

Standard 8: Community Relationships

Definition of Standard 8

The program establishes relationships with and uses the resources of the children’s communities to support the achievement of program goals.

Rationale

As part of the fabric of children’s communities, an effective program establishes and maintains reciprocal relationships with agencies and institutions that can support it in achieving its goals for the curriculum, health promotion, children’s transitions, inclusion, and diversity. By helping to connect families with needed resources, the program furthers children’s health, development, and learning.

The Community Relationships standard is made up of three topic areas (8.A, 8.B, and 8.C).

Topic Areas

- ❖ 8.A—Linking With the Community
- ❖ 8.B—Accessing Community Resources
- ❖ 8.C—Acting as a Citizen in the Neighborhood and the Early Childhood Community

8.A—Linking With the Community

Topic 8.A addresses the program’s role in gathering information about community services, informing families about these services, and assisting families in gaining access to services and consultants. It also describes ways that program staff advocate for services for families enrolled in their programs and use information from community stakeholders to inform a program’s continuous improvement.

Recommended Best Practices

Criteria in Topic 8.A	Early learning programs serve a vital role by bringing information about community resources to the families of children in their care. The program should compile and maintain a current list of child and family support services available in the community. The information should reflect the pattern of needs the staff observe among families, and what families request. Examples of such resources are:
8.A.01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Service providers for health, mental health, and oral health ● Providers of nutrition, child welfare, and parenting programs ● Early intervention—special education screening and assessment services ● Basic needs, such as housing and child care subsidies
8.A.03	
8.A.01	
8.A.02	
8.A.04	
8.A.05	
8.A.06	
8.A.07	

If some of the families might require culturally or linguistically specialized services, the community services list should include providers and specialized consultants who are able to address those needs. The program should share the list with families and assist them with locating, contacting, and using community resources that support children’s and families’ well-being and development.

In addition to creating a community resource list, program staff should develop partnerships and professional relationships with agencies, consultants, and organizations in the community that further the program’s capacity to meet the needs and interests of the children and families they serve. For example, program staff can encourage continuity of services for children by communicating with other agencies and programs to achieve mutually desired

outcomes for children and to guide collaborative work. Administrative staff should identify and establish relationships with specialized consultants who can assist with all children’s and families’ full participation in the program. This assistance might include support for children with disabilities, behavioral challenges, or other special needs.

Another important reason for establishing linkages with the community is to advocate for the program and its families. Program administrators can create awareness of the program’s needs among community councils, service agencies, and local governmental entities. Once established, these relationships can provide valuable feedback to the program as well. Program staff should include information gathered from community stakeholders when evaluating the program and planning for continuous improvement. Asking for feedback from community agencies, consultants, and service providers builds their involvement in the program, which in turn broadens community support for the program.

8.B—Accessing Community Resources

Topic 8.B addresses program efforts to integrate the community into the program both by inviting community members to participate in program events and by moving into the community to take advantage of opportunities that are offered.

Recommended Best Practices

Criteria in Topic 8.B	
8.B.01	Community resources should inform not only family service referrals but also the program’s curriculum. Program staff should use their knowledge of their community and the families in their program to integrate the community into the curriculum and the children’s learning experiences. Members of the performing and visual arts community, such as musical performers, coordinators of traveling museum exhibits, local artists, and community residents, should be invited to share their interests and talents with the children. The program can also work with other community organizations and groups to cosponsor or participate in cultural events that enrich the experience of children and families in the program.
8.B.04	
8.B.05	
8.B.02	
8.B.03	

Early learning programs should always seek ways to break out of the classroom’s four walls to enlarge the learning experience. Program staff should connect with and use their community’s urban, suburban, rural, or tribal cultural resources as sources of curriculum enrichment. Parks, libraries, nature centers, places of business (food stores, pet shops, garden centers), public transit, festivals, public historical observance events, and places of worship all provide opportunities to extend children’s learning. Through newsletters, bulletin boards, and other messaging, the program should inform families about community events intended for children, such as museum exhibits, concerts, storytelling, and theater.

8.C—Acting as a Citizen in the Neighborhood and the Early Childhood Community

Topic 8.C describes program relationships with the program’s families and neighbors to promote working together on neighborhood needs, community improvement, and advocacy projects. It also addresses staff participation in professional development opportunities.

Recommended Best Practices

An early learning program and its staff should be integrated into the physical and cultural community where it is located. But the program is also embedded in a professional community of early childhood educators. Program administrators must be aware of ways the staff can be assisted in engaging with their professional community. For example:

- Program staff can be encouraged to join local, state, or national early childhood education organizations, attend their meetings and conferences, and participate in their governance.

Criteria in Topic 8.C
8.C.02
8.C.01
8.C.06
8.C.04
8.C.03

- When the community offers joint and collaborative training activities or events with neighboring early childhood programs and community service agencies, the program can encourage and facilitate staff participation.
- Staff should also be encouraged to act as advocates for the profession by participating regularly in local, state, or regional public awareness activities related to early care and education.
- Program administrators should identify opportunities to participate in community or statewide interagency councils or service integration efforts, and encourage staff participation in these professional contexts.
- Program leadership should become knowledgeable about how policy changes at local, state, tribal, or national levels affect the services and resources available for children and their families. They can share this information with families and staff so that these stakeholders can participate in advocacy efforts.

Program leadership should develop mutual relationships and communicate regularly with close neighbors in the community. Neighbors should be informed about the program—their perspectives should be sought and considered, and they can be invited to become involved in the program as appropriate. Through relationship building, the program can cooperate with their neighbors on neighborhood interests and needs.

Program administrators should also inform, organize, and encourage staff and families to work together to participate in and support community improvement or advocacy projects.

Standard 8 Site Visit Assessment Items

Item count summary: Total items = 9; infant items = 9; toddler items = 9; preschool items = 9; kindergarten items = 9; school-age = 9

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 category
8.A 8.A.01	1138	Show or describe how you assist families with using community child and family support services. <i>Community: The specific locality of a group of people with shared governmental, cultural, historical, social, religious, or occupational heritage.</i> <i>Examples of community: Military bases, workplaces, academic campuses, local business, towns, neighborhoods, residential, and recreational areas or landmarks.</i>	PP	ITPKS
8.A 8.A.03	1140	Show that your program’s list of community child and family support services includes culturally and linguistically appropriate services for your community. <i>Community: The specific locality of a group of people with shared governmental, cultural, historical, social, religious, or occupational heritage.</i> <i>Examples of community: Military bases, workplaces, academic campuses, local business, towns, neighborhoods, residential, and recreational areas or landmarks.</i>	PP	ITPKS
8.B 8.B.01	1148	Show two examples of how staff used their knowledge of the community to develop curriculum and create learning experiences for the children. <i>Community: The specific locality of a group of people with shared governmental, cultural, historical, social, religious, or occupational heritage.</i> <i>Examples of community: Military bases, workplaces, academic campuses, local business, towns, neighborhoods, residential, and recreational areas or landmarks.</i> <i>Examples of learning experiences: Experiments, music recitals or dramatic arts, performances, conversations, field trips.</i>	PP	ITPKS
8.B 8.B.02	1149	Show two examples of how staff used your community’s cultural resources to develop curriculum and create learning experiences for the children. <i>Community: The specific locality of a group of people with shared governmental, cultural, historical, social, religious, or occupational heritage.</i> <i>Examples of community: Military bases, workplaces, academic campuses, local business, towns, neighborhoods, residential, and recreational areas or landmarks.</i> <i>Examples of cultural resources: Gardens, zoos, museums, libraries, historic sites, fairgrounds, performance venues, public art installations; also, individuals in the community who provide cultural resources.</i> <i>Examples of learning experiences: Experiments, music recitals or dramatic Sarts, performances, conversations, field trips.</i>	PP	ITPKS
8.B 8.B.03	1150	Show two examples of how you inform families about child-centered community events that are sponsored by local organizations. <i>Community: The specific locality of a group of people with shared governmental, cultural, historical, social, religious, or occupational heritage.</i> <i>Examples of community: Military bases, workplaces, academic campuses, local business, towns, neighborhoods, residential, and recreational areas or landmarks.</i> <i>Examples of community events: Concerts, storytelling activities, other cultural or performance events designed for children and their families.</i>	PP	ITPKS

8.B 8.B.04	1151	Show one example in the past year when artists or performers were invited by the program to share their interests and talents with the children. <i>Examples of artists and performers: Musical performers, coordinators of traveling museum exhibits, local artists, puppeteers, and community residents.</i>	PP	ITPKS
8.B 8.B.05	1152	Show or describe one example of how you worked with another community organization or group to cosponsor or participate in a cultural event that enriched the experience of children and families in your program. <i>Community: The specific locality of a group of people with shared governmental, cultural, historical, social, religious, or occupational heritage.</i> <i>Examples of community: Military bases, workplaces, academic campuses, local business, towns, neighborhoods, residential, and recreational areas or landmarks.</i> <i>Examples of cultural resources: Gardens, zoos, museums, libraries, historic sites, fairgrounds, performance venues, public art installations; also, individuals in the community who provide cultural resources.</i>	PP	ITPKS
8.C 8.C.04	1158	Show or describe one example of how you involve close neighbors in your program, as appropriate, or cooperate with them on neighborhood interests and needs.	PP	ITPKS
8.C 8.C.06	1160	Show two examples of how your program's leadership stays informed about changes in local, state, tribal, and national government policies related to child care and related family services.	PP	ITPKS