at least annually. Regularly check for indications of any animal activities; damaged or missing shingles; algae, moss, or fungus growth; leaks in the roof (ceiling staining is a good indicator). Any debris on the roof should be cleared promptly. Trees near the structure should have any branches overhanging the roof trimmed. Gutters and drains should be cleaned before rainfall/storms.

Windows

- Useful Life Estimate: The useful life varies; however, windows will typically last approximately 15 to 20 years.
 - Preventative Maintenance Tips: Windows should be included as a critical component of an annual building or home inspection. Each year, examine your windows closely for leaks, cracks in the paint or material, sealant cracks or breaks and problems with mechanisms for opening and closing the windows. It's also a good idea to check for these issues after a big storm. Regularly clean the windows, frames, and tracks.

Doors

- Useful Life Estimate: This will vary; however, exterior fiberglass, steel and wood doors should last as long as the building, while vinyl and screen doors may last 20-30 years.
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Exterior doors should be inspected at least annually for any signs of damage or weathering. Check for loose hinges and that self-closing devices are functioning in good repair. Protect the door surface and repair appropriately (this will depend on the material). Door gaskets and weatherstripping on exterior doors may need to be replaced every five to eight years.

HVAC: Your HVAC system is too important to neglect. An unmaintained system creates higher energy costs, reduces the lifespan of the equipment, and can create comfort, safety, and regulatory concerns if a program does not have a reliable and consistent HVAC system.

- Useful Life Estimate: A typical AC unit has a 7-15 year estimated useful life (if you keep up with suggested maintenance for your system)
- Preventative Maintenance Tips:
 - HVAC systems should be scheduled for service by a professional company yearly. It may be wise to have your annual service in the spring, depending upon your regional location. If you are in the south, you want to get failing units replaced before the summer heat comes. In the north, you want to replace them before winter and snow starts. There can be long lead times for ordering replacement units, so you want to make sure you replace them before something fails. Failures can result in centers closing until units can be received and replaced which is much harder for the bottom line.
 - Air filters should be changed every one to three months
 - Regular maintenance you can do:
 1. Look at HVAC filter frames, is the arrow pointing the right way on filters?
 2. Change filters according to the manual and keep a log.
 3. Look to see that HVAC dampers open and close.
 4. Check to see if the dampers are clear or clogged with debris.

Exterior surfaces: Walking surfaces that are slippery, uneven, or in poor condition can lead to falls, injuries, and potentially damage to the surfacing or surrounding area.

- Useful Life Estimate: Varies (for example: asphalt driveway 15-20 years; brick and concrete patio 15-25 years; gravel walks 4 to 6 years; concrete walks 40-50 years).
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Exterior surfaces such as porches, decks, steps, stairs, walkways, and driveways/parking lots should be inspected and maintained to be:
 - Free of loose or sharp objects
 - Free of deteriorated paint (e.g., cracking, chipping, or peeling)
 - In good condition (e.g., no splintering wood, loose boards, or broken railings)
 - Non-slip (e.g., slip-resistant mats or textured surfaces in wet areas)
 - Free of any trip hazards (e.g., extension cords, hoses, tools, cracks)
 - Free from water, ice, or snow
 - A cleaning schedule for exterior areas should be developed and assigned to appropriate staff members.
 - Seal coating regularly can help double the life expectancy of most pavements. It also slows oxidation and water penetration, resists gas and oil spills, and reduces the effects of the freeze-thaw cycle.

Plumbing

- Useful Life Estimate: Varies, though plumbing systems and fixtures can last a long time with appropriate preventative maintenance.
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Regularly check for leaks. If you notice signs of a leak like low water pressure or an increase in water usage, contact a plumber as these can cause

costly damage and attract pests. Test drains and clear slow-moving drains promptly. Regularly inspect any exposed pipes for damage, rust, decay, or warping. Know how to shut off your water in case of a suspected leak, overflow, malfunctioning appliance, etc. Work with a professional plumber to schedule inspections in commercial buildings where systems are more complex.

Electrical

- Useful Life Estimate: Commercial grade electrical systems, if maintained properly, may last 20 to 30 years (but depends on a variety of factors).
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Keep trees and branches trimmed regularly around the facility as well as the power lines coming into the building. Falling branches onto power lines is one of the top reasons for power outages during storms.

Fire Protection/Suppression Systems

- Useful Life Estimate: Varies based on system type, component, and environment.
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Plan to have a trained staff member conduct regular/monthly fire checks. Be on the lookout for fire and life safety hazards such as exits that are blocked, doors that are in disrepair, any issues with fire alarm or fire sprinkler components, and electrical hazards, so that they can be addressed immediately. *Please note that this guidance DOES NOT take the place of applicable local, state, and federal building codes and regulations for fire safety testing and inspection of your facility.*

Building Structure Maintenance Resources

- ✓ LISC's [Child Care Center Design](#) resource guide
- ✓ LISC's [Equipment & Furnishings guide](#)
- ✓ [Caring for Our Children's](#) overall requirements for openings including windows and doors
- ✓ [Caring for Our Children's](#) overall Requirements for Exits/Paths of Egress
- ✓ Video guidance on changing an HVAC unit air filter:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNTC08Qju9E>
- ✓ The Arizona Department of Human Services' [monthly log for Fire Drill and Smoke Detector Battery Checks](#)
- ✓ The Arizona Department of Economic Security's [Life-Safety Inspections: The Rules in Plain English](#) which includes a life safety inspection checklist report

Outdoor Play Area

Proper maintenance of the outdoor play area can reduce injuries and can prolong the longevity of the play equipment. Playground safety guidelines are governed by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) in the CPSC Public Playground Safety Handbook. These guidelines are widely considered the 'Standard of Care' for public playground safety. All commercial child care facilities except for home-based programs, are considered public playgrounds, whether they are publicly or privately operated. The handbook is available on-line at

www.cpscpublicplaygroundsafety. Playground Maintenance guidelines are outlined in Chapter 4 of the CPSC document. As part of your center's playground maintenance program, it is recommended to have someone on staff who is familiar with the CPSC Playground Safety guidelines to be able to maintain the Standard of Care. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) offers a two and a half-day course that reviews the current playground safety guidelines and is a cost-effective resource to educate your playground maintenance staff about current playground safety guidelines.

Playground **Standard of Care** is a legal term used to describe an owner's responsibility to provide a reasonable level of care to a play area to lower the likelihood of serious injury. The "[Daily Dozen Playground Safety Checklist](#)" can help guide you in identifying common safety hazards and help keep the children in your care safe.

Proper maintenance of your outdoor play area includes:

1. Maintenance Inspections
2. Repairs
3. Recordkeeping

Maintenance Inspections

A maintenance program should be developed for your outdoor play areas that include periodic inspections of the play area and the equipment for excessive wear, deterioration, and any potential hazards such as shown in this table from the CPSC Public Playground Safety Handbook:

Routine inspection and maintenance issues

- Broken equipment such as loose bolts, missing end caps, cracks, etc.
- Broken glass & other trash
- Cracks in plastics
- Loose anchoring
- Hazardous or dangerous debris
- Insect damage or nests
- Problems with surfacing
- Displaced loose-fill surfacing
- Holes, flakes, and/or buckling of unitary surfacing (such as poured-in -place rubber safety surfacing)
- User modifications (such as ropes tied to parts or equipment rearranged)
- Vandalism
- Worn, loose, damaged, or missing parts

- Wood splitting
- Rusted or corroded metals
- Rot

If you recently have had a new playground installed, or have made changes to your play area, you could have a **'playground audit'** performed on your play area by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector (CPSI) who has been trained in playground safety. The playground audit report will include a review of your play area and the play equipment to certify compliance or non-compliance with the CPSC guidelines and will provide recommendations for corrections of non-compliant issues to bring your play area into a Standard of Care. After all non-compliant issues are corrected, your play area will reflect the Standard of Care for future **'regular'** inspections to meet. A CPSI near you can be found at the National Recreation and Park Association CPSI registry.

If your play area has specific safety concerns, **'high frequency'** inspections may be warranted, such as daily inspection for hazardous materials in loose fill safety surfacing, such as broken glass, pest droppings or needles.

Repairs

All repairs to playground equipment should be made following the manufacturer's recommendations, and a call to the manufacturer prior to making the repair is recommended. Consult the manufacturer for maintenance schedules for each piece of equipment.

Recordkeeping

Records should be kept including all the manufacturers' information, warranties and installation instructions for all play equipment and playground surfacing. Records of playground safety surfacing testing results, indicating compliance with safety surfacing ASTM standards should be kept. Additionally, records of installers and contractors of play equipment and surfacing should be kept.

If you come across an issue during inspections, assess the damage or problem and consult with a professional when necessary.

Specific components of an outdoor play area

- Equipment:
 - o Useful Life Estimate: Based on industry standards, normal expectancy for commercial playground equipment is approximately 10 to 15 years with proper maintenance and inspection. You can also consult the equipment vendor/manufacturer for this information as playground equipment will vary based on several factors including the type of equipment; the quality, durability, and type of material; and the environment.
 - o Preventative Maintenance Tips: The indoor and outdoor play areas and equipment should be inspected daily for the following:
 - Missing, loose, or broken parts
 - Protrusion of nuts and bolts
 - Rust and chipping or peeling paint
 - Sharp edges, splinters, and rough surfaces

- Stability of handholds
- Visible cracks
- Stability of non-anchored large play equipment (e.g., playhouses)
- Wear and deterioration
- Insecure anchors, barriers, & panels
- Heavily worn moving parts (especially swing parts)

- **Fencing:**

- Useful Life Estimate: The average lifespan of a wood fence is 15-20 years, and for PVC/Vinyl, Aluminum, Steel, and Chain Link fences the average lifespan is 25-35 years.
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Regular inspections are essential to identify any issues early on and promptly address them. Check for loose parts, sagging sections, peeling paint, rotting or splitting wood, broken or damaged fence sections, or signs of wear and tear. Inspect the hardware, such as hinges and latches, to ensure they are not rusty or broken. Check that fence fittings, bolts, ties, or other hardware are installed or repaired/replaced in a manner that avoids potential safety issues such as protrusions or entanglement hazards. Regularly trim any vegetation that is in contact with the barrier like vines or shrubs. This will help prevent the accumulation of moisture and reduce the risk of pests or insect damage. Check for any large gaps under the fence bottom rail and fill all gaps larger than 3”.

- **Synthetic/Artificial Turf Safety Surfacing:**

- Useful Life Estimate: Synthetic turf playground safety surfaces can last 10-25 years with proper care.
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Regular maintenance for artificial turf includes:
 - Regular removal of debris with a blower or broom to keep the surface clear and dry.
 - Clear the edges of the turf where debris can accumulate, and weeds can grow.
 - Rinse the turf regularly with a garden hose to remove dirt and dust.
 - Clean any spills as soon as possible to avoid stains.
 - Use water, mild detergent, and a sponge to spot clean stains (follow with a rinse).
 - When rips or damaged seams are detected, contact a professional for repair as soon as possible.
 - Periodically brush to redistribute infill.
 - Replace areas of high wear as needed.



Emily Meschter Early Learning Center in Tucson, AZ

NOTE: Make sure that the artificial turf you select is a playground safety surface and meets American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) requirements for impact attenuation (the measure of its shock absorbing qualities) in the fall zones of play equipment. Your artificial turf safety surfacing will come with testing results that indicate the height of the equipment that it provides the required impact attenuation for and

compliance to ASTM. Discuss with your surfacing sales representative what your best practice should be to have surfacing periodically tested, inspected, and maintained.

- **Poured-in-place Rubber Safety Surfacing and Rubber Tiles:**
 - o **Useful Life Estimate:** Poured-in-place rubber surfaces and tiles have varying life spans.
 - o **Preventative Maintenance Tips:** Exposure to ultraviolet light, sand, and water can detrimentally affect these products, it is important to periodically inspect to ensure the impact attenuation is still adequate. Discuss with your surfacing sales representative what your best practice should be to have surfacing periodically tested. Every surface has a different time frame for inspection and maintenance. If rubber is deteriorating, such as crumbling, pitting, or chunking, contact a professional to recap or replace it.

- **Loose Fill Surfacing:** An important part of playground maintenance is making sure the safety surfacing in the fall zone of the play equipment is appropriately maintained. If you use a fill material such as wood chips, sand, mulch, or other natural material, the proper depth must be maintained.
 - o **Useful Life Estimate:** As loose fill is easily displaced, these materials usually need to be replenished annually. Spring is the ideal time to perform annual playground inspections and refresh fill material, plantings, and sand.
 - o **Preventative Maintenance Tips:** Organic materials, such as wood chips, bark chips, and pre-engineered wheel chair accessible processed wood fibers, have good impact-absorbing potential, but require proper maintenance to ensure safe, consistent depth. Loose fill surfacing materials require special maintenance to ensure that the surfacing has not been displaced particularly in areas of high use, such as at the end of slides and under swings. Surfacing should be raked back into its proper place. Installing impact-attenuating rubber mats in high-use areas can significantly reduce displacement. This includes annually refreshing materials, and regular raking/sweeping materials into place and spreading to ensure the proper depth. Refer to the chart in the CPSC Playground Handbook for the required depths of loose fill safety surfacing.

Table 2. Minimum compressed loose-fill surfacing depths				
Inches	Of	(Loose-Fill Material)	Protects to	Fall Height (feet)
6*		Shredded/recycled rubber		10
9		Sand		4
9		Pea Gravel		5
9		Wood mulch (non-CCA)		7
9		Wood chips		10
* Shredded/recycled rubber loose-fill surfacing does not compress in the same manner as other loose-fill materials. However, care should be taken to maintain a constant depth as displacement may still occur.				

- **Shade structures:** Routine maintenance on your shade structure after its installation, such as regular check-ins, cleaning and other essential strategies can extend the structure's useful life and help ensure the children and adults in your space remain safe and comfortable. Regular maintenance keeps your structure in its best condition long after your initial purchase.
 - Useful Life Estimate: Consult Vendor/Manufacturer
 - Preventative Maintenance Tips: Check the following components regularly.
 - **The fabric:** Shade fabric faces continuous exposure to weather elements and chemicals, which can degrade quality over time. It's best to check the fabric at least once a month. During your inspection, look for scratches, frays, stains, tears, or other noticeable weaknesses. Make sure the cloth maintains its tension and doesn't show signs of sagging, as well. If you identify any of these issues, try to repair them as soon as possible.
 - **The posts:** Check the structure's posts often. The posts ensure the structure remains secure and in an upright position. Make sure they're stationed securely and don't show signs of wobbling or leaning. Depending on the posts' material, they could have different problem types. For instance, wooden posts could develop rot, while iron posts might form rust. Repair or replace posts as needed.
 - **Signs of vandalism:** If your property's shade structure is in a public place, it could experience different forms of vandalism like leftover trash, spray paint or cigarette burns, which can degrade the structure's condition and visual appearance. Clean or repair signs of vandalism and take preventive action against vandals.

Without regular check-ins, problems can be missed and grow more severe. For instance, you might not notice a fabric tear, and it can continue to grow because of wind or other elements. The longer it is left untreated, the more likely a costly replacement will be necessary. Additional maintenance to extend the life and quality of your structure includes:

- Establishing a routine cleaning schedule. Try removing the sail and scrubbing it at least every few months.
- Taking down the shade structure's fabric ahead of harsh storms or poor weather conditions if possible. Put the fabric in temporary storage until the weather clears and your outdoor space reopens rather than leave it outside to face the elements.

- **Storage Sheds and Containers**

- Useful Life Estimate: Approximately 20-30 years for wood or vinyl sheds, and five or less for resin, plastic, or metal storage.
- Preventative Maintenance Tips: Check your storage container/shed regularly for cracks and leaks. One tell-tale sign of a leak is discoloration on the walls. Check components of your storage such as door handles, locks, hinges, and shelving to ensure they are in good repair and working condition. Clean the exterior and sweep or vacuum inside the structure regularly. Keep the area around your shed clear (trim vegetation, avoid stacking things against it, etc.) to help prevent pests. If your storage shed is wooden, plan to repaint it every few years.

Note: Your storage shed should have ventilation to avoid an excessive buildup of heat or moisture which can decrease its lifespan and potentially damage the equipment/materials being stored.

Outdoor Play Area Maintenance Resources:

- ✓ The National Program for Public Playground Safety offers a video walkthrough of playground maintenance basics: <https://youtu.be/AcRCcA2L5a4>
- ✓ See [Appendix: Sample Playground Inspection and Maintenance Lists](#) for some regular maintenance and inspection checklist items from the Consumer Product Safety Commission's playground safety handbooks.
- ✓ The LISC Rhode Island Child Care Facilities Fund has published a "Fast Fact" resource on playground inspections, including a fillable equipment inventory form, [Playground Safety Inspections](#).
- ✓ A monthly inspection checklist, such as [this one from Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards](#), should be completed in addition to daily checks.
- ✓ Learn more about the procedure for testing playground safety surfacing in this [video demonstration](#).
- ✓ The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) Association offers [shade structure resources](#) and sun safety information.
- ✓ This [shed maintenance and care article](#) (with seasonal tips) can help you create a maintenance plan that meets the needs of your outdoor storage solutions.

Capital Needs Assessment (CNA)

Hiring a qualified third-party consultant to conduct a Capital Needs Assessment can offer you a road map to understanding the life expectancy and cost of major items needed to maintain a property over the next 20 years based upon the observed current physical conditions of a property. The CNA report provides a year-by-year estimate of capital replacement costs over this 20-year period for use by the property owner and other related management personnel in planning the reserve account for replacements and other funding to cover the anticipated costs. The CNA is based on the expected useful life in relation to the remaining useful life of all components that make up the property's basic needs. These components are separated into four main categories: Site, Architectural, Mechanical/Electrical and Dwelling Units. See the [appendix](#) for a description of these categories as well as sample criteria for a property outline.

Energy Efficiency Projects

Eventually equipment will reach the end of its useful life when repairs no longer make sense. If you are planning to replace any systems or equipment that will increase your space's energy efficiency, there are some resources that can support you in your decision-making and budgeting:

- The Cash Flow Opportunity Calculator helps inform strategic decisions about financing energy efficiency projects. [Dive in here](#).
- A well-designed efficiency project is likely fundable. If you are willing to put in thoughtful research for your project. You may be able to access financial assistance. [Read more here](#).

Sources

- American Society of Home Inspectors – [Basic Home Maintenance Checklist](#)
- Caring for Our Children (CFOC): [National Resource Center](#)
- Children’s Environmental Health Network (CEHN): [Indoor Air Quality in Child Care Facilities](#)
- Consumer Product Safety Commission: [CPSC.gov](#)
- Energy Star: [Energystar.gov](#)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) - Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools: [Preventative Maintenance Guidance Documents](#)
- LISC Child Care & Early Learning: [Resource Library](#)
- LISC Phoenix: [Arizona Child Care Infrastructure Grant](#)
- LISC Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund: [Resource Library](#)
- National Program for Playground Safety (NPPS): <https://playgroundsafety.org/>
- National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA): <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/playground-safety/>
- San Mateo County Office of Education: [Facility Maintenance Resources and Samples](#)
- studioMLA Architects: <https://www.studiomla.com/>
- US General Services Administration Child Care Services: [Resources for Child Care Facility Professionals](#)
- USA Shade and Fabric Structures: [Tips for Commercial Shade Structure Maintenance](#)

Appendix

Sample Playground Inspection and Maintenance Lists

Family- or home-based child care providers

As outlined in the CPSC's [Outdoor Home Playground Safety Handbook](#):

- Check nuts and bolts twice a month and tighten as needed.
- Oil moving metal parts as directed by the manufacturer.
- Check to make sure protective caps and plugs that cover bolt ends and ends of tubing are in place and tight. Inspect twice a month and replace as needed.
- Check the condition of the equipment, look for signs of wear and tear such as broken or missing components, bent pipes or tubing, and splintering wooden surfaces. Repair as necessary.
- Check swing seats, ropes, chains, and cables monthly for deterioration and replace as needed.
- Clean, sand, and repaint rusted areas with a non-lead-based paint, as needed.
- Remove plastic swing seats in cold weather, if recommended by the manufacturer.
- Rake surfacing periodically to prevent compaction and maintain appropriate depths.

Center-based child care providers

As outlined in the CPSC's [Public Playground Safety Handbook](#)

- Broken equipment such as loose bolts, missing end caps, cracks, etc.
- Broken glass & other trash
- Cracks in plastics
- Loose anchoring
- Hazardous or dangerous debris
- Insect damage
- Problems with surfacing Displaced loose-fill surfacing
- Holes, flakes, and/or buckling of unitary surfacing
- User modifications (such as ropes tied to parts or equipment rearranged)
- Vandalism
- Worn, loose, damaged, or missing parts
- Wood splitting
- Rusted or corroded metals
- Rot

Capital Needs Assessment Categories and Sample Criteria

A CNA is based on the expected useful life in relation to the remaining useful life of all components that make up the property's basic needs. These components are separated into four main categories:

1. **Site**- Includes all parking lots, sidewalks and other hardscapes, exterior furnishings (benches, mail boxes, flag poles, etc.), landscaping (including trees, irrigation, fences, trash enclosures, etc.) and playground/outdoor equipment (including sand boxes and canopies). This category assesses all egress/ADA pathways and ADA parking for compliance. Any site life/safety items of note should be assessed in this section.

2. **Architectural-** Includes all exterior building components such as siding, roofing, windows, doors, building light fixtures and entries. This category also assesses the project accessibility and all compliance/non-compliance with the current ADA requirements. All common interior areas of the building, including the common laundries, kitchens, bathrooms and all other areas open to the tenants. This includes common corridors and stairwells. All life/safety items of note should be noted.
3. **Mechanical/Electrical-** Includes power distribution, shared hot water tanks, furnaces, boilers, elevators, entry systems, general fire alarm systems, corridor air systems, and all other common area serving equipment.
4. **Dwelling Units-** Includes all furnishings within the unit. All items for assessment shall include, at a minimum, flooring, wall conditions, doors, hardware, trim, cabinets, sinks, toilets, tubs/showers, faucets, countertops, light fixtures, receptacles, hot water tanks, fire alarm devices, heaters, bathroom hardware, appliances, bath fans, kitchen exhaust, laundry vents and closets/closet doors. At least 50% of all units shall be inspected. All ADA units on the property shall be inspected and assessed for complete compliance to ADA and UFAS standards.

The following is an example of a list of criteria a CNA provider may outline for a property:

Site

- Status of the paving, sidewalks, accessible paths to common areas, curbs and other hardscapes.
- Drainage of the hard surfaces, landscapes and building perimeters.
- Condition of life and safety issues such as handrails, uneven walking surfaces, pedestrian warnings, electrical and mechanical services, etc.
- Trash enclosures, mailboxes, playground equipment and play area, site lighting and other common areas.
- Landscaping and grading issues. Any/all life /safety issues.

Building Exteriors

- Building cladding including the status/installation of the flashings, sealants, trim, corners, abutment to other surfaces and overall existing performance.
- Windows and doors. Assess the condition and performance.
- All penetrations such as mechanical vents, fixture mounts, and utility entry points.
- Roofing and gutters. Determine the condition along with the installation and the current performance.
- Condition and code related issues for stairways, decks, and deck rails.

Building Systems

- Common area and unit heat and ventilation. Domestic water source and water heating source.
- Electrical service and distribution.
- Fire Alarm systems.
- General lighting and illumination at the interior and exterior.

Common Areas

- Accessibility to all common areas. Include any life/safety concerns. Condition of walls and ceiling substrates, doors, flooring and trim
- Egress and general pathways.
- Security to the building.
- Stairs, ramps and railing systems.

Units

- Flooring including condition, transition strips, baseboards and other related items.
- Bathrooms including plumbing fixtures, GFIC outlets, exhaust fans, bath hardware and cabinets.
- Wall and ceiling substrates. Doors, hardware and millwork. Window coverings.
- Kitchen including cabinets, countertops, sink/faucet, appliances, range hood exhaust, GFIC outlets.
- Light fixtures, baseboard and wall mounted heaters, unit electrical panels and wall receptacles.
- Hot water tanks.
- Smoke/fire and CO detectors.