

4 STAR Verification Tool



Facility Name: _____

PDS: _____

Date: _____

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4A: **STAFF QUALIFICATIONS, EVALUATION AND COMMUNICATION**

Staff Evaluation

DEFINITION: The director, using criteria from the individual’s job description, evaluates each staff member. The evaluation criteria and procedures as described in the program’s personnel handbook (which may include self-evaluation) are known to each individual being evaluated. The director discusses evaluation results with each staff member, and results are considered when determining salary increments. Results are incorporated into the individual’s professional development plan.

***Not Obs = Not Observed**

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs*	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. A tool, which includes criteria for evaluation and the process of evaluation for staff at least on an annual basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing staff evaluation tool/form used by program - Verify that evaluation process has occurred on at least an annual basis by viewing completed evaluations or by verification provided through staff interviews or by statement by HR dept acknowledging annual staff evaluations take place. 				
2. A plan for staff improvement for each staff member, if appropriate, based on evaluation results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing document when applicable. 				

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Staff Communication

DEFINITION: Meetings held on a regular basis with all staff for program planning and problem solving. It is recommended that meetings be held at least quarterly.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. Meetings are held at least on a quarterly basis.	- Verify by reviewing sign in sheets, agendas or minutes verifying meeting accord at least quarterly.				
2. Staff participation in developing agendas and setting meeting dates.	- Verify by documenting how staff participate through staff interviews or other program documents or observation of other documents that show evidence.				
3. Evidence that meetings provide a safe environment where staff members can ask questions, present alternative ideas, and share feelings.	- Verify by reviewing copies of minutes documenting staff input and by interviewing staff.				

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4B: EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM'S ENVIRONMENT

RATIONALE—The environment affects the way children behave, develop, and learn. It also affects the quantity and quality of interactions between adults and children. It includes tangible aspects, such as appropriate materials and equipment and intangible aspects, such as the physical and human qualities that together create an atmosphere that promotes self-esteem, social interaction, rich language, and joy of learning.

DEFINITION: The environment meets all required local, state, and federal regulations. It includes space (both indoors and outdoors) with appropriate equipment and materials that encourage children to engage in hands-on learning. The environment represents New Mexico's diverse languages and cultures.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. Outdoor space has some protection from the elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify through observation of outdoor space that there are adequate shaded areas like: Trees, sunshades, porch, etc. 				
2. Outdoor space should include as many centers as possible and be offered as often as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Through observation verify by using a check mark that the program has some of the following interest area in the outdoor space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Play area that includes climber, swings, slides, space for active games, play with a parachute, hoops, balls and other equipment. • Sandbox for digging area and various sand toys made available to children. Sandbox /sand is kept clean. • Water table or dish tubs and water toys located near a faucet. 				

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Riding toys with trails or paths that link various spaces on the playground, a large patio area for riding, and a storage area. • Dramatic play area that includes a playhouse or other play structure. Dramatic play also occurs on climbers in conjunction with riding toys. Wide variety needed. • Quiet play area for relaxing, enjoying books, listening to stories, and alone space. • Science/Nature area such as a small garden, animal area or bird feeders. • Art/Woodworking area for children to engage in creative and constructive play with equipment such as a table, an easel, tree stumps, etc. 				
<p>3. Opportunities to develop motor skills.</p>	<p>- Verify through observation that facilitated group and individual activities like, jumping, climbing, running, balancing hopscotch are provided</p>				

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4C: CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN’S PROGRESS

RATIONALE—One of the major aspects of high quality programs for young children is the curriculum, which stems from sound principles of child development and reflects that each child is a unique person with an individual pattern and timing of growth and development. The curriculum consists of developmentally appropriate practices that are based on a holistic view of children, meeting their needs in all six developmental areas: physical, motor, social, emotional, language, and cognitive. Some programs might also include the spiritual domain as a seventh developmental area. Curriculum is carefully planned to meet both short-term and long-term goals for the program and for individual children.

Children’s progress is assessed informally on a continuous basis using a series of brief anecdotal records (descriptions of the child’s behavior or skills in given situation). Children’s progress also can be assessed formally at least twice/year using a developmental checklist (checklist of behaviors that indicate physical, motor, language, cognitive, social, and emotional development/progress).

DEFINITION: Curriculum is what happens every day in the classroom and on the playground. It includes every aspect of the daily program. Curriculum derives from the program’s mission statement, philosophy (which, in turn, is based on materials and equipment are used, activities that children and adults participate in, and interactions among children and between children and adults.

Assessment information is used to inform the development of curriculum. Observation of children is the primary method of gathering information for assessment, but especially in the case of children with special needs, other forms of assessment and evaluation may be used. Information on each child is collected, summarized and analyzed to document progress, and this information normally is shared with parents.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. A Written curriculum that that is carefully planned to meet both short-term and long-term goals for the program and for individual children that includes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing curriculum and day-to-day schedules. - Interview staff to verify that activities are planned based on individual children’s assessment. - Interview staff to verify that they are aware of individual children’s assessments and learning goals. 				

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<p>a) Knowledge of children’s needs and interests based on observation and assessment completed in the classroom</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing observation/assessment tool completed by staff on all children. - Some example that demonstrate staff understanding of children’s needs and interest are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff spends time with individual children in order to get to know their interests. • Age of children is taken into account i.e. shorter activities for younger and a bit longer for older. • Staff are flexible enough to change plans based on children needs and interests. • Staff provides experiences related to children interest. 				
<p>b) Continued use of assessment information and child observations for individual curriculum and program planning (evidence that the program ties assessment of children to curriculum)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Verify by reviewing dates on observation/assessment documents to ensure that they have being done as required: For preschoolers, anecdotal observation should be completed at least 4 times a year for each child or a development checklist completed at least 2 times a year accompanied with written observation that are conducted during the interim time period. For infants and toddlers, anecdotal observation should be completed 6 times a year or a developmental checklist completed 3 times a year accompanied with written observations conducted during the interim time period. - When staff are asked how the assessment tool is used for planning 				

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	curriculum, they can explain and show individual children's assessment records linking it to curriculum planning.				
c) Reflection of on-going implementation	- Verify by reviewing a history of individualization of lesson plans				
d) Broad range of content	- Verify through observation that staff provide activities which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning about shapes through unit blocks • Learning about numbers through grouping and sorting. 				Give Examples
e) Sequencing of activities from simple to complex	- Verify through observation sequencing of activities from simple to complex. Some examples may included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children pick a favorite book and after reading it, use props to act it out. Children change the events in the story. • Obstacle course- add a different skill weekly • Support developing self-help skills. Teachers are patient and encourage child's efforts. 				Give Examples
f) Support for children's thinking, reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving;	- Verify through observation support for children's thinking, reasoning, decision-making and problem solving. Some examples may included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff allow children to work through issues among themselves as much as possible with limited facilitation by modeling. • Staff provide activities that encourage thinking and reasoning. • Staff provide opportunities for children to make decisions 				Give Examples

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<p>g) Evidence that each child’s language and culture are integral components of the daily program;</p>	<p>- Verify by reviewing the daily program. Some example may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The classroom/setting includes images/photos of the children that are represented. • Art area is supplied with tan, brown and black paint, colors, and paper along with other colors. • Dramatic Play has dolls (a balance of both male and female), which represent major groups. Diverse cooking utensils, and equipment such as wheel chairs are present. • Books that reflect a range of ages, special needs and abilities, occupations, various gender roles, racial and cultural backgrounds. 				<p>Give Examples</p>
<p>h) Evidence of child participation in planning activities and developing program rules and routines;</p>	<p>- Verify through interviews with director, staff and older children.</p>				
<p>i) Evidence that adults challenge children just beyond their current level of development (scaffold their learning).</p>	<p>- Verify that staff extend children’s thinking and learning with in daily activities by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posing problems, asking open-ended questions, making suggestions. • Adding complexity to tasks. • Providing information, materials and assistance as needed to enable a child to master a skill and move to the next level of functioning. 				<p>Give Examples</p>
<p>j) Documentation verifying at least a 3 months history of</p>	<p>- Verify by reviewing at least a 3 months history of curriculum and lesson plans.</p>				

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curriculum planning and preferably a year's history of planning.					
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**ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4D:
STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

RATIONALE—The quality of the staff is the most important determinant of the quality of programs. Research shows that the level of professional preparation and formal education directly impact developmental outcomes for children. Teachers make decisions about the environment and the curriculum based on knowledge of early childhood theories and best practices. Well-prepared teachers advocate for quality in early childhood programs and take advantage of opportunities to improve competence, both for personal and professional growth and for the benefit of New Mexico’s culturally diverse children and families.

DEFINITION: An on-going plan for continued professional development for each staff member, including the director. Evidence should show that staff professional development plans are progressing on order to meet national accreditation standards, if the program plans on attaining national accreditation.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. Evidence that individual professional developmental plans established at level two and level three are progressing for each staff member, including the director.	- Verify by reviewing staff’s professional developmental forms. Provide example of progress. Some examples my included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training certificates match professional development document. • Copies of class registration, copies of grades for completed courses. 				
2. Evidence of career guidance to ensure that all training contributes to program and individual goals.					

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4E: FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

RATIONALE—Parent participation is valuable in assisting parents to increase their knowledge about child development and education which enhances their ability to serve as their child’s primary teacher and to help staff make learning meaningful for children.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. Provide at least THREE (3) family involvement activities including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion box, parent bulletin board newsletter, written monthly communication, • Parent meetings, socials, informational workshops, minimum of one activity that encourages male participation, • Child development milestone information, parent/staff conferences, • Classroom and/or field trip volunteer, support of program operation, • Daily (written communication system between parent and teacher. 	- Verify by documenting at least three activities in which parents have had the opportunity to participate. Some examples may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggestion box, parent bulletin board, milestone information posted in classrooms, pictures from parent’s socials. • Copies of written documents provided like newsletter, flyers for workshop, and parent meetings. 				Give Examples

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4F:

ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES- FINANCIAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONAL EVALUATION*

RATIONALE— Sound financial management is one of the best ways for your business to remain profitable and solvent. How well you manage the finances of your business is the cornerstone of every successful business venture. Each year thousands of potentially successful businesses fail because of poor financial management. As a business owner, you will need to identify and implement polices that will lead to and ensure that you will meet your financial obligations. (U. S. Small Business Administration)

FINANCIAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Continue meeting minimal licensing regulations and requirements for Level Two. No additional requirements for Levels Three or Four.

OPERATIONAL EVALUATION

DEFINITION: The operational evaluation is a process to determine if the goals and objectives of the program are being met. The evaluation process includes collecting, summarizing, analyzing and using data to document outcomes.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. A written plan for a process that is comprehensive and includes all aspects of the program's operation is on going and occurs on a regular basis.	- Verify be reviewing the plan. For examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Twice a year surveys are provided to staff and parents 				
2. A plan for using evaluation results for program improvement	- Review Document				
3. Exit interview with all staff who terminate, with feedback incorporated into program planning/evaluation.	- Document program's exit process and provide concrete examples that program has or is attempting to incorporate feedback into program operations.				Give examples

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4G: EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

RATIONALE—Programs that are able to offer employee incremental compensation and benefits reinforce the professionalism of the staff employed by the program and provide incentive for the staff. Research shows that programs that provide incremental compensation and benefits are more likely to retain staff.

DEFINITION: Provide a brief written description of benefits available to staff.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
1. Continue to implement an incremental compensation plan that includes tangible recognition and salaries.	- Verify by reviewing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The personnel handbook • Asking the program director to provide examples of the incremental compensation that program has provided to staff - Verify by interviewing staff				
2. Programs must provide at least FOUR (4) employee benefits* including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Payment of individual professional membership or association fee; • Insurance supplement; • Paid Leave (sick, vacation, personal, maternal, parental or bereavement); • Monetary bonuses; • Insurance (health, life, accident, disabilities, dental or vision); • Work release time to attend professional development. *The Office of Child Development prior to implementation must approve Benefits other than those listed.	- Verify by reviewing the personnel handbook. - Verify by interviewing director and staff. Provide concrete, specific examples that program has provided at least 4 employee benefits				Give Examples

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ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4H: RATIOS AND GROUP SIZE

RATIONALE—Research has consistently documented that fewer children per adult and smaller group size result in a higher quality program and more positive developmental outcomes for children. When teachers have smaller numbers of children and smaller groups, they can supervise and monitor children more carefully, provide more individualized attention, implement activities that are developmentally appropriate for each child, and engage in more one-on-one language. Basic health and safety are compromised when adults have responsibility for too many children and/or when group size is large.

DEFINITION: Ratios are stated as the number of children allowed per one adult in each classroom or home at all times. The number of children per adult increases as the age of children increase. Group size refers to the total number of children in any one classroom or home.

If program is preparing for national accreditation, it is recommended that the program check with the chosen accrediting body for specific information related to ratios and group size. It is recommended that programs meet the ratios and group size identified by national accrediting bodies.

Essential Element	Examples Of How The Element Can Be Verified	Met	Not Met	Not Obs	Document How The Element Was Verified
Licensed Centers: ❖ Center in which children are grouped by age: 6 weeks - 24 months 1:5 2 Years 1:8 3 Years 1:10 4 years 1:10 5 years 1:12 6 years 1:12 ❖ Center in which age groups are combined: 6 weeks - 24 months 1:5 2, 3, and 4 years 1:10 3 4, and 5 years 1:12 6 years 1:12	- Verify by randomly reviewing attendance records and compare to staff logs or time sheets.				

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❖ Maximum group size: 6 weeks - 24 months 10 2 years 16 3,4 and 5 years 24 6 years & up 24					
Licensed Homes: 1:6 for programs licensed for 6 children 2:12 for programs licensed for 12 children					
Licensed School-age Programs Group size does not exceed 26 1:13					

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4I:
ACCREDITATION**

****NO REQUIREMENTS FOR LEVEL 4***