

## WILL “CHILDREN AT PLAY” SIGNS HELP SLOW TRAFFIC?



Signs are used to guide and direct motorists. However, unnecessary signs can promote disrespect for all signs. The best example is the “CHILDREN AT PLAY” sign.

While it may seem that this sign would protect neighborhood youngsters, facts indicate otherwise. Although some communities have posted these signs in residential areas, no evidence exists to prove that these signs help reduce pedestrian accidents or lower speeds.

A “CHILDREN AT PLAY” sign is not a regulatory sign. It is only advisory. The Institute of Transportation Engineers’ technical paper entitled *The Design of Pedestrian Facilities* states “such signs also provide no guidance to motorists in terms of safe speed, and the sign has no legal basis for determining what a motorist should do...”

Studies have shown that many signs in residential areas, which are installed to “warn” people of normal conditions, fail to improve safety.

Pedestrians can get a false sense of security since drivers often disregard these signs. Signs that encourage parents or children to believe they have added protection (which they do not) can do more harm than good. Children should not be encouraged to play in the street. Federal standards reject these signs because they openly suggest that playing in the street is acceptable. Pedestrians do not have the right-of-way in the street unless they are in a crosswalk.

Since children live on nearly every residential block, if used, the signs would have to be placed on each street. Blocks with no signs might imply that no children live there, so it is alright to speed.

Because of these serious concerns, Texas law, as presented in the *Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)*, does not recognize “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs. Specific warnings for schools and crosswalks are available for use where they clearly serve a purpose.

Warning signs can be effective tools if used sparingly and only to warn motorists of uncommon hazards that are not apparent to drivers.

Remember, “CHILDREN AT PLAY” signs ARE GENERALLY DISREGARDED BY MOTORISTS and GIVE PEDESTRIANS A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY.

