

Program Administrator Guide to Evaluating Child Supervision Practices

Purpose:

For the purposes of NAEYC Accreditation, failing to supervise children as defined by the NAEYC Accreditation criteria¹ constitutes a lapse in supervision.² Lapses in supervision may occur when children are left unattended, when children are not properly supervised by sight and sound as appropriate for their age category, or when children wander away from the class unnoticed by teaching staff. Such incidents happen in all types of programs, and even a momentary lapse can have serious consequences.

This resource was primarily designed to assist programs that have experienced a supervision-related incident, but it can also be used by programs as a proactive approach to improve program policies, procedures, and practices related to supervising children. The following series of questions may be completed by the designated program administrator, but collaboration with administrative and teaching staff and board members is strongly encouraged. Once you have gathered information by responding to these questions, use your responses to determine strengths and weaknesses, develop program improvement plans, implement those plans, and then monitor your progress.

Clear Written Policies and Procedures

1. List your program's written supervision policy and related procedures and their locations (i.e. in the staff handbook, family handbook, program website, orientation materials, etc.).
2. Are the written policies and procedures easy for staff members and families to understand?
3. Do written procedures provide staff members with clear guidance on how to implement the supervision policy?
4. Do staff members receive a written copy of these policies and procedures before working with children?
5. Do families receive a copy of these policies and procedures upon enrollment?
6. How frequently are your written supervision policies and procedures reviewed? What was the date of the last review?
7. How do these written policies and procedures address specific issues pertaining to supervision, such as:
 - transitions
 - nap/rest time
 - inside/outside play time
 - transportation to and from the program
 - field trips
 - restroom routines
 - drop-off and pick-up times
 - Other _____

¹ NAEYC Accreditation Criteria related to supervision include criteria 3.C.01 through 3.C.05, 9.A.05, 9.B.03, and 9.C.12.

² Specific information about the program requirements for notifying NAEYC regarding lapses in supervision, see the 72 Hour Notification Policy and Related Procedures at www.naeyc.org/academy.

Staff Orientation, Training, and Retraining Orientation

1. Describe the teaching staff orientation training that covers safety issues, such as supervising children.
2. After the training, how are staff members evaluated to ensure that they are capable of putting their knowledge into practice?
3. Is there an introductory period during which new staff members are closely supervised by more senior or experienced staff?
4. Do all new staff members receive a formal or informal evaluation before working with children?

Training and Retraining

1. Does your program require staff members to participate in either formal or informal training on supervising children, such as:
 - attendance at staff meetings,
 - participation in off-site or in-service trainings,
 - completion of college courses, or
 - involvement in other professional development opportunities: _____
2. How frequently does this training occur (number of trainings per year or required number of contact hours, CEU's or college credits)?
3. Is there a systematic process to ensure that all staff members receive training on topics related to health and safety, including supervision?
4. Does your program support participation in these trainings, for example, by providing staff members time away from children to attend trainings during the day, by providing financial assistance to cover the cost of the training, or by compensating staff for the time needed to attend the training?

Staff-to-Child Ratios and Group Sizes

1. Is there a systematic way to ensure that teacher-to-child ratios and group sizes are maintained at all times? For example, does the program employ floaters or have a regular pool of substitute teaching staff members that can be called when needed? What is your program's policy in the event that a staff member is ill? How does your program minimize regrouping children in order to maintain teacher to child ratios and groups sizes?
2. What are your program's policies on leaving one staff member alone with a child or class of children? What are the procedures for staff communication if a staff member is left to supervise children alone, even for a short time period?

Physical Environment of Spaces Used by Children

1. Consider the physical environment of all spaces used by children. Are there any changes in the physical environment (physical structure of space or arrangement of equipment/materials) that your program could make to enhance visual or auditory supervision of children?
2. (Infants and Toddler/Twos): Separate sleep rooms are not prohibited by the NAEYC Accreditation criteria but if they are used, programs must carefully consider the physical design of the space and the way that staff position themselves to ensure that infant s and toddler/twos can be seen and heard at all times (see criterion 3.C.02).
3. (Preschool and Kindergarten only): Arrangements may include semi-private spaces for preschool and kindergarten aged children as long as both children and adults can be observed from outside the area (see criteria 3.C.04, 3.C.05, and 9.A.05). Describe semi-private areas and how you ensure that age-appropriate supervision is maintained.

4. Is the playground arranged so that staff can supervise children by sight and sound (see criterion 9.B.03)?
5. Describe the security systems you have in place to prevent children from entering or exiting a building or classroom without adult supervision, such as bells or alarms, locks, codes or key cards required for entry and exit, situating administrative staff desks or offices near entrances, etc.
6. What fences or natural barriers protect children in outdoor play areas (see criterion 9.B.02)?

Involving Children and Families

1. (Toddler/Two, Preschool and Kindergarten aged children only): How do you incorporate safety rules into the curriculum with children?
2. How do you gather information from families about their children that relates to supervision issues? For example, is there a systematic way (intake form, parent meeting) that you gather information from families regarding a child's behavior at home, such as the tendency to wander away, hide, or seek private space?
3. How do you ensure proper communication with families at drop-off and pick-up times to account for the whereabouts of children at all times?
4. What is your policy for families to contact the program in the event that their children will not be attending due to illness, vacation, etc?
5. If a child does not arrive at the program as scheduled on any given day, what procedures does the program have in place to ensure the whereabouts of the child?
6. If children are transported to the program via van/bus either owned or operated by the program or an outside contractor, what mechanisms are in place to ensure that children are accounted for during the transition:
 - from home to the vehicle, and
 - the vehicle to the child's classroom.

On-going Monitoring Plan

1. What systems are in place to monitor staff compliance with program supervision policies and procedures?
2. How often are staff members evaluated on supervision practices?
3. Is supervision of children covered in the staff member's job description?
4. Are teaching staff members observed as part of the evaluation process?
5. Is oral and/or written performance feedback provided to staff members?
6. What are the program's procedures to be followed for reporting and investigating an incident involving a lapse of supervision, for example, if a child is left unattended or wanders away from the class?
7. Are these procedures clearly communicated to staff in writing?
8. What systems does the program have in place for teaching staff members to report supervision non-compliances with administrative staff?
9. What systems does the program have in place for program staff members to report supervision non-compliances with local/state regulatory/licensing and accrediting bodies, including NAEYC?

Investigating an Incident Related to a Lapse in Supervision (Applies Only to Programs that Have Experienced Such an Incident)³

1. What is the specific nature of the incident that occurred in your program in relation to the NAEYC required criteria, including the age of the children involved and the duration?
2. How did your program investigate the incident?
3. Did your program have clear written policies and procedures at the time of the incident to prevent the incident from occurring?
4. What changes have been made to minimize the risk of future violations from occurring (could include written policies/procedural changes, staff disciplinary action, follow-up training, etc.)?
5. After your program's investigation, what was determined to be the root cause of the incident?

Related Resources

1. Paula Jorde Bloom and Teri N. Talan. Program Administration Scale. New York: Teachers College Press, 2004.
2. NAEYC. 2010. *Avoiding Lapses in Supervision That Place Children At Risk*. *Young Children*. Vol 65 (2): 78-80.
3. NAEYC. 2010. *Required Criteria Policy and Related Procedures*. Washington, DC. (www.naeyc.org/files/academy/file/RequiredCriteriaPolicy.pdf)
4. NAEYC. 2008. *Self-Study Kit for Program Quality Improvement through NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation*. Washington, DC: Sharon Ritchie and Barbara Willer, editors.

³ All currently NAEYC-Accredited programs should refer to page 2 of the 72 Hour Notification Form for details on the specific information that will be requested by the NAEYC Early Learning Programs during the Scope and Severity Review Process. The 72-Hour Notification form is available on the NAEYC website at www.naeyc.org/academy.