

Children at Play Signs

Overuse of signs causes them to lose meaning to drivers.

Typically, warning signs are not enforceable.

It is not safe to play in or near the road.

Studies show that there is no reduction in speed with the signs present.

Usage of Child at Play Signs

Periodically, the Engineering Department receives requests to install the following types of Child Crossing Signs:

- Children at Play
- Watch For Children
- Slow Children

Usage of these types of signs has been discouraged by the Federal Highway Administration, Institute of Transportation Engineers, and many other States and Local Units of government for the following reasons:

- Signs lose credibility with motorists when they appear too often.
- Warning signs are most effective when they warn of consistent, not occasional conditions. Children are not likely to be consistently playing at a particular location in the street at all times (unlike at playgrounds or parks). As a result, the signs mentioned above could lose their effectiveness.
- These signs provide parents and children with a false sense of security that their children are safe when playing in or near the street.
- The signs have little to no effect on driving behavior
- Some before and after studies have indicated no reductions in vehicle speeds or crashes with the signs present.
- Because these signs are typically warning signs, they are not enforceable.
- In lieu of signing, more effective countermeasures may be employed to increase motorist visibility on the roadway. Some of these countermeasures could include:
 - a. Restricting parking or trimming vegetation to increase sight distance.
 - b. Education and awareness efforts.
 - c. Installation of traffic calming devices for urban low-speed areas.

In addition, neither federal nor the state of Michigan standards, Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), directly recognizes the placement of these types of signs. Due to the current recommendations the city no longer installs these signs

References:

1. The latest and most comprehensive research on this issue was a Wisconsin Transportation Synthesis Report (WisTSR) "Effectiveness of "Children at Play" Warning Signs".
2. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) of the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD).
3. Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT), Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD).