



ACQUISITION
AND SUSTAINMENT

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

3010 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-3010

MAR 10 2020

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
Committee on Armed Services
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

House Report 116-120, page 326-327, accompanying H.R. 2500, the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2020, requests the Secretary of Defense provide a report to the House Armed Services Committee on the Department's efforts to ensure that play areas for dependents of Service members at installations designated as locations for the Exceptional Family Member Program are compliant with the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) (Public Law 90-480) accessibility standards for play areas and meet evidence-based design standards for all ability inclusion.

On July 23, 2004, the United States Access Board issued updated accessibility guidelines, published in the *Federal Register*, for newly constructed, altered, and leased facilities. These contain scoping provisions specifying what must be accessible and technical requirements specifying how access is to be achieved. Chapter 10, section 8 of the ABA standards applies to play areas.

On October 31, 2008, the Department of Defense (DoD) issued policy adopting the updated ABA standards, including chapter 10, section 8, for play areas. These standards were subsequently incorporated in DoD's Unified Facilities Guide Specifications (UFGS). These provide planning, design, construction, sustainment, restoration, and modernization criteria, and apply to the Military Departments, the Defense Agencies and the DoD Field Activities. The UFGS covers, among other things, playground equipment.

It is DoD's practice to integrate consideration for children with special needs into the design of the outdoor play environment. As the Committee notes, there are military members with dependents enrolled in the Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP), and the Committee "believes that it is imperative to have at least one ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliant playground at each DoD EFMP designated installation." The DoD does not, however, formally designate installations as EFMP locations. Every installation across the Department provides EFMP services, and every effort is made to ensure that service members and their families enrolled in the EFMP are assigned to locations where specific services, such as specialized medical care, are available.

The Department is committed to inclusion for all military families. Accessible playgrounds are designed and built across the enterprise with this principal in mind and families

have access to playgrounds in family housing areas, temporary lodging facilities, youth centers, child development centers and schools.

Your continued support for service members and their families is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,



Ellen M. Lord

cc:

The Honorable William M. "Mac" Thornberry
Ranking Member

The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$7,880 for the 2019 Fiscal Year. This includes \$100 in expenses and \$7,780 in DoD labor.

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