

# Safety Factors Relating to CHILDREN AT PLAY SIGNS



Pinellas County often receives requests to install signs warning drivers of the possible presence of children at play on or near the street in residential areas. Concerned citizens often do not realize that these signs are deceiving and ineffective. Drivers already expect the presence of children in residential areas and studies show that devices attempting to warn motorists of normal conditions or conditions that are not always present fail to achieve the desired safety benefits.

## **False Sense of Security**

- "CHILDREN AT PLAY" signs tend to create a false sense of security for parents and children who believe the signs provide an added degree of protection. In fact, motorists, particularly local ones, actually pay little attention to them. The use of the CHILDREN AT PLAY and similar signs such as SLOW CHILDREN or SLOW – RESIDENTIAL AREA has long been discouraged because these signs suggest to parents and small children that playing in or beside the roadway is acceptable.
- Parents also seem to believe such signs may help reduce speeds. There is no evidence that these signs prevent crashes or reduce the speed of vehicles. If problems with speeding exist, these should be brought to the attention of the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office at (727) 582-6200.

## **County Practice on CHILDREN AT PLAY SIGNS**

- CHILDREN AT PLAY and similar signs are not recognized by the State of Florida or the Federal Highway Administration as official traffic control devices and, therefore, **are not installed by the County on public streets.**

## **Addressing the Safety of Young Children**

- Unnecessary signs confuse and annoy drivers and foster disrespect for all signs. Signs in accordance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices are posted for school zones and pedestrian crossings where a need exists. More importantly, parents should teach children the dangers of playing in or near roadways and strongly discourage them from doing so. Neighborhood parks are provided throughout the County where children can play safely with proper supervision.

## **Lower Speed Limits**

- Citizens frequently request lower speed limits on residential streets where children are playing. By Florida Statute, the speed limit on a residential street is 30 miles per hour, whether posted or not. Pinellas County does post 25 miles per hour signs upon request, through our Residential Traffic Management program. Call Jim Cannon, Residential Traffic Manager, at 727-464-8907 for more information.
- Pinellas County does not post speed limits less than 25 miles per hour, as courts may consider that a "speed trap", and in accordance with state law, any citations issued may be invalid.
- Pinellas County Code and Florida Statute prohibit private citizens from posting, erecting, installing, or maintaining any signs or devices that resemble a traffic control device on or for a public roadway. Government agencies may remove such devices without notice.

This flyer is for general information only. For more information call (727) 464-8907.

**NOTE:** The MUTCD is used throughout the country as the standard by which traffic control decisions are made. The complete MUTCD can be found at [http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/pdfs/2009/pdf\\_index.htm](http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/pdfs/2009/pdf_index.htm).