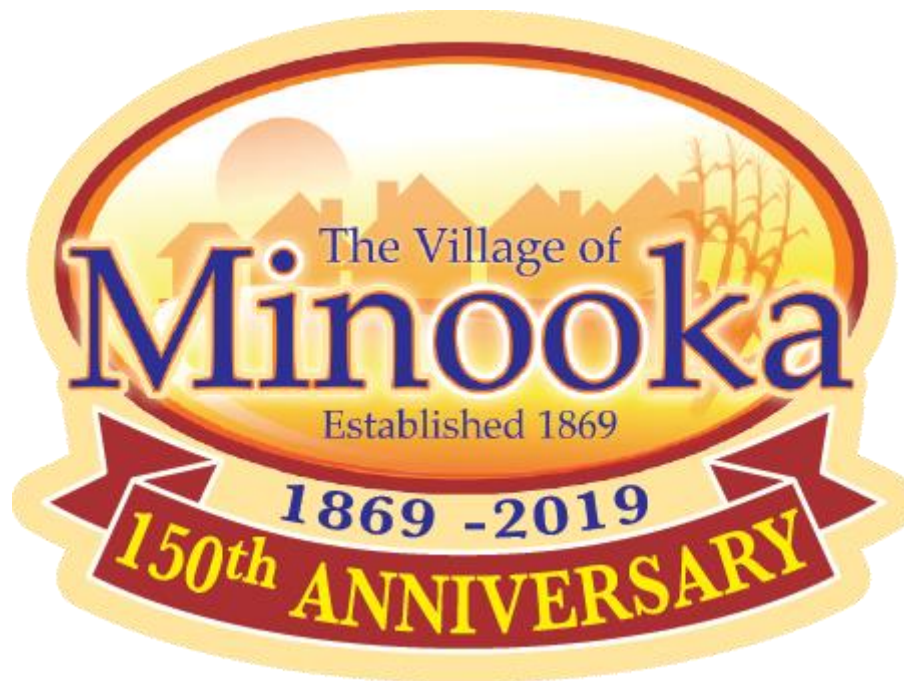


VILLAGE OF MINOOKA



SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD

&

CHILDREN AT PLAY

SIGNS POLICY

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VILLAGE OF MINOOKA SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD & CHILDREN AT PLAY SIGNS POLICY

I. PURPOSE

To provide a Village-wide policy governing the installation and removal of special needs (blind & deaf) child signs and children at play signs.

II. BACKGROUND

On occasion the Village has received requests from residents to install “CHILDREN AT PLAY” (CAP), handicap/disabled, deaf child, blind child and autistic child signs or ones with similar messages. Although the Village does not have a written policy regarding these signs, the Village has not allowed the installation of CAP or SLOW CAP signs.

III. RATIONALE

Neither federal nor state standards, Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), directly recognize the placement of these types of signs.

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) also addressed this issue with the release of Circular Letter 2011-08. They didn't prohibit their use, but they didn't recommend their installation either.

Other word message warning signs dealing with children such as "Autistic Child," "Blind Child," "Deaf Child" or "Children at Play" are not recommended. These types of warning signs:

- Do not describe where the child might be;
- No longer attract the attention of motorists after initial installation;
- Have no legal meaning;
- Provide parents and children with a false sense of security;
- Are often left in place after the child is grown or moved away;
- Lack established procedures for engineering judgment or study; and
- Have proven ineffective.

The MUTCD provides the following support for the function of warning signs:

Warning signs call attention to unexpected conditions on or adjacent to a highway, street, or private roads open to public travel and to situations that might not be readily apparent to road users. Warning signs alert road users to conditions that might call for a reduction of speed or an action in the interest of safety and efficient traffic operations.

The Village policy will be to continue to prohibit CAP, SLOW CAP or any other AT PLAY (AP) signs, but to allow requested special needs child warning signs that meet certain criteria and documentation. The basis for the prohibition is summarized as follows:

1. Children, whether special needs or not, should not play in or near the street. Signs of this type give the impression that it's safe for children to play in or near the street. Streets are not a safe place for children to play. There are plenty of parks and other open spaces where it is safe for children to play.

2. The signs have little to no effect on driving behavior. They do not reduce driver speeds, accident rates, legal liability nor do they protect children.

3. The same reasoning also applies to special needs signs: "BLIND CHILD", "DEAF CHILD", "AUTISTIC CHILD" and "DISABLED CHILD". However, there is an important difference between these signs and the CAP, SLOW CAP and other AT PLAY (AP) signs. Use of a horn or the sound of an approaching vehicle may not be sufficient to warn a deaf child. Similarly, just the visual aspect of a vehicle may not be enough to alert a blind child. Autistic and disabled children also may not be able to realize an approaching vehicle. Installation of a special needs signs can help warn motorists of these situations.

While researching for policies on this subject, municipalities or counties either prohibited the special needs warning signs outright or allowed their installation under certain conditions. In cases where certain signs were permitted; a resident was required to fill out an application with proof of a deaf or blind child and documentation that ensured the sign would only be posted as long as the special needs child lived in the home. The MUTCD offers guidance on the application of warning signs:

The use of warning signs should be used conservatively because these signs, if used to excess, tend to lose their effectiveness.

IV. CRITERIA

A sign request will only be granted for those children who are impaired to the extent that they are unable to hear, see or otherwise comprehend oncoming traffic. The Village reserves the right to deny any request found not to meet the criteria or with overly burdensome requests as determined by the Village. The application must be signed by a qualified ear, eye or other specialist certifying the child is impaired or disabled. The child must be between the ages of two (2) and fifteen (15) years of age at the time of the request. At age fifteen most children are able to obtain a driving learner's license and therefore should understand road dangers as well as the rules of the road. Sign requests for persons beyond fifteen (15) years of age may be granted at the discretion of the Village if extenuating circumstances warrant.

V. INSTALLATION LIMITS

The special needs sign shall be placed approximately 150 feet from the property line where the child lives but no less than 100 feet. This will provide enough advance warning for the motorist. A maximum of one (1) sign per approach will be installed for each situation. Sign locations will be determined by the Village Engineer or designee.

Signs will only be installed on residential streets with a posted speed limit of 25 mph. Signs will not be allowed on arterials or major collectors as identified by the Village Engineer or designee. All special needs signs will be installed within the Village right of way, not on private property. The request for special needs sign will not be approved if its placement blocks or interferes with other required signs.

VI. PROOF OF RESIDENCY

Proof of residency by the applicant (copy of driver's license, property tax notice or utility billing) must be submitted at the time the sign request is made and on a yearly basis (January 1, of each year thereafter) to the Village of Minooka Police Department. If verification is not received, a personal contact will be attempted. If contact cannot be made, the sign will be removed. All special needs signs will be removed when the child reaches fifteen (15) years of age.

VII. PROCEDURES

Residents shall fill out an application requesting installation of a special needs child sign. See Special Needs Child Sign Application Request Form. The Public Safety Committee will review the application to determine if the criteria are met for installation. If approved, the Public Works Department shall determine the location of sign placements and notify the applicant of the requirement for them to provide Public Works with “Proof of Residency” documentation prior to January 1st of each year. Public Works shall be also notified of the sign locations and an electronic copy of the application shall be saved. Public Works will then order the sign and install it as soon as practical.

Following initial approval and installation of the sign, if the applicant does not provide “Proof of Residency” prior to January 1st, a notice shall be sent to the previous applicant on file that the special needs sign will be removed promptly if proof is not received within 30-days.

VIII. SPECIFICATION

All warning signs shall be diamond-shaped (square with one diagonal vertical) with a black legend and border on a fluorescent yellow-green background. Warning signs shall be designed in accordance with the sizes, shapes, colors, and legends contained in the “Standard Highway Signs and Markings” book (see Section 1A.11). Only the following text for the black legend will be allowed for each appropriate sign:



DEAF CHILD AREA



BLIND CHILD AREA

Special Needs Child Sign Application Request Form

I, _____, parent/legal guardian of _____, age _____, hereby request installation of Special Needs Child sign to serve _____ (address).

Type of Sign (Check one)

Deaf Child

Blind Child

In support of this request, I certify that the following statements are true:

1. The child is between the ages of two (2) and fifteen (15) years of age as of the date of this request (date of birth) _____. _____ *initials*
2. I am the parent or legal guardian of the child. _____ *initials*
3. The child resides with me at _____ (address). In support of this statement, I provided the following documentation:
 - Copy of Driver's License
 - Copy of Property Tax or Utility Billing
4. I agree to provide "Proof of Residency" prior to January 1st of each subsequent year of this application. Should such proof not be provided, I understand that the sign will be removed by the Village and will not be re-installed.
5. I understand that the sign will be removed upon the earliest of the fifteenth birthday of _____ or when the child no longer lives at the subject address.

Signed: _____	Print Name: _____	Date: _____
Address: _____	Email Address: _____	Telephone: _____

I _____ certify that _____ is impaired to the extent that he/she is unable to see, hear or otherwise safely comprehend oncoming traffic.

Signed: _____ Specify Qualification (eye, ear or other specialist): _____ Date: _____

For Office Use Only		
Recommend denial (reason): _____ _____		
Recommend _____ (number and type) signs are installed at the following location(s): _____		
Signed: _____	Print Name: _____	Date: _____