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tip|sheet

Ideas and information about child development and early education for parents, professionals and the community-at-large.

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Tips for Improving Your SACERS Score!

Part IV - Staff Development & Special Needs

The following tips will help you assess your programs in both the Staff Development and Special Needs components of the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS).

Staff Development

Opportunities for Professional Growth: Provide thorough orientations for all new staff members. Topics should include interactions with children and parents, discipline methods, and appropriate activities. Provide on-site training regularly. Provide professional resources on premises that contain current materials on a variety of school age care subjects. Encourage staff members to attend courses, conferences, or workshops.

Staff Meetings: Conduct regular monthly staff meetings that include staff development activities. The meetings should have planned opportunities for staff to share new professional ideas and materials with one another.

Supervision and Evaluation of Staff:

Conduct annual supervisory observations that are written and shared with staff. Staff should also be encouraged to participate in self-evaluations and to request help and guidance from supervisors.

Special Needs Supplementary Items

The following six items are to be used in addition to the entire scale when children with special needs are included in the group. In order to use these

items accurately, information is needed about the special needs of the individual children.

Provisions for Exceptional Children:

Provide staff information from available assessments or request assessments of child's needs. Use assessment information about needs of exceptional children to make modifications in environment, program, and schedule so children can participate in many activities. Consult with professional special educators regularly to assist in planning individual programs for exceptional children. Follow through with activities and interactions recommended by professional special educators to help children meet identified goals.

Individualization: Provide individualization in play activities and routines so children can participate successfully in tasks and activities that appropriately challenge their abilities. Provide one-to-one and small group activities in addition to the regular program for exceptional children. Incorporate objectives for special needs children into free play and planned activities. Use interactions with children, room arrangement, materials, and schedule to meet individual needs. Examples include using raised picture labels on toy shelves for the visually-impaired child or signing so the hearing-impaired child can fully participate. Encourage independence through environmental modifications, appropriate activities and teaching strategies.

Tips for Improving Your SACERS Score! *Part IV - Staff Development & Special Needs- con't*

Multiple Opportunities for Learning and Practicing Skills: Repeat opportunities for learning and practicing skills. Practice skills during naturally occurring routines and events to reinforce learning objectives.

Engagement: Appropriately involve children during staff-directed activities, routines, and play times. Interact with children and provide attractive, developmentally appropriate materials to maintain active involvement. Guide a wandering child to attractive play areas or help a non-mobile child change an activity when ready. Arrange transitions between activities, routine care, and play times so children maintain involvement. Continue play until the next activity is ready.

Peer Interactions: Promote peer interactions at planned group times. Examples include a child being given the chance to answer questions at story time or helping someone else set the table. Encourage appropriate peer interaction during free choice activities and throughout the day.

Promoting Communication: Adjust speech to children's level of understanding. Include social conversation and information sharing

in communication with children. Ask developmentally appropriate questions and attend to children's answers. Alternate communication options used throughout the day and involve other children in communication with child with disabilities. Frequently promote children's communication. Examples include giving verbal descriptions of ongoing activities, expanding on children's talk, prompting or modeling communication, and reinforcing the children's attempts to communicate. Use routines and activities throughout the day to reach appropriate communication goals for the children.

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