

NAEYC Program Standards and Accreditation Assessment Items

Standard 7: Families

Definition of Standard 7

The program establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with each child’s family to foster children’s development in all settings. These relationships are sensitive to family composition, language, and culture.

Rationale

Young children’s learning and development are integrally connected to their families. Consequently, to support and promote children’s optimal learning and development, programs need to recognize the primacy of children’s families, establish relationships with families based on mutual trust and respect, support and involve families in their children’s educational growth, and invite families to fully participate in the program.

The Families standard is made up of three topic areas (7.A, 7.B, and 7.C).

Topic Areas

- ❖ 7.A—Knowing and Understanding the Program’s Families
- ❖ 7.B—Sharing Information Between Staff and Families
- ❖ 7.C—Nurturing Families as Advocates for Their Children

7.A—Knowing and Understanding the Program’s Families

Topic 7.A addresses program staff’s ability to work effectively with diverse families based on their knowledge of a family’s socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, and cultural background.

Recommended Best Practices

Criteria in Topic 7.A	
7.A.06	<p>Program policies can help staff establish intentional practices designed to build strong relationships with families from the first contact, and maintain them over time.</p> <p>Right from the start, program staff should understand the kinds of families served in the program. The program’s employee orientation process should include an overview of the diversity of families in the program, and ongoing staff development should help staff acquire the skills and knowledge they need to work effectively with all families. To better understand the cultural backgrounds of enrolled children, their families, and the surrounding community, program staff should be encouraged to participate in cultural events, concerts, storytelling activities, and other events and performances in the community that are designed for children and their families. Staff participation in such activities may be formally planned by the program or informally sought out by individual staff members according to their own interests. The key is for staff to get to know and to become part of the lives of the program’s families.</p> <p>If classroom staff are going to work effectively with each family, the program should have established ways to identify which family members are legally responsible for the care and well-being of each child. Staff provide ongoing support and information regarding the children in their care to these identified individuals.</p> <p>When first getting acquainted with a child and family, both administrators and teaching staff should know and use a variety of formal and informal strategies to become acquainted with and learn from the family. Questionnaires, emails, and planned and spontaneous conversations are all ways to learn more</p>
7.A.01	
7.A.04	
7.A.05	
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about families. Program staff should ask families about their family structure¹, their preferred childrearing practices, and any other information families wish to share about their socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, religious, or cultural background.

Staff can also ask family members to share their knowledge of their child’s interests, approaches to learning, and developmental needs. Staff will want to learn about the family’s concerns and goals for their child. Teachers and administrators can and should find ways to actively use this information to adapt the program environment, curriculum, and teaching methods to better serve their enrolled families.

While continuously getting to know the children and their families, program staff also need to help families get to know the program. Program staff should make opportunities to discuss the program’s philosophy and curriculum objectives with families. They can talk about effective strategies that can be used by families to promote their children’s learning. These conversations can occur during new family orientations, small group meetings, and individual conversations and through written questionnaires, all of which can help staff inform families and get input from families about curriculum activities throughout the year. Classroom staff should communicate with families often about shared child caregiving issues, including parent-child separation at drop-off, special needs, and the food served and consumed.

Programs need to establish an atmosphere that continually invites and includes families in the life of the program in as many ways as possible. This starts with an open-door policy: families should be able to visit any area of the facility at any time during the program’s regular hours of operation. Program staff should think about how to ensure that all families are included in volunteer opportunities and program events, taking into account challenges that may be posed by family structure, socioeconomic circumstances, racial and cultural backgrounds, gender, abilities, and preferred language. Participation opportunities should consider each family’s interests and skills and the needs of program staff. Program staff and families can work together to plan events. Families’ schedules and availability must be considered as part of this planning. Staff or other families in the program should encourage and support family members to take on leadership roles.

The program has an important role in creating a true community of families it serves. This can be accomplished by facilitating opportunities for families to meet with one another on a formal and informal basis, to work together on projects that support the program, and to learn from and provide support for each other. A sense of community and inclusion is fostered when a program’s governing or advisory groups include families as members and active participants.

Criteria in
Topic 7.B

7.B.05
7.B.06
7.B.01
7.B.03
7.B.04

7.B—Sharing Information Between Staff and Families

Topic 7.B addresses techniques and communication styles that promote continuous communication with families. It describes expectations with respect to written communication about the program’s operations.

Recommended Best Practices

In a high-quality program, communication between families and program staff is continuous and fluid, using formal and informal channels. Programs need to be intentional about communicating both with families as a whole and with individual families, based on the needs of each family and child. In written operating policies shared with staff

¹ Examples of family structures: nuclear family, single-parent family, extended family, childless family, step-family, grandparent family, and families including adopted members, same-sex spouses, unwed partners, and teenage parents.

Criteria in
Topic 7.C

7.C.01
7.C.02
7.C.04
7.C.05
7.C.03
7.C.05
7.C.06
7.C.07
7.C.08

and families, intentionality should be reflected when describing program expectations for frequent and individualized communication between staff and families.

Many daily happenings of a class can be communicated to all families at once through message boards, private network posts, or other means of reporting. Additionally, teaching staff who care for infants, toddlers, and 2-year-olds should have a procedure for communicating with each family on a **daily basis**, about their child’s activities and developmental milestones, shared caregiving issues, and other information that affects the child’s well-being and development. Similarly, teachers who care for preschoolers and older children should have a procedure for communicating these things to each family on a **weekly basis**. When in-person communication is not possible, teaching staff can communicate through established alternative means, such as daily written report forms, emails, web posts, or phone calls. Program staff may also consider using family conferences or home visits to promote dialogue with families.

When enrolled families speak languages other than English, programs should compile and provide program information to families in a language they understand. Where many families speak a single language other than English, the information provided in that language should include program policies and operating procedures. For in-person communications, program staff need to ensure that other adults are available to translate or interpret communications to families, as needed.

Programs conduct assessments of children’s progress and should communicate closely with each family about their child’s progress throughout this process. Program staff should inform families about the program’s systems for formally and informally assessing children’s progress. The information should include the purposes of assessments, the procedures used for assessments, the procedures for gathering family input and information, the timing of assessments, the way assessment results or information will be shared with families, and ways the program will use the information. When an assessment process leads program staff to suspect that a child has a developmental delay or other special need, this possibility should be communicated to the family in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner. The family must be given documentation of the assessment, an explanation for the concern, suggestions about next steps to take, and information about resources for further assessment.

7.C—Nurturing Families as Advocates for Their Children

Topic 7.C addresses the early childhood program’s role in supporting family members as their child’s primary advocate, both in and beyond the program. It also addresses how differences that arise between program staff and families should be managed, and describes how programs support families in making transitions to other early childhood settings, public school settings, or both.

Recommended Best Practices

The truest partnership between programs and families occurs when program staff share their professional knowledge and experience with families in ways that empower family members to effectively advocate for their children’s needs. Program staff can and should encourage families to discuss their children’s needs when it comes to the program’s activities and services. If a family member has concerns about a child’s experiences while in care, staff can and should encourage the family to raise those concerns. Staff and family can then work collaboratively to find mutually satisfactory solutions that staff incorporate into classroom practice, when possible. When disagreements or other difficulties arise between a family and program staff, the program’s written policies should affirm that a variety of techniques are used to negotiate difficulties. These must include arrangements to use a language the family understands, if needed.

Program staff also have the important role of encouraging and supporting families to make the primary decisions about services their children may need outside of the program. Program staff can provide families with information about programs and services from other organizations. Staff should guide families in advocating to obtain needed

services. Staff can support and encourage families' efforts to negotiate health, mental health, assessment, and educational services for their children.

The program should establish relationships with other early learning programs and with local elementary schools. These relationships are needed to help families prepare for and manage their children's transitions between programs, including special education programs. Program staff should be a resource for general information on local enrollment procedures and practices, visiting opportunities, and program options, as well for communication with specific schools and programs.

Help and referral of families to health or educational services may also involve communication by the program about a child's experiences in that program. Before sharing information about a child with other relevant providers, agencies, schools, or programs, staff must obtain written consent from the child's family. The program needs to have clear written policies concerning confidentiality of family information, and these policies must be communicated to all staff.

Standard 7 Site Visit Assessment Items

Item count summary: Total items = 11; infant items = 10; toddler items = 10; preschool items = 10; kindergarten items = 10; school-age = 10

Sources of evidence key: CP = Class Portfolio; CO = Class Observation; PP = Program Portfolio; previsit = previsit evaluation of documentary evidence

Assessment category key: (R) = required criterion/item; (E) = emerging practice criterion/item

Topic area Criterion of origin	Item ID	Assessment item Definition, examples, guidance	Source of evidence	Age categories
7.A 7.A.01	1085	Show or explain how your program’s staff orientation process helps new program staff understand the diversity of families in your program.	PP	ITPKS
7.A 7.A.03	1088	Show or describe one example of how information about the families you serve has been used to adapt the program environment.	PP	ITPKS
7.A 7.A.03	1090	Show or describe one example of how information about the families you serve has been used to adapt teaching methods.	PP	ITPKS
7.A 7.A.08	1099	Show or describe two examples of how teachers have incorporated family members’ knowledge about their children into ongoing classroom planning.	PP	ITPKS
7.A 7.A.10	1103	If needed, teachers assist families in handling difficult separations during drop-off and pickup times. <i>Rate No Opp if no difficult separations are observed.</i>	CO	ITPKS
7.A 7.A.12	1105	Show or describe two examples of how you have helped families to meet with one another on a formal basis and to support the program or each other.	PP	ITPKS
7.A 7.A.14	1109	Show or describe one example of how staff and families have worked together to plan an event.	PP	ITPKS
7.B 7.B.04	1115	Show that when staff suspect that a child has a developmental delay or other special need, your program provides <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation and explanation for the concern • Suggested next steps • Information about resources for diagnostic evaluation <i>Diagnostic evaluation: An in-depth appraisal of a child by a specialist to identify specific abilities and needs, frequently administered after a child has been noticed in a screening by a teacher or family member.</i>	PP	ITPKS
7.B 7.B.05	1118	Show or describe two examples of how you communicate daily with the families of infants, toddlers, or twos about each child’s developmental milestones, individual activities, and shared caregiving issues.	CP	IT
7.B 7.B.06	1122	Show or describe two examples of how you communicate at least weekly with the families of preschoolers or kindergartners about each child’s developmental milestones, individual activities, and shared caregiving issues.	CP	PKS
7.C 7.C.02	1126	Show or describe an example of how staff have worked with a family to respond to a concern about their child’s care or education.	PP	ITPKS