



Verification Visit – Pre-Visit Protocol

1. Introduction
2. General Information
3. Confirming Current Program Information
4. Preparing for the Verification Visit

1. Introduction

This protocol contains instructions for NAEYC assessors during the pre-visit preparation period before a verification visit. The NAEYC Academy is obligated to ensure that all NAEYC accredited programs continue to meet the current accreditation standards and criteria throughout their five-year term of accreditation. Fulfilling this obligation assures families and other stakeholders in NAEYC-accredited programs that procedures exist for maintaining the integrity of the accreditation process. A verification visit may be necessary after a program has achieved accreditation to ensure that the program continues to comply with NAEYC standards and criteria and with other accreditation requirements.

A verification visit may be “announced” or “unannounced”, and random or non-random. Each year a number of programs are selected at random for verification visits; these are always “unannounced” visits – that is, the program receives no advanced notice that an assessor is coming to visit. Programs may also be identified for a verification visit on the basis of non-random factors such as: significant program changes as indicated in an Annual Report or Self Report; a complaint received about the program; and/or concerns about the program’s compliance with required criteria. Depending upon the issue identified, these verification visits may be unannounced or “announced” – that is, the program may be notified in advance to expect a visit sometime within a 6-month time frame.

This pre-visit protocol applies to announced, unannounced, and random unannounced verification visits and has been established to ensure that NAEYC’s accreditation system is reliable and credible. Failure to follow the outlined protocol could result in the termination of an assessor’s contract with NAEYC. All assessors must adhere to this protocol when preparing for a verification visit.

2. General Information

IMPORTANT: Unless you are clearly informed otherwise by the Academy, assume that this is an unannounced visit. Do NOT have any contact with the program until you arrive at the program on the day of the visit.

Generally, verification visits will be completed in one day. A verification visit will include no more than eight (8) group observations, regardless of the size of the program. An individual assessor may complete no more than 4 observations per day during a verification visit.

Therefore, if 5 to 8 group observations are required due to the size of the program, multiple assessors may be required to complete the visit in a day. In this case, one assessor will be assigned the visit as the lead assessor. The lead assessor will be responsible for all pre-visit planning, including arranging the co-assessor(s). If you are assigned to a visit as a lead assessor and you review information (e.g., from the program website; see below) suggesting that a visit may require more than one day, contact the Academy immediately.

The Academy will send you a cover sheet that will provide you with information pertaining to the visit, including the date by which the verification visit must be completed. Some types of verification visits (announced and unannounced verification visits) have a six-month time frame for completion while others (random unannounced verification visits) have a longer time frame.

All forms and worksheets supporting the verification visit (*Required Criteria, Process Verification*, etc.) are specific to the verification visit process.

3. Confirming Current Program Information

Cover Sheet. See the *Verification Visit Cover Sheet* received from the Academy Decisions Manager for the most up-to-date information regarding the program and the verification visit. Information transmitted on the cover sheet includes:

- Type of verification visit (random unannounced, unannounced or announced)
- Assignment date and completion-by date
- Program contact information, including program website address
- Accreditation date
- Eligibility of ‘school-age’ age category
- Number of assessors and days needed for the visit
- Program operating hours and group information

If the Academy is informed of any changes, staff will send you a new cover sheet to replace the original sheet. However, the Academy will not initiate any further research into the program after sending you the cover sheet through Mimeo unless they are informed by the program of a change.

Program Website. Academy staff will initially attempt to confirm program information using the program’s website (if available). After the assessor has received the cover sheet it is the assessor’s responsibility to verify that there have been no more recent changes in holidays, field trips, etc. by checking the program’s website.

Verify the information received on your cover sheet by checking the program’s website soon after accepting the visit. Check it again shortly before conducting the visit to see if any information has been further updated. Using the website referenced on the cover sheet (or using a search engine to search the program’s name to find their website), review the website to determine whether there is any additional information concerning the following topics:

Ages. Using the cover sheet, confirm which age categories the program serves: Infant, Toddler/Two, Preschool, Kindergarten, and School Age.

- Programs accredited prior to 9/06: School Age groups will be considered the oldest age category and must be observed if the program was accredited with the school age group(s). This information will be conveyed on the cover sheet.
- Programs accredited after 9/06: School Age groups will only be observed if 50% or more of the children in the school age group are in a currently eligible age category (i.e., kindergarten or younger).

Group Numbers. Using the website, check to see if you can tell how many groups are at the program. If it looks like there could be more than what is on the visit document, additional GOE tools may need to be ordered. Contact the Academy.

Program Information. Check the website to confirm the program’s physical location, driving directions, parking information, hours and days of operation, and any other information pertinent to arriving at the program on the day of the visit.

Arrival. Verification visits should generally begin at 8 AM. However, you are encouraged to use your discretion when determining what time to arrive at the program. Factors to consider would include, but are not limited to: assessor’s prior knowledge of the parent organization’s practices; arrival time of the program administrator; whether the responsible person at the program in the early morning is covering classroom ratios; and whether school-age groups must be assessed. If there is more than one assessor on the visit, assessors should arrange to meet before the start of the visit and arrive at the program together.

Closure Days. Check the website to see if the program has posted any information regarding days that they will not be available for a visit within the time frame of the assignment. Because you will not have contact with the program prior to the visit, this is a mechanism to determine if there are any days you should not schedule the visit. This could include information regarding field trip schedules for the entire program, and also for specific age categories and groups, holidays, professional development days, and any other days that the program is closed, or not

operating at full capacity. This could also include schedules for specific age categories (e.g., toddlers are only at the program on MWF).

If upon reviewing a program’s website you read anything that contradicts any information on your *Verification Visit Cover Sheet*, contact the Academy immediately. You may check the program’s website for scheduling purposes ONLY. Do not check the website for the purpose of reviewing evidence of how the program is meeting NAEYC standards and criteria; therefore do not read policy or procedure information that the program has posted other than what is needed for scheduling the visit.

4. Preparing for the Verification Visit

Clear Conflict of Interest. When you are first assigned to a verification visit, you will receive an initial *Verification Visit Cover Sheet* and the *Verification Visit Confirmation Letter* from the Academy Decisions Manager. Review the Cover Sheet to determine if you have a conflict of interest (COI). Respond by email to the Decisions Manager within 48 hours to indicate if you have a COI or if you can accept the visit.

The *Verification Visit Confirmation Letter* is the letter that you will present to the responsible person at the beginning of the visit. The letter, with the program information filled in, will be sent to you via email. You will need to fill in your name as the assessor who will be completing the visit. Then print out the letter to take with you on the visit.

Request Tools, Forms and Worksheets. Assessors will be sent bulk mailings of verification visit materials. You would send an email to the *Program Monitoring and Compliance Administrative Assistant* to request additional materials when you find that you are running low of any of the forms, worksheets, or tools, or if you need the GOE Inter-Rater Reliability Form and GOE tools for reliability ratings.

Enclosed in the Mimeo package you should find:

- Copies of Group Observable Evidence (GOE) Tools;
- Additional copies of GOE tools for reliability ratings (if applicable and only sent via request);
- GOE Inter-Rater Reliability Form (if applicable and only sent via request); and
- The following forms, worksheets and other supporting documents:
 - *Materials Checklist--Verification Visit*
 - *Acknowledgment of Refusal of NAEYC Verification Visit*
 - *Process Verification Form–Verification Visit (two copies)*
 - *Verification Visit Classroom Selection Form*
 - *Required Criteria Documentation Form–Verification Visit (two copies)*

- *Missing Evidence Request Form—Verification Visit (MERF-VV) (two copies)*
- *Safety Concerns Report (two copies)*
- *Required Criterion 10.B.04 Worksheet*
- *Required Criterion 5.A.03 Worksheet*
- *First Aid/CPR Acknowledgment Form (two copies)*
- *NAEYC Next Steps and the Accreditation Decisions—Verification Visit*
- *Administrator Evaluation--Verification Visit*
- *72-Hour Notification Flyer/Postcard*
- *License-Exempt Acknowledgment Form (two copies)*

Obtain a Co-assessor (if applicable). If the visit includes more than 4 observations, the assessor should arrange for a co-assessor. If the program has short daily hours, it may be necessary to use a co-assessor for 4 observations or fewer. Consult with the Academy Decisions Manager if you are not sure if you need a co-assessor, or if you don't know who is available in your area. When you have chosen a co-assessor, add the assessor ID on the program's scheduling page in DMS. Confirm with the co-assessor that he/she has read through the verification visit protocols. If it is impossible to arrange a co-assessor, larger visits may be done in 2 days with the approval of Academy staff.

Randomize (Not!). Unlike the process in a regular accreditation site visit, randomization occurs during the orientation meeting of a verification visit – not before the visit. See the *Verification Visit Protocol* for details. However, you should print the *Combined Randomization Selector for Verification Visits* off of iCohere for the month that you plan on doing the visit and bring it with you on the visit.

Create a Schedule. The lead assessor is responsible for preparing and printing the schedule prior to arrival at the program. There is a verification visit schedule template for assessors on iCohere and a sample verification visit schedule for public viewing in the Step 4 section of the NAEYC website under Meeting the Standards, Sample Site Visit Forms.

- **Tasks.** Include in the schedule: orientation meeting, group observations, MERF-VV, review of 5.A.03 and 10.B.04 evidence, preparation of forms for closing meeting, and closing meeting.
- **Multiple assessors.** If more than one assessor is involved, the schedule should specify what each assessor will be scheduled to do at all times.
- **Groups.** Leave the names of the groups that are to be observed blank as well as the names of the teaching staff. You will create the schedule based on your best estimate of the number of groups to be observed and will amend it as necessary on the day of the visit.
- **Copies.** Bring two copies of the schedule and make copies on-site after completion of the randomizer and all scheduled tasks.

- Changes. Include lines to annotate the schedule as changes are made on the day of the visit.
- Signatures. The *Verification Visit Schedule* should include a line at the top of the schedule to indicate who took responsibility for accepting the visit, and lines at the bottom for the assessor(s) and responsible person to sign and date the final schedule, as reviewed at the Closing Meeting.

Plan Travel. Make travel arrangements for the visit: flight, hotel, car, etc. as needed. Keep in mind that most verification visits are one day visits. If you can combine the verification visit with other site visits in the area, it will be a cost saving to NAEYC.

Security Clearance. There are a few instances where a program requires security clearances for the assessor to be able to gain access to the program or the base (e.g., military bases, secure facilities). In these instances, the assessor will need to contact the individual designated on the cover sheet as the person to contact for the assessor to receive a security clearance (usually in the notes section at the bottom of the cover sheet). This individual should NOT be the primary or secondary contact, but a third party. Contact the individual approximately a week prior to the visit to determine what information is needed. In these instances it might be necessary to inform the contact what date you will be completing the unannounced visit. Inform the contact of the need for confidentiality regarding the date of the visit to ensure the validity of the visit.