MATERIALS AND PRACTICES
MAP Assessment

Instructions for Evaluators

Program assessments will be unscheduled. Each assessment is expected to last no more than 1 1/2 hours and will include program assessment and a provider interview.

Upon arrival at the program, the evaluator will introduce him/herself to the provider and explain the procedures for the quality rating assessment. The evaluator will record:

- Name of the program

- name of the person collecting the information

- date of the program assessment

Provider will be asked to remain on-site throughout the period of assessment, and to be available, if needed, during the last 5-10 minutes of the assessment when the evaluator asks questions about the curriculum. In addition, at some point, the provider will be asked to gather materials necessary for the interview on the program's professional practices (Appendix A). The interview with the provider will be conducted immediately following the program observation, and should last approximately 30 minutes.

Program Assessments

Ask the provider to pretend that you are not there while you try to stay out of the way and conduct your assessment materials and practices. Explain that after you complete your observation, you will want to ask some questions about some of the things you were not able to see regarding the curriculum and lesson plans. Before you begin the observation, find out if there is a storage area for additional materials.

Characteristics: Record the program name, the number of children enrolled, the number of children present, the number of providers present, and the first names of the providers present. For the numbers of providers and children present, record the number present upon your arrival, but check these numbers half-way through your observation and modify accordingly in order to convey the approximate staff-child ratio during the majority of your observation. Do <u>not</u> "estimate" numbers of providers or children present based on what might typically occur in a particular program.

Minimal Requirements: All of Wisconsin's early care and education programs should meet minimal certification or licensing requirements for children's basic (1) health, (2) safety, (3) supervision, and (4) care for children with special needs. On-site evaluators will assess each environment, using the wording of each item on the score form and in the manual, aided by their experience in observation, to make a decision on each minimal requirement. No boxes should be skipped or left blank. Items that are scored "yes" reflect programs that are meeting Wisconsin's minimal requirements for basic standards of care. Items that are marked "no" reflect programs that are NOT meeting Wisconsin's minimal requirements for basic standards of care. Failure to meet any of these minimal requirements indicates a serious flaw in the quality of the classroom environment, or a need for basic training to improve teachers' abilities to support children in the Family Child Care programs. Due to limited time, evaluators will not ask teachers for clarification on these items. If all four minimal requirements are fully met, the classroom will earn one point on the quality rating scale. If a classroom fails to meet any of the four minimal requirements, the program will receive a score of "zero" for the entire program assessment.

Quality Indicators: Evaluators will use their best judgment based on program observations, review of the daily schedule and lesson plans, and discussion with the provider to rate eight quality indicators in terms of the appropriateness of the program materials and the quality of program practices.
1. Adult-child relationship
2. Books, literacy and writing
3. Block and dramatic play
4. Fine motor, math, and science
5. Music, movement, and art
6. Large motor
7. Child assessment
8. Program assessment

Materials: For each quality indicator, the evaluator must simultaneously assess the number of age-appropriate materials accessible to the children, the quality of the space available in which to use those materials, and the adequacy of the amount of time that the materials are accessible to children. The evaluator must also determine whether there is a wide selection of developmentally-appropriate materials that range in complexity to meet the needs of all children in the classroom. The goal is to set a high, but realistic standard for each program.

- Are activity areas well-organized, easily accessible, and conveniently equipped with adequate space for independent use by all children?
- Are there enough materials to meet the criteria for each quality indicator and appropriate materials within each category for each age group of children?

Practices.: The evaluator must observe the classroom, talk with the provider and then balance these different sources of information in order to assess whether there is evidence of alignment between materials and high quality daily activities.

- Are materials routinely rotated in a planful way so children have access to a variety of different materials, and an approach to learning that explicitly demonstrates the link between specific activities, routines and the domains of children's learning?
- Are activity plans and the daily schedule complete and consistent with daily practices?
- Are providers actively engaged with children and committed to scaffolding children's play and learning through providing a range of enriching experiences?
- When asked open-ended questions, for example, "Can you tell me a little bit about dramatic play?" is the provider able to articulate routines? Is emphasis placed on nurturing children's discovery, helping children develop problem-solving strategies, and providing opportunities for children to link new experiences with past learning?

Score the program based on your observations of children's and providers' use of materials and activities. Look at the daily schedule to try to get a sense of how activities are distributed across the day and look at the lesson plan to see how complex and varied the activities are across the week. If there is a storage area, look through and assess the additional materials available. It should be possible to determine this without carefully counting the items. Note that most quality indicators include a list of components. The evaluator must place a check mark by each component that is present and supports children's early learning. In order to receive a "yes" for a quality indicator, all components within that indicator must be fully met.

After the observation: Thank the provider for allowing you to observe, and ask if it is a good time for you to ask a few questions about the materials and activities. Before leaving the program, the evaluator should thank the provider for his/her participation. It is important to fully complete the score forms within one hour of leaving the center, while your memory is fresh. Information collected from observations should be considered confidential and should not be discussed at any time.

Minimal Requirements

a. Health

Assess the environment in terms of basic cleanliness. Determine if providers and children try to cut down on the spread of germs. Assure that a system is in place for maintaining a healthy environment. Be alert to all hand washing, diaper changing, toileting, table washing, wiping of noses, clean-up of spills, or other health practices.

- Does the environment itself and the materials (floors, tables, toys) appear clean?
- Are facilities and supplies accessible for maintaining cleanliness (soap, toilet paper, toweling, tissues; sinks at an appropriate level and appropriate location)?
- Do providers and children generally cut down on the spread of germs (e.g. washing their hands appropriately with soap and running water after diapering and toileting)?

b. Safety

Note if any equipment or materials are in poor repair or if any hazardous conditions are evident (e.g. wobbly furniture, heavy objects, sliding rugs, open stairways, accessible poisonous materials). Observe to make sure that providers are attentive to safety issues.

- Can you confirm that there is no broken furniture with sharp edges, no loose electrical cords or other obvious hazards that may be easily accessible to children?
- Are all materials labeled "keep out of reach of children" kept, when not in immediate use, in a locked cupboard? Bleach spray can be kept out of reach but all medication, lotions, disinfectants, and cleaning materials need to be stored in locked cabinets.
- Is a system in place for teaching children best safety practices (e.g. how to be safe in traffic, how to respond in a fire emergency, what a safe touch is, why we have rules for how high a block structure can be built, how to ask for help)?

c. Supervision

Consider the design of the environment, providers' ability to supervise all areas, providers' typical supervision practices, and children's general behavior style. Allow for the fact that some programs may enroll children who take longer to learn rules. Credit programs for providing enough supervision to protect all children at all times.

- Is the ratio of the number of children to the number of providers always consistent with licensing/certification requirements? Is careful and thoughtful supervision happening in the setting?
- Is an adult always aware when a child leaves a room?

d. Children with special needs

Assess the program in terms of accessibility to facilities and supplies for children with special needs. If there are no children with identified special needs, score "yes" on this standard.

- Do children with special needs enjoy equal access to all goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages and accommodations (e.g. wheelchair ramps, bathroom assistance, visual aides)?
- Are materials accessible to individuals with different learning styles (e.g. books on tape for children who have a visual impairment, closed caption video for children with hearing loss, schedules posted visually for children who have difficulties with transitions)?
- Are children with special needs included in age-appropriate activities with children with typical development in natural proportions? (Natural proportions means that the student with disabilities participates in activities and classes in numbers that reflect the natural proportions of individuals with disabilities within the community at large).
- Are adaptations made, as necessary, to successfully include each child's special needs for basic care, communication, learning, play, emotional, and social activities?
- Does observation, examination of the lesson plans, and discussion indicate that the provider collaborates with families of children with special needs and other professionals (doctors, therapists, educators) to structure activities and design competent services, supports, and other assistance and opportunities that promote safety, health, development, independence, productivity, integration and inclusion in the child care setting?

Program Quality Indicators

For each quality indicator, assess the appropriateness of: (a) program materials, and (b) program practices. All criteria must be fully met in order to be scored "yes" for each quality indicator.

1a. Adult-Child Relationship

Assessing the "materials" criterion for this quality indicator requires listening to the amount of language, determining whether children's basic social-emotional needs are being met, and assuring a positive (non-punitive) tone to classroom interactions.

Language. Communication (verbal and nonverbal) is fundamental for building relationships. Adults should have frequent one-on-one conversations with children and should attempt to establish relationships with all children.

Social-emotional. Adults should be attentive to the children, actively engaged at children's level, quick to smile, and able to show physical affection, not busy preparing for the next activity.

Tone. Expectations for behavior should be clear. Environments should be set up to avoid conflict and promote age-appropriate interaction. Providers should state limits clearly and consistently, give attention to positive behavior, and redirect children from unacceptable behavior. Discipline should be non-punitive, and there should be an absence of threatening, yelling, unnecessarily prohibiting activities, physically controlling behavior, or excessive time-outs.

1b. Adult-Child Practices

Listen carefully and observe to see if adults are playing an active role in supporting children's language comprehension and productive language development, social and emotional competence, and abilities to express their feelings and solve their problems.

Language
- Are adults listening attentively to children, responding to children's communication, teaching language through careful modeling, expanding on children's language, repeating children's words, labeling, describing children's actions, and intentionally varying their vocabulary?
- Are adults introducing new concepts to extend children's understanding, asking open-ended questions to encourage children to give more complex answers, and encouraging children to listen to one another?
- If you are in a bi-lingual classroom, is a bi-lingual provider enhancing the language development of these children?

Social-emotional
- Do adults promote social and emotional competence by providing opportunities for children to learn new skills (share, take turns, take the perspective of others)?
- Do adults serve as models for effective relationship-building skills in their relationships with co-workers, parents, and children?

- Do adults interact positively with children individually and as a group, show interest and take part in children's activities, and respond sensitively to children with encouragement, praise and comfort?

Tone
- Do adults provide opportunities and effective feedback as children practice alternative strategies for expressing their feelings and controlling their impulses?
- Do adults help children express their feelings in words, understand other children's perspectives, and try to think of solutions to their own conflicts? Do adults teach conflict resolution to children through books and group discussion?
- Do adults help children to understand and respect others? Does the attitude of the provider and the setting reflect respect and not stereotypes of races, genders, ethnicities, abilities, etc?

2a.   Books, Literacy and Writing Materials
At least one clearly defined, well-organized book area should be easily accessible, always open, comfortable (carpet, rugs, soft pillows, chair), with enough space for children, and the designated number of books and other literacy materials for the age level of children present: Four book categories include: picture books, board/plastic/activity books; rhyme and repetition books (nursery rhymes, Dr. Seuss); multicultural/bilingual books (ethnic diversity, books in Spanish); and concept books (color, number, alphabet, math, science). Literacy and writing materials should be in good condition, developmentally-appropriate, varied, and ranging in difficulty.

Books: Infants have easy access every day to at least 5 books including one board book, one plastic/cloth book, and one activity book. Toddlers have access to at least 10 books, including one from each of four basic categories. Preschool and school-age children have access to at least 20 books, including books from the rhyme/repetition, multicultural/bi-lingual, and concept book categories. Books are available in storage for each age group of children.

Literacy: Toddlers, preschool, and school-age children have daily access to at least three literacy games/activities (picture sequencing, memory matching, alphabet bingo, alphabet puzzles, flashcards, classifying/conceptual thinking.

Writing: Developmentally-appropriate writing materials should be available daily to toddlers, preschool, and school-age children including: (a) child writing tools (fat and skinny, lead and colored pencils, markers, different types, shapes, sizes of lined/unlined paper), (b) writing materials (templates, tracing cards, tracing paper, worksheets, alphabet/picture stamps/stamp pads, letter/word cards, name tracing, laminated sheets to write on, mazes, activity books, Pictionary) (c) boards of various types where children can write stories with letters, words, or pictures (magnetic, felt, wipe board, chalk board), and (d) props in the dramatic play, block or other area (clipboards, menu pads, envelopes, notepads, typewriter, time sheets, library cards). Toddlers need to have 5 available; preschool and school-age children need to have 20 writing materials available.

2b. Books, Literacy and Writing Practices

Observation, lesson plans, the daily schedule, and teacher discussion should indicate whether teachers intentionally guide children's appreciation of books as well as their literacy and writing competencies.

- Are all children exposed to at least 15 minutes of reading per day?
- Do adults systematically rotate books and introduce varied literacy and writing materials in an effort to build children's developmental skills and understanding?
- Do adults provide a variety of pre-literacy experiences during large group, small group, and free play (e.g. nursery rhymes, listening center with recorded stories, teaching a letter/sound each week)?
- Do adults use storytelling materials (big books and chart paper for writing group stories, flannel board, finger puppets, and other story props) and encourage writing through group stories?
- Do adults engage toddlers, preschool, and school-age children in educational interactions designed to support children's literacy skills (visits to the library, guest readers, making homemade class books, children's journals, backpack books that go back and forth to children's homes)?
- Do adults regularly provide materials, activities, and expanded opportunities that allow children to express their feelings and record their ideas in writing?
- Do toddler, preschool, and school-age settings have one or more examples of adult dictation where adults help children connect oral and written language (e.g. written labels on the class mural)?

3a. Block and Dramatic Play Materials

Recognizing that children learn through play and the active exploration of their environment (Guiding Principle #7 of Wisconsin's Model Early Learning Standards), this indicator assesses two components of children's play: Blocks (defined as non-interlocking geometrically-shaped pieces of wood, plastic, foam, or cardboard) and dramatic play. Assess the block and dramatic play spaces in terms of size, organization, and the number and quality of different materials accessible to meet the creative, social, and emotional needs of children.

Blocks

- Do infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-agers have at least 10 blocks of varying shapes and sizes?
- Is there an area for toddlers, preschools, and school-agers with enough blocks and accessories for children to build without interruption, a smooth surface to build on, and plenty of space with no obvious pathways going through the building area?
- Is there an assortment of block accessories (which may or may not be stored in the block area)? Accessories include at least 5 transportation toys and at least 5 animal/people figures.

Dramatic play

- Are developmentally-appropriate play materials accessible to infants, toddlers, preschool and school-age children including a telephone, kitchen materials, play furniture, dress up clothes/accessories, that show diversity in the play materials? Are there props for various types of dramatic play scenes?

3b. Block and Dramatic Play Practices
- Can several children play comfortably with the block and dramatic play materials at the same time? Are the materials interesting and generally available for children's use? Do adults selectively vary the block and dramatic play materials from a selection of additional materials in storage?
- Do adults seem to be aware of the developmental value of blocks and dramatic play? Do they encourage children to use materials in different ways? Do they sometimes join children in play activities?
- Do dramatic play themes for preschool and school-age children vary responding to the interest of the children?
- Are planned activities designed to enrich preschoolers' thematic play? Do adults extend learning beyond the setting through guests, fieldtrips, books, and other pretend play activities?

4a. Fine Motor, Math, and Science Learning Materials
Fine motor. These leaning materials are designed to strengthen children's problem-solving skills, develop creative construction skills, and enhance eye-hand coordination. They need to be accessible daily, complete, organized, and varying in levels of complexity. A total of 10 are needed with at least 1 in each category. Categories include: puzzles (including shape sorters), interlocking blocks or fit-together toys (e.g. duplos, legos, star builders, snap-beads, magna tiles, crystal climbers, bristle blocks, Lincoln logs, links, stacking/nesting toys), and manipulatives (e.g. bead maze, push/pull toys, lacing/sewing cards, dressing frames, pegboards, stringing beads, design boards, magnetic mazes, hammering sets, and tweezer/pincer grasp activities, or other toys that require manipulation and eye-hand coordination but are not used for building and creative construction).
- Toddlers, Preschoolers, and Schoolagers need at least 10 fine motor items including one item from each of the three fine motor categories outlined above.

Math. Math materials allow toddler, preschool, and school-age children to practice: (1) counting or sorting collections of objects (e.g. a bin of 100 colored cubes or colored teddy bears), (2) learning about geometry, including size, shape, and pattern (tangrams, mosaic sets, parquetry, plastic, wooden, and foam shapes and puzzles), (3) measuring (tools for balance, tape measure, ruler, scale, unifix cubes, measuring cups, clock, timer), (4) reading math concepts (books of numbers, shapes), and (5) recognizing number games/activities (dice, counting numbers, dominoes, flash cards, unit cubes, number puzzles, calculator). Some math concepts should also be displayed in each preschool classroom (e.g. posters, clock, calendar, number rugs)?
- Toddlers, Preschool, and School-age children need daily access to at least ten math materials with at least one in each category.

Nature/science. Nature/science materials allow toddler, preschool, and school-age children to practice with: (1) collections of natural objects (pine cones, sea shells, rocks), (2) living things (plants, animals), (3) tools for conducting science (magnets, magnifying classes, color paddles, binoculars), (4) nature/science books, and (5) nature/science games/activities (nature matching cards, dinosaur classification).
- Toddlers, Preschool, and School-age children need access to at least 10 nature/science materials with at least one in each category.
- In addition, sensory-motor activities are needed daily for toddlers and preschoolers.

4b. Fine Motor, Math, and Science Learning Practices

Observation, examination of lesson plans, and discussion with the teacher indicate that fine motor, math, and science activities are essential components of the curriculum.

Fine motor
- Are fine motor learning materials selectively rotated into the program from additional materials in storage or other resources and used to structure children's experiences and enhance their development?
- Are adults aware of the fine motor developmental needs of these children and able to skillfully stimulate appropriate activities for all children? Do adults engage in educational interaction designed to challenge and enhance children's fine motor skills? This might include spreading different fine motor materials over a small table and inviting children to work with them individually or as part of other planned small group activities.

Math (toddler, preschool, and school-age children only)
- Is math included in the curriculum (e.g. adult places a number next to snack crackers indicating the number of crackers each child is permitted to take; children are routinely counted before going outside, etc.)?
- Does adult-guided math occur in large group or small group activities?
- Is there evidence in the program that a more extensive math activity (e.g. graphing, measurement charts, sorted items, timelines) took place recently?

Nature/science (toddler, preschool, and school-age children only)
- Is science included in the curriculum (e.g. watering plants, feeding animals, recording behavior).
- Do adult-guided nature and science activities occur in large group or small groups? (using tools to conduct simple "experiments," forming explanations based on trial and error, communicating and interpreting results, observation, gathering information, and making predictions) on various topics such as animals, weather, rocks, oceans, dinosaurs, gardens, cooking, rain forest, chemistry, the senses, human body, and fun science topics?
- Is there evidence in the program that a nature/science activity (e.g. seedling plants growing) took place recently? Note that assessing the weather as part of the daily calendar time would meet part of this criterion, but more extensive weekly and bi-weekly activities would also be required to get credit on this quality indicator.

5a. **Music, Movement, and Art Materials**

The arts are an essential component of children's cognitive, social, and emotional development. When exposed to a rich environment of music, movement, and art materials, children can practice a wide variety of skills and learn to freely express their thoughts and emotions. Infants are exempted from art activities.

<u>Music and movement.</u> This item assesses the number of different types of music and movement materials accessible to children.
- Are children regularly exposed to a variety of different types of music during free play and group time? There should be tapes/CDs within at least 3 different genre (jazz, classical, bluegrass, barbershop, cultural, ragtime, marching band, show tunes, country, reggae, etc.) and a adult-operated (working) tape/CD player for daily listening for children of all ages?
- Are there enough musical instruments (drums, rhythm sticks, xylophone, bells, shakers, triangles, tambourine – or toys that make music for infants), available either in the setting or in storage, as well as assorted dance props (scarves, ribbons, bean bags) for all children to be able to make music and engage in creative movement activities?

<u>Art.</u> This item requires counting the number of different types of artistic materials available for children to use on a daily or weekly basis from each of five art categories: drawing (markers, crayons, colored pencils, chalk, craypas, glitter pens), painting (easel, do-a-dot, water color, tempera paint, assorted brushes, sponges), collage (yarn, felt, sticky tape, stickers, buttons, assorted paper, glitter, feathers, eyes, foam, sequins), construction (pipe cleaners, clay, play dough, wood, popsicle sticks), and art tools (scissors, stencils, stamps, stamp pad, punchers, glue).
- Toddler, Preschool, and School-age children need availability to art and must have at least 10 art materials in storage, including at least one item per category.

5b. **Music, Movement, and Art Practices**

A rich variety of music, movement, and art experiences offered daily, weekly, and monthly encourages children's cognitive development and freedom of expression.
- Do children have opportunities several times each day to listen to different types of music? Do adults sing during transitions and routines? Do adults provide frequent opportunities for movement and dance experiences?
- Do planned activities for toddler, preschool, and school-age children occur at least twice a month that encourage creativity, develop skills and music concepts (rhythm, pitch, fast and slow), and extend children's understanding and appreciation of music (going to/giving performances, making musical instruments, having musical guests)?
- When looking at the usage of art materials and the quality of art displayed on the walls, does it appear that children typically experience free expression of art?
- Are there planned adult-guided art activities, at least twice a month, that encourage creativity, develop skills, and extend children's understanding of art (artistic guests, 3-D creations, filed trips, performances, art appreciation)?

6a. Large Motor Materials

This quality indicator assesses the adequacy of children's access to age-appropriate large motor materials and experiences (including the safety, quality, and accessibility). Examine the large motor space, materials, and equipment indoors and in the outdoor play yard. Assess the indoor large motor play area only if it is the primary area used each day by a particular group of children. Large motor materials in storage are not counted.

- Infants need daily access to a variety of large motor equipment; toddlers, preschool, and school-age children need daily access to enough large motor materials for all of the children present.
- Materials for toddler, preschool, and school-age children include: stationary (slides, climbers, tunnels, swings, stairs, and balance beam), portable (balls, bean bags, jump ropes, parachute), and ride-on toys (bikes/tricycles, wagons, scooters, rockers). All children need a daily balance of large motor indoor and outdoor play.
- The layout for large motor play equipment must be well-organized from a safety stand point, and materials must be in good condition, with enough space for children to play.

6b. Large Motor Practices

- Do children experience a daily balance of large motor indoor/outdoor play?
- Do large motor materials, equipment, and activities provide significant variation and stimulate a variety of large motor skills (e.g. balance, climbing, strength, endurance, and agility)?

7a. Child Assessment Materials

In order to score programs on the child assessment quality indicator it is necessary to see samples of child assessment tools used, checklists, observational records taken by staff, portfolios, as well as documentation of assessment results used in individualized curriculum planning. Ask the provider to provide you with a sample of a recent child portfolio and progress notes. These items should be reliable and valid and the date should be within the past 6 months. Based on the children's portfolios and the results of child assessments, the provider should be able to articulate the ways in which the assessment results are being used to plan long-range curriculum planning and program evaluation for individual children or for the whole group of children.

7b. Child-Teacher-Family Practices

Children have the opportunity to be strengthened by programs in which providers and families communicate positively and effectively with each other. In these programs, providers and parents can work together to strengthen children's development.   In addition to looking at the classroom environment in order to determine how welcoming it is, assess whether providers appear skilled at engaging in informal conversations with families, sensitive to family diversity, able to provide family support, and willing to talk with families about difficult issues. Can they give examples of how they develop relationships with families? Does the provider believe that provider-parent interactions are very important?

- Does there appear to be ongoing daily communication with families that provides information about children's play and learning and encourages family involvement and support? For example, is there a provider bio-board? Do

parents sign in and record information about the child? Do daily notes go home? Is there an interesting family resource board that parents read? Do you see any evidence (including from provider-teacher interaction, if available) that providers maintain positive daily communication with families?

- Do providers attempt to bring families into the program to observe, participate, share their talents, go on field trips, or participate in any other way? Are parents encouraged to contribute to the curriculum in any way?
- Are parents kept informed about the curriculum and other activities on a regular basis, for example, through a newsletter? Are providers supportive of parents and able to provide resources to families as needed (e.g. on biting)?
- Are provider-family conferences offered at least once a year?

8a. Program Assessment Materials

Determine whether program assessments are conducted annually. The type of assessment used may include FCCERS, NAFCC, or any other independently-designed assessment that involves systematic observation of program quality. It does not matter if the assessments are conducted from within or outside of the program.

- Ask to see evidence of completed assessments. If the materials and the methods for collecting the assessment appear consistent and reliable, credit this item.

8b. Program Assessment Practices

Find out how results of program assessments are used to estimate progress toward established standards, and used for program improvement.

Professional Practices

The evaluator will conduct a brief examination of written policies, procedures, and checklists related to staff practices, business practices, and family practices in order to assess whether there is evidence of an objective system in place with clearly defined processes of accountability and transparency, involving multiple individuals, applied equitably, and reviewed annually. The evaluator will base scoring decisions as to whether the program demonstrates strong and systematic efforts to meet high quality program standards on direct observations, written materials, and an approximately 30-minute interview with the provider following the program assessment. A list of materials to be gathered prior to the interview should be given to the provider prior to arrival at the program (see Appendix A).

1. Staff Practices

High quality programs offer core benefits, institute beneficial management practices, conduct evaluations, and encourage or provide professional development. Review employee handbooks, if applicable and other professional practice procedures in order to assess program performance in these areas.

a. Benefits:
- Look for evidence, within the program policies, that the provider takes at least one   week of paid vacation and six paid Holidays and also offers this to any employees, if applicable.

b. Staff Management: (Complete if the provider has employees).
- Shared leadership. This program's system of participatory management is effective because all providers share a sense of responsibility for operation and success of the program. Efforts are made to strengthen relationships among providers, to encourage team decision-making and to support each provider's needs. Providers may adopt a variety of different non-teaching roles including taking responsibility for training others, organizing the program's library, recognizing providers' special accomplishments, or engaging in clear systems of shared leadership.
- Orienting staff. A written plan exists to orient staff, substitutes, and emergency back-up providers on the children present and policies of the program.

c. Staff Evaluation: Programs should have a systematic plan in place for staff hiring, staff orientation, monitoring and evaluation of staff performance and professional development. To determine if an appropriate system is in place, assess the thoroughness of a sample staff performance review, if available, other written documentation, and the provider's answers to your open-ended question: "Can you tell me about staff evaluation in your program?" Assessment of staff evaluation for the quality rating system includes documentation of high quality annual performance reviews and annual discussion of each provider's professional development plan.
- Annual observation-based performance reviews. Performance reviews for all providers (full-time and part-time) are based on formal observations by a supervisor and are conducted at least annually.

- Professional development plans. Annual performance reviews provide an opportunity for oral and written feedback, including detailed discussion of each provider's strengths as well as areas needing improvement, and a review of each provider's individual professional development plan.

   d. **Staff Development and Retention:** Programs promote staff development and retention by putting specific policies in place that encourage and reward provider's efforts to strengthen their training and educational qualifications. The following measures are used to assess program's efforts to strengthen staff development and retention for the quality rating system.
   - Policy rewards credit-based education. A written policy ensures that providers who complete credit-based education receive increased wages. If at least one provider is currently on a T.E.A.C.H. scholarship, then the program would automatically get credit for this item.
   Number of providers currently on T.E.A.C.H. scholarships: _____
   - Training opportunities. Employees are informed of upcoming training opportunities through postings on a bulletin board, written memos, etc.
   - Budget item supports staff training. Program includes a line item in the budget dedicated to staff education and training. The amount of financial support will depend on the size of the program but should reflect a consistent effort to provide meaningful support annually for some teachers to get additional training.

2. **Business Practices**
   High quality early care and education programs include policies and procedures that detail an organized system of fiscal management, program management, and internal communication, with efforts at quality improvement led by a competent and committed leader. Ask the provider to show you a copy of the program's policies and procedures for fiscal management (sample of an annual budget, quarterly spreadsheets), program management (maintenance and risk procedures), samples of internal staff communication (memos, message book), and a sample of minutes from a staff meeting. Check to see if these materials are easily accessible, comprehensive and up-to-date.

   e. **Fiscal Management:** Programs with sound fiscal management have transparent policies and procedures in place that ensure consistent daily, quarterly, and annual management of operating funds and demonstrate fiscal responsibility for long-term program development and improvement.
   - Monthly or quarterly tracking. There is an adequate system in place for monthly or quarterly tracking of all income and expenditures.
   - Annual budget. There is an annual budget available that is used routinely in administrative planning throughout the year.

   f. **Contracts/Policies:** Contracts and Policies are essential for basic communication and understanding between all parties. Ask the provider to show you her written policies and contracts that are given to families.
   - Written contracts/policies. Families are given contracts and policies of the program and these are reviewed annually by the provider and revised, if necessary.
   g. **Program Management:** High quality programs have procedures in place for reacting to new risks as they develop, and incorporate new procedures into long-range plans for program improvement.

- Job Descriptions. Written job descriptions need to be available for each position, if applicable.
- Space. The space in the Family Child Care setting should be balanced between space for children, business space (desk, computer, etc.), and space for the provider's family.

h. **Internal Communication:** Strong systems of internal staff communication are vital to ensure that all providers and families are fully informed of every policy and procedure affecting the operation of the center. Communications are most effective when they are two-way. Measures of daily staff communication and the quality of ongoing staff meetings are used to assess program's efforts at internal communication for the quality rating system.

- Staff communication. All relevant information is communicated effectively within the program. Multiple pieces of observable evidence including written materials confirm strong staff communication practices. Assessment of various combinations of communication methods (e.g. up-to-date staff bulletin board, message board, in-house newsletter, internal memos, email or voicemail practices, successful policies for conflict resolution), should confirm that communication procedures among staff are strong in this program.
- Staff meetings. All providers attend at monthly or quarterly meetings (as a program or within teams).

i. **Provider Leadership:** Programs with competent and committed leadership tend to have providers who are frequently on-site, who invest significant amounts of time in administering the program, and who show commitment to early care and education outside of the program by participating in professional organizations.

- Provider on-site. The provider is on-site at least 10 hours per week.
- Networking. Provider demonstrates leadership by belonging to and participating in professional organizations and/or networks with other professionals in some way (must provide evidence of networking---minutes from meetings, event flyers, etc).

3. **Family Practices**

High quality early care and education programs have a plan in place for making families feel welcome, monitoring ongoing family participation and satisfaction, strengthening family-provider communication, and assuring that available resources and services are meeting the needs of all families. Examine a sampling of policies and procedures related to families in the center. Look for a welcoming environment as well as comprehensive family-friendly materials accessible on site that include policies, a fiscal agreement or written policies on parent responsibilities for payments and collection of delinquent tuition and fees.

j. **Welcoming Environment:** Recognizing that families are the customers, assess the program from the perspective of new and continuing families. As you enter the center, look around for obvious efforts to communicate with families. Are strong orientation procedures in place for new families? Are there comfortable spaces, possibly a bulletin board with resources for families, a family newsletter, or other messages that convey a sense of welcome to families in the program?

- Orientation of new families. An appropriate system is in place for orientation of new families including a center tour and check-in after enrollment. New families

should be kept up-to-date and should receive accurate information on program operations.

- Family resources. Families are welcome to spend time in the program.   Some pamphlets/brochures as well as other family-friendly resources for families (e.g. family resources bulletin board, suggestion box, program newsletter, books on child development) are available for families.

k. **Family Participation:** Programs that truly welcome family participation in the program find ways to bring families into the program, recruits families as volunteers, makes use of family members' talents, and requests input on program operations from families at a variety of different levels. Indicate if there is a system in place for maintaining ongoing participation of families and encouraging family input at different levels of program operation.

- Family social/educational events. Ongoing family participation is meaningfully encouraged by offering at least one family meeting or social events each year. These "meetings" may take many forms including semi-structured family fun nights, breakfast meetings, holiday parties, or educational events, or they may include a variety of less formal invitations designed to bring families to share their talents or cooperate toward a program goal. The goal is to determine whether effective practices are routinely used to encourage family participation.
- Family input into decision-making. Evidence is shown that the program conducts an annual family survey and uses the results of the survey to guide future program practices.

l. **Family-Provider Communication:** Programs with strong systems of family-provider communication establish practices that encourage providers to establish ongoing daily and weekly systems of friendly, informative conversations with families as well as more structured opportunities to talk directly with families about how best to work cooperatively to optimize their children's activities both in the program and at home.

- Daily/weekly/quarterly communication practices. The program encourages strong daily and weekly communication between providers and families. Newsletters are provided for families.
- Family-provider conferences. The program makes a strong effort to ensure that providers conduct family-provider conferences at least once each year with all or almost all families. Scheduled conferences may take place at the program or could take the form of a home visit.

m. **Family Services:** Programs can meet the needs of all families served by establishing links with community services and by developing collaborative relationships with other service providers in the community in order to increase family awareness, provide enriching opportunities, or increase the likelihood that families' needs are being met. Families' needs may vary depending on the socio-economic status of the clients served, but efforts should be made by all programs to inform families of community opportunities and connect families with needed services.

- Links with community services. Provider has knowledge of community opportunities and has established links with community service providers. Program provides services to meet the needs of families, whatever those needs might be (e.g. lending library, parenting classes, computer lab, food/clothing donations, transportation, notices of community events, library story hour).