Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation Recognition Application Resource Guide

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Contents

To qualify for a one-year term of NAEYC Recognition the early learning program must comply with 80% of the applicable items, including items R.6.05 and R.9.03 which are required.

Section 1: Staffing and Licensing Items

Information about the qualifications of educators and administrators of early learning programs is self-assessed in the Recognition Application in conjunction with information that is entered by program administrators into the Early Learning Hub. It is the responsibility of program administrators to ensure that all staff information, staff qualifications, and licensing documentation is up to date and accurate at the time the application is submitted.

Item	Rationale	Comments

R.8.01:
 At least 25% of assistant teachers[i] fulfill the requirements for ECE I (CDA or state equivalent), ECE II (Early Childhood associate degree) or ECE III (Early Childhood bachelor's degree or higher) designation.
	The delivery of high-quality early childhood education is reliant on a diverse population of well-prepared workforce of professional educators and administrators.
	
	The intent of this item is to evaluate the qualifications of assistant educators, as aligned to the Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession.
		Recommendations:
		☐ Ensure all assistant teachers (if used) are listed in the ELP Hub.
		   o Each assistant teacher is assigned to at least one class.
		   o The highest level of formal education, relevant to the ECE field, and/or ECE specific credentials have been accurately reported for each assistant teacher.

R.8.02:
At least 25% of teachers[ii] fulfill the requirements for ECE II (Early Childhood associate degree) or ECE III (Early Childhood bachelor's degree or higher) designation.
	The delivery of high-quality early childhood education is reliant on a diverse population of well-prepared workforce of professional educators and administrators.
	
	The intent of this item is to evaluate qualifications of lead educators, as aligned to the Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession.
		Recommendations:
		☐ Ensure all teachers are listed in the ELP Hub.
		   o Each teacher is assigned to one class.
		   o Each class has been assigned at least one teacher.
		   o The highest level of formal education, relevant to the ECE field, and/or ECE specific credentials have been accurately reported for each teacher.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.8.03: At least 25% of administrators[iii] fulfill the requirements for ECE III (Early Childhood bachelor's degree or higher) designation.	The delivery of high-quality early childhood education is reliant on a diverse population of well-prepared workforce of professional educators and administrators. The intent of this item is to evaluate qualifications of administrators, as aligned to the Unifying [Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession].	**Common Errors:** • Programs do not include administrator information in the ELP Hub. • Administrators are listing the 'Administrator Credential recognized by NAEYC' as a form of administrator qualifications, however, this credential alone does not meet the requirements for ECE III. **Recommendations:** ☐ Ensure at least one administrator is listed in the ELP Hub. ○ The highest level of formal education, relevance to the ECE field, and/or ECE- or administrator-specific credentials have been accurately reported for each administrator.
R.9.03: The program or provider is in good standing[iv] with the applicable state licensing authority or applicable public or governmental regulatory system	Center-based programs and home-based providers that are licensed or regulated have demonstrated a capacity to meet minimum health and safety standards that protect children from harm. A requirement for all programs seeking NAEYC recognition or accreditation to be licensed or regulated provides basic assurance that these fundamental standards have been addressed. **This is a required item and failure to meet this item will result in the application being denied.**	**Common Errors:** • Programs are not in good standing with applicable state licensing authority or applicable public or governmental regulatory system at the time of application. **Recommendations:** If licensed/regulated: • Ensure that the licensing/regulatory status is in good standing and free of restrictions prior to applying for NAEYC recognition. • Ensure that a copy of the current license/regulatory documentation is ready to be uploaded in the application. If license-exempt and ineligible to be licensed: • Ensure that a copy of the *License Exempt Acknowledgement Form* is completed, signed, and ready to be uploaded in the application.

Section 2: Family Handbook & Policy Items

Program administrators may submit up to ten documents for Family Handbook & Policy questions. Supplemental, single-page documents, flyers, external resources, and the like will not be accepted. In response to each question in this section of the application, program administrators must provide the exact page numbers or range of pages where the corresponding information can be found. If multiple documents are uploaded, the response must also indicate which specific document is to be referenced. Program administrators are strongly encouraged to note the specific section heading and/or to highlight the relevant information within the uploaded document(s).

Evidence of this assessment item must be in the uploaded family handbook or family policies and procedures manual(s).

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.2.01: The family handbook informs families of how the program or provider shares information and communicates with families on an ongoing basis.	Reciprocal, consistent communication between programs and families strengthens and enriches the learning experiences of young children in high-quality early childhood education settings. The intent of this item is to ensure that families know where and how they can expect to receive information and communication on an ongoing basis from the program or provider.	**Common Errors:** • Programs listing communication methods that only occur once or twice a year rather than ongoing. • Programs listing ways that families can contact the program rather than providing information on how the program or provider communicates with the families. **Recommendations:** ☐ Ensure the family handbook includes information about how they will *receive* information and communications from administrators and educators. ☐ Ensure the methods listed are ongoing and consistent (e.g., daily app communications, weekly emails, monthly newsletters).
R.2.02: The family handbook outlines the steps that families can take to ask questions, raise concerns, or provide feedback on an ongoing basis	Reciprocal, consistent communication between programs and families strengthens and enriches the learning experiences of young children in high-quality early childhood education settings. The intent of this item is to ensure families have a clear understanding of the steps they can take to ask questions, raise concerns or provide feedback at any time.	**Common Errors:** • Programs only indicate one point in time (e.g., conferences) where families can ask questions, raise concerns, or provide feedback. **Recommendations:** ☐ Ensure the methods listed are ongoing and consistent (e.g., daily app communications, weekly emails, monthly newsletters). ☐ Consider including specific information about who should be contacted, and steps families should take if questions or concerns persist.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.2.03: The family handbook provides information about how family members can be involved in their child's learning environment and at the program or provider.	Young children benefit when their family members are actively engaged and are involved in shaping their child's experiences at the program and with their educators. The intent of this item is to ensure families are aware of how they can be actively involved in the program or in the learning environment.	**Common Errors:** • Family involvement at the program is limited to periodic planned events outside of the day-to-day learning environment and activities (e.g., evening conferences, weekend potlucks, Mother's Day event). **Recommendations:** ☐ Ensure the information provided to families provides opportunities to be involved in the daily routines and planned learning activities. (e.g., reading a story, sharing a talent, planning a learning activity, visiting the classroom, donating materials, chaperoning a field trip, etc.).
R.2.05: The family handbook includes a list of community resources that support families.	The Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators uplifts advocacy on behalf of children and their families within the broader context of community and society. To this end, programs and providers have an ethical responsibility to refer families to appropriate community resources and support services. The intent of this item is to fulfill this ethical responsibility by providing resources within the community that may support families in a variety of ways.	**Common Errors:** • Programs not providing at least three resources. • The contact information for community resources is missing. **Recommendations:** ☐ Ensure at least three community resources and/or support services are included in the family handbook. ☐ Ensure contact information is provided for each listed community resource and/or support service (e.g., email, phone number, website).
R.4.01: The family handbook includes a written commitment to playful learning which describes: 1) the ways in which children learn through play and 2) how play is incorporated into every learning experience.	Young children benefit from intentional teaching practices and carefully planned environments that actively support joyful, play-based learning. The intent of this item is to inform families how child focused, fun teaching methods and strong lesson plans can work together to help young children grow in all areas. This is in contrast to more academically-focused learning and direct instruction typically found in learning environments for older children and adults.	**Common Errors:** • The information provided in the handbook does not address both parts of the assessment item. **Recommendations:** • Ensure the family handbook includes a section about play-based learning. o This includes a general description of the ways in which young children learn through play. o This includes a general description of how play is regularly incorporated into learning experiences at the program.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.5.01: The family handbook includes information that describes how the program or provider uses observation-based assessments to evaluate children's development and learning.	Young children, and those under the age of 5 especially, should be assessed for developmental progress through observation-based methods that take place in the regular learning environments with which they are familiar. The intent of this item is to ensure that families are aware that the program/provider is using formative assessment methods that rely on direct observation from the educators and staff who are with the children on a day to day basis and that these assessments take place in the context of normal routines and learning experiences. This contrasts with the use of more direct-assessment methods that remove young children from the context of the learning environment and removes the child's regular teaching staff from the assessment process (e.g., tests, quizzes, computer-/app-based assessments).	**Common Errors:** • Programs stating that they use screening tools as an assessment method (e.g., ASQ-3, ASQ-SE) **Recommendations:** • Ensure the family handbook includes a section about assessments of children's development and learning. ○ This includes specific reference to the use of observation-based assessment methods.
R.5.02: The family handbook includes information that describes how the program or provider uses assessment of children's development and learning to inform overall program or provider improvements.	Analysis of assessment results at a broad level allows for the continual improvement of high-quality programming that meets the development needs and interests of young children. The intent of this item is to inform families how their child's assessment information is combined with other children's and across classrooms to create summative assessment data (ex. at the end of the unit/term/program year to assess overall program performance across children and classrooms). This data is then reviewed to inform program needs such as equipment and material purchases, professional development, and/or stronger partnerships with community resources and family support systems.	**Common Errors:** • Programs describing how assessment may inform classroom level improvements, like teaching practices and changes to the environment rather than overall program improvements. **Recommendations:** • Ensure the section of the family handbook that includes information about the assessment of children's progress includes how the program/provider uses summary data to drive programmatic improvements (e.g., professional development, material purchases, closer relationships with outside resources, etc.).

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.5.03: The family handbook includes information that describes how families may contribute to the assessment of their child's development and learning.	Family members have deep familiarity with and knowledge of their children's developmental progress across many different environments and situations. This information is vital to providing an accurate understanding of each child's developmental progress in a context that is broader than the program setting. The intent of this item is to show how family members may be involved in their child's assessment process.	Common Errors: • Programs stating that they share information on assessments with families at conferences rather than providing information on how families can contribute their own observations and reflections. Recommendations: • Ensure the section of the family handbook that includes information about the assessment of children's progress includes suggested ways that families may contribute their own observations of their child's development and learning as part of the formal assessments conducted by their child's educator(s).

R.6.01:
The family handbook includes a policy to address when sick children should be excluded from care and when they may return.
	Early childhood is a time in which illnesses are common. Strong policies that work to protect both children and adults from spreading and getting contagious illnesses ensures that high-quality practices are maintained and that children are more likely to be healthy enough to attend and receive the benefits of being in a high-quality early learning environment.
	
	The intent of this item is to provide clear information to families about when to keep children home and when they can return to the program following illnesses that may be contagious.
		Common Errors:
		• Programs not stating when children may return to the program following an illness that requires exclusion from the program.
		Recommendations:
		• Ensure that the family handbook includes an illness policy.
		   o This policy includes the specific illnesses and circumstances in which children are not permitted to attend.
		   o This policy includes when children are permitted to resume attendance following an illness that requires children be kept home.

Item	Rationale	Comments

R.6.06:
The family handbook includes a policy which describes the expectations for active supervision for each age category served by the program or provider.
	Continuous, alert supervision is one of the most fundamental ways in which educators and staff members can protect young children from harm.
	
	The intent of this item is to share with families clear expectations for how educators engage in active supervision in all areas of the program.
	
	Looking ahead to Accreditation:
	NAEYC supervision for Accreditation and Accreditation + includes that infants and toddlers are always monitored by sight *and* sound. Preschoolers and kindergarteners are monitored by sight and sound most of the time. They can be out of sight for up to five minutes so long as they can still be heard (such as independent bathroom use).
		Common Errors:
		• Programs are describing ratios (i.e. how many teachers are in a classroom) and are not expanding on the expectations to ensure active supervision.
		Recommendations:
		• Ensure the family handbook includes a policy about supervision.
		  o Describe what "active supervision" means.
		  o If multiple age categories are served, ensure the policy addresses any differences in what active supervision means to address different developmental needs.

R.9.04:
The family handbook describes the expectations for confidentiality regarding information about enrolled children and their families.
	Early childhood professionals have an ethical responsibility to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the children and families they serve (Responsibilities 1.6, 1.10, 2.8, Admin 1.8, Admin 2.6)
	
	The intent of this item is to provide an in-depth confidentiality policy, indicating to families that their personal information is protected and will not be shared without their permission.
		Common Errors:
		• Programs are providing policies that only address confidentiality of children's information or family information, rather than address both.
		Recommendations:
		☐ Ensure the family handbook includes a policy about maintaining confidentiality.
		  o This policy includes information about maintaining the confidentiality of children.
		  o This policy includes information about the maintenance of information about families.

Section 3: Staff Handbook & Policy Items

Programs may submit up to 10 documents for Staff Handbook items, so long as they are a policy and procedures manual/handbook. Supplemental single-page documents, flyers, external resources, etc. will not be accepted.

Evidence of this assessment item must be in the uploaded staff handbook or staff policies and procedures manual(s).

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.6.02: The staff handbook includes information about when and how to wash hands and change diapers (if applicable).	Early childhood is a time in which illnesses are common. Strong policies that work to protect both children and adults from spreading and getting contagious illnesses ensures that high-quality practices are maintained and that children are more likely to be healthy enough to attend and receive the benefits of being in a high-quality early learning environment. The intent of this item is to ensure that all staff members are provided with information about *when* to wash hands and change diapers, as well as the step-by-step process of *how* to properly wash hands and change diapers *to reduce the spread of germs and risk of illness.*	**Common Errors:** • Programs not including all required information in the handbook. **Recommendations:** ☐ Ensure the staff handbook includes a hygiene policy which includes: o When staff and children should wash their hands. o A step-by-step procedure for handwashing. o When staff should check and change diapers (when applicable*), o A step-by-step procedure for diaper changing. *If the program does not have children enrolled that use diapers/pull-ups, please write that in the description box within your application.*

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.6.03: The staff handbook includes information about safe practices related to the preparation, serving, and storage of food and drink. This includes at minimum that all whole fruits and vegetables that are provided by the program or provider are washed thoroughly before they are prepared and served to children	The safe handling of food is especially important for young children to reduce the likelihood and spread of foodborne illnesses. Policies should address minimum food safety and handling requirements set forth by the applicable state licensing or regulatory body including specific instruction to remove soil and contaminants from whole fruits and vegetables that are served to children. The intent of this item is to ensure that the program has provided staff with basic information about safe food handling practices.	Common Errors: • Programs provide a policy on food safety; however, they do not include information that ensures that all whole fruits and vegetables are thoroughly washed before being served to children. Recommendations: ☐ Ensure the staff handbook includes basic information about safe food handling and preparation. ☐ Ensure the policy includes specific reference to whole fruits and vegetables being washed prior to being prepared and served to children. *If all foods and drinks (other than water) are provided entirely by families, this item is not applicable.* **If whole fruits and vegetables or other foods and beverages are used only in the context of learning experiences (snacks and meals are provided exclusively by families) food safety policies should still be present in the staff handbook.*

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.6.05: The staff handbook includes a child guidance policy that 1) prohibits the use of physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion and 2) addresses how disruptive and unsafe behaviors in children are handled, and 3) limits or eliminates the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures due to consistent and prolonged disruptive or unsafe behavior.	Punitive and exclusionary discipline practices are counterproductive to helping educators and administrators build long-term, mutually respectful, and trusting relationships with young children and their families. Early childhood professionals have ethical responsibilities to children to do no harm to children (Responsibility 1.1), protect children from abuse and neglect (Responsibility 1.7), and strive to prevent suspensions and expulsions in early childhood settings (Responsibility 1.8). The intent of this item is to ensure that programs and providers have a detailed policy in place that employees can access when managing any disruptive, unsafe, or challenging behaviors in the learning environment. **This is a required item and failure to meet this item will result in the application being denied.**	**Common Errors:** • Programs not including information on all three required points in policy. • Programs not stating or providing information that limits or eliminates the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures. Rather, programs are stating that they use suspension and expulsion when managing consistent and prolonged disruptive or unsafe behavior. • Programs including unclear information regarding the use of "time outs" which may open the door to potential forms of psychological abuse and/or coercion. **Recommendations:** ☐ Ensure the staff handbook includes a child guidance policy, which includes: 　o Prohibition of physical punishment, psychological abuse, and coercion. 　o Discusses how staff should handle disruptive and unsafe behaviors. 　o Limits/prohibitions on the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures (including soft exclusionary measures such as "time-outs" as punishment) to address disruptive and unsafe behaviors.
R.7.01: The staff handbook includes information about how staff report and/or address facility and equipment maintenance issues or other health and safety problems.	Early childhood professionals have an ethical responsibility to inform administration and/or appropriate authorities when there is concern about circumstances or conditions that impact the quality of education and care within a program (Responsibility 3B.2). The intent of this item is that employees can easily reference how they should report any maintenance issues that may pose a health or safety issue. This ensures that known issues are brought to the attention of those who can make sure corrections are made in a timely manner.	**Common Errors:** • Programs do not include HOW staff report/address these issues. **Recommendations:** ☐ Ensure the staff handbook includes information about reporting maintenance and safety issues they may find. ☐ Ensure this information tells staff how to report these issues (e.g., verbally, in writing, through a specific form, in what time period, to whom).

Item	Rationale	Comments

R.8.05:
The staff handbook addresses professional development for educators to include annual training on 1) Identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect,
2) the curriculum and learning approaches used in the program or provider,
3) the assessment methods used in the program or provider, and
 4) child development or developmentally appropriate practice.
	Administrators of early learning programs have an ethical responsibility to provide staff members with relevant professional development (Admin 1.6). Educators in high-quality early learning programs base their professional practice on current knowledge of child development and learning. Ongoing opportunities for educators to participate in professional development ensure that their knowledge and skills reflect the profession's ever-changing knowledge base.
	
	The intent of this item is to ensure that staff are provided with information regarding *annual* professional development training. Professional development must take place annually and include the four topics listed.
		Common Errors:
		• Programs leaving out one or more of the required professional development topics,
		• Programs do not state that professional development is annual.
		  o If a program states that employees only complete these trainings when initially hired, they will not receive credit for this item.
		Recommendations:
		☐ Ensure the staff handbook includes information about annual professional development topics. These topics include:
		  o Identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect.
		  o The chosen curriculum/learning approach.
		  o The chosen assessment methods.
		  o General topics related to child development or Developmentally Appropriate Practice.

R.9.01: The staff handbook includes information about educator planning time and how educators can access curricular resources when planning activities.	Intentional planning allows educators to effectively implement the curriculum to advance children's learning and development. The intent of this item is to provide clear information to the staff about the program's approach to educator planning time *and* how they can access curricular resources for planning purposes. For example, this might include the location of physical materials such as books, manuals, or printed forms. Alternatively, many curricula now include online components to assist in planning and educators should be provided with the information needed to access these materials online.	**Common Errors:** • Programs not stating where curricular resources can be found or how educators can access the resources. **Recommendations:** ☐ Ensure the staff handbook includes information about educator planning time. ☐ Ensure this information includes what resources are available to aid in planning. ☐ Ensure this information includes how educators can access these resources.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.9.05: The staff handbook includes a policy which prevents volunteers and other service providers from working alone with children and ensures they are always supervised by a staff member that has successfully completed new employee orientation.	It is incumbent on administrators to ensure children are always under the care and supervision of educators and other program staff that have successfully completed background checks and have the general physical and mental health to work effectively with young children. The intent of this item is to ensure that all employees have been made aware that volunteers and other service providers (extracurricular providers, outsourced vendors, etc.) are not to be left alone with children and that they are not left in the supervision of new staff who have not yet completed their own employee orientation period. This serves to ensure the safety of children and not unduly burden new employees who are not yet fully trained.	**Common Errors:** • Programs only stating one of the item requirements in their policy. The policy must include both requirements to receive credit for this item. **Recommendations:** ☐ Ensure the staff handbook includes instructions that children are never to be left alone with volunteers or other service providers. ☐ Ensure this includes a provision that only staff who have completed their own orientation period may supervise volunteers or other service providers.

Section 4: Show & Describe Items

Two separate pieces of evidence are needed for this section. A show item is an attached example to demonstrate how the program or provider meets the item. The description typically ranges from 3 to 8 sentences depending on item requirements. Be sure to read individual item instructions. The description provided needs to fully describe how the program meets the item, rather than stating to 'see attachment'.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.3.03: The curriculum or learning approach[v] addresses each of the following domains: social and emotional development, physical development, language and communication development (literacy, writing, speaking), cognitive development (math, science, engineering), and creative arts.	The design, content, and implementation of an early childhood curriculum is a significant contributor to quality in the early learning setting. High-quality early learning curriculum that integrates all domains of development help children make meaningful connections between topics of study and strengthens learning. The intention of this item is to describe how your curriculum addresses each of the 5 developmental domains to ensure a high-quality curriculum that promotes children's learning and development.	**Common Errors:** • Programs do not describe how the curriculum addresses each listed domain. • Programs will only describe one or two with an attached example. • Program examples are unclear with what activities are connected and meeting each domain. **Recommendations:** ☐ One example of a planned learning experience for each developmental domain. ☐ A brief description of the selected examples that speaks to the general content of the curriculum.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.4.02 ITPK: The curriculum or learning approach has guided educators in individualizing activities for children of all age categories served.	Even with the use of a pre-existing curriculum, educators in high-quality settings adapt and individualize content in ways that are meaningful and relevant to the children they teach. The intention of this item is to show how educators plan curriculum to differentiate and modify learning experiences to promote success for each individual child.	Common Errors: • Descriptions addressing how the curriculum is developmentally appropriate for the age group rather than describing how activities are individualized. • A description that meets item requirements, however the attached example does not show the individualizations. Recommendations: ☐ One example of an individualized learning experience. ☐ A brief description of the selected example that speaks to the educator's approach to individualizing content.
R.6.04: All families receive snack and meal menus and families have been notified of menu changes in a timely manner.	Families have a personal stake in what their children are consuming throughout the day regarding their child's health, development, and cultural identity. The intent of this item is to show how families are provided with the menu and notified of changes to the planned menu to ensure families always have an accurate understanding of what their child has consumed.	Common Errors: • Programs attach examples of the menu only and do not also show how families are notified of any menu changes in a timely manner. Recommendations: ☐ One example of how families are provided with the planned menu ☐ One example of a way that families have been notified of a menu change (e.g., an email, message on an app, or an updated/changed menu posted at the program). ☐ A brief description of the selected example(s) that speaks to the program's approach to ensuring families receive menus and are informed of menu changes.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.8.04: The program or provider has developed an orientation plan for onboarding new staff which includes expectations for conduct based on the Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators	Individuals who work in early childhood education face daily decisions that have moral and ethical dimensions. The Code of Ethics for Early Childhood educators present the essential, professional ethical responsibilities of all early childhood educators. The intent of this item is to show that the program or provider uses/reviews the Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators during the onboarding of new staff members, regardless of previous experience in the field.	**Common Errors:** • Programs attach the Code of Ethics rather than an orientation plan that shows where the Code of Ethics is reviewed during onboarding. **Recommendations:** ☐ An orientation plan for onboarding new staff is provided as evidence. ☐ The orientation plan includes an introduction to the Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators. ☐ A brief description that speaks to the program's general approach to introducing the Code of Ethics to new staff members.
R.9.02: The position description for program or provider leadership includes responsibilities related to preparing, reviewing, and reconciling the program or provider's operating budget.	Program leaders need to be knowledgeable and in charge of fiscal planning, budget preparation, and budget oversight to establish priorities based on program mission, philosophy, and to provide the long-term resources needed to sustain the program. The intent of this item is to show that leadership that participates in the day-to-day operations have some responsibilities related to preparing, reviewing, and reconciling the program or provider's operating budget. This need not be the primary responsibility, but administrators should have some input into the budgeting process.	**Common Errors:** • The position description provided is for a position that is not involved in the day-to-day operations of the program. For example, describing the Financial CEO (who is not typically at the center), rather than the program director. **Recommendations:** ☐ A position description for program leadership (director, assistant director, principal, assistant principal. head of school, etc.) ☐ The position description includes responsibilities related to preparing, reviewing, and reconciling the operating budget

Section 5: Narrative Description Items

The description typically ranges from 3 to 8 sentences depending on item requirements. Descriptions will not be reviewed past sentence 8. Each description requires one to two examples in the description. Be sure to read individual item instructions for specific sentence and example requirements.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.1.01: The program or provider has worked to establish warm, positive relationships with each child.	The intent of this item is for programs to describe how they (educators and administrators) establish warm, positive relationships with each individual child on an ongoing basis.	**Recommendations:** ☐ A brief description that includes: ☐ Two examples of how educators and administrators work to establish warm, positive relationships with each child. Consider the types of greetings and interactions that take place between children and educators.
R.1.02: The program or provider has worked to establish warm, positive relationships with each family.	The intent of this item is for programs to describe how they (educators and administrators) establish warm, positive relationships with each individual family on an ongoing basis.	**Common Errors:** • Programs describing how educators develop relationships with children instead of the family as a whole. **Recommendations:** ☐ A brief description that includes: ☐ Two examples of how educators and administrators work to establish warm, positive relationships with each family. Consider the types of greetings and interactions that take place between educators or administrators and families.
R.1.03 ITPK: Educators have intentionally facilitated relationship building between children of all age categories served.	The intent of this item is to show how educators have intentionally facilitated relationship building between children (peer-to-peer).	**Common Errors:** • Programs provide examples of how educators build relationships with children, rather than how educators facilitate relationship building between children. **Recommendations:** ☐ A brief description that includes: ☐ Two examples of how educators encourage relationship building between children. Consider how educators plan curriculum, activities, daily routines, or the learning environment and how it may guide children in building relationships.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.1.04 ITPK: Educators have created a learning environment that reflects the identities of children and families of each age category served.	The intent of this item is for programs to describe how the educators create a learning environment that reflects identities (racial, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, or physical characteristics, as well as family values, beliefs, and experiences) *of the children and families served.*	Common Errors: • Programs provide examples of how families are involved at the program rather than how the educators have created a *learning environment* that reflects the identities of children and families served. • Programs provide information on diversity in general instead of reflecting the identities of children and families enrolled at the program. Recommendations: ☐ A brief description that includes: ☐ Two examples of how educators have created a learning environment that reflects the children and families they serve.
R.1.05: Program leadership or providers and educators have worked to build awareness and understanding of how personal culture, beliefs, values, and biases impact our work as early learning professionals.	The intent of this item is to describe how the program (leadership and educators) is actively working towards a better awareness and understanding of how personal culture, beliefs, values, and biases impact our work as early learning professionals.	Common Errors: • Programs describing how they help children build awareness and understanding of personal culture, beliefs, values, and biases, rather than how the program and educators are. Recommendations: ☐ A brief description that includes: ☐ Two examples of how administrators and educators have examined their own cultures, beliefs, values, and biases in relation to their work with young children and families. Consider what professional development, discussions/activities during staff meetings, or books/articles staff have engaged in related to these topics.
R.2.04: The program or provider has been regularly informed about community events.	The intent of the item is for programs to show how they are made aware of community events through community partnerships.	Common Errors: • Programs describe how they inform their families about events, rather than how the program is informed of community events through community partnerships. Recommendations: ☐ A brief description which includes: ☐ Two examples of how information about community events that might be relevant to families is received.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.3.01: The curriculum or learning approach that has been used is play-based.	The intent of this item is to provide examples of how the curriculum supports children's learning through activities and play that is child-directed, where children choose activities based on their current interests.	**Common Errors:** • Programs describe the curriculum or learning approach, but do not address how it is play-based. • Programs say their curriculum or learning approach is play-based but don't give specific examples of what it looks like in their classrooms. **Recommendations:** ☐ A brief description which includes: ☐ Two examples of how the program as a whole takes a play-based approach to implementing curriculum and learning.
R.3.02: Educators have intentionally planned what to teach and when to teach children specific learning content over time.	The intent of this item is for programs to describe how they are planning what and when to teach based on children's developmental progress.	**Common Errors:** • Programs describe how they plan what to teach based on weather or the time of year (holidays). • Programs describe how they use themes to guide their decisions on what to teach and when to teach children specific content. **Recommendations:** ☐ A brief description which includes: ☐ Two examples of how educators plan what to teach and when to teach specific content. Consider using children's current assessment data along with educator knowledge of child development to plan activities based on children's strengths, needs, and interests.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.4.03: The curriculum or learning approach that has been used is responsive to children's home languages, dialects, abilities, and/or cultures.	The intent of this item is for programs to describe how their curriculum can be adapted based on a child's individual needs and background (dual language learner, culture, dialect, and ability).	**Common Errors:** • Programs describe how they create a relationship with families to better understand their culture rather than how the curriculum is responsive to children's home languages, dialects, abilities, and/or cultures. **Recommendations:** ☐ A brief description which includes: ☐ Two examples of how educators have adapted the curriculum to reflect children's home languages, dialects, abilities, or cultures. Consider the specific ways in which the curriculum has been adjusted to reflect the children's lives and experiences at home and among their communities.
R.7.02: The program or provider has ensured that children have access to drinking water when heat conditions are harmful.	The intent of this item is for programs to describe how they provide access to drinking water for all children when they are outdoors, and the heat conditions are harmful.	**Common Errors:** • Programs describe how children have access to water when inside rather than when they are outside in harmful heat conditions. **Recommendations:** ☐ A brief description which includes: ☐ One example of how children are offered and provided drinking water when heat conditions are harmful.
R.7.03: Children have been protected from harmful weather conditions in outdoor learning environments.	The intent of this item is for programs to have protection strategies and equipment in place so children can go outside despite weather conditions and to describe the policies they have in place to keep children protected from any harmful weather conditions when outside.	**Common Errors:** • Programs say children have access to water rather than describing elements they have in the environment to protect children. • Programs describing policies that indicate when children cannot go outside due to weather. **Recommendations:** ☐ A brief description that includes: ☐ Two examples of how children are protected from harmful weather conditions when playing and learning outside. Consider shade structures, sunscreen, or protective gear children wear when outside in inclement weather conditions.

Item	Rationale	Comments
R.7.04: The program leadership or provider has regularly received Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recall notices and ensured that recalled products for young children are identified and removed from classrooms.	The intent of this item is to ensure that programs regularly receive recall notices from the Consumer Product Safety Commission *and* that the program has a system in place to check for *and* remove recalled items from the learning environment.	**Common Errors:** • Programs do not provide a clear description that indicates that they remove the recalled item after receiving the notice. • Program stating that they do not receive recall notices from CPSC, but they occasionally check the CPSC website. Programs must regularly receive/review CPSC recall notices to receive credit for this item. **Recommendations:** ☐ A brief description that includes: ☐ One example of how CPSC recall notices are received, and ☐ How the program ensures recalled products are removed from classrooms.
R.7.05: The program or provider has ensured that there are adequate learning materials in all learning environments and how all children, including children with disabilities and those who need individual accommodation, have equitable access and use of learning materials.	The intent of this item is to: 1. Ensure that the program has a process in place that consistently evaluates classroom learning environments to ensure they have adequate materials. 2. Ensure environments have space and materials that meet the individual needs of all children. Consider children who may need accommodations due to differing developmental levels or learning styles, ensuring equitable access to the space and materials for all.	**Common Errors:** • Programs only provide information for one of the two parts of this item. **Recommendations:** ☐ A brief description that includes: ☐ Two examples of how adequate learning materials are available to children in all learning environments, and ☐ How all children have equitable access to these materials.

Additional Resources

Topic	Resource	Related Items
Assessment and Observation	DAP: Observing, Documenting, and Assessing Children's Development and Learning	NAEYC Rocking and Rolling: Bringing Observation and Documentation to Life in Infant and Toddler Settings I NAEYC	R.5.01, R.5.02, R.5.03
Playful Learning	*Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* Chapter 5: The Power of Playful Learning in the Early Childhood Setting NAEYC: The Power of Playful Learning in the Early Childhood Setting	R.3.01, R.4.01
Curriculum	DAP: Planning and Implementing an Engaging Curriculum to Achieve Meaningful Goals	NAEYC	R.3.03, R.4.02, R.4.03

Family Partnership	DAP: Engaging in Reciprocal Partnerships with Families and Fostering Community Connections	NAEYC	R.2.01, R.2.02, R.2.03, R.5.03
Building Relationships	DAP: Creating a Caring, Equitable Community of Learners	NAEYC	R.1.01, R.1.03 ITPK
Suspension and Expulsion, and Implicit Bias	Preventing Suspensions and Expulsions in Early Childhood Settings NAEYC statement regarding research on implicit bias and early childhood educators	R.1.05, R.6.05
Business Practices • Policy Development and Handbooks • Teacher Planning Time • Professional Development • Budgeting		
Health and Safety Practices	Caring for Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs CPSC Recalls & Product Safety Warnings EHCC_Heavy Metals in Foods_2025.pdf - Google Drive	R.6.02, R. 6.03, R. 6.05, R. 7.01 R.7.02, R.7.03, R.7.04 R.7.04 R.6.03
Equitable Learning Opportunities	Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement	NAEYC	R.1.05, R.4.03
Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators	2024_code_of_ethics_for_early_childhood_educators_final_3.pdf	R.8.04
Learning Environments	Universal Design for Learning: A Checklist for Early Childhood Environments	7.05

[i] **Assistant teachers** are educational staff who implement program activities under the direct supervision of a teacher. An assistant teacher can work independently in a teacher's absence for short periods of time, but for most of the time assistant teachers work directly with a teacher in a supportive role. Assistant teachers may be assigned to more than one class throughout the operational day (i.e., floating between classrooms). There is no requirement that NAEYC recognized or accredited programs employ assistant teachers.

[ii] **Teachers** are adults that have primary responsibility for a class of children. Each class must have at least one designated teacher but may have multiple co-teachers. Teachers spend most of the time with one class of children who attend at the same time, rather than dividing their time between classes.

[iii] **Administrators** are adults with primary responsibility in planning, implementing, and evaluating the day-to-day operations of an early learning program (center-based or home-based). Administrators oversee both the leadership and management functions that support the program in setting and achieving a clear vision and mission. Generally, administrators do not spend most of their time filling in for educational staff in the classroom setting or learning environment. However, self-employed home-based providers and in small center-based programs a single adult may fill the role of both teacher and administrator.

[iv] **Good standing** means the center-based program or home-based provider has a fully valid and current license or certification. A licensing or regulatory status may not be in good standing if there is a provisional or temporary status, the license or regulatory status has been suspended or revoked, or there are ongoing investigations related to child abuse, neglect, lack of appropriate supervision, and/or ongoing health and safety violations.

[v] **Curriculum or learning approach** refers to the program or provider's or provider's methods of planning and responding to specific learning goals and meeting the needs of children. Examples may include lesson plans, graphic organizers, curriculum webs and mapping, unit reflections and evaluations, individualized learning activities, among others.