

Community Investment
Collaborative for Kids

Early Childhood Physical Environment

LISC



Community Investment
Collaborative for Kids

Checklist



Introduction

This Checklist was created to help center-based early childhood programs assess the quality of their physical environment. It relies on standards developed by experts in the early care and education field and on experience gained by LISC staff and consultants in their work with programs across the country. A basic assumption of the Checklist is that your program space already meets applicable state building codes, health department regulations and state licensing requirements for child care facilities.

Reviewing a child care space with this tool can help you identify aspects of the physical facility that interfere with your efforts to provide high quality care, including a good working environment for your staff and a family-friendly space for parents. It may help with setting priorities for renovation or reconfiguration of your space. It may also help raise your expectations for the facility and motivate you to work toward a higher standard of quality.

This tool is for your program's internal use, and is intended to help you reach your goals for quality space. Look at each response and its list of features carefully, and resist the impulse to inflate or exaggerate your ratings. The Checklist will be most useful if it is an objective and honest appraisal of your space.

INSTRUCTIONS

The Checklist Key at the right shows the rating scale you should use to rate each response. Rate each checklist item based on this numeric scale from 0 to 4 or by marking "not applicable." Each item also has one or more icons, pictured in the Key, to indicate whether it is related to Health and Safety; Quality; or Maintenance, Repair and Aesthetics.

Use the Checklist as you review the space, examining each item and noting whether your space or furnishings meet the criteria or contain the features described. Reviewing the number and type of features checked under each item can help you determine which number on the scale best represents that particular aspect of your space.

You will note that each item also has a space to identify whether it is a priority item (PRI!). You can either mark priorities as you go through the checklist or you may find it easier to think about which items are priorities after you have completed all of the checklist sections. There is no single way to identify priorities. In almost every case a health and safety concern should be a priority. A low scoring item that affects how you implement your program or keeps you from achieving your goals is also likely to be a priority. For example, if your program values creating a welcoming environment for families, but scores low on its reception area, this could be a high priority to address.

KEY

RATING SCALE:

0
Does not exist
in the center, but should

1
Inadequate: requires
improvement or repair

2
Fair: should be improved

3
Good: good quality
or in good condition

4
Excellent:
first-rate or top quality

N/A
Not applicable:
doesn't apply to the program

PRI!
Priority!

ICONS:



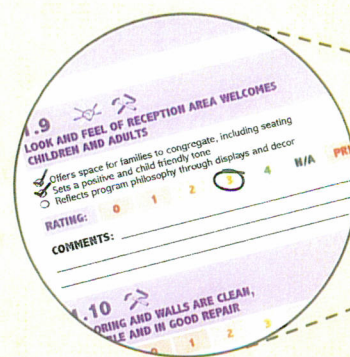
Health & Safety



Program Quality



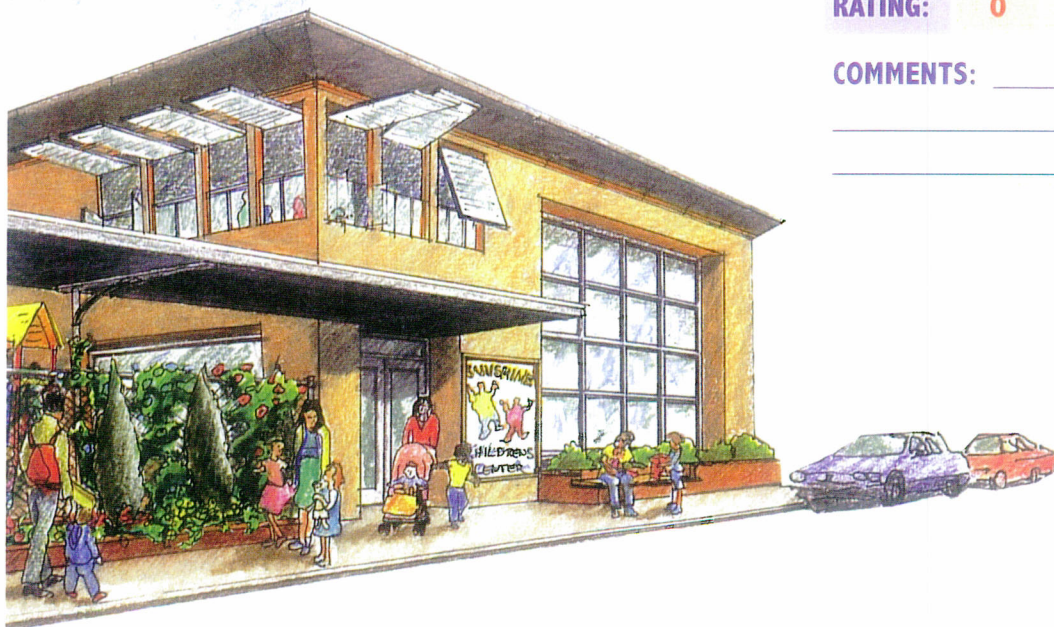
**Maintenance, Repair
& Aesthetics**



NOTE: This Checklist is based in part on the following resources: Early Childhood and Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scales, Head Start and Early Head Start Program Standards, Consumer Products Safety Commission, NAEYC Accreditation Standards, and National Program for Playground Safety.

1. The Building Exterior & Center Entry

The entry to your center, both exterior and interior, sets the tone for your program. It is the first impression that parents, children and other visitors will have of your space. The challenge at the entry is to find a balance between hospitality and security. The entry should be welcoming and the layout and feel of the space should support children in making the sometimes difficult transition from home to the center. Yet it must also provide some control over access to the facility.



BUILDING EXTERIOR

1.1

BUILDING EXTERIOR IS CLEAN AND WELL-MAINTAINED

- Area free of trash and debris
- Walls, windows, trim intact
- Exterior stairs, sidewalk in good condition
- Trees, shrubs, lawn well-maintained
- No graffiti on walls

RATING: **0** **1** **2** **3** **4** N/A **PRI**

COMMENTS: _____

1.2

BUILDING EXTERIOR IS ATTRACTIVE AND WELCOMING

- Materials and colors used on exterior of building inviting to children and families
- Attractive signage clearly welcomes families and visitors and directs them to the entrance
- Covered area at entry allows transition space out of the elements
- Dumpsters and other unattractive items hidden from view if near entry
- Plantings, pathways, seating and other interesting items such as a sculpture or landmark create welcoming feel at entry
- The scale of entry is intimate and non-institutional

RATING: **0** **1** **2** **3** **4** N/A **PRI**

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

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N/A

Not applicable: doesn't apply to the program

PRI

Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items



Health & Safety



Program Quality



Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics

1.3



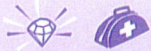
BUILDING IS STRUCTURALLY SOUND AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SAFE

- No plumbing leaks
- Roof is in good condition with no leaks
- Heating and air conditioning systems are fully functional
- Building is lead-free
- Building is radon-free
- Building is asbestos-free
- Building is free of mold

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.4



PARKING AREA IS SAFE AND CONVENIENT

- Located near center entrance
- Sufficient parking for staff and families
- Parking area and pathways well-lit
- Parking area safe
- Drop-off area located where children don't have to cross in front of moving vehicles

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.5



OUTDOOR LIGHTING IS ADEQUATE AND WELCOMING

- Security lighting on building and playground
- Exterior lighting makes center more welcoming after dark

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.6



BUILDING IS HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.7



ENTRANCE TO CENTER IS SAFE AND SECURE

- Clearly marked
- Has exterior lighting
- Security system controls access to center and screens visitors via intercom, personal contact or technology
- Pathways free of snow and ice

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

RECEPTION AND CIRCULATION

1.8



RECEPTION AREA IS WELL-DEFINED AND SECURE

- Signage directs visitors to reception area
- Clearly defined space for reception
- Controlled access to children's space
- Clear view of visitors entering center
- Serves as transition into the center

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

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Health & Safety



Program Quality



Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics

1.9

LOOK AND FEEL OF RECEPTION AREA WELCOMES CHILDREN AND ADULTS

- Offers space for families to congregate, including seating
- Sets a positive and child-friendly tone
- Reflects program philosophy through displays and décor

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI

COMMENTS: _____

1.10

FLOORING AND WALLS ARE CLEAN, DURABLE AND IN GOOD REPAIR

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI

COMMENTS: _____

1.11

DISPLAY BOARDS OR AREAS ARE AVAILABLE

- In reception area
- In corridors outside classrooms
- Enclosed in glass where required by code

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI

COMMENTS: _____

1.12

CIRCULATION THROUGHOUT THE FACILITY IS EFFICIENT AND SUPPORTS PROGRAMMING

- Clearly defined pathways through the center allow children, families and visitors to easily move through the space without passing through other classrooms
- Warm and welcoming, not institutional
- Hallways are clean, well-lit and clutter-free
- Enough room to maneuver strollers and equipment
- Signage to direct visitors through center and to identify spaces

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI

COMMENTS: _____

1.13

STAIRWAYS ARE SAFE AND EASY TO ACCESS

- Well-lit
- Non-slip treads on steps
- Handrails at child and adult height
- Clean, clutter-free

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI

COMMENTS: _____



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2. Program Support Space

A child care center is not just for children; it is also a work environment for the adults managing the center and caring for its children. The adult spaces should be comfortable, functional, attractive and well-equipped. Work in child care can be physically and emotionally demanding, with long hours and modest pay. Providing a professional work environment that shows respect for the staff and an understanding of their needs is crucial to ensuring their commitment and professionalism.

The facility is also used by parents and other visitors, and how the space is arranged can welcome them and encourage their involvement, or discourage it. To that end, the space, equipment and materials should convey a message about the values and philosophy of your program.

2.1

SEPARATE OFFICE SPACE IS SUFFICIENT

- Office space provides opportunities for confidential conversations between staff and with families
- Sufficient number of administrative offices to meet center's staffing needs
- Space for files, materials, office equipment

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PRI!**

COMMENTS: _____

2.2

MEETING SPACE IS SUFFICIENT

- Sufficient amount of space for staff and parent meetings
- If it is in a multi-purpose space, storage is available for tables, chairs
- Comfortable and functional adult-sized furnishings in good repair
- Good acoustics

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PRI!**

COMMENTS: _____

2.3

ADULT LAVATORIES MEET PROGRAM NEEDS

- Sufficient number for staff and visitors
- Conveniently located
- In good repair

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PRI!**

COMMENTS: _____

2.4

APPROPRIATE WORK SPACE IS DEDICATED FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

- Resource area with work surface and curriculum materials, tools, and supplies
- Access to computer and phone
- Functional, attractive and in good repair

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PRI!**

COMMENTS: _____

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2.5



SECURE AND ACCESSIBLE STORAGE SPACE FOR STAFF IS AVAILABLE IN OFFICES, CLASSROOMS, CLOSETS OR OTHER STORAGE AREAS

- Locked storage for personal possessions
- Storage for files, paperwork, children's records
- Closed storage for classroom materials
- Sufficient storage for bulk supplies, seasonal items, etc.
- Appropriate storage for first aid supplies

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.6



APPROPRIATE SPACE FOR STAFF BREAKS AND TIME AWAY FROM CHILDREN

- Comfortable adult-sized furnishings in good repair
- Access to phone
- Refrigerator, microwave and area for personal items

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.7



APPROPRIATE SPACE IS DESIGNATED FOR A SICK CHILD TO REST WHILE WAITING FOR PARENT

- Near lavatory
- Room for cot to rest
- Easily supervised

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.8



FACILITY FEATURES ENGAGE PARENTS IN THE PROGRAM

- Area set aside for parent resources and information
- Individual parent mailboxes in classrooms
- Décor and display reflect family culture and interests
- Spaces outside the classroom invite parents to linger, meet other parents, talk to teachers or spend time with a child before leaving

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.9



TELEPHONE SYSTEM IS ADEQUATE

- Sufficient number of phone lines to handle needs of program
- Working telephone or intercom in each classroom
- Telephone system provides intercom between classrooms and office

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.10



HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING IS EFFECTIVE

- Heating consistent and comfortable
- Cooling consistent and comfortable
- Cooling units do not block windows
- Systems can be manually controlled

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

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2.11



LIGHTING IS SUFFICIENT IN ADMINISTRATIVE, STAFF AND PUBLIC AREAS

- Balance of natural and artificial lighting
- Fluorescent lighting is not the exclusive artificial light source

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI

COMMENTS: _____

2.12



KITCHEN IS SAFE AND APPROPRIATELY EQUIPPED FOR TYPE OF FOOD SERVICE PLANNED

- Conveniently located
- Clean and efficiently laid out
- Closed storage for dishes, utensils, bulk foods, including locked storage for any potentially hazardous items
- Appropriate equipment for type of food service, in good working condition
- Adequate provisions for handling waste and recyclables
- System for record keeping, posting notices

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI

COMMENTS: _____

2.13



KITCHEN IS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S COOKING ACTIVITIES

- Layout of kitchen allows children to safely watch or participate in cooking activities, including a child-height counter space
- Kitchen is located near classrooms where it is convenient for staff to access and use

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI

COMMENTS: _____

2.14



LAUNDRY AREA IS WELL-DESIGNED AND CENTRALLY LOCATED

- Protected from child access
- Close proximity to infant/toddler rooms
- Full-sized heavy duty washer and dryer
- Laundry sink with hot and cold water
- Counter with space to organize clean laundry
- Storage for supplies and soiled items
- Adequate lighting
- Acoustic treatment to manage sound transmission

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI

COMMENTS: _____

2.15



MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL CLOSET IS SAFE AND FUNCTIONAL

- Locking door
- Control panels for electrical and telecommunications equipment easily accessible for servicing
- Acoustic insulation if near classrooms or offices
- Adequate lighting
- Located near service entrance and accessible through non-classroom space

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI

COMMENTS: _____

2.16



CUSTODIAL FACILITIES ARE SAFE AND FUNCTIONAL

- Locking door
- Provisions for waste handling and disposal
- Slop sink on floor or janitorial sink
- Space for brooms, mops, vacuum cleaner
- Secure storage for cleaning supplies
- Adequate lighting

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI

COMMENTS: _____

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3. Children's Spaces

Each group of children and their teachers (as defined by NAEYC guidelines) should have its own distinct classroom space with walls to provide acoustical separation from other classrooms. Although some connections between classrooms through windows or shared bathrooms or changing areas can facilitate teacher communication and provide children with views beyond their own room, it is critical to provide a distinct space for each group.

Each classroom should also have its own individual identity with colors, décor, equipment, display and materials that differ from other classrooms, rather than creating a uniform institutional appearance. Colors should be in tones that will blend harmoniously with the multitude of shades found in children's toys and materials. Find opportunities to use natural materials rather than plastic, to create order instead of clutter, and to create a space that reflects the lives and work of the teachers and children using the space.

Please note that this section does not cover classroom toys and materials. When assessing your center's physical environment, keep in mind that equipping the classrooms with appropriate educational toys and materials is essential to providing a quality program. Information on this is included in the Appendix.



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 **Health & Safety**

 **Program Quality**

 **Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics**

CLASSROOM

3.1

ALL GROUPS OF CHILDREN (as defined by NAEYC guidelines) **ARE IN DISTINCT CLASSROOM SPACES ACOUSTICALLY SEPARATED BY WALLS**

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.2

CHILDREN'S LAVATORY IS LOCATED DIRECTLY ADJACENT TO CLASSROOM

- Opens directly onto classroom
- Location and design provide good sightlines into lavatory from the classroom

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

Note: This section should be completed for each classroom in the center. Please photocopy if additional copies are needed.

3.3

CHILDREN'S LABORATORY IS WELL-DESIGNED FOR CHILD CARE USE

- Fixtures, soap, paper dispensers correct size and height
- Ventilated with mechanical exhaust fan
- Drain in floor

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.4

CLASSROOM OFFERS AMPLE SPACE

NOTE: Early childhood experts agree that more than the minimal licensing requirement of generally 35 sq-ft. per child is needed to support a high quality learning environment. Optimal square footage is generally considered 50-70 sq-ft. per child depending on the age and number of children.

- Activity area exceeds licensing minimum
- Allows for flexible use as children's needs change
- Space does not feel crowded

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

TIP: When measuring classroom square footage make sure to subtract the area occupied by large furniture such as cubbies, refrigerators, and cabinetry.

3.5

CLASSROOM ENTRY IS WELL-DESIGNED

- Provides for a distinct and separate area that allows families and visitors to enter without disrupting classroom activities
- Each child has his or her own cubby large enough for all personal belongings
- Parent notice board and sign-in
- Transition area/seating for removing outdoor clothes, etc.

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.6

ARRANGEMENT OF CLASSROOM SPACE IS FUNCTIONAL

- Clear pathways through the space
- Mix of floor surfaces: non-skid resilient flooring and carpet
- Not crowded or cluttered
- Sufficient space for cots when children are napping
- Room arranged for wheelchair access if needed

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

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Health & Safety


Program Quality


Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics

3.7

CLASSROOM SPACE IS SAFE

- Pillars and posts wrapped with soft covering
- Space easily supervised
- Heating units and pipes securely covered
- All outlets are child-safe or covered
- Cords secured out of children's sight and reach
- Hazardous substances and sharp objects stored out of children's sight and reach
- Doors have view panels for safe entry or exit from rooms
- Protective barrier/shatterproof glass on windows at child-height
- Operable windows have secure screens
- Operable windows above the first floor have child-safe barriers
- Shelf and cubby units anchored to wall or floor

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.8

ARRANGEMENT AND LAYOUT OF CLASSROOM SPACE SUPPORTS PROGRAMMING

- Separate zones for quiet, active and messy play
- Interest areas well-defined using furnishings, room dividers and architectural features
- Compatible activities adjacent to each other
- Materials displayed and accessible to children
- Interest areas placed near resources to support the activity (art near water, computer near electric outlet, blocks on rug)
- Room organized to promote independence and exploration

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.9

SPACE SUPPORTS TEACHERS

- Adult-height sink in classroom (other than diaper sink)
- Adult-height work surface
- Telephone and/or intercom system

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.10

AESTHETICS AND MOOD CREATE A COMFORTABLE AND SOOTHING ENVIRONMENT

- Harmonious color scheme
- Furnishings and rugs create a unified look
- Muted color palette
- Many soft elements in the space
- Emphasis on natural materials and nature

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
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Health & Safety



Program Quality



Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics

3.11

CHILDREN'S FURNISHINGS ARE SUFFICIENT, APPROPRIATE AND CLEAN

- Sturdy, well-made, in good repair
- Cubbies, tables, chairs and shelves have a unified appearance
- Appropriate size and scale for age group
- Each child has chair, cubby, storage for individual work, and a cot or crib
- Soft furnishings available

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.12

CLASSROOM IS IN GOOD REPAIR

- Ceiling, floor, floor coverings and walls free of splinters, peeling paint, water stains or excessive wear
- Windows, heating units, other fixed features intact and in good condition

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.13

CLASSROOM HAS ACTIVITY SINK FOR CHILDREN

- Sink and counter at child-height
- Soap and paper towels flush-mounted at child-height

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
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3.14

SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF EXTERIOR WINDOWS PROVIDE GOOD AMOUNT OF NATURAL DAYLIGHT AND VISIBILITY TO OUTDOORS

- Access to child-height windows to the outdoors
- Lofts or raised platforms up to higher windows
- Window coverings adjust to control level of natural light

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CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
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CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.15

INTERIOR WINDOWS ALLOW FOR VISIBILITY AND SECURITY BETWEEN CLASSROOMS WHILE STILL PROVIDING ACOUSTICAL SEPARATION

- Windows to other classrooms and/or corridors
- Windows or observation spaces allow parents, staff and visitors to see into classrooms
- Safety glass used where glass is child-height

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.16

CLASSROOM OFFERS AMPLE STORAGE SPACE

- Sufficient space for children's materials and supplies used on a regular basis
- Closed storage space available in classroom for children's supplies and teacher materials
- Individual storage for children's belongings
- Easily accessed storage for cots/mats
- Secure storage of medicines/hazardous materials

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.17

HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEM IS SAFE AND RESPONSIVE

- Temperature controlled within individual classroom
- Air temperature consistent and comfortable
- Radiant heating in flooring, especially in infant/toddler rooms

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

0
Does not exist in the center, but should

1
Inadequate: requires improvement or repair

2
Fair: should be improved

3
Good: good quality or in good condition

4
Excellent: first-rate or top quality

N/A
Not applicable: doesn't apply to the program

PR!
Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items


Health & Safety


Program Quality


Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics

3.18

LIGHTING IS VARIED AND ADJUSTABLE

- Balance of natural and artificial lighting in each classroom
- Fluorescent lighting not the only source of artificial light
- Different lighting used for different activity areas
- Light level can be adjusted by turning some fixtures on and off
- Classroom lighting has dimmer switches

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

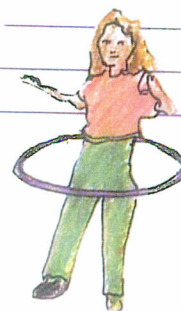
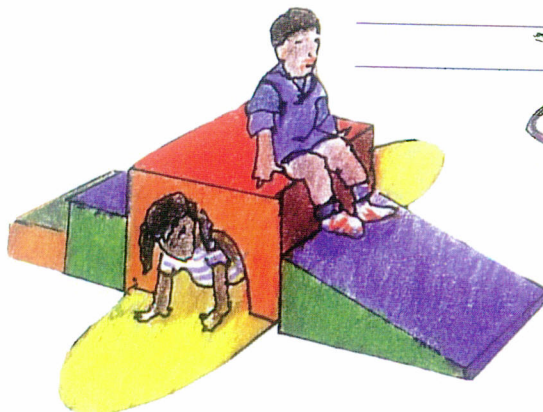
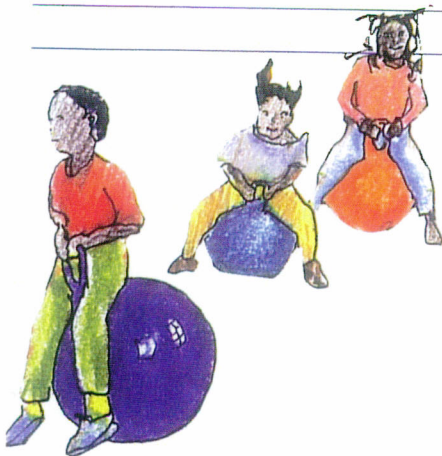
3.19

ELECTRIC SERVICE IS AMPLE

- Sufficient number of outlets to avoid use of extension cords
- Circuit breakers are not thrown because of overloads to system

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____



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N/A
Not applicable: doesn't apply to the program

PR!
Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items



3.20

APPROPRIATE ACOUSTICAL FEATURES REDUCE NOISE LEVEL OF CENTER

- Absence of ambient noises such as buzzing lights, electronic hums, ventilation system motors, etc.
- Limited transmission of sound from adjoining rooms or outside street noise
- Efforts made to soften and absorb excessive noise – use of acoustic tiles and panels, fabric, cushions, rugs, upholstered furniture
- Absence of high ceilings that would contribute to poor acoustics

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

OTHER CHILDREN'S SPACES

3.21

THERE IS A WELL-DESIGNED INDOOR GROSS MOTOR SPACE

- Designated space for active indoor play available
- Suitable climbing, jumping, crawling and balance equipment
- Safety mats or protective flooring
- Suitable wheeled toys for different age groups
- Convenient storage for gross motor equipment

RATING: **0** **1** **2** **3** **4** **N/A** **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

INFANT AND TODDLER ROOMS

In addition to the information above, there are further considerations for infant and toddler rooms. Infants and toddlers spend much of their time on the floor so it should be soft, warm, and clean. Equipment should be sturdy, age appropriate and scrupulously clean.

3.22 FLOOR SURFACE IS VARIED

FOR INFANTS:

- Well-padded carpet, low carpeted risers in crawling spaces
- Easily cleaned resilient flooring in eating areas and at changing table

FOR TODDLERS:

- Mix of carpet/area rugs and washable flooring
- Floor level changes with carpeted risers or steps

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.23 DIAPER CHANGING AREA IS ACCESSIBLE AND HYGIENIC

- Location of diaper area allows teacher to continue to supervise classroom
- Sink location is separate from food prep area
- Diaper sink separate from other sinks and adjacent to diaper area
- Changing table has safety rail and non-porous surface
- Storage of soiled diapers convenient, hygienic and air-tight
- Diapering and sanitizing supplies stored securely
- For toddlers, changing table has steps
- Area is ventilated with mechanical exhaust fan
- Diaper and wipe storage accessible with one hand while teacher still has one hand on child
- Sink features wrist-controlled faucets

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.24 SPACE FOR INFANT AND TODDLER ACTIVITIES IS SUFFICIENT AND APPROPRIATE

- Sufficient usable floor space for crawling, climbing, and other activities (after subtracting floor space used for cribs, feeding and diapering activities)
- Well-defined napping area such as an alcove or separate crib area (if this meets licensing regulations for supervision and visibility)
- Available space for children to get out of the group, rest or watch the activities

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.25 INFANT AND TODDLER FURNISHINGS ARE APPROPRIATE

- Comfortable adult seating, suitable for holding or rocking children
- Soft surfaces: futons, water mattress, other textures if allowed by licensing
- Secure railings and surfaces for children to pull themselves to standing position
- Pictures and non-breakable mirrors at crawler's eye level
- Low open shelves for toys
- Bins to isolate toys that have been in a child's mouth
- Equipment to sanitize infant toys
- Sturdy furnishings designed for use with these age groups
- Cribs and evacuation crib(s) as required by licensing
- Individual feeding chairs
- No use of walkers
- Limited use of "containment" equipment such as Exersaucers, swings, etc.
- Elevated enclosed play platform

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

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Not applicable: doesn't apply to the program

PR!
Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items


Health & Safety


Program Quality


Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics

4. Outdoor Play Areas

Outdoor play spaces are frequently an afterthought when planning or evaluating child care environments. As a result, many child care playgrounds include one or more pieces of play equipment but offer little else. If the outdoor space is considered an extension of the classroom, it will be designed to support a range of activities: physical activity, exploration, fantasy play, sand and water play, interaction with nature and safe plants, as well as space for quiet contemplation.

4.1 PLAY AREA IS WELL-LOCATED

- Classrooms open to outdoor play space
- If no direct access from classrooms, distance to play area is short and does not require crossing traffic
- Convenient access to bathroom, sink, drinking water

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

4.2 PLAY AREA PROVIDES SUFFICIENT SPACE

- Minimum 75 square feet per child of usable outdoor play space for 50% of the total center population
- Separate play spaces for infants, toddlers and preschool children

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

4.3 PLAY AREA HAS SEPARATE ZONES

- Areas for quiet activities and active play
- Areas for large group play and individual or small group play
- Distinct area for fixed play structures
- If center is located in housing complex or office building, active zone is away from building
- Good teacher sightlines

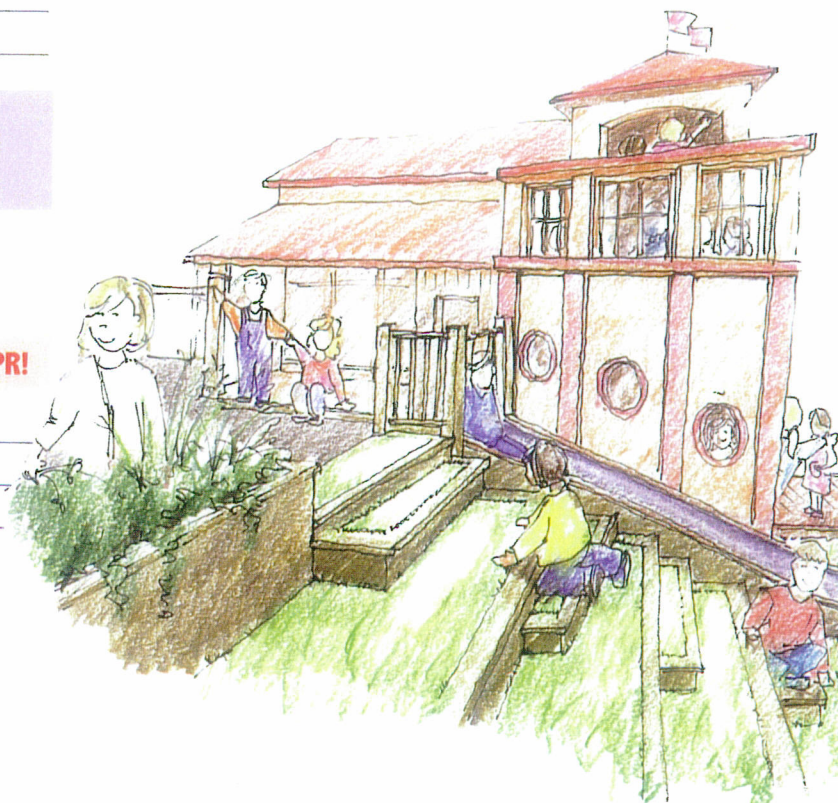
RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

4.4 CLEAR PATHWAYS DIRECT CHILDREN THROUGH THE PLAY AREA AND AROUND ACTIVITY AREAS/EQUIPMENT

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____



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N/A
Not applicable: doesn't apply to the program

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Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items


Health & Safety


Program Quality


Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics

4.5

PLAY STRUCTURES AND EQUIPMENT PROVIDE DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY

- Appropriate size and scale for age group
- Provide a variety of options for climbing, jumping, balancing and sliding

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.6

AGE APPROPRIATE RIDING TOYS ARE AVAILABLE

- Several types for each age group
- Clearly delineated hard surface riding path separate from quiet activities

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.7

A RANGE OF OTHER OUTDOOR PLAY OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVIDED

- Sand and water play
- Garden area with access to sun and water
- Dramatic play area with props and enclosure (canopy, play house, tent)
- Large flat surface for running, circle and ball games
- Art area with outdoor easels or chalk surfaces, tables or other flat surfaces
- Block and building activities

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.8

IF THE PROGRAM SERVES INFANTS AND TODDLERS, AGE APPROPRIATE AREAS/ACTIVITIES ARE PROVIDED

- Safe and interesting places to crawl, pull up and climb
- Self-contained and protected from other children

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.9

NATURAL FEATURES ARE INCLUDED WHENEVER POSSIBLE

- Gardening opportunities for children
- Tree, shrubs, child-safe plants
- Rocks or boulders
- Small hills or slopes
- Bird feeders or houses

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.10

SUFFICIENT STORAGE IS AVAILABLE FOR OUTDOOR AND SEASONAL EQUIPMENT

- Storage for large equipment such as riding toys and strollers
- Secure and weatherproof
- Well-organized and easy to use
- Smaller point of use storage units placed around playground for toys and "loose parts"

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

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Not applicable: doesn't apply to the program

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Health & Safety


Program Quality


Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics

4.11

PLAY AREA IS HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE

- Slope of paths and ramps meets accessibility guidelines
- Activity areas are barrier-free

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

4.12

GROUND SURFACES ARE VARIED, INCLUDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF GRASS, DIRT OR SAND, HARD SURFACE FOR RIDING TOYS, SUITABLE SAFETY SURFACING UNDER ANY EQUIPMENT, ETC.

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

4.13

PLAY AREA IS CLEAN

- Litter free
- No animal waste
- Garbage and recyclables kept in closed receptacle outside play area
- Sandboxes covered when not in use
- Wading pools and water tables emptied and cleaned after use
- Free of insect nests and signs of rodents

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

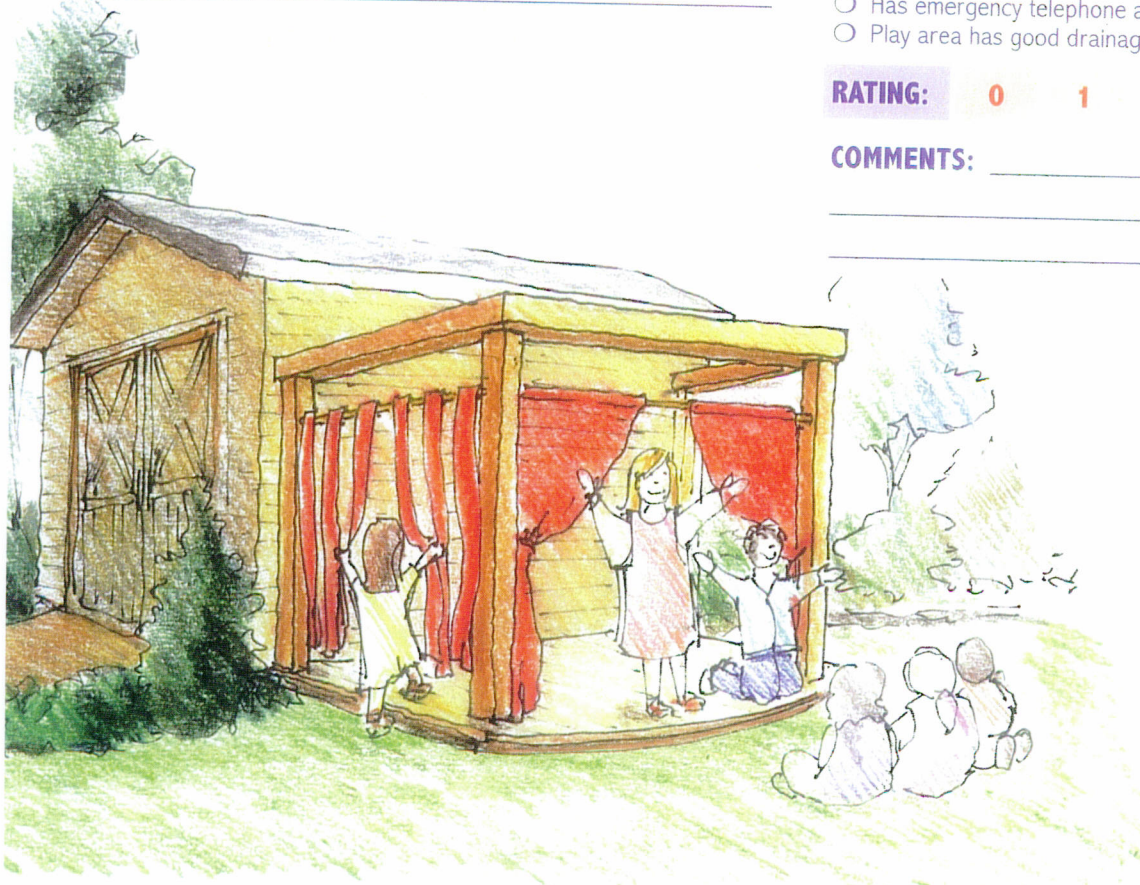
4.14

PLAY AREA IS SAFE

- Complies with National Program for Playground Safety guidelines on equipment, fall zones and safety surfaces (www.uni.edu/playground)
- Play structures in good repair and inspected regularly
- Easy to supervise – clear sightlines, no large obstructions
- Checked daily for hazards
- Has emergency telephone and first aid kit
- Play area has good drainage, does not collect water

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____



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Excellent: first-rate or top quality

N/A
Not applicable: doesn't apply to the program

PR!
Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items



4.15

SHADE IS AVAILABLE TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM THE ELEMENTS

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

4.16

COVERED PLAY AREA IS AVAILABLE SO CHILDREN CAN BE OUTDOORS IN ALL WEATHER

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

4.17

PLAY AREA IS SECURE

- Fenced with appropriate height for the area (minimum four feet), with self-closing gates and a childproof mechanism
- Play area is for exclusive use of the center's children, teachers and parents
- Center entrance does not pass through play area

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

4.18

PLAYGROUND STRUCTURES ARE IN GOOD REPAIR

- No loose, broken or missing parts
- Free of splinters and rust
- No open S-hooks on equipment
- No protruding bolts
- Free of cracks and holes
- Concrete footers on equipment are covered

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

4.19

PLAY STRUCTURES ARE SAFE

- No gaps in equipment where clothing could be caught (generally a gap between 3 1/2 – 9 inches)
- No head entrapments or pinch hazards
- Climbing structure platforms have a maximum height of 24 inches for infants and toddlers and 48 inches for children under 5 years
- Climbing structure platforms have guardrails
- Climbing structures have more than one way on and off
- Steps, ramps and ladders end at a platform that holds more than one child
- Swings are separate from climbing structures and are at least 18-24 inches apart
- Only bucket style swings with straps are used for infants and toddlers
- Preschool slides are a maximum height of 6 feet
- Infant/toddler slides have a gradual slope
- Slides have non-metal surface

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

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Health & Safety


Program Quality


Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics

4.20

APPROPRIATE FALL/SAFETY ZONES AROUND PLAY EQUIPMENT

- Stationary equipment such as climbers have a fall zone at least 6 feet in all directions
- Slides higher than 4 feet have a fall zone (use zone) of safety surfacing equal to the slide height plus 4 feet (for example a 6 foot slide would have a fall zone extending 10 feet from the end of the slide)
- Swings have use zones of safety surfacing at least double the height of the swing beam (for example a swing on a 10 foot pole requires 20 feet of fall zone surfacing and clearance in front and 20 feet in the back).

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____

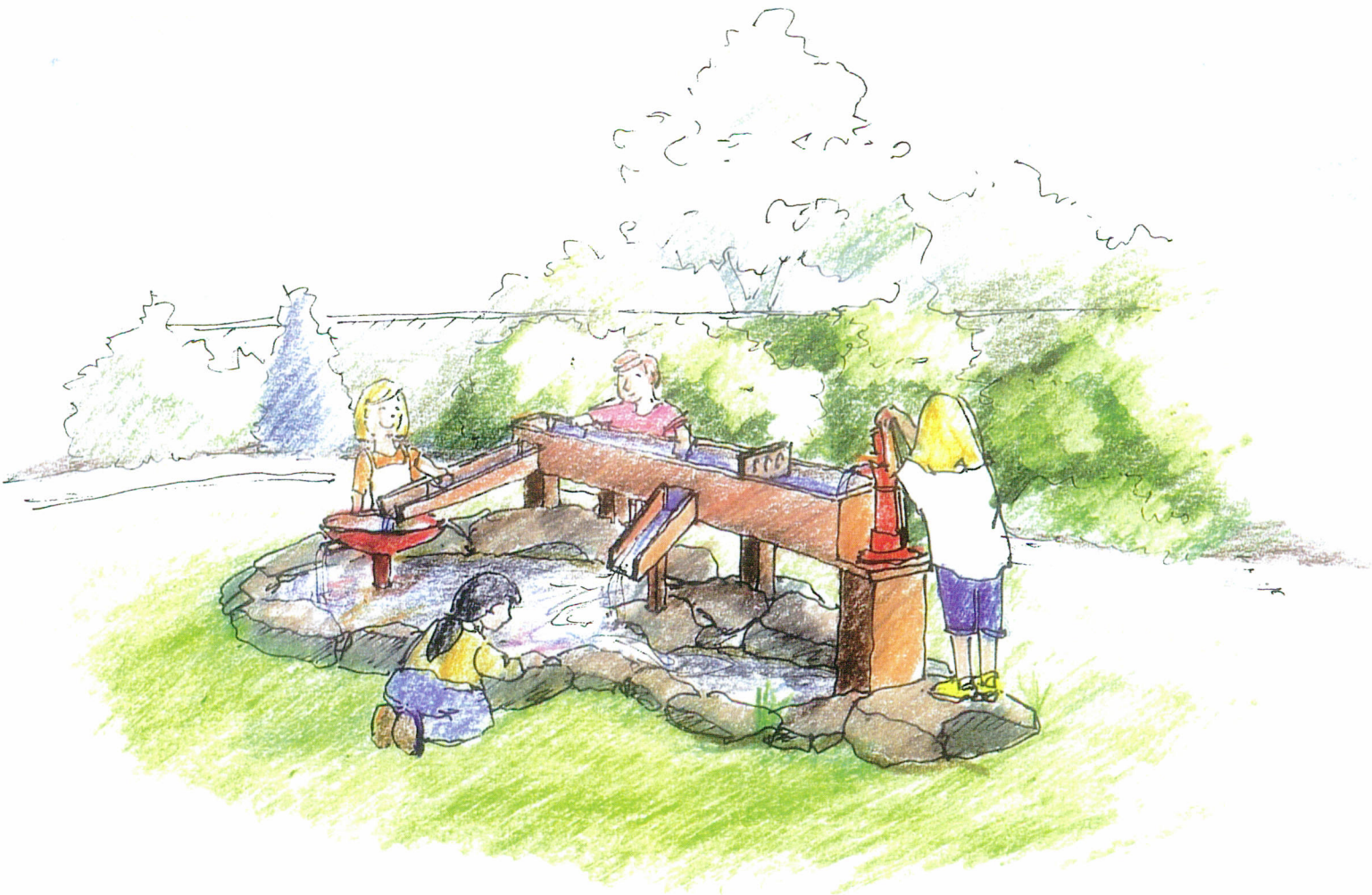
4.21

SUITABLE MATERIAL USED AT ADEQUATE DEPTH IN ALL FALL/USE ZONES

- Equipment 6 feet or higher has at least 12 inches of wood chips, double shredded bark, engineered wood fiber or fine pea gravel or has a synthetic surface such as poured-in-place surfacing or rubber mats/tiles
- Equipment 4-6 feet high has one of the above surfacing materials or may also have 12 inches of sand or medium gravel
- Border around loose-fill surfacing
- No equipment is placed on asphalt, cement, dirt, grass or rocks

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A **PR!**

COMMENTS: _____



KEY

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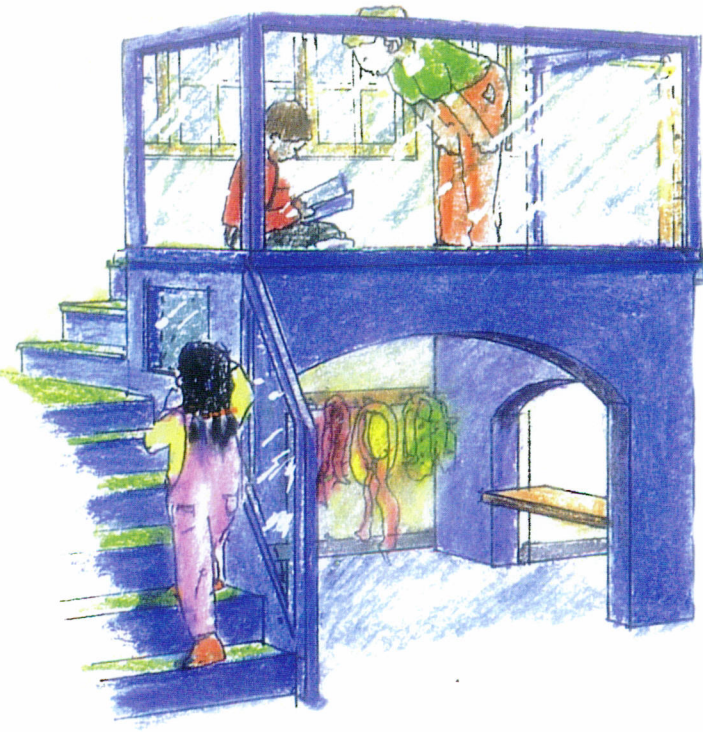
Next Steps

Now that you have used the Checklist to review your center's physical space you should have a better sense of its strengths and weaknesses. Hopefully while you were completing the Checklist you identified priorities and made notes on the specifics of your findings.

If your center is like most others, you no doubt identified a number of items that need improvement. The next logical question to ask is where do you go from here?

Start by going back through the Checklist and your findings to reflect on the results, and share them with others such as staff and board members. Pay attention to any particular trends and overarching strengths and weaknesses of the facility that became apparent while you were completing the Checklist.

Here are some specific steps you can take to help your organization develop a plan for addressing the facilities issues identified through your review.



I. IDENTIFY PRIORITY ITEMS THAT NEED ATTENTION

Go back through the Checklist and pull out any items that were identified as priorities, but scored low:

PRIORITY ITEM	SCORE
1. _____ _____	
2. _____ _____	
3. _____ _____	
4. _____ _____	
5. _____ _____	
6. _____ _____	
7. _____ _____	
8. _____ _____	
9. _____ _____	
10. _____ _____	

2. CATEGORIZE THE PRIORITY ITEMS

Use the chart below to categorize each of the priority items above according to the size and scope of the project and the level of effort and investment that will be required:

LIGHT REPAIR/AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENT/GENERAL MAINTENANCE	MODEST RENOVATION PROJECT	MAJOR RENOVATION TO AN EXISTING FACILITY	REQUIRES MOVING TO OR BUILDING A NEW FACILITY TO ACCOMPLISH
<p>Hints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ minimal in cost ○ can often be done by staff or volunteer ○ can be accomplished without structural work ○ can be done in a short time frame <p>Example: Painting the center's hallways</p>	<p>Hints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ may require some structural work ○ can be achieved without a major fundraising campaign ○ likely to require the assistance of an outside professional ○ will not generally require full architectural plans <p>Example: Installing a sink in a classroom</p>	<p>Hints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ typically require a major fundraising effort ○ needs involvement of a full construction team including an architect <p>Examples: Building an addition to an existing center, re-configuring existing space to increase square footage, providing missing features such as storage or staff support spaces</p>	<p>Hint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ cannot be achieved within the confines of the existing building or site regardless of the financial investment <p>Example: Insufficient square footage in classrooms in a building that won't accommodate any expansion</p>
1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.	5.

3. LOOK FOR TRENDS

Once you have placed all of the priority items into one of the columns in the chart above, try to identify specific themes. For example, if 80% of the items fall into the category of “requires a new facility,” this is an indication that your efforts should be focused on seeking alternative space. On the other hand, if the majority of your items fall into the “light repair” or “modest renovation” categories, you will be able to begin tackling these items immediately without a long planning process or substantial resources.

4. DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

The vast majority of programs will benefit from some additional planning and the development of specific action plans for addressing facility improvement priorities. The chart that follows is designed to help you think about the steps you should take.

Complete one chart for each major priority item. Photocopy this page for additional priority items you want to address. It may make sense in some cases to combine several items into one broader category for the purpose of this exercise. For example, if you have multiple priority items under "center entry/reception," you may want to create one broader category of "entry."

CHECKLIST NUMBER AND ITEM (or major category):

_____ : _____

TYPE OF PROJECT (repair, minor renovation, etc.):

DESCRIBE THE IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF YOUR PROGRAM IF THIS ITEM IS NOT ADDRESSED

- What will happen if you don't address this item?
- What benefit will be achieved by addressing this item?

WHAT IS NEEDED TO ADDRESS THIS ITEM?

- Financial resources
- Professional experts
- Staff time

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

- Foundations
- Individuals
- Operating reserves
- Capital campaign

PROPOSED TIMELINE

- How long do you expect this to take?
- When will the project begin?
- When do you hope to have it completed?

ACTION STEPS

- What are the next steps?
 - raising money
 - identifying professionals
 - seeking approvals (landlord, licensing, neighbors, etc.)
- Who will be responsible for carrying out these steps?
- Who will track your progress?

Appendix: Toys and Materials

CLASSROOM TOYS AND MATERIALS

Toys and materials are key elements in developing a high quality classroom environment. Select attractive, well-constructed toys that stimulate the imagination. Look for open-ended toys that will maintain children's interest. Reduce the visual chaos of your space by selecting toys made from natural materials or muted colors rather than the very bright plastic that is so prevalent in children's toys. Choose toys that suit the age and development of the children in the group – some should be easy to master and others more challenging. Provide several of the more popular toys, particularly for toddlers and young three-year-olds. Look for materials that will build on the interests of individual children as well as the group. Offer children safe and interesting materials to use in their play.

OUTDOOR TOYS AND MATERIALS

Even a beautifully landscaped and equipped outdoor play area requires a variety of props, toys and materials that children can use in their play. A mix of containers, sturdy dolls and animals, vehicles, balls, child-size tools, and dress ups can be placed in appropriate areas around the playground. For toddlers and preschoolers, add various natural materials: shells, colored pebbles, pieces of wood, baskets, and other materials sorted into weatherproof containers. Planning for storage and display of the outdoor toys and materials is important to their effective use.

FOR DETAILED INFORMATION ON SELECTING MATERIALS SEE:

- **The Creative Curriculum** by Diane Trister Dodge and Laura J. Colker provides detailed curriculum plans for interest areas and suggestions for materials and furnishings to equip each area.
- **Designs for Living and Learning** by Deb Curtis and Margie Carter includes beautiful photographs and thoughtful ideas about developing a child care environment.
- **Playgrounds that Work: Creating Outdoor Play Environments for Children Birth to Eight Years** by Pauline Berry offers a practical guide to creating appropriate outdoor learning environments.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE MATERIALS

LISC has produced a series of resource guides on all aspects of child care facilities design and development, including outdoor playgrounds. These guides may be helpful during your planning process. More information is provided on the inside cover.