Verification Visit Protocol

1. Introduction

This document provides the guidelines for conducting verification visits. 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. As a result, your arrival at the program's facility, particularly for random unannounced verification visits, may be exceptionally stressful for the program's staff. It is important to show the utmost respect to all of the program and teaching staff, as well as the children and their families, throughout your time at the program.

Furthermore, in order to ensure that all programs receive a fair and equitable verification visit, all NAEYC assessors must conduct themselves in a professional manner and collect and report data consistently.

The following protocol 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 conducting a verification visit.

2. General Protocol

Sources of Evidence Used. The Group Observable Evidence (GOE) tool is the only assessment tool used in the verification visit. Additionally, documentation of how a program meets required criteria 5.A.03 and 10.B.04 is collected and rated by means of assessor worksheets.

Sources of Evidence Not Used. There are a number of tools used in an accreditation site visit that are not applicable to a verification visit. They are:

- Program Observable Evidence (tour)
- Program Portfolio
- Classroom Portfolio
- Teaching Staff Surveys
- Family Surveys

Number of Group Observations. For programs with 16 or fewer groups, 50% of the groups (maximum of 8 groups) will be observed during the verification visit. For programs with more than 16 groups, no more than 8 groups will be observed.

Verification Visit Schedule. The verification visit schedule will be used to identify each task to be completed on the verification visit. These tasks include:

- Orientation meeting
- Group observations
- Review of required criteria evidence
- Presentation and review of *Missing Evidence Request Form- Verification Visit* (MERF-VV; for criteria 5.A.03 and 10.B.04 only)
- Preparation of forms for closing meeting
- Closing Meeting

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 Currently Accredited portion of the Academy website for additional verification and unannounced visits.

- Multiple assessors. If more than one assessor is involved, the schedule should specify what each assessor will be scheduled to do at all times.
- Copies. Bring two copies of the schedule and make copies on-site after completion of the randomizer and all scheduled tasks.
- Changes. Each assessor should annotate his or her copy if schedule changes occur during the visit. Before the end of the visit, the lead assessor is responsible for creating a final annotated copy of the visit schedule, showing the actual time all tasks were begun and ended, and by whom. This annotated final schedule becomes part of the verification visit process procedure and must be mailed back to the NAEYC Academy along with the blue *Process Verification Form—Verification 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.

Confidentiality and Ethical Conduct. Assessors are expected to conform to NAEYC standards for ethical conduct at all times. Everything assessors see and hear on a visit is confidential. Assessors do not repeat anything about the staff, children, or facility to those outside the NAEYC Academy staff structure.

Tools. NAEYC site visit tools and worksheets are proprietary and are NOT to be shown to or otherwise shared with program administrators or staff during the visit. Assessors will share visit process forms ("blue forms"), which are posted publicly on the NAEYC website.

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 responsible person; whether the responsible person at the program in the early morning is covering classroom ratios; and whether school-age groups must be assessed.

If more than one assessor will be part of the assessment, plan to meet outside the program and enter as a team. This is important to ensure that the assessment team has the opportunity to review the verification visit schedule prior to the orientation meeting.

ID. Wear NAEYC identification badges during site visits.

Accepting Refreshments and Resources. With a few exceptions, assessors may NOT accept refreshments or resources (phone use, office supplies) from the program. The exceptions are:

- Assessors may accept water from programs at all times.
- Assessors may accept coffee or tea if the program normally provides these beverages on site. Assessors may not accept coffee or tea purchased for them off-site.
- Assessors may accept other light refreshments if failing to do so would offend the cultural norms of the program.
- If an assessor needs to photocopy additional documents in order to conduct the site visit, the assessor may ask for permission to use the program's photocopier.

  If you need to make extra copies of assessment tools, you must do the copying yourself – you cannot give proprietary documents to program staff to copy. Be very careful not to leave pages on the copier when you are done.

  Offer to pay for copying. If there is a charge, pay it and submit the expense to NAEYC.

Assessors should be prepared to carry meals, snacks, drinks, extra pens, and a mobile phone to the site, or should have informed themselves of available resources nearby before the start of the visit.

Demeanor. Be cordial and pleasant (Smile!) when interacting with staff and children. Remember that staff may be nervous about your visit and they will do their best if you can put them at ease. While you should do minimal talking in the classrooms during observations, you may certainly make common small talk with staff. Do respond briefly to children when *not* doing so would set an awkward tone. Move if you are in the way of the responsible person, teachers, children or families.

Dress. Wear functional "business casual" clothing for visits. You can expect to go outside, sit in tiny chairs or on the floor, and spend long hours at programs. Dress appropriately. Consider wearing layers, as you never know if a program's facility will be too hot or cold. Also, do not wear anything (jewelry, bright clothes) that calls attention to yourself. You want to blend into the background as unobtrusively as possible.

Your Belongings. Limit the personal belongings you take into a program. Whenever possible leave personal items in a locked car. However, if this is not possible, consult with the responsible person to find a safe location to store your belongings during the visit. This is an important safety precaution as purses and bags can contain items dangerous to children.

Lunch Break. Lunch breaks are recommended, but it is left up to the individual assessor to decide whether to work through lunch, eat on premises, or take a longer break off premises. If you leave the premises for a lunch break, notify the program staff when you are coming and going. Secure all confidential information and proprietary tools while you are off the premises.

Cell Phone. If for emergency reasons you must carry a cell phone, be sure it is in silent mode so that you do not interrupt the ongoing program activities/environment. *Do not make or receive phone calls during classroom observations.*

Closets. Do not look through closets, drawers, cabinets, or other closed spaces without first getting the responsible person's permission. General permission to look where needed should be obtained at the Orientation Meeting (see below).

Oh no! What to do when…

- Something is different from what you were told by the Academy via the cover sheet, phone, etc. Call the Academy at 800-424-2460 (choose option 3, then option 1) and ask to be transferred to a Reliability Specialist or Manager who is present.
- You arrive and the doors are locked and the lights are out. Wait for 30 minutes (if you are on East Coast time, wait until 9AM and the Academy opens) and see if anyone arrives. If not, call NAEYC at the number above.
- The program has added groups or age categories. Follow the classroom selection protocol (below) and complete the randomizer and schedule during the orientation meeting.
- The program administrator does not arrive. If the director/program administrator is not available when you arrive, ask that he/she be contacted. If a designated person will not take responsibility for the visit, use the protocol in the **Obtaining Program Consent** section of the protocol.
- The program refuses the visit. Hand the responsible person the *Acknowledgment of Refusal of NAEYC Verification Visit* form and ask that it be signed. Call the Academy and send the signed form back to the Academy. Go home.
- You have been sent to observe a specific group but the group is not functioning that day (if applicable). See another group within that same age category. If there is not another group within the same age category, call the Academy.
- The program is on a field trip. Call the Academy when the Academy is open.

Basic rule of thumb: Since you are already on site, do what you can. If irregularities arise, start what you can do and then call the Academy once they open.

Order of Tasks during the Verification Visit.

Some tasks on the verification visit must be done in a specified sequence, or at a specific time with respect to the beginning or end of the visit. Other tasks may be ordered in whatever way best suits the assessor's appraisal of the program's schedule and the assessor's needs. Factors affecting scheduling and order of tasks include:

- the time of day the program opens and closes;
- whether groups to be observed meet full days, part days, and/or not every day;
- whether groups to be observed have nap times;
- the size of the program, including whether the program is a program with satellite locations.

The following tasks must be executed in a specified sequence or at a specific time:

Orientation Meeting	Immediately upon arrival on the day of the visit. There are a number of information-gathering and information-giving tasks that must be done as part of the Orientation Meeting.
Required Criterion 5.A.03 Worksheet	Start completing this worksheet before beginning any group observations. Complete the worksheet after all group observations are completed and before presentation of the MERF. In extreme circumstances it may be necessary to begin and complete this worksheet after all of the observations have been completed, but before presentation of the MERF. For example, if the program is a half-day program, it may be important to begin observations as soon as possible to complete all observations before the groups dismiss.
Missing Evidence Request Form (MERF)	The MERF can be provided to the responsible person at any point during the visit, but the responsible person must have at least 30 minutes to compile and return the evidence.
Closing Meeting	Last scheduled task on the day of the visit. Several tasks, such as the *Safety Concerns Report* and the *Required Criteria Site Visit Documentation Form*, are completed during the Closing Meeting. All other tasks must be completed before the Closing Meeting.

The remaining tasks described below can be done in any sequence. Note that some of them do require specific time durations, or minimum *("Allow AT LEAST xx minutes")* durations. Some task durations, such as those for orientation and closing meetings, are given as estimates *("Allow about xx minutes")* to be used in constructing the schedule.

Assessor Equipment and Supplies for the Visit. Assessors will receive a set of assessment tools, process forms and worksheets **in a bulk shipment.** Details of the order process are to be found in the Pre-Visit Protocol. Additionally, assessors must carry the following equipment and supplies to each site visit:

- The program's Cover Sheet.
- The appropriate **combined** Randomization Selector.
- Measurement tools supplied by the Academy: trowel, tape measure, and choke tube. Assessors have also been provided a fanny pack to carry these tools and disposable booties for infant room observations.
- Extra copies of the following forms, used optionally or used in support of the ratings

process. They may be downloaded from the “Assessor Protocol” section of the Assessor Online Community (iCohere):

- *Extra copies of the Required Criterion 5.A.03 Worksheet*
- Extra copies of page 3 of the *Required Criteria Verification Visit Documentation Form.*

- NAEYC ID badge and business cards.
- Pens, post-it tabs, paper clips or binder clips, and a clip board or similar equipment for holding rating forms during observations. Assessors have an annual office supply allocation with which to purchase the supplies that work best for them.
- Mailing supplies (Tyvek envelopes, UPS shipping labels) for mailing visit packets back to the Academy.
- Some assessors find it helpful to bring an extra copy of the GOE on verification visits in case the program has more groups than originally expected.

3. Obtaining Program Consent

Introductions. Upon arrival at the program, the lead assessor should identify him- or herself as such, and introduce all other assessors. Although it is best if you can meet and deal with a program administrator, it is not always possible to wait until an administrator is present and available to meet. Therefore, ask who is in charge of the program at that moment (the “responsible person”) and state that you need to speak with that person. Hand the responsible person the *Verification Visit Confirmation Letter* explaining what a verification visit is. Explain to the person that he/she may decide at any time during the day to cancel the verification visit, but that it will result in the revocation of the program’s NAEYC accreditation. In that case the program has the ability to appeal the decision to revoke.

Ask the Responsible Person if he or she chooses to accept the verification visit.

<u>If Yes</u>: Note on the visit schedule the time the visit was accepted, and the name of the responsible person accepting the visit. Ask the responsible person for a place to conduct the orientation meeting and begin the meeting. Indicate on the schedule the name of the person who accepted the visit.

If the responsible person has accepted the visit, but is unavailable and cannot meet with you, wait no more than 30 minutes for that person to become available. If the person is still unavailable after 30 minutes of waiting, it is going to be the best use of your time to try to begin an observation. Using your best judgment, choose a group to observe by following these guidelines:

1. Choose an age category that only has one group (so no randomization is at issue).
2. Choose a group whose age categories for assessment are the clearest (that is, from what you can see, the least possibility of being a mixed age group).

Begin the observation. If possible, confirm the age category(s) with the responsible person before beginning the observation.

If the responsible person becomes available while you are in the observation, continue the observation until you have observed the group for the full 60 minutes, and then join the responsible person to conduct the orientation meeting. Consider the group that was observed as randomly selected and continue the randomization process as detailed in the protocol with the remaining groups.

If No: Ask that the responsible person read and sign the *Acknowledgement of Refusal of NAEYC Verification Visit* document. Explain that signing the form will result in the revocation of the program's NAEYC accreditation. Upon receiving the signed document from the responsible person, walk to your car and call NAEYC immediately and explain the situation.

If the Responsible Person will not take responsibility for deciding about the visit: Ask if the Program Administrator, or another responsible person, will arrive within the next 15 minutes.

If Yes: Ask for a quiet place where you can get settled and prepare to begin the visit. Organize your documents and wait for the program administrator or other responsible person to arrive. Obtain program consent and begin the orientation meeting.

If No: Ask the responsible person to immediately contact someone who can take responsibility for making the decision about the visit. Tell them you would like to speak to the person contacted. Ask if you can wait at the program. If not, return to your car and wait for the communications process to unfold.

Allow no more than 1 hour. If a program staff member has not approached you with a decision, then inform the person in charge that you must leave. Repeat that (1) if you leave, the program needs to sign the refusal form, which will result in the revocation of NAEYC Accreditation; and (2) if you start the assessment, the program always has the option of terminating the visit and asking that the data not be recorded. Proceed accordingly. If the program won't sign the refusal, call the Academy.

4. Orientation Meeting

(Allow about 45 minutes)

The verification visit continues with an orientation meeting between the assessor(s) and the program administrator or other responsible person. Ask to hold this meeting in the administrator's office, or wherever they keep information on children and groups.

Process Verification Form--Verification Visit. This form outlines the procedures to be followed in the opening and closing meetings. Follow the instructions on the form. When all of the orientation meeting procedures have been completed, initial the form at the bottom of the first page, and ask the responsible person to do the same.

Group Confirmation and Selection. The randomization process for verification visits is different than that of regular site visits because the assessor is unable to verify the name, number, and ages of the groups until the day of the visit.

Verification Visit Classroom Selection Form. During the orientation meeting, ask the responsible person the names of the groups in each age category. As the responsible person says the name of each group, write the name in Table 1 of the form. Note that Table 1 allows for a maximum of 10 groups per age category. If the program has more than 10 groups in an age category, **continue listing the groups on the back of the form or have the age category spill over into one of the non-used age category columns, changing the title of that column to the appropriate age category.**

If the program defines some groups as mixed-age groups, include each mixed-age group among one of the regular age categories on the *Classroom Selection Form* by using the following decision rules:

- If the mixed-age group includes an age category that is not represented in other groups, it must be assigned to the unrepresented age category and observed.
- If the mixed-age group is made up of age categories that are all represented in other groups, count the mixed-age group among the age category for the youngest children in the group.

Review the groups with the responsible person and make changes as needed. In Table 2 of the form, confirm the total number of groups for each age category and write that number in the appropriate box. Once you have confirmed with the responsible person that all groups are accounted for, that each group is in the appropriate age category, and that the total number of groups in each age category is correct, the responsible person will sign and date the *Verification Visit Classroom Selection Form*, verifying that you have the correct information. Initial this document as well.

Randomization Selector for Verification Visits: After signing the form, ask the responsible person to locate the licensing information needed to evaluate required criterion 10.B.04 while you complete the randomization process unobserved. Tell the responsible person that verification of the reported licensing status will need to be provided at least 30 minutes prior to the closing meeting or at any time during the visit. See the protocol below for additional details on what documentation is needed to complete the *Required Criterion 10.B.04 Worksheet.*

Tally up the total number of groups in Table 2. Determining <u>which</u> classroom groups and <u>how many</u> classroom groups are observed during a verification visit depends upon the following guidelines:

- If there are 16 or fewer groups in the program overall, observe at least 50% of the total number of groups in the program. Depending on which groups the Academy has requested and the group structure of the program, you may actually be observing somewhat more than 50% of the total number of the program’s groups.
- If there are more than 16 groups in the program overall, observe a maximum of 8 groups.
- Observe at least one group from each eligible age category (infant, toddler/two, preschool, kindergarten, school-age (if applicable))
- According to Academy directions for some non-random visits, you may also be required to observe certain designated groups.
- In programs with satellite locations, observe at least one group from each site.
- Within each age category, use random selection to pick specific groups to observe.
- In a group with kindergarten and school-age children, if 50% or more of the children are in kindergarten, it is a mixed-age group of kindergarten and school-age children.

Rate kindergarten and universal criteria. If the group has less than 50% kindergarten children, the group is a school-age group. Rate only universal criteria. Only observe the school-age group if the program is eligible for observation of school-age groups.

To use the *Randomization Selector for Verification Visits*, first determine the TOTAL number of groups in an age category (NOT the number to be observed). Then use the first set of randomly selected numbers for that total. If an additional age category has the same number of groups, use the second set of randomly selected numbers.

Circle the randomly selected groups by number in Table 1 of the *VV Classroom Selection Form*. If the Academy has specified that a certain group be observed, see if it has been randomly selected. If not, then insert that group onto the schedule, exchanging it for the last randomly selected group.

Verification Visit Schedule. Insert the selected groups into the schedule. For each group to be observed, identify the staff expected to be present at the observation time, including break subs.

- Note staff names on the schedule, group observation tools, and on the *First Aid/ CPR Worksheet*.
- Ask the responsible person if any “other adults” are scheduled to be in the groups during the observations; note these as well.
- Request that 5.A.03 documentation be available for each of the staff members to be observed. Ask that this documentation be provided at least 30 minutes prior to the closing meeting.
- Ask if there are any children with identified special needs in the groups selected to be observed. If so, find out what are the special needs. You <u>do</u> <u>not</u> need to know the identity of the children themselves.

Review the *Verification Visit Schedule* and provide a copy to the responsible person. Verify at this time that you will observe at least one group within in each eligible age category and at least 50% of the total number of groups in the program, up to a total of **8** observations overall.

- Verify that the scheduled times for group observations are times when those groups are in session and not napping. Any time when a group is meeting and awake is a valid time to observe.
- For programs with Infant groups verify that all infants are not anticipated to be asleep during the scheduled observation time. (Note: Any time when a group is in session with one or more awake children is a valid time to observe.)
- Observation times should NOT be moved or rescheduled around ‘specials’ such as art, music, or walks. Observations times may be moved or changed if a group is going on a field trip or will be transported off-site, otherwise assessors should make every effort to observe groups at the times originally scheduled.

<u>NOTE</u>: Due to the unannounced aspect of most verification visits, it is possible that unforeseeable circumstances will make it impossible to observe the projected number and age-category distribution of groups. This does not necessarily invalidate the verification visit.

Variations from the observation protocol will be reported to the Academy. Academy staff will determine whether to score the visit or discard it.

Facility Orientation. Have the program administrator point out the spaces used most often by each group to be observed for gross motor play, including indoor and outdoor spaces, spaces owned by the program and spaces not owned such as public parks, fields, etc. Be clear about which groups use which spaces and which climbing equipment. If the program does not have a playground on the facility grounds, ask what outdoor environment the program uses most often. If they use two environments equally, assess both of the environments that are associated with that group and rate accordingly. Otherwise, when determining which outdoor environment to assess for a group, ask the administrator which outdoor environment each group uses the most.

If possible during the facility orientation, touch base with the teaching staff of any infant groups to be observed to determine if all infants are anticipated to be asleep during the scheduled observation.

Verification Visit Process Forms. Show the responsible person the blue forms *(Process Verification Form- Verification Visit, Verification Visit Classroom Selection Form, Missing Evidence Request Form- Verification Visit, Required Criteria Documentation Form- Verification Visit, Safety Concerns Report,* and *First Aid/CPR Acknowledgment Form)* related to the verification visit process. Briefly review the protocol for each (see details of protocol, below). Tell the responsible person that verification of the reported licensing status (required criterion 10.B.04) and staff pediatric first aid training, including managing a blocked airway and providing rescue breathing for infants and children (required criterion 5.A.03), will need to be provided at least 30 minutes prior to the closing meeting.

Leave blank copies of these blue forms with the responsible person for the remainder of the visit.

Required Criteria, Licensing Status. Show the responsible person the *Required Criteria Verification Visit Documentation Form.* Review the protocol for this form (see details of protocol, below). Let the responsible person know that assessors do not evaluate issues of possible licensing (10.B.04) non-compliance. This information is evaluated at the Academy.

Access to materials. Tell the responsible person that you will be looking through books, CDs and other materials in the classrooms during observations. Ask for permission to open closets, cabinets and drawers while in classrooms, in order to best make ratings of which criteria are met. If necessary, clarify with the responsible person which spaces in each classroom may or may not be accessed.

Note to program administrators and other responsible persons: The assessor can only give credit for materials and equipment that he or she can access. It is generally to the program's advantage to allow access to classroom storage areas during the verification visit. However, the program may certainly indicate that they do not wish for specific closets, cabinets or drawers to be opened by the assessor.

Data collection tools. Show the responsible person the tools used to ensure accurate data collection:

- *Trowel* for measuring the depth of cushioning material under gross motor play equipment, if applicable.

- *Measuring tape* for measuring use zones, height of play equipment, and hazardous entrapment areas on play equipment. The measuring tape may also be used inside for criteria specifying distances.
- *Choke tube* for assistance in determining if toys are too small for infants and toddlers.

Meeting completion. Finally, review the *Process Verification Form-- Verification Visit*. Confirm that all orientation tasks were addressed. The responsible person and the assessor(s) are required to initial the orientation meeting section of the form upon completion. Do that now. Leave **a copy of** the form with the responsible person throughout the day. Note on the visit schedule the time the orientation meeting ends. Thank the responsible person, smile, and begin the assessment!

5. Verification Visit Tools, Worksheets and Forms

Group Observational Evidence Tool (GOE)

Allow EXACTLY 1 hour for direct observation + an optional 10 minutes for supplemental location (indoor, outdoor) observation for each group + an optional 10 minutes for supplemental infant observation.

The GOE is used to conduct data collection during a classroom observation. The following guidelines will help ensure that the classroom observation process is conducted as unobtrusively as possible and will help to make this a positive experience for everyone involved.

- Begin a classroom observation if the group includes at least one awake child and one teaching staff member. Do not begin an observation if no children have arrived, or if all children have departed for the day, or if there are children present but they are all asleep.
- Classroom observations should last exactly one hour, with a 10-minute time exception if you do not get to observe interior or exterior group environments, or if infant observations result in less than 20 minutes of “awake” time. This means that you stay with children and staff for one hour, wherever they are. If at the end of the hour you have not observed interior or exterior environments, leave the group if necessary to observe the area not seen. Be sure the time you enter the classroom is noted on the *GOE* cover page along with the time you exit the classroom. There is a place on the cover page to record the 10-minute additional times if you need them.
- When observing infant groups, special consideration is made to accommodate individualized infant schedules. Begin an observation if at least one infant is awake. At least 20 minutes of total “awake” time should be observed. The “awake” time does not need to be consecutive. If by the end of the 60 minute observation, 20 minutes of “awake” time has not been observed, an additional 10 minute time exception is allowable to complete the observation. You might need to return to the group later in the day to complete the observation. Make a note if this is the case and speak with

the staff to arrange an appropriate time to return to the group when the children will most likely be awake. Make notation of the total "awake" time and any timeframes in which all infants are asleep on the GOE Notes page. If at the completion of the observation you have still not observed a total of 20 minutes of "awake" time including the 10 minute time exception, leave the room and contact the Academy for further instruction.

- Upon starting each observation, confirm the names of the teaching staff present and the status of other adults present (parents, volunteers). It may be that you can determine the names of the staff present by reading their nametags, seeing their photos posted, or listening to their conversation. If none of these means is available, briefly ask staff to confirm names, and then begin the observation. You do not need to ask classroom staff about children with special needs, or dialogue with them about looking through closets and cabinets. Keep all talk to a minimum.
- Do not interfere with the classroom activities in any way. Be as unobtrusive as possible. Move if you are in the way of teachers or children.
- Station yourself around the perimeter of the classroom as inconspicuously as possible. You may walk around the perimeter to get a better vantage point during the observation. When observing with another assessor, stay inside and outside together.
- You may sit in a chair so that children are not intimidated by your height. Do not sit on other furniture such as shelves, tables, the children's chairs near an activity table, or on play equipment.
- Refrain from talking to other assessors when you are in the classroom. Do not receive or make phone calls during observations.
- Try to keep a pleasant or neutral facial expression so children and/or staff are neither drawn to you nor concerned about your response to them.
- You may acknowledge children if they approach you, but do not otherwise take part in classroom activity. You can tell them that you are watching them play today or that you have to finish your work.

<u>Serious Incidents</u>

The assessor generally continues with all observations and other tasks needed to complete the verification visit, regardless of whether a required criterion may have been unmet. However, if a child is at <u>immediate risk for harm or abuse</u>, the assessor should halt the observation or other visit procedures and intervene. NAEYC's code of ethical conduct calls for active response in such cases. After direct intervention, call the Academy.

If the assessor believes an incident may need to be reported to state licensing authorities, call NAEYC staff at the Academy (800-424-2460, choose option 3, then option 1 and ask to be transferred to a Reliability Specialist, or Manager who is present) during the visit for guidance on how and if to report. Unless there is immediate risk involved, wait until completion of the observation to call.

If the serious incident also constitutes a possible failure of a required criterion, the assessor should complete the *Required Criteria Documentation Form-- Verification Visit*. See instructions for this form below.

- Note if individual staff members are not present with the group for the entire observation. Also note if the group splits up so that all staff are not with all children during the observation. This is critical for verifying that at least one staff member is present with children at all times who has current pediatric first aid certification as described in required criterion 5.A.03.
- Remember when conducting the classroom observation that you are considering the full experience of the children in the identified classroom. Therefore, in instances where two or more groups (classrooms) are combined (for example, in the outdoor space), all teacher – child interactions should be considered when completing ratings.
- Remember to bring your trowel, measuring tape, and choke tube into the observation. Wear your booties into infant rooms that do not allow shoes.
- School age group observations: Score only Universal criteria (only criteria marked as applicable for ALL age categories -- infant, toddler, preschool and kindergarten). Don't follow students into the bathroom. Be prepared to be outside or in a cafeteria, gymnasium, or other non-classroom space.
- Assessors are required to make notes on the *GOE* Notes Page. Note generally what went on in the observation period. It is helpful if you note what was observed that led to negative ratings for specific criteria. Assessors are also permitted to make notations for their own use on other parts of the GOE tool. When writing notes, keep the notes as objective as possible. State the facts and describe what you are seeing. Keep the notes specific to what you are seeing and what is occurring during the one-hour observation. Do not give general information regarding the program, the weather, or situations unless they directly pertain to, and have affected, the observation.
- <u>Assessors are also required to complete the rating scales on the notes page in addition to writing general notes regarding what occurred during the observation period and negative ratings.</u> The rating scales are not a substitute for writing general notes.
- If an assessor witnesses the possible failure of a required criterion during an observation, the assessor is required to write detailed notes on the notes page of the GOE tool describing what child and/or adult was involved, the physical layout of the

environment (if applicable), the time or duration of the incident (if applicable) and the setting. If there is a half-wall, bookcase, full-wall, window, door, or any other physical structure in the classroom that is pertinent to the description of the incident, make the location and placement of the physical structure clear in the notes. These notes and details must be transferred onto the *Required Criteria Documentation Form* to be shared with the program administrator during the Closing Meeting.

Worksheets. In order to evaluate required criteria 5.A.03 and 10.B.04, multiple pieces of evidence must be reviewed and organized. Assessor worksheets have been created to aid the process for these 2 criteria. The worksheets carry their own detailed instructions.

Worksheet for criterion 5.A.03 (pediatric first-aid/CPR). Assessors must complete the *Required Criterion 5.A.03 Worksheet* by verifying pediatric first aid documentation for each classroom staff person observed. Be sure to follow the protocol outlined above in the orientation meeting to ensure that all information is available at the time of the review. Rate 5.A.03 on the *Group Observable Evidence Tool* as “yes” or “no” based on completion of the *Required Criterion 5.A.03 Worksheet*. If 5.A.03 is rated as not met, follow the instructions on the *First Aid/CPR Acknowledgement Form*.

Worksheet for criterion 10.B.04 (Licensing). Assessors must complete the *Required Criterion 10.B.04 Worksheet* by following these procedures. Request the program’s license. If the license is current and valid, required criterion 10.B.04 is rated ‘Yes’.

<u>Temporary, Provisional, Probationary or Expired Licenses:</u> If the license is in a temporary, provisional, probationary or expired status, put 10.B.04 on the MERF and request a current, valid license. If the program produces a current and valid license, rate 10.B.04 ‘Yes’ through the *Required Criteria Documentation Form* (10.B.04 will be met because it is not indicated as unmet). If the program does not produce a current and valid license after the MERF, rate 10.B.04 as possibly not met, (‘No’), on the *Required Criteria Documentation Form*.

<u>License Exempt Programs:</u> If a program is license-exempt, indicate that additional documentation is needed for criterion 10.B.04 on the MERF and give the responsible person the *License-Exempt Acknowledgement Form* at the time of the MERF. If the program executes and returns the form, 10.B.04 is met. This will be reflected on the *Required Criteria Documentation Form.* If the program does not execute the form on the day of the visit, rate 10.B.04 as possibly not met on the *Required Criteria Documentation Form.* The program may choose to submit the completed form up to 5 business days after the visit. See the *License-Exempt Acknowledgement Form* for further instruction.

<u>72-Hour Notification Form:</u> If the program has reported that they are on a temporary, probationary, provisional or expired license due to the occurrence of a critical event, ask if the program has submitted a *72-Hour Notification Form* to the Academy. If they have, indicate this on the 10.B.04 worksheet. If they have not, direct them to the NAEYC website for further information (http://www.naeyc.org/academy/pursuing/changes) and/or give the program the *72-Hour Notification Form.* Instruct the program to submit the form immediately and to call the Academy (800-424-2460 and choose option 3, then option 1) if they have further questions. Do not request evidence about the critical event; the Academy will follow up.

Be sure to follow the protocol outlined above in the Orientation Meeting to ensure that all information is available at the time of the review. The assessor must indicate that criterion 10.B.04 is met or possibly unmet on the *Required Criteria Documentation Form.*

Missing Evidence Request Form —Verification Visit (MERF-VV). The MERF-VV for the verification visits consists only of missing evidence for criteria 5.A.03 and 10.B.04. If applicable, briefly describe the missing evidence needed to rate criteria 5.A.03 and 10.B.04. Give the program <u>at least</u> 30 minutes to respond to the MERF-VV. It can be given to the responsible person at any time during the day. For example, the MERF-VV may be given to the responsible person prior to the start of your last observation. Inform the responsible person that if you need to see any additional evidence after completion of the last observation regarding criterion 5.A.03, you will let him/her know at the completion of the last observation. Indicate what time the MERF-VV was given to the responsible person and the time it was returned to you on the MERF-VV. If NO additional evidence is needed for these 2 criteria, check the box on the form indicating that. Note 'N/A' on the schedule in place of the time that the MERF-VV was given. Even if it was not submitted to the responsible person for further evidence, both parties need to sign off on the MERF-VV at the Closing Meeting.

First Aid/CPR Acknowledgment Form
(OPTIONAL: may submit and review with MERF-VV; OR may need to review at Closing Meeting)

The *First Aid/CPR Acknowledgment Form* is an optional form that provides a means of addressing incomplete evidence regarding required criterion 5.A.03, which relates to pediatric first aid training (including managing a blocked airway and providing rescue breathing for infants and children) among teaching staff. This form is introduced to the responsible person at the Orientation Meeting, and a blank copy is left with the responsible person at the end of the Orientation Meeting. However, it is used only if evidence for 5.A.03 is found to be missing or incomplete after reviewing the documentation provided by the program. The program is assessed on the documentary evidence for 5.A.03 first compiled by completing the *Required Criterion 5.A.03 Worksheet* (see above). When the evidence compiled on this worksheet shows the criterion is not met for one or more groups, assessors must list the missing evidence on the *MERF-VV (see above).*

Depending upon the nature of the missing 5.A.03 evidence, the *First Aid/CPR Acknowledgment Form* may be given to the responsible person along with the *MERF-VV*, or it may be given at the Closing Meeting. Here are 3 options for the types of missing evidence typically encountered when assessing 5.A.03:

- **OPTION 1: No Pediatric Component Documented**. The program had at least one staff member present with each group of children who had a certificate showing current first aid training, BUT the documentation <u>did not show clearly that the training included a pediatric component.</u> The first aid certificate DID clearly show that training included management of blocked airways and rescue breathing OR the staff member had a certificate showing completion of CPR training.
- **OPTION 2: No Rescue Breathing/Blocked Airway Component Documented.** On the day of the visit, the program had at least one staff member present with each group of children who had a certificate showing current first aid training, BUT the documentation did not show clearly that the training included rescue breathing and management of a

blocked airway. A certificate showing completion of CPR training would meet this component.

- **OPTION 3: No Certified Staff in a Group.** The assessor observed one or more groups in which no staff member present had a certificate showing current pediatric first aid training, including management of blocked airways and rescue breathing (or completion of pediatric CPR training instead of the blocked airway/rescue breathing component of a first aid course).

If Option 1 ONLY is the case, check the first box on page 1 of the *First Aid/CPR Acknowledgment Form* and give the form to the responsible person along with the *MERF-VV*. The responsible person may sign the acknowledgment section of the form and return it to the assessor with evidence requested for other criteria on the *MERF-VV*. If the responsible person attests that the staff with certificates did receive training that included a pediatric component, then the assessor should rate the criterion as met on the GOE tools.

If Option 2 and/or 3 is the case, check the corresponding box(es) on page 1 of the *First Aid/CPR Acknowledgment Form*. If the responsible person cannot provide additional evidence supporting current first aid certifications (including rescue breathing and management of blocked airway) for all groups when returning evidence requested on the MERF-VV, then the assessor must do the following:

1. Rate the criterion as NOT met on the GOE tools.
2. Complete the *Failed Required Criterion Form* for 5.A.03.
3. Give the *First Aid/CPR Acknowledgment Form* to the responsible person at the Closing Meeting when the *Failed Required Criterion Form* is reviewed.

The responsible person must sign the acknowledgment section of the *First Aid/CPR Acknowledgment Form* at a later date, when all conditions have been met. The completed form can be faxed or emailed to NAEYC within 30 days of the site visit (see below).

Note that it is possible for more than one of the 3 options to be true. That is, one group may have staff that lack documentation of pediatric component, while another group may have staff lacking any documentation of blocked airway/rescue breathing, and yet another group may have no training certificates at all. In that case, you will have to fill out the *Failed Required Criterion Form,* and the *First Aid/CPR Acknowledgment Form* will have to be executed by the responsible person at a later date.

Safety Concerns Report (SCR)

(Allow about 15 minutes to compile; 5 minutes to review [in Closing Meeting])

The *Safety Concerns Report* is a method for communicating to the program any observed safety concerns. The SCR includes categories of safety issues that create a risk of harm to children's health or safety, and that may be corrected by the program within a short time frame. The kinds of safety concerns included on this form do NOT refer to NAEYC required criteria, which are reported on the *Required Criteria Documentation Form- Verification Visit* (see below).

The *SCR* is introduced to the responsible person during the Orientation Meeting. The assessor should leave a blank copy of the form with the responsible person, and answer any questions they have.

An assessor may notice safety concerns at any time during the visit, whether or not he or she is conducting a formal group or program observation at the time. The assessor(s) should carry the SCR throughout the visit, noting safety concerns as they occur, or making notes onto the form upon completing a group observation or other visit task. If safety concerns are noted during an observation they may also be used to rate criteria as "not met" on the observable evidence tools.

If more than one assessor is conducting the site visit, all assessors should compile safety concerns on working copies of the *SCR* form. The lead assessor should then combine all concerns onto one final copy of the *SCR* prior to the Closing Meeting.

If there are no safety concerns noted, check the box on page 1 of the form and initial where indicated.

At the Closing Meeting, review the contents of the report with the responsible person. Remind the responsible person that once the form is presented, no further documentation or follow-up by the program will be accepted as further evidence related to formal visit ratings. The ratings are done; this form is advisory only. Avoid lengthy discussion of what is noted, and make it clear if necessary that you cannot change visit ratings at this time. When you are finished reviewing the *SCR*, have the responsible person sign the form at the Closing Meeting. By signing the form, the responsible person agrees to take immediate corrective action to address the safety concerns noted, or to communicate the safety concerns to others who have the authority to take action. A copy of the form is left with the program, and also kept by the assessors.

Required Criteria Documentation Form-- Verification Visit (RCF-VV)
(Allow about 15 minutes to compile; 15 minutes to review [in closing meeting])

Required criteria are those that are considered basic to quality. You will be recording possible violations of required criteria for review by staff at the Academy. If it is ultimately decided that the criteria are unmet, it will result in the revocation of the program's NAEYC accreditation.

These are the required criteria (described in brief) that are assessed in the verification visit:

- 1.B.09: No physical punishment, psychological abuse or coercion.
- 3.C.02: Teaching staff supervise infants and toddlers/twos by sight and sound at all times.
- 3.C.04: Teaching staff supervise [preschoolers and kindergarten] children primarily by sight; supervision for short intervals by sound alone is permissible, as long as teachers check frequently on children who are out of sight.
- 5.A.03: Presence of a staff member trained in pediatric first-aid, including managing a blocked airway and providing rescue breathing, at all times with each group of children; staff trained in CPR if necessary due to program characteristics (swimming, wading or particular health needs).
- 5.A.12.a: Infants (12 months or younger) are placed on their backs to sleep, on a firm surface that meets the standards of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission, unless otherwise ordered by a physician.

- 10.B.04: The program and facility are licensed to operate or are otherwise regulated; and the program is in good standing.

If at any time during a visit the assessor reviews documentary evidence or directly observes evidence of a possible failure to comply with any of the listed criteria, the assessor fully documents the possible failure of required criteria on the *RCF-VV*. This form is also used to document that there were no failures of required criteria. Compile the *RCF-VV* just before the Closing Meeting. Review the *RCF-VV* at the Closing Meeting.

Assessor Determination on Page 2 of *RCF-VV*. Something must be checked on this page! The assessor must indicate whether all required criteria were met, or whether one or more required criteria were possibly *not* met. For required criteria 5.A.03, and 5.A.12, secondary check boxes prompt additional assessor follow-up:

- **5.A.03:** Assessor must give the responsible person the *5.A.03 Follow-up Documentation Required* form and *First/Aid CPR Acknowledgement Form.*
- **5.A.12:** Assessor must ask the responsible person if there is a physician's order or note permitting the infant to be placed to sleep in a position other than the back.

Final determination of whether a recent violation results in failure of 10.B.04 is made by NAEYC Academy staff. Assessors must only complete and return the 10.B.04 worksheet.

Document Evidence indicating possible failed required criterion on Page 3. If multiple instances of a required criterion or of the same criterion failure are present (for example, the assessor observes 2 separate instances of infants being improperly placed to sleep on their stomachs), a copy of Page 3 should be created for each instance.

- Indicate at the top of page 3 how many copies of Page 3 are being submitted.
- Describe the evidence as completely and legibly as possible. For observational evidence, it is important to convey the details requested about the scope and severity of the incident—where it happened, how long it lasted, how many children or staff were involved, etc.
- Solicit the responsible person's written response at the Closing Meeting. Responses should be written at the bottom of page 3. The back of the page may be used if necessary to provide additional details. If the responsible person chooses not to respond, he or she should check the box on Page 3. *Either the box must be checked, or a written response must be made.*

Signatures. It is important that the lead assessor and the responsible person (or other program representative) sign on Page 4. The communication of failed required criteria can become crucial to the final decision as to whether the program retains accreditation or not. It is the lead assessor's responsibility to fully complete this document.

Verification Visit Materials Checklist

(Complete this form after the visit; do not include on visit schedule)

The *Verification Visit Materials Checklist* is a control form that allows the lead assessor and Academy staff to account for all tools, worksheets and forms being returned to the Academy at the end of a verification visit. This one-page form is completed by the assessor after the visit, when he or she is checking and packaging verification visit materials for shipment to NAEYC. The bottom of the form is for Academy staff use only and is used to expedite routing of the forms through the scoring and decision process.

The lead assessor should complete the visit information at the top of the form, then use the first column to list how many of each tool, answer sheet or form is being returned to the Academy. For example, if four group observations were conducted, you will indicate that you are returning four *GOEs*. The assessor should initial this form once, at the bottom of the list (middle of page). Return the *Verification Visit Materials Checklist* on the top of the pile of documents; it is the first thing Academy staff will need when they open the package.

6. Closing Meeting

(Allow about 30 minutes)

The closing meeting is an opportunity for the assessor(s) and responsible person to verify that the assessment was conducted as outlined in this protocol and on the *Process Verification Form-- Verification Visit*. Assessor(s) and the responsible person sign and date several forms in the closing meeting. The closing meeting is also the time for the responsible person to respond in writing to licensing violations or possible failures to meet required criteria. Remind the responsible person that assessors are not able to discuss any of the results of the assessment.

The responsible person is entitled to receive copies of all visit process forms ("blue forms") reviewed and/or signed by program representatives during the visit. These include the *Missing Evidence Request Form* and the *VV Classroom Selection Form*, received earlier in the visit, as well as the forms reviewed in the closing meeting (listed below). If the program does not have a photo copier, the lead assessor should arrange to copy and mail, or fax, all relevant forms after the visit is completed.

Specifically, assessors must review the following forms in the Closing Meeting:

- *Verification Visit Schedule,* annotated during the visit to reflect any changes in the schedule as actually executed. The assessor should take some time reviewing the schedule, noting that sufficient time was taken for each assessment task, noting when additional time was needed for tasks (for example, additional 10 minutes for observations), and noting where the original schedule was altered, and why. It is very important that the responsible person be able to understand and confirm that protocol was followed with respect to how much time was allotted to tasks. Therefore, your hand-written changes to the schedule should be neat and legible.

  After reviewing it, the assessor(s) and responsible person should sign the bottom of the schedule, indicating that it was reviewed and appears accurate. The responsible person is NOT agreeing by signing that everything in the schedule is correct. He or she may decide upon later review that something is not right. However, the responsible person is acknowledging receipt of the schedule, with amendments to reflect its actual execution.

- *Required Criteria Documentation Form--Verification Visit*, regardless of whether or not any of the criteria were observed to be met or not met. See above for detailed instructions. This form requires signatures by the assessor(s) and the responsible person.

- *Missing Evidence Request Form*, regardless of whether or not any documentation was requested. This form requires signatures by the assessor(s) and the responsible person.

- *Safety Concerns Report.* Review the form. It requires a signature by the program administrator.

- *Next Steps and the NAEYC Accreditation Decision--Verification Visit* handout. It is recommended that the assessor not read through this entire handout at the closing meeting. Assessors should briefly summarize the main points in the handout, and urge the responsible person to review it carefully after the visit has been completed.

- *72-Hour Notification Flyer/Postcard***.** Give the responsible person the *72-Hour*

Notification Flyer/Postcard received via Mimeo. Leave the flyer/postcard with the program. If they have any questions about what to report or around a specific situation, direct the program to call the Academy Information Center (800-424-2460; choose option 3, then option 1).

- *Administrator Evaluation--Verification Visit*, which the responsible person is asked to return directly to the NAEYC Academy within 5 days of the visit.
- *Process Verification Form--Verification Visit*. This form also requires signatures by the assessor(s) and the responsible person.

Make sure to record the Closing Meeting completion time on both copies of the *Verification Visit Schedule*.

Make sure you have packed up all used and unused copies of NAEYC tools and other proprietary forms before you leave the site.

Finally, tell the responsible person that upon completion of the visit no further alterations to the scoring tools will be made. Thank the responsible person and his or her staff for their accommodation of your site visit, and for all their hard work on behalf of program quality improvement.

7. After the Visit

Prepare and check the visit documents before mailing them:

- Before completing the visit, review each assessment tool answer sheet and be sure all ratings are complete (e.g., 5.A.03).
- If a tool was part of a reliability assessment, the “Reliability Check?” data field on the answer sheet cover page should be marked “Yes” for both the white and yellow copies of paired GOE tools.
- Be sure that all identifying information on every assessment tool, worksheet and form is complete and legible (Program ID, Group numbers, Assessor ID, times, etc.).
- Ensure that all required signatures appear on forms and on the final schedule. Remove paper clips, rubber bands, Post-It notes, or other extraneous materials before mailing.

Return data to the NAEYC Academy. The *Materials Checklist--Verification Visit* lists all assessment tools, forms, worksheets and other documents that must be (or may be) returned to the Academy. The following documents must be returned in a Tyvek envelope or UPS mailing box:

- Completed *Materials Checklist--Verification Visit*. Be sure to mark the total number of tools and forms being returned to the NAEYC Academy.
- Copies of every assessment tool. Include yellow copies of the tools used by additional assessors doing a reliability check, and any *Reliability Summary Sheets* used as part of ongoing reliability.
- All blue forms: *Process Verification Form--Verification Visit*, final *Verification Visit Schedule*, *Verification Visit Classroom Selection Form* and *Required Criteria*

Documentation Form--Verification Visit.

- All visit worksheets: *Required Criterion 10.B.04 Worksheet,* and *First Aid/CPR Worksheet.*
- Any additional 5.A.03 or 10.B.04 documentation submitted during the visit.

Record Keeping. Assessors are instructed to use UPS ground to return all verification visit materials to the NAEYC Academy ***within one week of completing the visit***. UPS tracking must show that the package was received by UPS within one week of the visit date. It is the assessor's responsibility to record and save the tracking information. Completed visit materials are very valuable; if visit materials do not arrive, it is essential that the Academy is able to track them using all available resources. The NAEYC Academy reserves the right to withhold payment for any visit until the materials are received.

Log into DMS and input the date the verification visit materials have been returned to the NAEYC Academy and the UPS tracking number on the program's visit scheduling screen.

Assessor Evaluations and Feedback. Evaluations must be completed by all assessors who take part in a verification visit. It is important that the Academy receive this feedback in order to inform on-going reliability issues and training for assessors. These evaluations are accessed and completed online in the iCohere system.

Notify the NAEYC Academy of any issues or discrepancies found in tools or procedures when you are out in the field. Utilize the *Criteria Suggestion Form* posted in iCohere for tracking these issues.

Thank you for your willingness to serve as part of the NAEYC Assessor Corps!