NAEYC Accreditation Site Visit Protocol

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Accreditation of Early Learning Programs
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Contents

Introduction

In order that all programs receive a fair and equitable site visit assessment, NAEYC assessors must plan and execute site visits consistently. Protocols have been established to ensure that the site visit process is conducted consistently by all assessors. This protocol applies to NAEYC's revised accreditation assessment for programs with visit windows beginning July 2019.

This document describes procedures relevant to all types of site visits NAEYC currently conducts –

- Accreditation Visits (AVs, the most common and complex type of site visit)
- Reliability Visits (a subtype of AVs)
- Verification Visits (VVs)
- Random Visits (RVs)

Accreditation Visit protocols are described in detail. Later sections describe how protocols for other visit types diverge from the standard AV protocol.

Files used in NAEYC Site Visits

A set of digitized rating tools and other resources related to the site visit can be found on the NAEYC's website at https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/early-learning/tools. Programs can and should access the tools and other resources to know how they will be assessed during a site visit.

Pre-Visit Protocol and Procedures

An assessor will contact an assigned program before the site visit, to collect additional information pertinent to the scheduling of the site visit. There are four steps in the assessor's pre-visit scheduling process for Accreditation Visits:

- Receive and accept the assignment.
- Make initial contact with the program to confirm program information in the NAEYC Portal and begin the scheduling process.
- Set a 15-day window when the visit will occur and refine scheduling preparations.
- Make a Prior Day Notice contact with the program to confirm the visit date(s).

Receive and Accept the Visit Assignment

When assessors receive notification from NAEYC of a potential site visit assignment, their first task is to accept or refuse the assignment after considering whether there is a potential conflict of interest or scheduling conflict.

Conflict of Interest. An assessor may have a conflict of interest that prevents them from accepting a particular visit assignment if:

- They previously worked for or consulted with the program, or with a parent organization of the program;
- They have any fiduciary connection to the program;
- They have a direct personal relationship with the program administrator or with other principals of the program or the program's parent organization;
- They know the program and have concerns about their ability to conduct an impartial assessment.

If the assessor determines that he or she has a conflict of interest, the visit is reassigned to another assessor. Visits may also be reassigned if assessors are overscheduled, or find the logistics are difficult for scheduling a particular visit.

Length of Visit

Site visits are almost always completed within 1 day or 2 consecutive weekdays. The size of the program, and therefore the number of observations required, generally determines the number of days and assessors needed for a site visit. However, visit length can also be influenced by the program's hours of operation, the schedules of individual classes, and the possibility that assessors are conducting reliability checks or collecting research data in addition to basic visit tasks. There are rare exceptions when site visits can take 3 days, or span an exclusion day or a weekend (i.e., visit begins on a Friday and is completed on a Monday). Special considerations may apply when assessors conduct visits overseas.

There may be times when it makes sense to change an accreditation visit from a 2-day to a 1-day visit mid-way through the visit. This may occur for a variety of reasons including shared Class Portfolios, a well-organized Program Portfolio (that takes less time to review than expected), and an unexpected decrease in the number of observations.

Multiple Related Visit Assignments

If an assessor has been assigned 2 or more program visits in the same geographic area, they will attempt to coordinate visit scheduling to save time and expense. This may cause some delay in setting the exact dates for the visits; however, it should not delay the initial contact with the programs.

Initial Phone Call and Administrator Information Packet Email

The program should have already received notification from NAEYC that they were approved as a candidate, or that their renewal materials were approved, so they should be expecting to be contacted by an assessor. Before making initial contact with the program, assessors review the program's information in the Accreditation Portal. Programs are required to review profile information (such as contact persons, number and types of classes, staff) as part of the application and candidacy/renewal steps, and update if needed. Assessors use this information to prepare a *Pre-Visit Worksheet,* which documents the required pre-visit telephone calls and other communications**.**

The assessor first contacts the program to introduce themselves, and to confirm days and dates when a visit may *not* be conducted. This initial contact includes a phone call followed promptly by an email including the administrator information packet. The email may also include a *Visit Scheduling Form* if the program has not been able to enter program closure or exclusion dates in their accreditation portal. If the assessor cannot reach the program's primary or secondary contacts by phone after 2 separate attempts, and they have left voicemails that were not returned, the assessor may send an email before making voice contact with the program.

The Initial Phone Call

<u>Confirm Program Information.</u> It is very important to understand the structure of the program before scheduling the visit. Therefore, the assessor makes an initial phone call that includes a review of program description information:

- Assessor's contact information
- Program contact information, operating hours, possible satellite locations
- Program's 6-month visit window
- Program's primary language for operations
- Program closure and exclusion dates entered in the Accreditation Portal
- Which assessment method the program has prepared to be assessed on; follow-up if necessary
- Number of assessors and visit days for the site visit
- Number and organization of Class Portfolios and Program Portfolio.

- Whether there is alignment with a large system user that has a system-wide Program Portfolio
- Classes information from the "class profile" in the Accreditation Portal:
    - *number* of classes (Has a new class been added? Has one been discontinued or not operating seasonally?)
    - *names* of the classes
    - *age categories* included in each class
    - *days of week and hours* of each class; nap times if applicable
    - *physical address* of each class (if program has satellite locations)

Class and Staff Changes

If there have been class or staff changes since completing the candidacy or renewal processes in the Accreditation Portal, **log in** now to update the information. Let the assessor know you have done so!

- Pre-visit and site visit processes
- Required Item documentation reminder for PP
- How to seek additional assistance from NAEYC
- Withdrawal information
- Next steps in visit scheduling process:
    - AIP email with optional Visit Scheduling Form following initial call
    - 15-Day window notification in AIS a few days prior to the window's start
    - Prior Day Notice of the visit date

Security: Sometimes security procedures can add considerable time to assessor arrival or can restrict their ability to leave the facility during the day to get lunch. The assessor will ask about these factors so they can plan accordingly**.**

Directions to Satellite Locations: If the program has satellite locations, the assessor will ask about travel time between the primary location and the satellite locations. Class portfolios and the program portfolio should all be in a single location on the day of the visit.

Prior Day Notice Call. The assessor will inform the administrator that the next contact will be a telephone call on the business day prior to the visit date. See below for details.

Program Primary Language: Programs may indicate whether a bilingual English/Spanish assessor is needed by selecting the Bilingual Assessor Needed box on the site visit Exclusion Date page under Program Dashboard. If it appears that the program is conducted in a language in which the assessor is not proficient, the assessor will contact NAEYC staff immediately. The program may have to be re-assigned to a different assessor.

Withdrawal: If the program wishes to withdraw from the accreditation process, the assessor will assist them to contact NAEYC staff for help with that process. NAEYC withdrawal procedures are found on website at:

https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/early-learning/forms

Administrative Information Packet

Within 2 business days after the initial phone call, assessors send an email to the program's primary contact person with the Accreditation Information Packet (AIP) as an attachment. A *Visit Scheduling Form* may also be attached, if the program was not able to enter their exclusion dates into their Accreditation Portal. The program has up to 5 business days to return the *Visit Scheduling Form* to the assessor. Programs use this form to indicate their availability for a visit during their 6-month visit window. Indicate:

- Dates the program is not serving children, or not serving an entire age category of children
- One additional date per month when the program is serving children, but does not wish to have a visit

- Dates that are inconvenient. The assessor does not promise not to come on these dates, but may be able to avoid them.

This information makes it possible for the assessor to schedule each program visit, and to coordinate the scheduling of visits. **See Appendix A for an example of a completed *Visit Scheduling Form*.**

Major Program Changes

During the initial call the assessor may become aware that there have been major changes to the program that affect eligibility, fees, or visit logistics. Major changes include:

- Change in program's ownership
- Change in the primary contact for the program
- Change of program's physical location
- Change to the physical facility or ground (due to damage, renovations, etc.)
- Addition or deletion of a Satellite Location
- Court order or legal action pending against the program

In this case the assessor will direct the program to update this information directly in the Accreditation Portal. The assessor may also inform NAEYC staff, so that additional support can be provided if necessary.

Administrator Information Packet (AIP) contains these files:
Process Verification Form Cover Page
Process Verification Form
Assessment of Required Best Practices
Safety Concerns Report
Visit Signature Form
License Exempt Acknowledgment Form
Class Selection Form
First Aid & CPR Staffing Pattern
Next Steps Flyer

Setting the 15-Day Window and Refining Visit Planning

After the assessor receives the program's completed *Visit Scheduling Form,* he or she creates a 15-business day visit window within which the visit date(s) are set. Dates are based on the program's available dates and the assessor's need to coordinate with other visits in the area. The exact visit date is not communicated to the program until one business day before the visit occurs. However, the program is notified of the 15-business-day (Monday through Friday) "window" in AIS a few days before the window starts.

The 15 business day window does not include weekend days; therefore it may span a 3 or 4 week period. The 15 days include all Mondays through Fridays from the first date through the last date of the window. There may be federal holidays, non-operational dates or exclusion dates within the window. These dates do not lengthen the 15-day business day window; it is understood that the visit will not occur on federal holidays, non-operational days, or exclusion dates.

Random Selection of Classes

A random selection of classes for observation is necessary to maintaining the validity of the NAEYC Accreditation system. Random selection is a research-based practice that allows for confidence in the assessment system by assuring that no human bias factors contribute to the decision as to which classes are observed.

Determining which classes and how many classes are observed during an Accreditation Visit depends upon the following guidelines:

- Assessors observe at least 50% of the total number of classes in the program**,** to a maximum of 10 observations in all. For randomization and assessment purposes, part-day and part-week classes that have the same staff and the same classroom space are considered to be a single class.

- Assessors observe at least one class from each eligible age category (infant, toddler/two, preschool, kindergarten, and school age as applicable).
- In multi-site programs, they observe at least one class at each site.

Within each age category, assessors use a random number process to select specific classes to observe.

Creating a Visit Schedule

Assessors create a custom *Visit Schedule* for each visit. A visit schedule always includes certain standard elements, but must be customized to reflect unique elements of each program and visit. Some visit tasks 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:

- time of day the program opens and closes
- whether classes to be observed meet full days, part days, and/or not every day
- whether classes have nap times
- whether the program has satellite locations

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

- Orientation Meeting: Immediately upon arrival on the first day of a visit.
- Closing Meeting: Last scheduled task on last day of visit.

The remaining tasks can be done in any sequence, however some of them do require specific time durations. Once the schedule has been finalized, assessors print paper copies, including one for the program administrator to have during the site visit.

Prior Day Notice Call

The assessor will call the primary contact person on the business day prior to the scheduled visit.

- If the visit is to start on a Monday, assessor calls on Friday.
- If the program is not open on Fridays and the visit is to start on Monday, assessor calls on Thursday.
- If the visit is to start on the day after a federal holiday, a non-operational day for the program, or exclusion date, assessor calls on the last fully operational day before the visit.

The primary and secondary contact persons must be available at, or checking messages at, their telephone numbers and email addresses at least daily starting on the business day prior to the start of the 15-business day window. Program staff are responsible for being available to be contacted. If the assessor is unable to reach the primary or secondary contact by telephone, he or she will leave visit information on voicemails or with a staff person who answered the phone. Assessors generally make the business day prior call early in the day; however, they have until the program's close of business to contact the program.

If during the Prior-Day-Notice call with the program, or at any point in the pre-visit process, the program administrator informs the assessor of an unplanned or emergency closure (i.e., weather, building problems, etc), the assessor will notify NAEYC and will attempt to reschedule the visit within the existing 15-day window. If it is not possible to reschedule the visit within the existing 15-day window, NAEYC will contact the program to discuss next steps.

Site Visit Protocol and Procedures

NAEYC Digital Visit Documents

NAEYC visit documents are of 3 types: *forms, worksheets* and *tools*.

- *Forms* capture important processes showing how the visit was conducted. They are shared with the program as blank versions before the visit, and as completed versions after the visit.
- *Worksheets* are used by the assessor to compile data used to rate items on tools. Worksheets are proprietary to NAEYC and are NOT shared with program administrators or staff during or after the visit.
- *Rating tools* are the documents on which assessors rate specific assessment items. They are available to programs on our website. However, assessors never share any part of completed rating tools with the program. Programs are evaluated on 4 sources of evidence, each with a corresponding rating tool:

Source of Evidence	Rating Tool
Observed Class Practices	Class Observation tool (CO)
Observed Program Practices	Program Observation tool (PO)
Class Documentary Evidence	Class Portfolio (CP)
Program Documentary Evidence	Program Portfolio (PP)
Required Item Rating Tool (for Verification Visit & Random Visits ONLY)	

Procedural Details of the Site Visit

Accreditation Visit Schedule. Assessors annotate their copy of the *Visit Schedule* throughout the visit, showing the actual time each scheduled task was performed. This annotated schedule becomes part of the accreditation visit record and is shared with the program administrator at the Closing Meeting.

Accepting program resources. Assessors are generally prepared to carry food, drinks and office supplies to the site, or to figure out available resources nearby before the start of the visit. They may accept program resources under the following conditions:

- Food and beverage: Assessors may accept water at all times. Coffee or tea may be accepted if the program normally provides these beverages on site. Assessors may NOT accept food or beverages purchased by program staff off-site. They may accept other light refreshments offered on site if failing to do so would offend the cultural norms of the program.
- Seating: Assessors may request that seating be provided during class observations.

Orientation Meeting with the Program Administrator

(Allow about 30 minutes)

The accreditation visit begins with an orientation meeting between the assessor(s) and the program administrator. Assessors use the *Process Verification Form* to assure that all of the required elements of the meeting are addressed.

Schedule. Assessors provide a copy of the Visit Schedule to the Program Administrator, pointing out the scheduled times for each task, and the column for recording the actual times tasks were done. They review and confirm details of the classes that have been selected for assessment, and verify that the scheduled times for class observations are times when those classes are in session and not napping. Any time when a class is in session with one or more awake children is a valid time to observe. For programs with infant classes, assessors verify that all infants are not anticipated to be asleep during the scheduled observation time.

Schedule problems. Class observation times will not usually be moved or rescheduled around 'specials' such as art, music, or walks. Observation times may be moved or changed if a class is going on a field trip, will be transported off-site, or is not in session for some other reason. If there are no children present in a class, assessors will alter the visit schedule to observe that class later in the day, or on Day 2 of the visit. If solutions to schedule problems are unclear, assessors will call NAEYC staff for help.

Infant Safe Sleep Exceptions. Assessors will ask if there are currently any infants younger than 12 months that have a physician's note permitting them to be placed to sleep in positions other than their back and/or with sleep positioners. If this is so, provide these notes along with the child's name and their class to the assessor. This information is relevant to assessing required item 5A.10 on the Class Observation tool.

Portfolios. Only the Class Portfolios for the selected classes will be reviewed**.** If the program has created electronic class or program portfolios, staff will be asked to orient the assessor to the portfolio software, computer and logistics. This may include the password(s) and login information necessary to complete the review, location of the portfolio on the computer, and other such information. All passwords and login information will remain confidential.

Review of accreditation visit process forms. These forms are available to the Program Administrator in the *Administrator Information Packet,* emailed to the administrator prior to the visit. The assessor will briefly review each form, and answer any questions the administrator may have.

Access to materials. The assessor may need to look through books, CDs and other materials in the classrooms during observations. They will ask for permission to open closets, cabinets and drawers while in classrooms, in order to best make ratings of which items are met.

Tamper-resistant outlets. Assessors will ask the program administrator if the program has any tamper resistant outlets in the center. These are not always self-evident.

Data collection physical tools. Assessors will show the program administrator the physical tools used during the site visit:

- *Assessor tablet* containing the rating tools, forms and worksheets.
- *Choke tube* for assistance in determining if toys are too small for infants and toddler/twos.

Facility Orientation. The assessor will request a short, guided walk through the facility. Assessors need to know the location where their review of the program documentation can be completed in private; identify bathrooms they may use; and learn how to access outdoor learning environments. If the program occupies part of a larger facility, assessors need to understand where the program's space begins and ends. They will ask to see if there is

an area set aside for nursing mothers (only rated for programs serving infants), and where staff store their belongings.

Accreditation Visit Tools

This section describes the rating tools used during the site visit. Each of the visit tools includes a "Notes Page" following the item rating pages. The notes page includes a series of brief global rating scales and a space for open-ended narrative notes. The global rating scales must be completed on all tools. Assessors may make item-specific comments anywhere on any tool; general notes are made on the Notes Page.

Program Portfolio (PP)

(2 hours scheduled for most; 1 hour for programs using a system-wide PP)

Organization of Evidence. PP evidence may be organized and presented in a variety of ways -- crates, manila folders, binders of information, or an e-portfolio on a computer. Evidence may be arranged by standards, topics and items, or by some other organizational scheme (such as indexing). Programs are asked to clearly highlight and/or label each piece of evidence with the item(s) they believe it meets. Programs are not rated on how well their evidence is organized and/or highlighted, however poorly organized evidence may be difficult for assessors to review and rate in the allotted time.

Class Portfolios (CP)

(Allow 45 minutes each)

Class portfolios are rated only for the classes randomly selected for observation. CP evidence is rated independently of what was directly observed in the classrooms; evidence from each source must stand on its own. Assessors may schedule the review of a class's CP either before or after the time of the class's observation. If there are 2 assessors on the visit, either assessor can rate a CP regardless of who did the observation.

Programs are permitted to submit a single CP to represent more than one class. Typically this is done when teaching staff work together in planning and implementing the curriculum; when the age categories of the classes are the same; and when the experiences of the children in each class are very similar. Assessors rate a shared CP only once, completing a single CP tool which counts towards the score of each class for which the CP is shared.

Program Observation (PO)

(Allow 15 minutes; more for large programs)

The *Program Observation (PO)* tool contains a set of items that require overall review of the program facility, both inside and outside. All items related to the physical characteristics of outdoor learning environments are included on the PO tool. The PO also assesses the adult spaces of the program. If the program has satellite locations, assessors conduct only one PO assessment, at the site with the largest number of classes.

Note that the PO tool rating task is not the same as the facility orientation done as part of the Orientation Meeting. Assessors do not make PO ratings during the orientation walk-around. They complete the PO tool at a later, clearly scheduled time, unaccompanied by program staff.

Class Observation (CO)

Schedule EXACTLY 1 hour for direct observation of children and teachers.

Guidelines for Conducting Class Observations. The following guidelines will help ensure that the class observation process is conducted as unobtrusively as possible and will help to make this a positive experience for everyone involved.

- Assessors may begin a class observation if the class includes at least one awake child and one teaching staff member. They will not begin an observation if no children have arrived, if all children have departed for the day, or if there are children present but they are all asleep.
- While conducting the observation, assessors must stay with children and staff for one hour, wherever they are. If the class moves outside, they follow along. If a class breaks into subgroups, assessors will choose one or the other subgroup to stay with.
- Assessors should wash or sanitize hands upon entering each classroom.
- Assessors do not interfere with the class activities in any way. They move if in the way of teachers or children. Teaching staff may ask assessors to move it they are in the way or about to be in the way of class operations.
- Assessors have been directed to silence their cell phone and/or tablet, and not receive or make phone calls or text messages during observations.
- Assessors may acknowledge and respond to children if they approach them, but they will not initiate conversations or otherwise take part in classroom activity. If children ask questions, assessors will briefly answer.
- Assessors bring a choke tube into infant/toddler/two observations. They wear booties into infant rooms that do not allow shoes. They are expected to bring outdoor wear into the classroom if there is a chance the class will go outside during the hour.
- If an infant is observed being placed to sleep in a position other than his/her back (required item 5A.10), at the end of the observation the assessor may confirm the name and age of the child. If the assessor was not told in the Opening Meeting that the child has a doctor's note permitting them to be placed to sleep in a different position or on a sleep positioner, then required item 5A.10 will be rated NO.
- If the class goes outside during the observation, the assessor's task is to continue to observe and evaluate curriculum, teaching and relationship practices. The rating of physical characteristics of the outdoor learning environment is made on the Program Observation tool.

Time Exceptions to the 1-hour CO norm. Sometimes the length of an observation may be extended in order to complete all ratings. Time exceptions to the 1-hour CO protocol may be taken for one of these 2 reasons:

1. To complete ratings of physical environment elements in the primary classroom environment. This may be needed if most or all of the one-hour observation occurs when the class is outside or in a secondary inside learning space (such as indoor gross motor room or library). Children do not have to be present during the time exception.

2. For infant classes, if no children are awake for at least 30 minutes of the standard 1-hour observation period. The minutes of "awake" time do not need to be consecutive. If 30 minutes of awake time has not been observed by the end of the 60 minute observation, the assessor will observe the class for additional time until a total of 30 minutes of awake time is observed:
    - If at least one child is awake at the end of the regular period, they continue the observation.
    - If no child is awake at the end of the regular 1-hour period, the assessor will speak with the staff to arrange an appropriate time to return to the class when children are most likely to be awake.

Required Items

Required items are those that are considered essential to program quality. Failure to meet any one of these items during the site visit will trigger a specific write-up by the assessor and will result in the program receiving an adverse accreditation decision.

These are the required items, in brief:

Required item	Source of Evidence	Item Description
1B.4	Class Observation	Guidance/discipline practices observed
3C.3	Class Observation	Infant/toddler/two supervision practices observed
3C.2	Class Observation	Infant/toddler/two supervision practices observed
3C.7	Class Observation	Preschool supervision practices observed
3C.6	Class Observation	Preschool supervision practices observed
3C.8	Class Observation	Kindergarten/ school age supervision practices observed
5A.10	Class Observation	Infants placed on backs to sleep -- observed
1B.10	Program Portfolio	Guidance/discipline policy
10B.16	Program Portfolio	Program is licensed or regulated, and in good standing

If at any time during a visit the assessor reviews documentary evidence or directly observes evidence of failure to comply with any of the listed items, this protocol is followed:

- Assessor completes a written report form to be sent to NAEYC's Quality Assurance team.
- Assessor also calls NAEYC Quality Assurance staff to alert them that a required item has been failed.
- NAEYC Quality Assurance staff contact the program within 3 business days to let them know of the failure.

Complete the Visit? If a child is in *immediate risk for harm or abuse*, assessors must halt the observation or other site visit procedures and intervene. NAEYC's *Code of Ethical Conduct* calls for active response in such cases. The assessor will call NAEYC staff during the site visit to report if an incident has occurred that caused them to halt an observation, or that may need to be reported to state licensing authorities.

Visit Process Forms

Visit process forms are used during the site visit to document that the site visit process was completely and accurately conducted. The forms also create structure for certain tasks during the site visit process. Visit process forms provide crucial evidence that may be called upon in the event that a program appeals its accreditation decision.

Some of the visit forms are completed and reviewed with the program during the Orientation Meeting and the Closing Meeting. These forms, along with additional information about these forms, are provided in the Administrator Information Packet (AIP) sent to the program during the pre-visit communications.

Process Verification Form

(Time to complete this form is included in Orientation Meeting and Closing Meeting)

This form is included in the *Administrator Information Packet* and the *Forms Document*. The *Process Verification Form* is a pair of checklists that guide the tasks that must occur during meetings with the program administrator at the beginning and end of the visit. It ensures the reliability and validity of the visit assessment by providing a framework for execution of many details of the visit protocol.

The Orientation Meeting Checklist serves as a reminder for all necessary information-giving and information-gathering steps to be completed during this meeting.

The Closing Meeting Checklist is the last task of the visit. The checklist serves as a reminder to review or report the information on various completed visit forms. The assessor(s) and the program administrator verify on the *Signature Form* that the *Process Verification Form* was completed properly.

Safety Concerns Report Form (SCRF)

(Scheduled for about 10 minutes to compile; 5 minutes to review [in Closing Meeting])

The *Safety Concerns Report Form* is a method for communicating to the program any observed safety concerns related to physical environment factors (building, grounds, equipment) both indoors and outdoors. The SCRF 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 items. Safety concerns caused by the *actions* of staff, children, or other present adults are also not reported on this form.

Assessors may notice safety concerns at any time during the visit, whether or not they are conducting a formal class or program observation at the time. If safety concerns are noted during an observation they may also be used to rate items as "not met" on the observation tools (CO, PO).

At the Closing Meeting, assessors review the contents of the report with the administrator. No further documentation or follow-up by the program is expected, nor will it be accepted to alter formal visit ratings that have already been made. The ratings are done; this form is advisory only. By signing the *Visit Signature Form*, the program administrator 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.

License-Exempt Acknowledgment Form *(Optional; Not scheduled)*

The *License-Exempt Acknowledgment Form* is an optional form that provides evidence addressing required item 10B.16, which relates to a program's licensing status. If a program is license-exempt, this form may be submitted in the Program Portfolio instead of a current valid license to operate or evidence of other regulatory status. Assessors collect a copy of this form if it has been submitted.

Visit Signature Form (*Takes about 5 minutes to review and execute in Closing Meeting)*

Visit Signature Form allows for signatures and affirmations of several elements of the visit process by both the assessor(s) and the program administrator. Signatures are executed digitally. The program administrator and all assessors present must sign this form. Each element being endorsed has its own checkbox. If any signer does not agree that a specific element of protocol was followed, the checkbox should be left unchecked. If a box is unchecked, the assessor will add a comment note to the form describing the nature of the disagreement.

Closing Meeting with the Program Administrator

(Scheduled for 20 to 30 minutes)

Assessors are not able to discuss any of the results of the assessment at the Closing Meeting. The Closing Meeting is an opportunity for the assessors and program administrator to verify that the assessment was conducted as outlined in this protocol. The completed *Visit Schedule* (annotated during the visit to reflect any changes in the schedule as actually executed) is reviewed, and a photocopy is given to the program. Assessor(s) and program administrators also review several other forms in the closing meeting, then execute the *Visit Signature Form* acknowledging the review and affirming that procedures were followed.

Forms reviewed:

- *Visit Schedule*
- *Safety Concerns Report Form*
- *Process Verification Form*
- *Visit Signature Form*

Post-Visit Protocol and Procedures

Following an accreditation visit the assessor has the following tasks:

1. Immediately notify NAEYC of any failed required assessment items.
2. Send a *Visit Completion Packet* e-mail to the program administrator
3. Share all visit documents (tools, forms, worksheets) with NAEYC
4. Complete an *Assessor Evaluation of the Visit*
5. Do financial accounting & other record keeping

Visit Completion Packet (VCP) e-mail. The program administrator is entitled to receive copies of all digital forms reviewed in the Closing Meeting. The assessor will send these documents as attachments to an email that includes additional information about the post-visit process.

The Administrator Evaluation of the Site Visit becomes available on the "site visit checklist" in the Accreditation Portal after the visit is completed. NAEYC requests that administrators complete the evaluation within 5 business days after the site visit. It is important that NAEYC receive this feedback in order to be informed of assessor performance and overall quality assurance. Administrator evaluations are always reviewed by NAEYC's Quality Assurance division. They may be consulted again if a program appeals an adverse accreditation decision and cites procedural irregularities as a basis for their appeal.

Assessor Evaluation of the Visit. Assessor Evaluations must be completed by all assessors who take part in a visit within 5 business days of the completion of the visit. This feedback informs Quality Assurance staff of any irregularities that occurred in the conduct of the site visit. Assessor evaluations are always reviewed by the NAEYC's Quality Assurance division. Like administrator evaluations, assessor evaluations are reviewed again if a program appeals an adverse accreditation decision.

Protocol Variations for Other Visit Types

Random Visits (RVs)

All NAEYC-accredited programs are eligible to receive Random Visits; this is a condition of accepting accreditation. Each year a subset of accredited programs are randomly selected to receive a RV. Assessors may conduct a RV any time during the calendar year in which it was assigned.

Variations to Pre-Visit Protocol and Procedures for Random Visits

Programs receive notification that they have been selected for a RV through the Accreditation Portal, after the assigned assessor has set a 15-day window in the portal. *Programs receiving RVs **do not** receive a prior-day notification.*

Variations to the Site Visit Protocol and Procedures for Random Visits

Sources of Evidence. Class Observation tools and a *Required Item Tool* (used only for Random and Verification visits) are the only Sources of Evidence assessed on RVs. The Required Item Tool is used to rate document evidence for required items 1B.10 and 10B.16. Program and Class Portfolio reviews are not conducted during RVs. No Program Observation is conducted.

Number of Observations. No more than 8 observations are conducted during a RV, regardless of program size.

Length of Visit and Number of Assessors. Because only class observations are rated, the length of visit guidelines are different for RVs:

Length of Visit Guidelines[1] for Random Visits, Verification Visits and School-Age Visits	
This many observation(s) in the visit…	… will require …
1, 2, 3, or 4 observations	1 Assessor for 1 Visit Day
5, 6, 7, or 8 (max) observations	2 Assessors for 1 Visit Day
[1] *These are guidelines; there may be exceptions made by the NAEYC on a case-by-case basis. Contact NAEYC for approval.*	

Orientation Meeting. Assessors use the *Process Verification Form* to conduct the Orientation Meeting, referencing the section of the form that applies to Random Visits.

The *Process Verification Form* prompts assessors to ask the Program Administrator for their Guidance/Discipline Policy and Licensing documentation related to Required Items 1B.10 and 10B.16. The Program Administrator may provide this documentation anytime throughout the course of the visit, up to 30 minutes prior to the scheduled Closing Meeting. Assessors record their ratings of these required assessment items on the *Required Item Tool*.

Variations to the Post Visit Protocol and Procedures

There are no variations to the post visit protocol and procedures for Random Visits.

Verification Visits (VVs)

Programs are identified by the Quality Assurance team for a Verification Visit on the basis of factors such as:

- significant program changes as indicated in the Accreditation Portal;
- a complaint received about the program; and/or
- concerns about the program's compliance with one or more required items.

Before an assessor is assigned, programs requiring a VV will be notified by NAEYC and provided a six-month window during which the visit will occur. Assessors begin pre-visit communication with the program by conducting the initial call. In the Accreditation Portal, the assessor sets a 15-day window within which the visit will occur. Programs receiving a verification visit also receive prior day notification from the assessor.

Variations to the Site Visit Protocol and Procedures

Rating Tools. Class Observations, up to a maximum of eight, and the rating of relevant evidence for required items 1B.10 and 10B.16 on the *Required Item Tool* are the only Sources of Evidence assessed on these visits. Program and Class Portfolio reviews are not conducted during Verification Visits. There is no Program Observation conducted.

Orientation Meeting. Assessors use the *Process Verification Form* to conduct the Orientation Meeting, referencing the section of the form that applies to Verification Visits.

The *Process Verification Form* prompts assessors to ask the Program Administrator for their Guidance/Discipline Policy and Licensing documentation related to Required Items 1B.10 and 10B.16. The Program Administrator may provide this documentation anytime throughout the course of the visit, up to 30 minutes prior to the scheduled Closing Meeting. Assessors record their ratings of these required assessment items on the *Required Item Tool*.

Variations to the Post Visit Protocol and Procedures

There are no variation to the post visit protocol and procedures for Verification Visits.

Reliability Visits

It is critical to the integrity of the accreditation system to periodically compare assessors' ratings to each other, to assure all assessors are reliable raters. A reliability visit is a type of accreditation site visit performed by 2 assessors in order to conduct inter-rater reliability ratings for some of the visit tools. There are no differences in the pre-visit protocol, or the post-visit protocol. The site visit protocol for reliability visits is mostly the same as for other accreditation site visits, with a few key differences:

- There are always at least 2 assessors conducting the visit, regardless of the size of the program.
- 2 assessors will jointly conduct one or more class observations and will also conduct reliability on the program observation tool.
- 2 assessors will both independently rate the program portfolio and may also conduct reliability on one class portfolio.
- Assessors will allow time in the schedule to compare their ratings, discuss and reconcile rating differences, and calculate inter-rater reliability.

School-Age Accreditation

School age accreditation is optional. Generally NAEYC accreditation applies to classes including infants through kindergarten-aged children. Some programs serving these age groups also serve school-age children, and wish to have their accreditation extended to their school age component. NAEYC assesses school-age classes upon request. When a program is eligible for renewal, they may request that school-age classes be included in the assessment for their new term of accreditation.

There are no variations to the Pre-Visit, Site Visit, and Post-Visit Protocols and Procedures for these visit types. School-age classrooms must prepare appropriate Class Portfolios and will be randomized and assessed along with the other eligible age categories in compliance with the randomization procedures described in this protocol. All scoring and accreditation decision, and appeal processes remain the same.

Appendix A

Example: Visit Scheduling Form

naeyc Accreditation
Early Learning Programs

Visit Scheduling Form

For help completing this form, click on these "ⓘ" information icons. If additional assistance is needed, please contact the NAEYC Program Support Center at 800-424-2460.

Today's Date: 7/2/18	Due Date: 7/9/18	Program ID: 123456	May 2018 Cohort ⓘ

Purpose: This form is used to assist assessors in scheduling your site visit. If you do not return this form to your assessor by the due date listed above, it will be assumed that you are able to receive a site visit on any weekday dates within your visit window. ⓘ

Visit Scheduling Information: NAEYC cannot conduct a visit on non-operational dates; these include dates that your program is closed, or dates when 1 or more of the age categories included in your accreditation are not present (e.g., no infants served on Mondays). In addition to non-operational dates, NAEYC does not conduct site visits on Saturdays, Sundays, or federal government holidays.

Complete steps 1 through 3 below to better assist your assessor in establishing a 15-day window.

Step 1 – Non-operational Dates: In the column labeled '1. Non-operational Dates' below, list and provide a brief description of any dates in each month when 1 or more age categories within your program are not present (e.g., on a field trip, state holiday, professional development day).

Step 2 – Exclusion Dates: In each month you may choose one additional non-visit date in the column labeled '2. Exclusion Dates' below.

Month in Site Visit Window	ⓘ Federal Holidays	ⓘ 1. Non-operational Dates and Description	ⓘ 2. Exclusion Dates
June		N/A	N/A
July	07/04/2018		
August		8/31/2018-professional development day	8/6/2018
September	09/03/2018		9/12/2018
October	10/08/2018		10/26/2018
November	11/12/2018 11/22/2018		11/21/2018

Step 3 – Inconvenient Dates: If there are any dates other than those already provided above that may not be convenient for you please note them below **and** briefly describe why. Your assessor may be able to schedule around these dates, but the NAEYC Accreditation of Early Learning Programs cannot guarantee that a visit will not occur on these dates.

August 6th-August 10th: Our Executive Director will be out
September 12th-September 14th: Our Program Director will be out