

DRAFT

1998 Edition

Military Child Development Programs

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

Prepared for

**The United States Air Force Child Development
Program**

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Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to this handbook:

The Army, Marine, Navy and Air Force personnel who
attended the
Department of Defense Joint Services Training
Military Child Development Programs Conference
11-12 November 1997

and, especially,

Kim R. Jackson, Wright Patterson AFB, Ohio
Lee Tomlinson, Kelly AFB, Texas
Dawn Garcia, Kelly AFB, Texas
Sherry Patterson, Air Combat Command
Alice Rose, United States Air Forces Europe
Barbara Diaz-Caneja, Air Force Services Agency
Joy Guenther, Army Child Development Services
Yolande Johnson- Spinnato, Army Child Development Services
Ellen Wolock, High/Scope Educational Research Foundation
Linda Smith, Department of Defense Office of Family Policy
and
the Children of the Kelly AFB Child Development Center

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PURPOSE

In an April 17, 1997 memorandum to the Secretary of Defense, President Bill Clinton directed that all military child development programs "share the expertise and lessons learned with Federal, State, tribal and local agencies, as well as with private and nonprofit entities that are responsible for providing child care for our Nation's children¹". In praise of military child development programs, the President added: **"I believe that the military has important lessons to share with the rest of the Nation on how to improve the quality of child care for all of our Nation's children."**

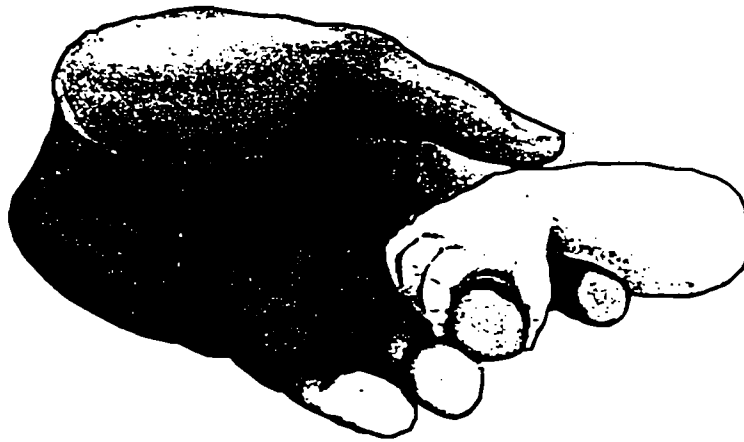
One of the reasons military programs were chosen for this recognition is the unusually high percentage of military programs that have been nationally accredited. In contrast to the civilian sector, over 75% of military centers have been accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Some centers have now been accredited for the third time. In the process of achieving this high level of accreditation, the military services have learned important lessons that can be shared with others.

The purpose of this handbook is to document some of the lessons learned by military programs in achieving accreditation by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs (NAECP). This handbook is also designed to help staff in military programs who provide community outreach to assist early childhood programs in the private sector in achieving accreditation. This guide is designed to supplement existing accreditation documents and guides provided by NAECP or the services, not replace them.

¹ letter from The WHITE HOUSE Office, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, to SECDEF, 17 April 1997

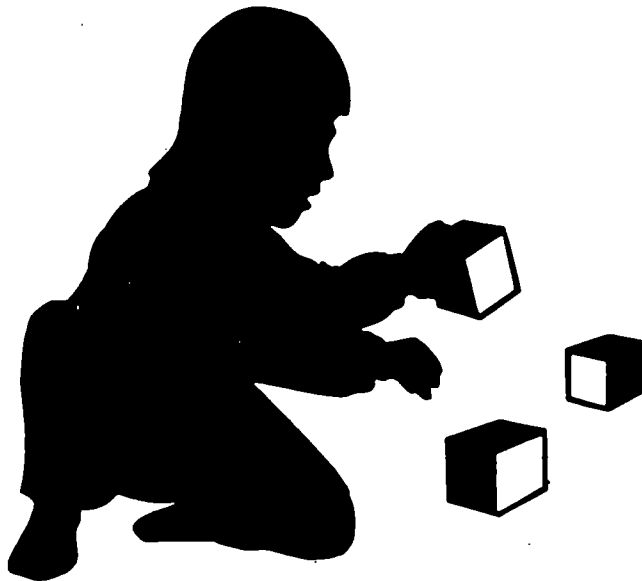
"I am proud that the military places such importance on helping the families of the men and women who serve our country in uniform. But it's really rather elementary to know that they're going to do a lot better on the ships, in the skies, in faraway lands if they're not worried about how their children are faring while they're at work serving America."

William J. Clinton
President
United States Of America



Section 1

Introduction to Best Practices Toward *Accreditation*



Criteria For Accreditation

The criteria for accreditation is based on NAEYC's Criteria for High Quality Early Childhood Programs (1984). The criteria is divided into 10 categories:

- ☐ A. Interactions Among Staff and Children*
- ☐ B. Curriculum*
- ☐ C. Staff-Parent Interaction
- ☐ D. Staff Qualifications
- ☐ E. Administration
- ☐ F. Staffing
- ☐ G. Physical Environment
- ☐ H. Health and Safety*
- ☐ I. Nutrition and Food Service
- ☐ J. Evaluation

Early Childhood Programs embarking on the truly rewarding experience of seeking accreditation can use this handbook as a guide on their journey toward accreditation. . . a journey toward improving the quality of care provided to the children in their program and those around them seeking to reach out and affect the lives of young children.

* - the most important areas

... The Self-Study

An early childhood program staff recognizes it's readiness and willingness to further enhance it's quality by seeking a nationally recognized "seal of approval" and decides to apply for accreditation. When the application is filed, the program receives a self-study kit. The period of self-study begins, during which the program staff and parents evaluate the program -- observing, questioning and determining the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The staff set goals for and implement any changes needed to improve the quality of the program. Once the staff believes the program is ready for accreditation, the program's compliance is documented on a program description.

... The Program Description

The program description includes a summary of observations conducted in each room, a parent questionnaire, a staff questionnaire, an overview of staff qualifications, the staffing pattern, and an administrator report. These items,

once consolidated, give the academy staff and, later, the evaluation commission, a picture of the program. When the program administrator and staff believe they meet the standards of accreditation, the program description is submitted to the academy and a validation visit is scheduled.

... The Validation Visit

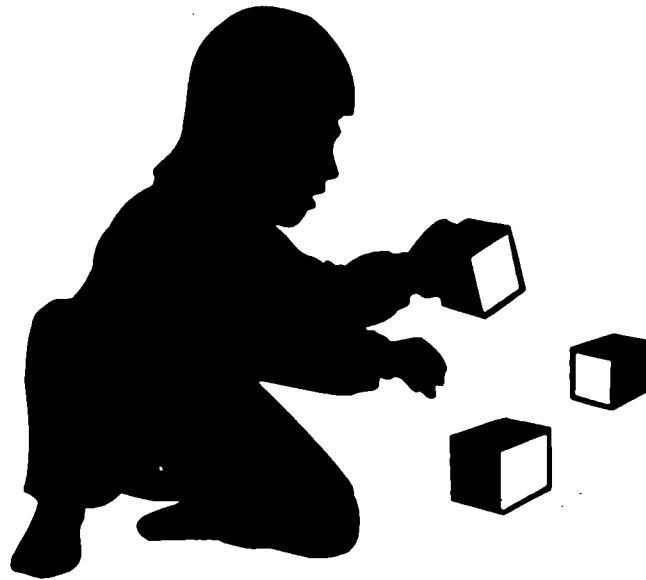
A validation visit is conducted by one or more trained early childhood professionals. The purpose of this visit is to verify the information the program provided to the academy and to submit the final description with the validator's verification, to the academy.

... The Commission Decision

A commission of three early childhood professionals reviews the program description, including the verification made by the validator, and decides whether the program substantially meets the criteria for accreditation. The commission decides to accredit the program or defer the program for later consideration after the necessary changes are made.

Section 2

The Process of *Accreditation*



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The Process Begins

Ordering the Materials

For information regarding current cost of accreditation materials, contact the Academy at the number below.

National Academy of Early Childhood Programs NAEYC
1509 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036-1426

Phone: 202-232-8777 or 800-424-2460
FAX: 202-328-1846

The cost is determined based on the enrollment of the program. For accreditation, a group is defined as children occupying a classroom. Part-day enrichment or preschool classes should be treated as separate classes (morning and afternoon). Individual observations of each will need to be made, even though the same teachers may teach both sessions. Ordering these materials also constitutes your application to begin the accreditation process. (Note: For military programs, purchase of accreditation materials may be done with appropriated funds.)

You're on your way!

The Self-Study Materials

The self-study is the process toward accreditation. Consider the materials sent to you from the academy to be your survival kit. This kit consists of the following:

Guide to Accreditation- 1998 Edition - All programs applying for accreditation or reaccreditation beginning in 1999 will use the updated version of the academy's criteria. This book has samples of all the forms you will be completing as part of your program description and an explanation of the process of accreditation.

Accreditation Criteria and Procedures- 1998 Edition - This book has all the policies and procedures for accreditation as well as an interpretation of the criteria for high quality in early childhood programs.

Early Childhood Classroom Observation (ECCO) - This is the tool used to observe the classrooms. The ECCO is used by the caregiving staff, as well as the management staff of the program, to define

ECCO Criteria:

- ☐ A. Interactions Among Staff and Children
- ☐ B. Curriculum
- ☐ G. Physical Environment
- ☐ H. Health and Safety
- ☐ I. Nutrition and Food Service

If, during the initial observations of the program, certain criteria are found to be "not met" that is, there is *very little evidence* of meeting the criteria, then plans must be implemented to correct these program weaknesses. The plan should involve the direct caregiving staff as well as another observer, either the director, a staff trainer, or another individual.

All groups of children must be evaluated using the ECCO at least twice; once by room staff and once by an administrator. Have the staff conduct their own ECCO's in their rooms, and come to a consensus on the rating. Then have the staff develop a plan of action regarding any areas that need improvement in their room. After a member of the management staff evaluates the classroom and discusses the findings with the staff, a second plan of action should be developed and added to the timeline.

The Self-Study Process

Timelines

Once you have all the materials, and have reviewed them, it is time to begin. Use the Task and Timeline Chart in the *Guide to Accreditation* as a guide to determine your timeline and how to divide the responsibilities and tasks. Be generous in your estimate of the time it will take to do an initial assessment of the program, especially if you are not familiar with the process of accreditation or your staff is not. Once you know where your program's strengths and weaknesses lie, you can determine a more comprehensive timeline. A sample timeline is found in Appendix A.

Timelines



HELPFUL HINTS



Typically, programs spend 6-12 months in the self-study period. The timeline should be based on the program's individual characteristics. Remember to involve your staff in this and in all parts of the accreditation process. The most powerful - and

empowering- message you can give the staff from the beginning, is that they have a voice in each decision that affects the program's quest for accreditation.

When you have projected a tentative timeline, it is time to take a closer look at your program . . .

Conducting Early Childhood Classroom Observations

The Early Childhood Classroom Observation (ECCO) contains the criteria which will be observed in the classrooms. The program staff, at all levels, will need to become familiar with this tool and use it frequently; both as teachers of young children learning the standards of high quality care for young children, and also as evaluators of his/her own classroom or that of a co-worker. As the self-study process begins, the staff should be trained in and become very familiar with the ECCO and all the criteria it contains.

ECCO Criteria:

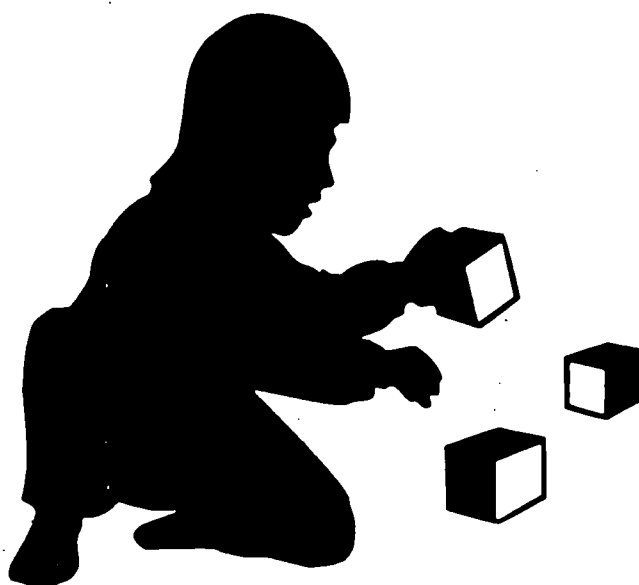
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Section 3

The Critical Elements of *Accreditation*



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respect for children and their individual needs and growth.

- ◇ Encourage staff to have conversations with children that go beyond routine matters and focus on the child's interests. When asking questions of children, offer staff alternatives to questions that will elicit a "yes" or "no" answer from the child. Ask open-ended questions that will provide opportunities for the child to respond with greater language complexity.

Programs often have difficulty with Criteria A-2. This criteria states that staff must be aware of the entire group of children even when involved with a smaller group. Strategic positioning of the staff within the classroom is very important in successfully monitoring the entire group. Also, ensure the environment does not have any viewing obstructions that could prevent complete oversight of the room.

Use video and audio taping for training purposes to demonstrate positive, open-ended language and respectful interactions. Use hands-on

role modeling, involving well-trained teachers who can demonstrate these kinds of interactions. Also, you can have peers observe each other and provide feedback.

- ◇ Provide training on speaking to children at their eye level and seeking meaningful conversation. A wonderful way of eliciting conversation with children is to ask, "tell me about . . ." "tell me how . . ." and so on.
- ◇ Encourage staff to have developmentally appropriate expectations of the children in their care. Knowing that each child grows and learns at an individual rate is a very important concept. Some times, staff will tell young children to share or apologize for something they did. Provide training on the importance of helping children express their feelings through words--by comforting, identifying, and reflecting children's feelings.

CURRICULUM

B-4b, B-4e, B-7a, B-7c, B-7d, B-7g, B-7h, B-9, B-11

The premise of an appropriate curriculum for young children is that whatever activity the child is engaged in, it fosters some domain of the child's development. Typically these domains are defined as: social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and linguistic. A developmentally appropriate curriculum provides activities that are meaningful and interesting to the child and builds on his or her own concrete knowledge of the world.

In order for the program to meet the criteria of a developmentally appropriate curriculum, the validator must see the children actively involved in the learning process. The teachers must provide a safe environment for children to learn about the world with materials and through experiences based on the children's interests.

Curriculum



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- ◇ On the ECCO, you will note that some elements have a list of examples, these do not have to be observed, but something similar to those examples should be evident. Remember, the elements with a box- the indicators of quality- must be observed in order to earn a rating of 3.
- ◇ Many criteria in this section list *developmentally appropriate materials and equipment* that must be available for the children in the rooms. There are also suggestions for *hands-on activities* which may be incorporated into daily activities.
- ◇ Ensure that there is a balance of activities. Alternating periods of quiet and active play must be provided. Check the daily schedules and observe the actual routines that the children are engaged in, to see whether there is a balance between indoor/ outdoor activities, large

motor/small motor, large group and small group.

Remember, if the validator does not see evidence of such a balance during an observation or while observing the daily schedule, he or she will not be able to validate the criteria.

- ◊ When discussing the balance of child-initiated and staff-initiated activities with the teaching staff, remember the younger the child, the more child-initiated activities should take place. This criteria is often not validated, due to very long group times or no group times at all.

Many items in the criterion of B-7 are interrelated; if you are meeting the goals in one area, you may be meeting them in another area. For example, when you provide the time and materials for children to do creative art activities, you are fostering their creative nature, and you can also foster their self-concept by displaying the artwork in the classroom. Use examples in section B-7 to discuss providing developmentally appropriate hands-on activities to foster various developmental domains:

- In fostering self-

concept, personalize interactions with children, sing songs with the child's name, and display the child's artwork respectfully and prominently at the child's level. Ask children's families to bring photos of the family so that the child can see, talk about, and draw about himself, his family and his culture, to encourage self-esteem.

- When encouraging

children to think, reason, question and experiment, use concrete experiences in their world and ask the children to "take it one step further", by providing opportunities for extending the activity. This is where training staff in open-ended questions is of great importance. Providing children with experiences and asking them, "what happens when. . .", "how do you think that works", or, "if you do this, what do you think will happen" will foster this thought process. Train staff in the importance of having living things (plants and animals) in their classrooms, so children can observe life cycles and learn about their world.

- Encouraging language and literacy development is another critical element. Expanding on the very young infant's sounds, providing a print-rich environment,

and reading and conversing with children all contribute to language and literacy development.

- Train staff on the importance of **encouraging creative expression** for all ages of children. Children need daily opportunities to hear, sing, and play music and to use a variety of media to express their vision and interpretations. Draw from a variety of cultures for music and art experiences.

- In trying to **respect cultural diversity**, some programs fall into the trap of stereotyping various cultures, particularly those that they may not typically see (e.g. all German girls wear dirndls, all Native American boys wear feather head dresses). While these customs may be true for some groups and at some times, this does not present a true picture of these cultures to children. (German girls also wear blue jeans and Native American boys wear sneakers). The other area of cultural diversity that will indicate whether the program is meeting the intent of the element, is whether the program has a variety of materials which reflect diverse cultures (for example, books, dolls, musical instruments and songs, games, etc.) This is an area in which the staff needs to come to a consensus. They need to decide

what the program goals are for encouraging cultural diversity and what types of activities and materials will help them meet those goals.

- The main reason **transitions** are such a critical element in the pursuit of accreditation is because, generally, children should not be expected to wait. Transition times should be planned, as are all other times in a child's day. Planning will help the program avoid waiting, crowding, and disruption within the classroom. Train staff to plan transition activities such as, singing songs and playing games. To avoid crowding in the bathrooms during hand washing, send a few children into the bathroom at a time while the remainder of the children are engaged in an activity.

- ◊ Provide new employees with resources to help them understand the criteria. Little pocket notebooks of ideas for transitions and activities can be part of a survival kit for new employees!

STAFF -PARENT INTERACTION

C-3a, C-3b, C-6, C-7, C-8b

Recognizing the importance of a reciprocal relationship between the families and the program is essential to ensuring the needs of the children, as well as their families, are met. When teachers see parents as their partners in a child's education, this is when the child truly benefits from the program. Parents must be seen as the principal influence in children's lives, and the trust they place in a teacher must be valued. Reaching out to families can sometimes be difficult for teachers. Parent communication can be provided in many different ways and each teacher finds his or her own style in creating a foundation for trust that Staff-Parent Interactions must be based upon.

Staff-Parent Interaction is evaluated using the Parent Questionnaire and comparing it to the Program Description. Take a look at the Parent Questionnaire and do an informal survey. The *Guide to Accreditation* has an open-ended parent questionnaire which can be used to determine the areas that need improvement.

Staff-Parent Interaction



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- ◇ Ensure that parents in your program know your program philosophy and practices. Discuss your center's philosophy and how to articulate it at a staff meeting during the self-study. Encourage staff to ask questions and to give input into the program's philosophy. Once the staff understand the philosophy and can communicate it, not just as "another rule", but because it is their professional belief, they will be able to better articulate it to parents and others.
- ◇ Hold new parent orientations and address the program's philosophy and the other criteria of Staff-Parent Interaction. When children transition to other age groupings, invite parents to a room orientation along with their child. This kind of transition can be just as difficult for a parent as a child!
- ◇ Provide staff training on how to give parents specific ideas on promoting children's

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

healthy development and learning. Newsletters or hand-outs, especially as children enter a new developmental period, are very helpful to parents and seen as a quality indicator in early childhood programs.

- ◊ Make sure you provide new parents with a thorough orientation to the program. Provide a booklet and hands-on experiences. During a meeting with the director, the trainer can show the parents the activity rooms- show the how and why of what the program does to provide developmentally appropriate activities. Use this meeting to communicate how much you care about your program and about them as future partners.

Explain to parents during the orientation that conferences are held every year and at other times, as needed.

Inform parents about regulatory changes, and other critical issues through regular newsletters, bulletin boards, frequent notes, and telephone calls. Remember these are your partners- they need and want to know about anything

that affects their child. Have a brainstorming session with staff if this is an area in which you need assistance. If parents feel they are not receiving adequate feedback or information, then you must find another way to give them the information.

- ◊ Seek ideas on how to promote positive parent programs and interactions from those who know best- fellow parents. Your Parent Advisory Board is your greatest ally, especially in getting out necessary information.
- ◊ When asking the parents to complete the Parent Questionnaire, provide them with information they may have forgotten- ask your staff to brainstorm ways to remind parents of program policies. Provide an incentive to parents for returning parent questionnaires. Some programs provide parents with a snack, others give parents a credit in their payment for returning the questionnaires. Programs make information boards detailing how the program meets the criteria, using samples and photographs for

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

parents to see as they complete the questionnaire. Some rooms have barometers to show the number of parents who have returned the questionnaire. There are many ways to get the response that you hope for and need. The best way is to lay a firm foundation of trust and communication.

- Provide parents with information on accreditation. Hold meetings to help them understand how important this process is for their children, the program, and them. Parents can be included in the process by being asked to help complete projects and by providing staff with motivational and reinforcing feedback.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

D-1b, D-1c, D-2b, D-3

The quality of staff is the most important factor in determining the quality of an early childhood program. Research indicates that staff training in child development and/or early childhood education is related to higher quality care.

Staff Qualification and Development



HELPFUL HINTS



Provide opportunities for professional training on a continuing basis. Provide CDA training and other college-level course during rest or lunch times. Many programs encourage teachers to pursue college courses in the evenings, some are able to provide tuition assistance or help the employees apply.

The management level staff can show their commitment to training by consistently reviewing the training plans with the staff to ensure their training needs are being met.

- ◇ Research the various training opportunities that are available to your staff within the community. Work with your NAEYC affiliate as another resource for training.
- ◇ Invite child development professionals and teachers from the community to mentor the staff and to provide input and share their perspective on accreditation.
- ◇ Cross-train flexible or part-time employees so they are knowledgeable and can work with all age groups. Encourage the completion of all of the sets of the DoD training modules.

ADMINISTRATION

E-4, E-5b, E-9, E-10a, E-10b, E-10c, E-10d, E-11, E-12

The way in which a program is administered will affect all aspects of the program. Effective administration creates an environment that facilitates high quality care for children. Effective administration includes good communication within the program, positive community relations, fiscal stability, and attention to the needs and working conditions of the staff members.

Administration



HELPFUL HINTS



Employee benefits are emphasized in the accreditation process. The Commission understands that for military programs some benefits are regulated by the government. However, each program should explore ways to offer options and benefits unique to your situation.

Maintain **confidential** files that include resumes with records of experience, transcripts of education, documentation of in-service training, and results of

performance evaluations.

Ensure all this information is located in your facility, readily available for the validator to review.

- ◇ Ensure staff is aware of the director's efforts to make appropriate use of community resources including social services, mental and physical health agencies, and educational programs, such as museums and libraries.
- ◇ Ensure that new staff members are aware of the administrator's efforts to communicate frequently with them about the program, children, and families.
- ◇ Consider ways to provide staff with paid planning time away from the children or during rest time, when children are asleep.
- ◇ Continue with regular staff meetings to consult on program planning, on individual children, and to discuss the program and working conditions.

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

- ◇ Ensure staff is aware of the space and time away from the children that is provided to them (breaks, lunch, scheduling).
- ◇ Ensure staff keep program information about children, families and associates confidential, including not sharing such information with a validator.
- ◇ Conduct the open-ended questionnaire at the beginning of the self-study to determine any areas which may need clarification with the staff. Typically, there is some confusion about how some criteria are applied in military child development programs. Utilize a staff meeting to clarify questions and ascertain any concerns the staff may have regarding their working conditions and/or the program.

STAFFING

F-2b, F-3b

An important determinant of the quality of a program is the way in which it is staffed. Well-organized staffing patterns facilitate individualized care. Research strongly suggests that smaller group sizes and larger numbers of staff are related to positive outcomes for children such as increased interaction among adults and children, less aggression, and more cooperation among children.

give staff breaks each day.

- ◇ Place photographs of staff, including staff who give breaks, at the entrance to the rooms.
- ◇ Ensure staff wear their uniforms and name tags.

Staffing



HELPFUL HINTS



Discuss the adequacy of the program's current policy for providing substitutes with the staff.

Develop a plan to provide continuity of staff for children, particularly infants and toddlers. Clarify the way the program does this with the staff.

Ensure you have consistent staffing at the beginning and end of the day, and also during the "core time", the main part of the day. Also, try to schedule the same people to

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

G-1b, G-4, G-5, G-6, G-7, G-9a

The physical environment affects the behavior of both the children and adults who live and work in it. The quality of physical space and materials provided affects the level of involvement of the children and the quality of interaction between adults and children. The amount, the arrangement, and the use of space, both indoors and outdoors, should be evaluated.

Physical Environment



HELPFUL HINTS



Ensure there is enough usable space for outdoor play for each age group.

Use of the outdoor space should be scheduled to allow for enough space and to avoid scheduling conflicts among rooms.

Arrange space outdoors for toddlers and preschoolers to engage in a variety of individual and small group activities, including block building, dramatic play, art, music, science, math, manipulative play, and quiet book reading. Provide sand and water play on a regular basis.

- ◇ To increase activities offered outside, if several classrooms share a playground at various times during the day, make each classroom responsible for one activity on a weekly basis.
- ◇ Ensure there is a variety and adequate quantity of age-appropriate materials and equipment for children both indoors and outdoors.
- ◇ Provide individual space for each child's belongings and space to hang personal clothing.
- ◇ Identify sheltered areas where children can work and play alone or with a friend both indoors and outdoors.
- ◇ Provide soft elements in each room such as: rugs (attached to the floor or with a non-slip back), cushions, banners, pillows (except in infant rooms), and rocking chairs.
- ◇ Ensure there are a variety of play surfaces outdoors, such as grass, sand, soil, hills, and hard surface areas for wheel toys. The criteria also calls for a variety of equipment for children to use to run, jump, play, ride, climb, balance, etc. Ensure there is enough shade, especially in hot climates.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

H-14b, H-15a, H-17a, H-17c, H-18c, H-19b, H-20a

The provision for the health and safety of the children and adults working with them is essential. The criterion in this element is critical for accreditation. Good quality early childhood programs act to prevent illness and accidents and they are prepared and trained to deal with emergencies as they occur. It is equally important to educate the children in the program concerning safe and healthy practices.

Health and Safety



HELPFUL HINTS



Ensure there is a sink with running water of a comfortable temperature very close to diapering and toileting areas. This includes both warm and cold water.

Provide training to all staff members on the importance of keeping the building and play-ground areas, as well as all equipment, safe, clean and in good repair. This is everyone's responsibility.

- ◇ Provide facilities where toilets, drinking water, and hand washing facilities are easily accessible to children.
- ◇ Develop and implement a plan to teach children the importance of hand washing before meals, after toileting, after nose-wiping, and prior to playing at the water-table.
- ◇ Ensure that all floor coverings are attached to the floor.
- ◇ Check all equipment indoors and outdoors for safety and secure anchoring. This includes lighter shelving units and cubbies which may move when leaned against.
- ◇ Train staff on the importance of chemicals and potentially dangerous products being stored in original, labeled containers in locked cabinets inaccessible to children. The bleach/water solution should be inaccessible to children but does not necessarily have to be in a locked cabinet as is the case with full strength bleach and any other potentially harmful product.

NUTRITION AND FOOD SERVICE

I-3

Children must be provided with adequate nutrition and also be educated concerning good eating habits. The goal is that the nutritional needs of the children are met in a manner that also promotes social, physical, emotional, and cognitive development.

Nutrition and Food Service



HELPFUL HINTS



Ensure mealtime is a pleasant, social and learning experience for children.

Provide training to staff on the importance of Family Style Dining. Many programs actively involve their food service personnel in assisting with the set-up (for younger children) and also train these employees in family style dining so they understand the rationale and importance of having the appropriate equipment and utensils available at mealtimes.

- ◇ Ensure infants are held when being fed. This includes bottle feeding and spoon feeding. Use this time to foster warm, affectionate social interactions.
- ◇ Involve toddlers and preschool age children in serving themselves and in feeding and cleaning up after themselves. Discuss with the staff the developmental benefits for the children when this occurs.
- ◇ Have at least one adult sit and eat with the children during mealtimes to model good nutrition habits for children.

EVALUATION

J-1f, J-2a

Ongoing and systematic evaluation is essential to improving and maintaining the quality of an early childhood program. Evaluation efforts are based on program goals and assessment of needs to identify strengths and weaknesses of program components.

Evaluation



HELPFUL HINTS

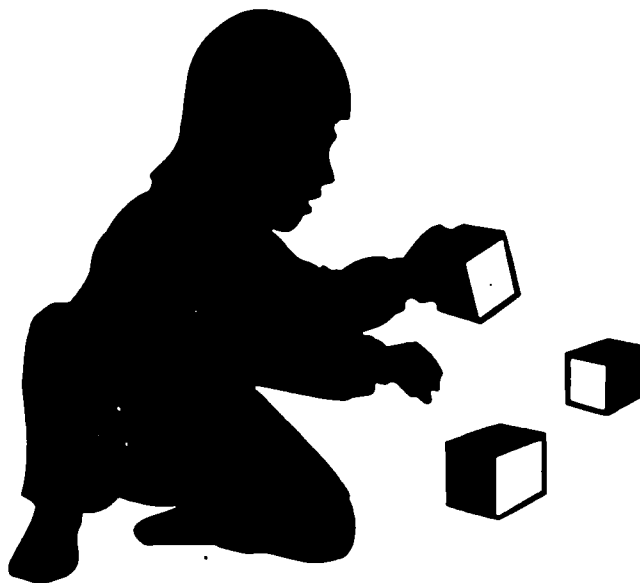


- Generate a plan for staff training based on the results of the staff and program evaluation process.

Involve parents in evaluating the program's effectiveness at least annually. During the period of self-study, two parent evaluations are recommended to give the program the ability to determine strengths and weaknesses and plan for improvement.

Section 4

Achieving Accreditation Quality



Achieving Accreditation Quality

Focus on Training/ Conducting Observations

In beginning your self-study, your primary focus should be on observing the rooms using the ECCO and developing action plans based on those observations. Provide training in areas that have been identified. Ensure the Director and/or Training and Curriculum Specialist conduct observations in each room. Give the staff an opportunity to perform observations in their room and come up with a consensus among themselves of strengths and needs. The staff should then be asked for input into the action plan to include training topics and any changes they may want to make to their environment. This is a good time to order or make any equipment and supplies that are needed to meet the criteria. Follow up with regular meetings and observations to ensure the plan is being followed.

Assign one person to coordinate the accreditation effort. Typically, this

is the Director or an assigned designee. Ensure everyone has a role in achieving certain tasks in the process. A sample Task and Timeline Chart is located in the *Guide to Accreditation*. Remember to assign person(s) responsible, then hold periodic meetings to ensure the goals are being met. For more information on Timelines, see pg 8 in this Handbook.

Conducting Trial Questionnaires

During the initial stage, it is also advisable to conduct trial Staff and Parent Questionnaires, using the open-ended surveys which are found in the *Guide to Accreditation*. This will enable you to take a reading of your program, and allows time to address all problem areas before conducting the final Staff and Parent Questionnaires. The final questionnaires must be completed no more than three months prior to submitting the Program Description.

While conducting the open-ended survey for staff, it is advisable to

begin collecting information on Staff Qualifications. Ask staff to complete the Worksheet for Collecting Information on Staff Qualifications found in the *Guide to Accreditation*. At this time, also ask staff to bring in copies of any applicable certifications, transcripts, and/or training that you do not already have on file. If training is identified in the listing of staff qualifications, it must be accompanied by the appropriate documentation and this documentation must be available for the validator to review.

Focus on Overall Quality

While conducting the self-study process, it is easy to get focused on specific criteria and lose sight of the whole purpose. While this is important, remember to step back every now and then to take a look at the overall program and its quality. Remember the goal of accreditation is to provide the quality early childhood for children and their families.



HELPFUL HINTS



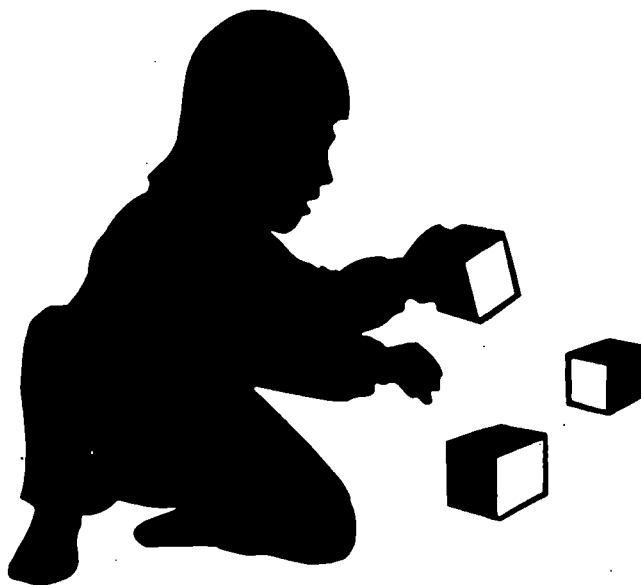
Ask a mentor or a colleague from a nearby base or early childhood program, someone who has been through the process, to come to the

program and provide you and your staff with insights. Consultants are also available to assist in this process.

- ◇ Establish a visual display for the staff on the tasks and timeline you have developed together. It is important to make sure the staff know they are instrumental in the accreditation process and how the program is progressing toward its goal.
- ◇ Celebrate steps you achieve as you go along. The accreditation process can be a time-consuming and demanding. Periodically recognize the staff and their hard work to keep them motivated.
- ◇ Use "Management by Walking Around". Provide quick "pats on the back" as you walk through the facility at different times of the day.
- ◇ Work with your Parent Advisory Board to assist in ways to keep staff focused and motivated.
- ◇ Remember the biggest motivating factor for employees is recognition. Develop different ways to recognize their hard work.

Section 5

Preparing Staff for Questions about *Accreditation*



Preparing Staff For Questions

When a validator is not able to see evidence of a particular criterion during an observation, the validator may ask to interview the staff to get more information. The purpose of such an interview is for the validator to be able to get a clearer picture of the program. Some employees may be anxious and will need help to practice for such a question and answer session.

The goal is to provide the validator with enough input during the one-hour observation that there are few or no questions. However, typically a few employees will be interviewed.

answers, staff become more familiar with program policies and philosophies and are better able to articulate them.

- ◇ Develop fun ways to practice these question and answer sessions- play games, such as, lotto and concentration.
- ◇ Role-play interview situations, so staff feel comfortable answering questions.

Questions



Helpful Hints



Help your staff practice for such an interview by asking open-ended questions of them after you have conducted your own observations. A sample of open-ended questions a validator may ask is contained on the following page; by practicing their

Open ended questions a validator may ask:

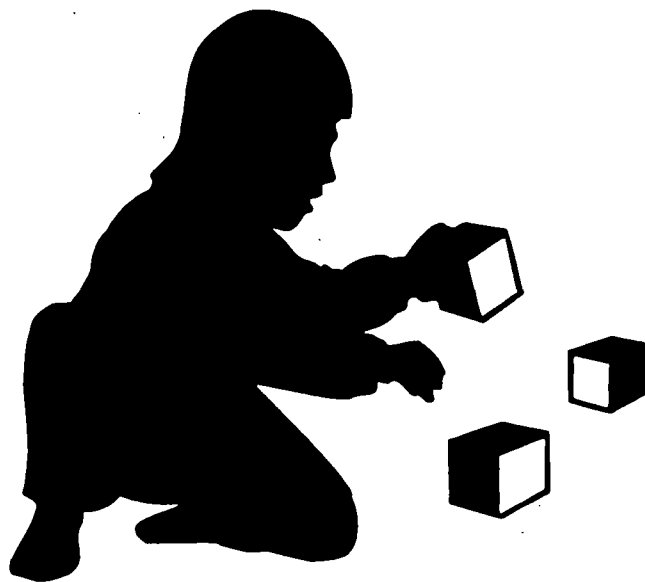
- How often do you take the children outside? _____
- How do you plan your schedule? _____
- How do you make choices for your lesson plans? _____
- What do you do to promote language development? _____
- What happens when one child hurts another? _____
- How do you handle separation anxiety? _____
- What happens when a child does not want to participate in an activity? _____
- What activities do you provide to increase self-esteem? _____
- How do you promote problem solving skills? _____
- How do you encourage children to take risks? _____
- How do you handle derogatory ethnic comments? _____
- How do you encourage independence in children? _____
- How do you handle disputes over equipment? _____
- What happens if a child cries constantly? _____
- What is your developmental philosophy? _____
- How do you respond to a child's fears? _____

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

- How do you integrate science into your curriculum? _____
- What is the benefit of music in the classroom? _____
- What activities do you provide to promote fine motor development? _____
- What activities do you provide which encourage math skills? _____
- What is your philosophy on artistic expression? _____
- Give an example of social growth and development _____
- What is the purpose of circle time? _____
- How do you involve parents in the program? _____
- What methods do you use to communicate classroom goals to parents? _____
- What kind of modifications do you make for the child with special needs in your classroom? _____

Section 6

The Program Description



The Program Description

The Program Description (PD) is used by the Director/Assistant Director to record the results of the Self Study. The validators will review this material before their visit to help acquaint themselves with the program. The commission will review both the recordings of the director as well as the validators to make their determination of quality.

Be very careful and thorough in completing the program description.

The components of the Program Description are as follows:

Part 1 - The Center Profile. This includes the actual Profile, a description of the program, the Staffing Pattern and Staff Qualifications

Part 2 - Results of Classroom Observations. This is a tally sheet to record and average the rating results of the classroom observations.

Part 3 - Results of the Administrator

Report. This section reports the director's evaluation of the administrative portion of the program as well as the results of Staff and Parent Questionnaire criteria that relate to the administrative portion of the program.



HELPFUL HINTS.



- ◊ It's a good idea to make a photocopy of the booklet to draft your answers. When you go final, the PD must be handwritten legibly and completed in black ink.
- ◊ Do not include information in any comments that indicates your program name, your affiliation with the military, or the entire names of your staff members.
- ◊ Ask your mentor or a colleague to review your program description. Have a higher headquarters review your draft copy before it is finalized and sent to the Academy.

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

- ◇ Address all the problems identified in the surveys with positive comments on what you have done or are doing to correct these deficiencies.
- ◇ Count the numbers on the surveys for the tally sheets several times to be sure you have the right numbers.
- ◇ List your local licensing agency- for military centers it is the Department of Defense. If the program's certification has expired, have a higher headquarters provide you with documentation that a certification is forthcoming.
- ◇ List external and internal funding sources. Generally, the funding source for DoD programs is 50% parent tuition and 50% public funds.

Part 1 - The Center Profile

Complete all pertinent information using civilian-type terms. Do not use military language or abbreviations, such as DSN, POC, etc. The Commission will not see the first page which includes the actual base name.



HELPFUL HINTS



Remember to fill in all the blanks including the Program Code in the boxes at the top of the pages.

Determine the person legally responsible for the program, typically this is the director. All questions and correspondence from the Academy will go to that person.

- ◇ Emphasize the Parent Advisory Board or Council is advisory only- this board does not regulate the program. Describe the Board and its functions.
- ◇ Ensure that the ages and numbers of children enrolled equals the total number of children on the Staffing Pattern forms.
- ◇ Ensure your philosophy communicates that your program is developmentally appropriate.

Staffing Pattern

Military centers have some staff turnover because of permanent change of station moves, so the names of staff included in the Staffing Pattern may change. You may provide the validators with an updated version of the Staffing Pattern upon their arrival for the validation visit. It is important to have the different shifts of staff noted as accurately as possible to correspond with what will be observed during the validation visit. This is an opportunity for the validators and the commissioners to review ratios and group sizes.



HELPFUL HINTS



Use names or numbers for groups or rooms that the staff recognizes.

If you have more than one group in a room separated by furniture, etc, do a separate Staffing Pattern for each side of the room. They are also considered a separate group. Define room divisions through a drawing for the validator. Provide a small copy of the floor plan to help validators find their way around the facility on the day of the visit.

- ◇ Use first name and last initial only for staff (see examples in the *Guide to Accreditation*).
- ◇ Slashes are used in the boxes for noting half-hours. For example, if the room opens at 8:30 use a slash in the 8:00 box and enter the number of children **below** the slash. Do not enter the number both above and below the same slash.
- ◇ Use lines similar to a bar graph to indicate the beginning and ending of shifts for staff. This is easier for a validator to understand than simply indicating times for beginning and ending of shift times. Avoid using military time (e.g;1400 hrs).
- ◇ Use actual attendance, not room capacity.
- ◇ Be sure to explain instances of combining rooms, (e.g. early in the morning, late in the afternoon). Be clear on what group of children goes where at the time they are combined.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

The Staff Qualifications are completed on all staff directly providing care to children and all administrators. Do not include kitchen and desk staff unless they work in an assigned room for a significant part of the day. It is very important that all documentation regarding staff qualifications is available at the center for review. Having staff complete the Worksheet for Collecting Information on Staff Qualifications found in the *Guide for Accreditation*, well ahead of time will assist you in this process.



HELPFUL HINTS



Use the same employee naming procedures as in the Staffing Pattern (first name and last initial).

Organize employees by the room or group they work with; this helps the validator see the combined qualifications of staff in a particular room.

Use job titles that are familiar to the Academy. Program

Assistant and Technician are not common names outside the military. Use "Teacher" or "Leader" for group leaders, and "Assistant Teacher" or "Caregiver" for all others. Each group should have a Teacher or a Leader, even though the employee may not meet the Academy qualifications for this position. In the case where you have a designated Teacher or Leader who does not meet the qualifications, a training plan should be developed (and be in progress) to help the employee reach the qualified level.

- ◇ Be sure to count all years of relevant experience, up to the present date.
- ◇ Use only the year of hire, not the day and month.
- ◇ Use only one check under formal education. Check the highest level of education attained. If a degree is noted, specify the degree. Be sure to have the documents to support the information on the form on file in the center.

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

- ◊ Detail all DoD module training completed in the "Other" section at the bottom of the form.
- ◊ Training hours accumulated to meet military child development program requirements should be used (An ECE/CD unit is equivalent to 16 classroom hours or 1 semester hour of study in Early Childhood Education or Child Development).

Provide the Academy with a brief synopsis of the DoD Child Development Training Modules and add this to your Program Description. A sample explanation of the training modules is contained on the following page.

- Sample Explanation-

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER TRAINING PROGRAM

Our Training Program was developed specifically for the Department of Defense by Teaching Strategies (Diane Trister Dodge). This training program encompasses the fifteen functional areas for the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) and is based on the CDA competencies.

The training program consists of fifteen modules to be completed on the job, under the direct supervision of a qualified Training and Curriculum Specialist. The modules are age-specific (infant, toddler and preschool age levels) and must be completed during the first eighteen months of employment. The module areas are as follows:

- Module 1 - Keeping Children Safe
- Module 2 - Promoting Good Health and Nutrition
- Module 3 - Creating and Using an Environment for Learning
- Module 4 - Promoting Physical Development
- Module 5 - Promoting Cognitive Development
- Module 6 - Promoting Communication
- Module 7 - Promoting Creativity
- Module 8 - Building Children's Self Esteem
- Module 9 - Promoting Social Development
- Module 10 - Providing Positive Guidance
- Module 11 - Working with Families
- Module 12 - Being an Effective Manager
- Module 13 - Maintaining a Commitment to Professionalism
- Module 14 - Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect in Center Settings
- Module 15 - An Overview of Child Abuse and Neglect in Center Settings

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

Each module is individually introduced to the employee by the Training and Curriculum Specialist and the content of the module is explained. To complete the module, the employee must read for content, perform various learning activities, and successfully complete a knowledge assessment based on the module content. The Training and Curriculum Specialist then observes the employee to ensure competency and practical application. Credit is given for the module when a score of eighty percent is achieved on the knowledge assessment and when competency is demonstrated in the area of that module.

Completion of this training is noted as "Program Assistant Certification Training" (PACT) in the "other" section of the Staff Qualifications Chart.

Part 2 - Results of the Classroom Observations

After the self-study process is well under way, action plans have been implemented, and improvements have been made, the director or trainer and the room staff should conduct two final classroom observations. They should then meet to agree on a consensus rating and this is then entered on the Classroom Observation Summary Sheet (a sample is found in the *Guide to Accreditation*,). This procedure should be followed throughout the program, to complete the Summary Sheet. All ratings for each criteria are averaged and this average rating is entered on the Summary Sheet.

Review the average ratings for any trends. The commission will review the Summary Sheet and the average rating on each Criteria to identify weaknesses throughout the program or in a particular room.



HELPFUL HINTS



In reviewing the Classroom summary sheet, if there is an average rating of 2.7 or less, a comment must be entered on

the Program Description. The comment should not be worded as an excuse, but rather as information so the Commission can see a plan is being implemented to improve the rating.

- ◇ A comment may also be made if the criteria is clearly exceeded.
- ◇ Remember, the quality indicator boxes on each criteria must be met in order to be rated with a 3. For example, having toys on order, would not justify checking a box.
- ◇ Remember not to write in the section marked "For Validator Only" because this section is completed during the visit.
- ◇ Do not fill in the score you have given to each room in the small boxes located in the right hand corner. The validator will fill these in only for the rooms which are observed.

Part 3 - Results of the Administrator Report

Parent Questionnaire

After the initial Open-Ended Parent Survey is completed, and any needed improvements have been made, have parents complete the Parent Questionnaire. Remember, this should happen no more than three months prior to submitting the Program Description.



At least 50% of the Parent Questionnaires must be returned.

Devise creative ways to conduct the survey, involving parents and staff. See Section 3, Critical Elements in this handbook, for suggestions on conducting successful parent surveys.

Clarify with parents, that question #14, which addresses children with special needs should be answered NA unless they have children with special needs.

Tally the results of the Parent Questionnaires several times to ensure accuracy in

completing the Summary Sheet. Transfer the totals onto Part 3 of the Program Description, marked "Parent Questionnaire".

Staff Questionnaire

After the initial Open-Ended Staff Survey is completed, and any needed program improvements have been made, it is time to ask the staff to complete the Staff Questionnaire. Remember, this should happen no more than three months prior to submitting the Program Description.



- ◊ Conduct the Staff Questionnaire during a staff meeting to ensure you get most Questionnaires returned.
- ◊ Use creative ways to inform staff of policies and procedures so they can provide informed responses on the Questionnaire.
- ◊ Tally the results of the Staff Questionnaires several times to ensure accuracy when completing the Summary Sheet. Transfer the totals

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

onto Part 3 of the Program Description, marked "Staff Questionnaire".

Questionnaires under the "Validation Procedures" column. This will save the validators time.

Administrator Report

Schedule a time away from interruptions to complete the director's portion of the Administrator Report.



HELPFUL HINTS



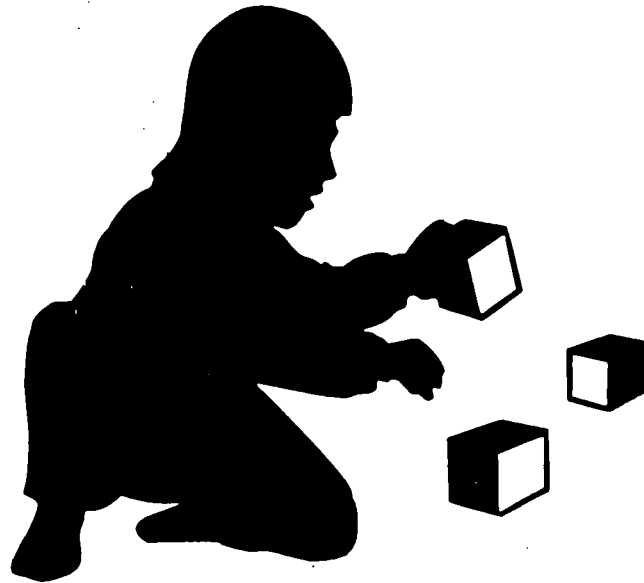
In completing Part 3, a non-validated item will occur if fewer than 75% of the Parent and/or Staff Questionnaires returned do not agree with the administrator's rating.

If the Director rates the criterion as a "1" or a "2", a comment must be made. These comments should be explanations, not excuses, and should include a description of the actions being taken to ensure improvement. Comments can also be made if the program exceeds the minimum standards for a rating of "3".

You may fill in the results of the Parent and Staff

Section 7

Making the Decision to Request a Visit



Making the Decision to Request a Visit

When you and the staff believe the program is ready for accreditation, ask a neutral person not familiar with your program (mentor, professional colleague, consultant) to come to the program to do a mock validation visit- concentrating mostly on room observations.



HELPFUL HINTS



Be honest in your evaluation of the rooms, but remember you have some time to do fine-tuning before the actual visit.

Schedule the visit for a time when all programs are operational. Summer or school vacations are traditionally difficult because two-thirds of the children enrolled must be present on the day of the validation visit.

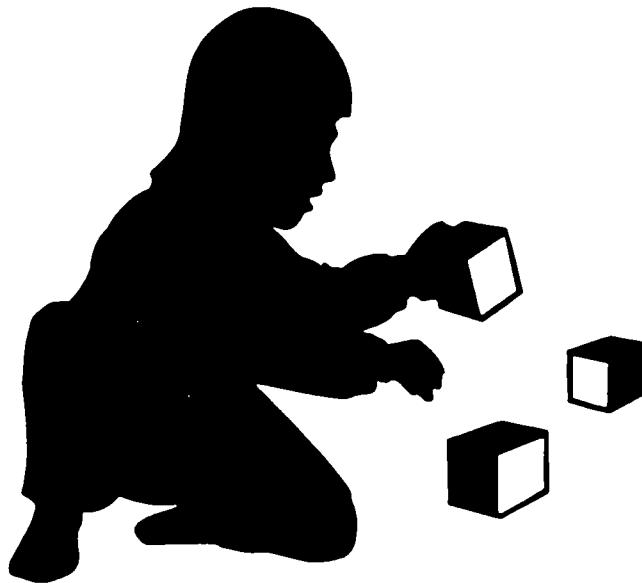
The Academy's busiest time for validation visits is from April to June. Try to avoid requesting your visit at this time of year. If you have no choice except to schedule a

visit during this time, expect to wait the maximum time for a validation visit.

- ◇ Remember you may need approval from a higher headquarters before you can send in your final Program Description.
- ◇ Before mailing your Program Description, make a copy, just in case the original gets lost in the mail.
- ◇ Remember the only items you mail to the Academy are: the Program Description and the Classroom Observation Summary Sheet. Keep all remaining items on file in the center. You'll need these to prepare for the visit.
- ◇ Allow 4-6 weeks for the Academy to arrange the validation visit. Ensure the validation fee has been received by the academy.

Section 8

Preparing for the Big Day



Preparing for the Big Day

Once the Program Description is on its way to the Academy, you and the staff should continue to prepare for the actual day of the validation visit.



HELPFUL HINTS



- ◊ Compile all the documents required for the visit in an organized manner. Check the *Guide to Accreditation* for the List of Documents Required by Criterion.

Set up a file box, notebook, or something similar. Label folders according to the criterion and ensure that the documents are on file and readily available. Some documents, such as personnel files and children's health records, may be filed elsewhere. Note the location of these items in the file box for the validator.

Decide on a location for the validators to work on the day of the visit. It should be a quiet area with adequate room to work with

a large volume of papers.

- ◊ Continue the flow of information to the staff and parents, as well as, the community. Keep staff informed on an on-going basis. Don't relax yet!
- ◊ Keep your staff motivated. Continue to provide them with positive feedback and recognition for their hard work. Reassure them that this is the final stage in the accreditation process.
- ◊ Keep up the momentum. Continue with observations, and have a meeting to let staff know what to expect during the validation visit.
- ◊ Prepare yourself for the administrator interview. Review the administrator report and consider your response to any areas you feel may have changed since you submitted the Program Description.

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

- ◊ Inform the staff that the validator's job is to observe, compare, interview and document. Remind staff that the validator will use the same observation tool they are already familiar with.
- ◊ Practice staff interviews with individual staff that don't feel comfortable. Remind them that if the validator is able to rate the criterion through observation, there will be no need for an interview.

Ensure new employees are informed about the accreditation process and are aware and trained on each of the criteria.

Check all your employee files and ensure the information is currently correct.

Double-check the Staffing Pattern. Make any changes to that and the Staff Qualifications that have occurred since you submitted the Program Description.

Brief staff in advance on the need to adjust break schedules when a validator is in the room.

- ◊ Inform the staff that leave will be limited on the day of the validation visit. Try to limit new child admissions to the program during that week, as well.
- ◊ Avoid scheduling field trips or any unusual programs that may disrupt the children's routine and prevent the validator from seeing a typical day in the program.
- ◊ Brainstorm with the staff, on "Things that Could Happen" during a validation visit.
- ◊ Ensure staff know the names and ages of the children in their room, by year and month.
- ◊ Inform the staff that the validators always observe the youngest and the oldest groups of children.

You can do a number of things to assist in preparing your parents and the community as well as asking them for assistance throughout this time.



HELPFUL HINTS



- ◊ Inform parents, the installation leadership, and

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

the community that the big day is arriving!

- ◊ Ask the Parent Advisory Board to assist in helping the validators feel welcome in the program. Some parents greet the validators, other parents volunteer to bring lunch for the validators that day, others provide beverages and snacks.
- ◊ Inform base support agencies such as engineering of the day of the visit and the need for cooperation should something go wrong, e.g. plumbing breaks.

When the Academy Contacts You . . .

The Academy will phone when they are ready to set up a validation visit. Normally, a list of validators will be presented to you, and you will need to determine whether there is a possible conflict of interest with any of them. The number of validators and days they will be with your program depends on the size of the program.



HELPFUL HINTS

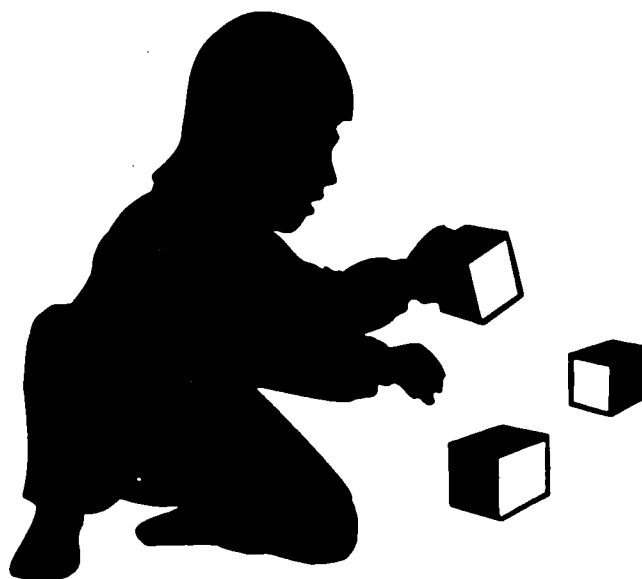


After a validator is selected, he or she will contact you about dates, times, needs, etc.

- ◊ Offer base billeting if they are traveling from far enough away that an overnight stay is warranted. Plan that the validator will take quick lunches with little formality. A sample schedule of a typical day's events can be found in the *Guide to Accreditation*.
- ◊ Ask the validator for the information to get an installation entry pass for them and be prepared to provide them with directions to the base and the center.
- ◊ Get in contact with the Academy should any unusual circumstances occur that would radically change the nature of your program. For example, at one installation, two days before the scheduled validation visit, the commander declared a "down day", when most parents were released from work and their children were going to be absent from the program. Consult with your higher headquarters and the Academy staff if you have any questions or concerns about the timing of the visit.

Section 9

The Day of the Visit



The Day of the Visit

The most popular phrase used in talking about the day of the validation visit from all those who have gone through one, is "EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED". Don't be overly concerned about mistakes, because if your staff is well-trained they will react appropriately. However, there are certain things we can prepare for, so that there are fewer "unexpected" moments.



HELPFUL HINTS



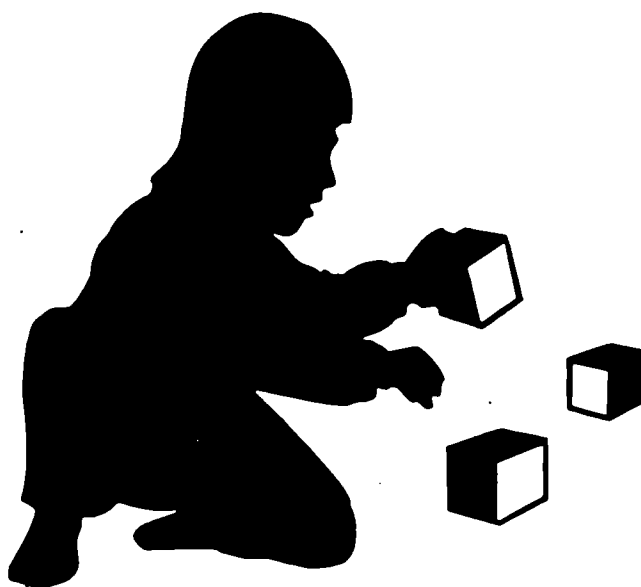
Arrive at the program early in the morning to do a final walk-through. Reassure staff; cheer them on. This is their opportunity to show others what a wonderful program they are a part of!

Prepare yourself for unexpected staff absences. You can also inform the validators after they arrive, that the regular staff cannot be in the room that day, and therefore they may not get a true picture of the room.

- ◇ After you have ensured the validator is signed in, offer a tour of the facility. Show the validator where they will be able to work and offer to make lunch arrangements. Provide nutritious snacks - it's going to be a long day for them, too.
- ◇ Provide the validator with any updated materials and inform them of any changes in the program. This is a good time to provide them with a floor plan of your facility if it is a large program. Remember to label the rooms with the same numbers or identifiers as in the Program Description.
- ◇ Be welcoming and show your pride in your program.
- ◇ FOCUS ON THE CHILDREN- THE VALIDATOR WILL!

Section 10

During the *Accreditation* Visit



During the Accreditation Visit

Try to follow the lead of the validator. Remember validators are fellow educators and they want early childhood programs to be accredited. They can recognize what is real and what is staged, so just be yourself and tell your staff to be as well. Remember, they are not the decision-makers, they are the messengers who will present a picture of your program to others.

While most validators like to start with room observations, some may begin by checking documents. Some validators observe in 50% of the rooms, while others try to observe in each room. This depends on the time allowed, the size of the program, and the decisions they make using their professional judgement. Be relaxed and positive, you have done your job- now let them do theirs.



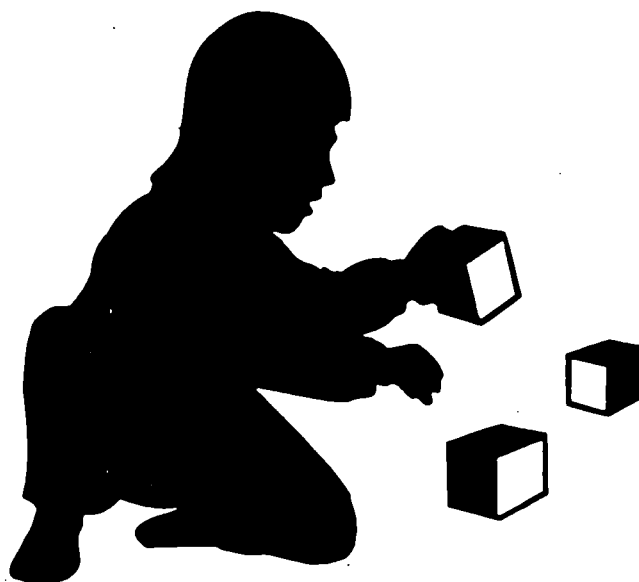
HELPFUL HINTS



- ◇ Avoid local, program, and military acronyms and lingo. Remember the validators typically have little or no knowledge about military programs.
- ◇ Remind staff to do what they usually do. If they deviate from the children's routine, it will have an effect on the children.
- ◇ Smile and be calm- ALL DAY. Staff react to your state-of-being- you are their barometer on how things are going. Step in and help if you are needed; just as you would on any other day. Remember validators are real people, and they know the realities of early childhood programs.

Section 11

During the Exit Interview



During the Exit Interview

After all information is gathered and the observations are completed, the validator will conduct the exit interview. During the exit interview, you will learn about the validator's findings. Choose one spokesperson to speak for the group of individuals attending the exit interview. Usually, this spokesperson will be the director. Typically, programs include the director, assistant director, and trainer in this meeting. Be sensitive to the numbers of people on your team, especially if there is only one validator present. The exit interview should not be approached as a negative interaction between the validator and staff. View this as an exchange of information. The validator is reporting to you what he or she observed, and you should respond with what you know about your program.



HELPFUL HINTS



- ◊ During the exit interview, the validator will inform you of any non-validated items. The spokesperson, (usually the director) is allowed to make a statement in defense of the program to clarify the program's position. This statement must be recorded by the validator or director **word-for-word** in the Program Description.
- ◊ If a non-validated item is the result of the staff's misunderstanding of the criterion, the director may alter the rating and initial the change.
- ◊ Remain calm! Explain rather than argue or rationalize.
- ◊ Formulate your answers to clarify your program's views and philosophies. Answers like, "it's a regulation" mean nothing to the validators and

may suggest you do not have a clear philosophy of your own.

- ◊ During the exit interview, if problems arise that concern you about the validator's performance or observations, ask to take a break. Call your higher headquarters and the Academy during the meeting, if necessary, for guidance on the procedures.
- ◊ Word your written responses to the non-validated items carefully because the Commission will weigh both opinions, yours and the validators.

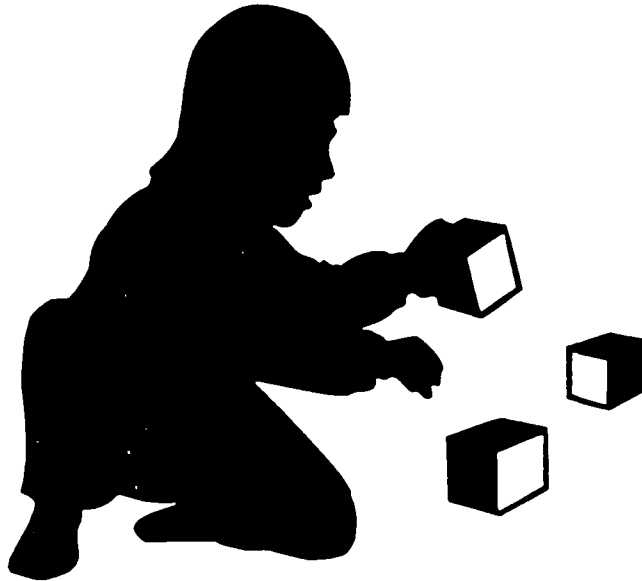
Don't be rushed. Exit interviews typically occur at the end of a long day and all parties involved want to go home. However, take your time to really understand the non-validated items so you can articulate your response.

Photocopy the final Program Description containing the director's and the validator's comments written during the exit interview and return it.

Remember to remain professional and dignified during the exit interview. Thank the validators for coming to your program.

Section 13

Waiting for the Decision



Waiting for the Decision

After the validation visit, the Program Description is reviewed by Academy staff, who may contact the program if there are any remaining questions. The Program Description is distributed to the Commission members for review, and approximately every eight to ten weeks, the Commission gathers to review the Program Descriptions. The Commission meetings are held at NAEYC headquarters in Washington DC.

Be prepared to wait several weeks or even months, especially if your visit was in the April - June timeframe.



HELPFUL HINTS



Emphasize to your staff, parents, and leadership that it is the process, not the results, that are important. Focus on "lessons learned" from this process and elicit staff, as well as, parent input.

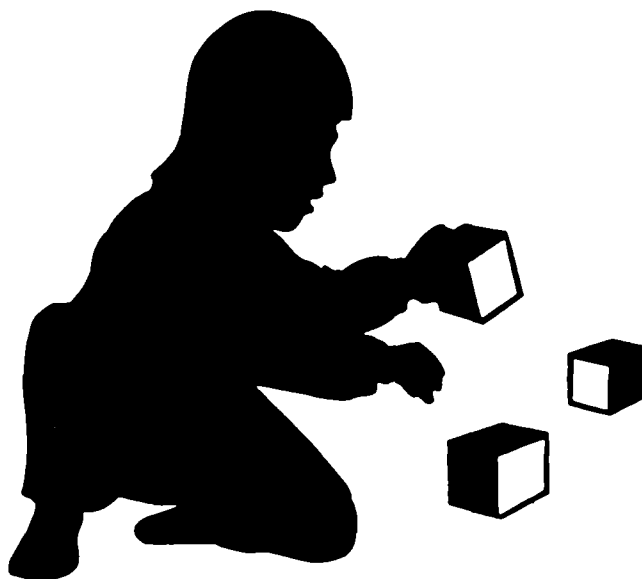
Continue to refine the program, make changes that

became apparent during the visit that need to be made and from the "lessons learned".

- ◇ Plan for a celebration but also be prepared for a deferral.
- ◇ Don't read too much into the validator's comments during the exit interview- they are not the ones who make the decision to accredit or defer the program.

Section 12

After the Validation Visit



After the Validation Visit

The most important thing to do after the visit is over is to thank the staff. They will need and want immediate feedback. They have been just as nervous about this day as you have been. Offer thanks to the parents who supported the process and inform everybody that the commission decision will follow in about 4-6 weeks.



HELPFUL HINTS



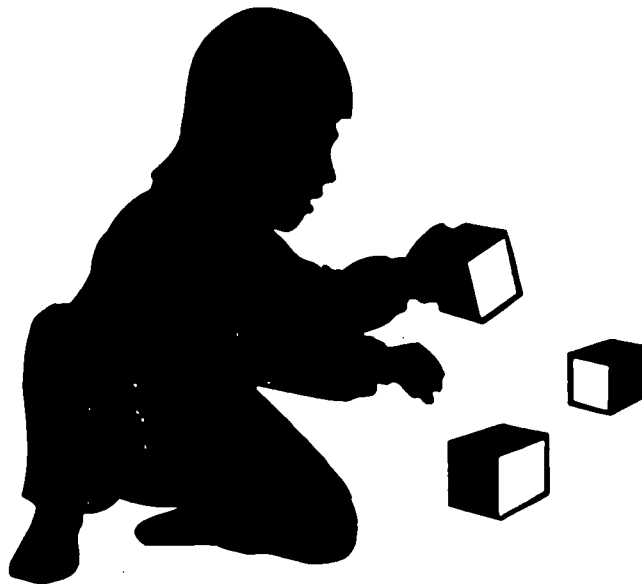
Celebrate! No matter what has occurred during the visit, show your staff your appreciation and that you value their hard work. Congratulate yourself and your staff. You couldn't have done it without them!

Support the staff whose rooms were not observed. Provide them with feedback on how well they did as well. It's the entire team and the entire program that pulled together in this effort.

- ◊ If you feel your validation visit was not what you expected, discuss this with your installation leadership and higher headquarters.
- ◊ If you have serious concerns about your validation visit, talk with your higher headquarters and the Academy contact. The validator may not have followed the guidelines and this should be discussed with the Academy.
- ◊ Continue improving. The accreditation process is a learning process. Now that you have learned what you can do, don't stop. Continue the self-evaluation process and establish goals to make your center even better.

Section 14

Accepting the Decision



Accepting the Decision

Accreditation

When you receive notification from the Academy that your program was accredited, the Academy is telling you that your program has substantially met the criteria for a high quality program. First, celebrate! The celebration for your staff should involve the entire community. Brief the senior leadership on how great an honor it is to receive this official recognition. Emphasize the importance of this recognition to the parents, staff and children.

When military centers receive accreditation, they especially should continue to focus on maintaining quality. During the time programs have to initiate reaccreditation, two years will pass, and the program may have a completely new staff. This means that accreditation really is an on-going process, and that maintaining the criteria must be an integral part of the program.



HELPFUL HINTS



- ◊ Most programs that get accredited as a result of their first visit, will receive some suggestions for improvement. These suggestions should be incorporated into the program's plan for improvement and must be addressed during annual reports submitted to the Academy.
- ◊ Mark your calendar for one year from the date of accreditation. Your annual report will be due to the Academy on that date!

Annual Reports

Each year the Academy requires an annual report on the progress your program has made in the past year, and any changes in staffing.

The Academy does not send reminders about this, so you need to suspense yourself! If there is a management change, ensure this information is passed on to the new management.

Deferral

If your program is deferred it is not the end of the world. Deferral is usually an indication that the program needs more time to implement the criteria for a developmentally appropriate program. Remember, in cases where programs have been deferred, 92% of them eventually become accredited.

When a program is deferred, the Academy sends a letter with a report from the Commission detailing the areas needing improvement. "Canned" comments are used for these reports so they may not be as specific to your program as you will be expecting. Programs have 30 days to notify the

Academy whether they will implement the suggested changes. After this period, the program has 90 days to develop an action plan and submit it to the Academy. Once you have submitted your plan, the Academy staff will call you within thirty days to schedule a revisit. Use this time wisely. Implement the suggestions from the Commission and ensure that you understand exactly what the Commission needs to see changed in order to accredit your program.

Dr Sue Bredekamp co-authored an article in Young Children (1986), entitled, "How Early Childhood Programs Get Accredited: An Analysis of Accreditation Decisions". This article gives some insight into how Commissions make their decision on whether to accredit or defer a program.

The components most frequently rated unacceptable for accredited programs seeking reaccreditation are:

- **Staff Qualifications and Development:** Staff may need additional training specific to early childhood and child development. Programs usually need *specific training plans* to help accomplish this goal.

Best Practices Toward Accreditation

- **Staffing:** Group sizes or ratios are slightly in excess of the requirements.
- **Health and Safety:** There are deficiencies in hand washing by adults and children, plans for dealing with emergencies, storage of chemicals in locked cabinets, and updating of staff health records.

Typically, there are three components determined as unacceptable in deferred programs:

- **Curriculum:** More emphasis is needed on a balance of child-initiated and staff-initiated activities; providing materials and time for children to select their own activities; and providing activities to foster self-concept and creative expression.
- **Interactions:** Improvement in frequency of positive interactions with children, responsiveness of staff to individual children, and techniques for encouraging language development are required.
- **Health and Safety:** The program has deficiencies in maintaining the building and

equipment in safe condition and in good repair, having trained first aid/CPR staff present at all times, regular hand washing by adults and children, and safe storage of chemicals.

When a generally strong program has a classroom or teacher that is below the program's overall quality, typically that classroom is in the toddler area.



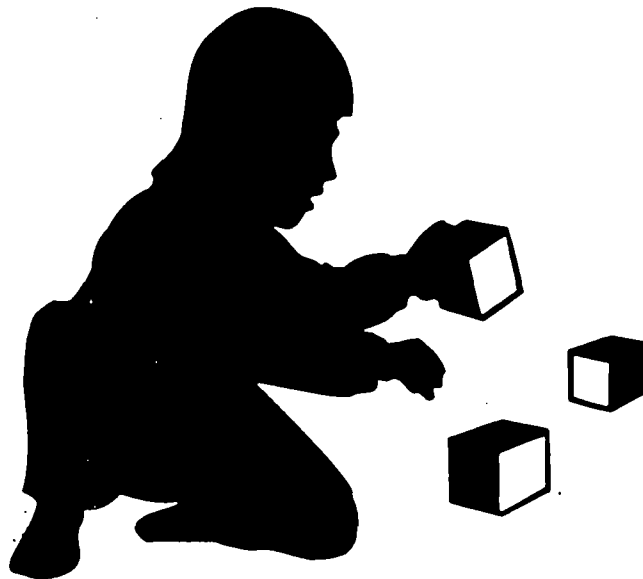
Helpful Hints



- ◊ Make sure you know *and understand* the specific reasons for deferral. If you disagree with the findings, you have a right to appeal the decision.
- ◊ Don't hesitate to have a mentor for accreditation. The Academy has a list of mentors, and your higher headquarters has a list of consultants who can assist you in this effort. Local universities may have recommendations as well.

Section 15

Reaccreditation



Reaccreditation

The most important challenge to accredited child development programs is to maintain the standards that helped them achieve accreditation and to build on that quality.

The best way to start the process of reaccreditation is to review the process the program used the first time and follow those same procedures.

Start by ordering the accreditation materials on the second anniversary of the program's accreditation. Review the materials for any changes. The Academy revised the Accreditation materials in 1998, so make sure you are up-to-date on the new criteria. Recognize that the Academy has learned lessons in the process of accrediting the first centers, and has "raised the bar" on some criteria. Many programs going through reaccreditation are surprised that nearly all or all of the rooms are observed during the validation visit, well exceeding the 50% minimum they may have experienced their first or second accreditation.



HELPFUL HINTS



- ◊ Involve new employees in the process of accreditation from the very beginning. This is especially important for military programs with a higher employee turn-over rate. Many of the employees may not have been through accreditation before. Some programs use the ECCO as a tool during the employee orientation, so employees become familiar with the tool from the start of their employment.
- ◊ Be just as serious about your preparation for the process of reaccreditation and remember the lessons learned from the last time you went through the process. Avoid making the same mistakes twice!
- ◊ Expect it to be more difficult to get employees enthused about reaccreditation. They will remember the hard work that was involved last time. Remind them of the rewards of their hard work.

Best Practices Toward Accreditation
Appendix A: Sample
Accreditation Task and Timeline Chart

<u>Task</u>	<u>Person (s) Responsible</u>	<u>Goal Dates</u>
Orientation		
1. Review Guide and Instructions	Director and support staff (Asst. Director, Trainer, etc)	Week 1
2. Meet with staff to review project	Director and support staff	Week 2
2a. Decide on staff motivation plan to implement on a monthly basis	Director and support staff	Week 2
Self Study/Program Implementation		
3. Observe and rate each classroom using ECCO	Director, Room Leaders, and support staff	Week 3-5
4. Meet with staff; plan for improve- ment; develop action plan	Director, Room Leaders and support staff	Week 6-8
5. Staff evaluate program, using open-ended questionnaire. Develop plan to disseminate information	Director, Trainer	Week 9
6. Collect information on staffing and Staff Qualifications for profiles	Trainer	Week 9
7. Evaluate program using Administrator Report	Director	Week 10
8. Complete Staff Questionnaire during staff meeting	Director	Week 11
9. Develop hand-out/display for Parent Questionnaire	Trainer/ Room Leaders	Week 11

*Appendix A: Sample
Accreditation Task and Timeline Chart (Cont.)*

<u>Task</u>	<u>Person (s) Responsible</u>	<u>Goal Dates</u>
10. Summarize Results of Staff Questionnaire on Summary	Director	Week 12
11. Complete Parent Questionnaire	Trainer/ Room Leaders	Week 12
Program Description		
12. Conduct final ECCO's	Director, Room Leaders and support staff	Week 13-15
13. Meet with Room Leaders to decide on a consensus for final ratings to be given on Classroom Observation Summary Sheet	Director, Room Leaders and support staff	Week 16
14. Compile Program Description using Administrator Report, Center Profile and Summary Sheets of: - Classroom Observations - Staff Questionnaires - Parent Questionnaires	Director and support staff	Week 17
15. Forward Program Description to higher headquarters; make necessary changes	Director and support staff	Week 18
16. Collect all documentation necessary for Validation Visit	Director and support staff	Week 19
17. Schedule visit from higher headquarters (if required)	Director and support staff	Week 21
18. Submit Program Description to Academy	Director	Week 22

*Appendix B:
Helpful Resources*

The following is a list of resources which can be used in addition to the resources and handbooks sent to you by the Academy to assist in the accreditation process.

- ◊ *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs - Revised Edition* . Sue Bredekamp and Carol Copple, Eds. National Association for the Education of Young Children. This volume describes the principles underlying developmentally appropriate practice and guidelines for classroom decision-making (an accompanying videotape is available as of May 1998) .
- ◊ *NAEYC Accreditation: A Decade of Learning and the Years Ahead* . Sue Bredekamp and Barbara A. Willer, Eds. National Association for the Education of Young Children. A compilation of 14 papers by national experts reporting on the effects of NAEYC accreditation on program quality and outcomes for children.
- ◊ *Reflections on NAEYC Accreditation: Lessons Learned and Goals for the Future* . N. Ethiel, Ed. National Association for the Education of Young Children. A summary of conference proceedings describing key issues confronting accreditation and the process.
- ◊ *The Right Stuff for Children Birth to 8 Selecting Play Materials to Support Development* . Martha B. Bronson, National Association for the Education of Young Children. This handbook describes the play materials that are beneficial to children from birth through age 8, including a listing of materials that enhance children's motor, cognitive, and social-emotional development.

Appendix B:
Helpful Resources (Cont.)

- ◊ *Model Child Care Health Policies-Revised 1997* . Developed by the Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics; prepared by S. Aronson and H. Smith, National Association for the Education of Young Children. This book contains model health policies that can be adapted or used in child development center settings.
- ◊ *Training Teachers- A Harvest of Theory and Practice* . Margie Carter and Deb Curtis, Redleaf Press. This book includes innovative ways to train teachers in several areas; notable are some of the methods to teach understanding and respect of cultural and familial diversity.
- ◊ *Blueprint for Action: Achieving Center-Based Change Through Staff Development* . Paula Jorde-Bloom, Marilyn Sheerer and Joan Britz, Redleaf Press. This book helps programs assess strengths and weaknesses and organizational structure.
- ◊ *Roots & Wings: Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs* . Stacey York, Redleaf Press. A resource on learning how cultures shape classrooms and attitudes in young children. A trainer's guide is also available.
- ◊ *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children* . L. Derman-Sparks & the ABC Task Force. A guide on helping staff and children respect each other and transcend barriers based on race, culture, gender, or ability. A parent brochure is also available.

*Appendix B:
Helpful Resources (Cont.)*

- ◇ *www.naeyc.org/default.htm*: The home page for The National Association for the Education of Young Children is an excellent source of information. This site contains information on promoting excellence in early childhood education. Information ranges from developmentally appropriate practices to an overview of NAEYC accreditation.
- ◇ *www.worldbank.org/children/basics/sites.htm*: At this web site you will find a collection of selected Internet resources on child development and related topics. This site is a map to many quality resources.
- dticaw.dtic.mil/childcare*: This site offers background information about the military's world-class child care program, which was recently described as the "best child care on earth" by Bruce Reed, the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy.

Appendix C

Trend Analysis

A trend analysis can be used by the director to record results of observations in each room to assess trends on specific criteria or in certain rooms within the program. Each criterion from the ECCO is in abbreviated form on the Trend Analysis.

In the sample attached, there is a center-wide trend on criterion A-3a. *"Staff speak with children in a friendly, courteous manner"*. There is a trend in room X that indicates the necessity for intervention in the areas of interactions and curriculum. This tool can be used to determine trends and plan training or make program changes.

Child Development Center TREND ANALYSIS

DATE: _____

Criteria	RM	RM	RM	RM X	RM	RM	RM
A INTERACTIONS							
A1 Attention, interest, respect	X	X	X	()	-	X	X
A2 Available & responsive	X	X	X	()	-	X	X
A3a Friendly, courteous	O	X	()	()	-	()	()
A3b Individual, encourage language	X	X	X	-	-	-	-
A4a Treat all with respect	X	X	X	-	-	-	-
A4b Equal opportunity	X	X	X	()	-	-	-
A5 Encourage independence	X	X	X	-	-	-	-
*A6a Positive guidance	X	X	X	()	-	-	-
A6b No negative discipline	X	X	X	X	-	X	X
A7 Overall sound is pleasant	X	X	X	X	-	X	X
A8a Children generally comfortable	X	X	X	()	-	X	X
A8b Help w/ anger sadness frustration	X	X	X	X	-	X	X
A9 Staff encourage prosocial behavior	X	X	X	()	-	X	X
A10 DAP expectations	X	X	X	-	-	-	-
A11 Encouraged to talk about feelings	X	X	X	-	-	-	-
B CURRICULUM							
*B3A Mods for special needs	X	X	X	-	-	X	X
B4a Outdoors daily	X	X	X	-	-	X	X
B4b Alternate quiet/active	X	X	X	-	-	X	X
B4c Options group activities (I-T no large grp)	X	X	X	-	-	X	X
B4d Bal of large/small motor	X	X	X	-	-	X	X
B4e Child/staff initiated	X	X	X	-	-	X	X
B5a Multiracial, non-sexist, etc	X	X	X	-	-	X	X
*B5b DAP materials- Infants	X	X	X	-	-	X	X
*B5c DAP materials- Toddlers	X	X	X	-	-	X	X

Legend--> X : Meets most criteria based on observations

X : Meets some criteria

O : Meets few criteria

Child Development Center TREND ANALYSIS

DATE: _____

Criteria	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM
*B5d DAP materials Preschoolers							
*B6 Media use limited							
B7a Foster self-concept							
B7b Social skills							
B7c Think, reason, question							
B7d Language/ literacy development							
B7e Physical development							
B7f Health, safety, nutritional practices							
B7g Creative expression/ the arts							
B7h Cultural diversity							
*B8 Child selected activities							
B9 Transitions							
B10 Flexible to routine activites							
*B11 Routine tasks							
G PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT							
G1a Indoor usable space							
G1b Outdoor space							
*G2 Space for children							
*G3 Space for variety of activities							
*G4 DAP materials							
*G5 Individual space							
G6 Private areas							
G7 Soft elements							
G8 Sound absorbing							
*G9a Variety of outdoor activites							
G9b Fences							

Legend--> X : Meets most criteria based on observations \ : Meets some criteria O : Meets few criteria

Child Development Center TREND ANALYSIS

DATE: _____

Criteria	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM
H HEALTH AND SAFETY							
H7a Adult supervision							
*H12 Children dressed appropriately							
*H13a Areas clean							
*H13b Toilet/diaper area clean							
*H14a Staff wash hands							
H14b Sink							
*H15a Building/ equipment safe							
H15b Infant/toddler choking							
H16b Crib sides locked							
H17a Toilets accessible							
H17b Soap, disposable towels							
*H17c Children wash hands							
H18a Areas clean, well-lighted							
H18b Elec outlets covered							
H18c Floor coverings							
H19a Cushioning materials - lg motor							
H19b Securely anchored							
H20a Chemicals locked							
I NUTRITION AND FOOD SERVICE							
I3 Mealtimes pleasant, learning experience							

Legend--> **X** : Meets most criteria based on observations

**** : Meets some criteria

O : Meets few criteria

Child Development Center TREND ANALYSIS

DATE: _____

Criteria	✓	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM
A INTERACTIONS								
A1 Attention, interest, respect								
A2 Available & responsive								
A3a Friendly, courteous								
A3b Individual, encourage language								
A4a Treat all with respect								
A4b Equal opportunity								
A5 Encourage independence								
*A6a Positive guidance								
A6b No negative discipline								
A7 Overall sound is pleasant								
A8a Children generally comfortable								
A8b Help w/ anger sadness frustration								
A9 Staff encourage prosocial behavior								
A10 DAP expectations								
A11 Encouraged to talk about feelings								
B CURRICULUM								
*B3A Mods for special needs								
B4a Outdoors daily								
B4b Alternate quiet/active								
B4c Options group activities (I-T no large grp)								
B4d Bal of large/small motor								
B4e Child/staff initiated								
B5a Multiracial, non-sexist, etc								
*B5b DAP materials- Infants								
*B5c DAP materials- Toddlers								

Legend--> X : Meets most criteria based on observations

✓ : Meets some criteria

O : Meets few criteria

Early Childhood Connections, Inc.

Child Development Center TREND ANALYSIS

DATE: _____

Criteria	✓	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM
*B5d DAP materials Preschoolers								
*B6 Media use limited								
B7a Foster self-concept								
B7b Social skills								
B7c Think, reason, question								
B7d Language/ literacy development								
B7e Physical development								
B7f Health, safety, nutritional practices								
B7g Creative expression/ the arts								
B7h Cultural diversity								
*B8 Child selected activities								
B9 Transitions								
B10 Flexible to routine activites								
*B11 Routine tasks								
G PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT								
G1a Indoor usable space								
G1b Outdoor space								
*G2 Space for children								
*G3 Space for variety of activities								
*G4 DAP materials								
*G5 Individual space								
G6 Private areas								
G7 Soft elements								
G8 Sound absorbing								
*G9a Variety of outdoor activites								
G9b Fences								

Legend--> **X** : Meets most criteria based on observations

✓ : Meets some criteria

O : Meets few criteria

Child Development Center TREND ANALYSIS

DATE: _____

Criteria	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM	RM
H HEALTH AND SAFETY							
H7a Adult supervision							
*H12 Children dressed appropriately							
*H13a Areas clean							
*H13b Toilet/diaper area clean							
*H14a Staff wash hands							
H14b Sink							
*H15a Building/ equipment safe							
H15b Infant/toddler choking							
H16b Crib sides locked							
H17a Toilets accessible							
H17b Soap, disposable towels							
*H17c Children wash hands							
H18a Areas clean, well-lighted							
H18b El outlets covered							
H18c Floor coverings							
H19a Cushioning materials - lg motor							
H19b Securely anchored							
H20a Chemicals locked							
I NUTRITION AND FOOD SERVICE							
I3 Mealtimes pleasant, learning experience							

Legend--> X : Meets most criteria based on observations \ : Meets some criteria O : Meets few criteria



OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-1100

Comptroller Suspense Number: 98MAY074

OSD Control Number:

Type of Action: Coordination

Action Assigned to: PB/OPS

Received in Control: 05/14/98

Suspense Date Comptroller: 05/19/98

Originating Office: Personnel & Families Ed.

Subject: Steps to Improve Federally Sponsored Child Care

Remarks:

If suspense date cannot be met, the Action Officer should justify an extension on the lines below and forward to the Correspondence Administrator, 41669. If necessary, an SD391 will be forwarded by Comptroller CCO to CCD.

Remarks: _____

*NOTE*NOTE*NOTE*NOTE*

THIS SLIP MUST BE RETURNED IN ORDER THAT LOGS MAY BE UPDATED TO SHOW COMPLETED ACTION. ACTION SLIPS SHOULD BE ATTACHED TO VERY BACK OF PACKAGE.

PRESIDENT CLINTON CALLS FOR CHILD CARE THAT STRENGTHENS AMERICA'S FAMILIES

March 10, 1998

Today, President Clinton renewed his call to make child care better, safer, and more affordable for America's working families. In a speech in Connecticut, the President issued an executive directive to improve federally-sponsored child care, and announced the release of a new report by HHS which reveals a pressing need for greater child care investment.

ENSURING THE QUALITY OF THE FEDERAL CHILD CARE SYSTEM. The President believes that the federal government should lead the way in improving the child care it sponsors for its employees. The executive directive President Clinton issued today instructs all executive agencies to: (1) reach 100 percent national accreditation of federally-sponsored child care by the year 2000 (accreditation is done by nonprofit, non-governmental professional organizations to validate safety and quality; criteria include developmental programming, staff training, appropriate staff-to-child ratios, as well as health, safety and facility standards); (2) ensure proper background checks on child care workers in federally-sponsored child care; (3) explore public-private partnerships to improve child care quality and affordability; and (4) ensure that all federal workers have full information on child care benefits and options available to them. The executive branch of the federal government operates 1,024 child care centers -- 788 by the military, 109 by the General Services Administration, and 127 by other federal departments -- and the military sponsors nearly 10,000 professional family child care providers. In total, about 215,000 children are in federally-sponsored child care.

NEW REPORT POINTS TO INNOVATION BUT LIMITED RESOURCES IN THE STATES. *The Child Care and Development Block Grant: Report of State Plans* outlines strategies that the states have developed to administer the Child Care and Development Block Grant and meet the pressing child care needs of working families. The report reveals:

- **States need more resources to help working families afford child care.** The welfare law allows states to use the Child Care and Development Block Grant to provide child care subsidies to lower-income working families -- defined as families with less than 85 percent of state median income. This new report shows that because of resource constraints, some states set eligibility levels far below what is allowed by federal law. For example, in 10 states, a family of three with as little as \$20,000 of income is not eligible for any help with child care costs. In as many as 37 states, a family of three with \$28,000 of income is not eligible for a child care subsidy. Further, most states have insufficient funds even to subsidize all families meeting their eligibility requirements.
- **States have innovative strategies to improve child care quality,** such as scholarships and basic training for child care providers, tax credits for businesses that offer child care services, initiatives to link the child care and health care communities, support for resource and referral services, and initiatives to expand school-age care.

THE PRESIDENT'S CHILD CARE INITIATIVE ADDRESSES THE NEED FOR MORE RESOURCES AND BUILDS ON INNOVATION IN THE STATES. The President's balanced budget calls for an historic investment -- more than \$20 billion over five years -- to help working families pay for child care, build the supply of after-school programs, improve child care safety and quality, and promote early learning.

CONNECTICUT IS IMPROVING CHILD CARE QUALITY. Connecticut recently passed bipartisan School Readiness Legislation to improve child care quality and promote early learning.

**PRESIDENT CLINTON'S PROPOSAL:
CHILD CARE THAT STRENGTHENS AMERICAN FAMILIES**

"Not a single American family should ever have to choose between the job they need and the child they love."

President Bill Clinton
State of the Union Address, January 27, 1998

President Clinton's balanced budget includes an historic initiative to improve child care for America's working families. The initiative proposes over \$20 billion over five years for child care -- **to help working families pay for child care, build a good supply of after-school programs, improve the safety and quality of care, and promote early learning.**

ENSURING AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE, SAFE CHILD CARE. The President's child care initiative responds to the struggles our nation's working parents face in finding child care they can afford, trust and rely on. The new initiative:

- **Makes child care more affordable for working families.** To help working families struggling to meet the costs of child care, the initiative invests \$7.5 billion over five years to double the number of children receiving child care subsidies to more than two million by the year 2003. The initiative also invests \$4.8 billion over five years to increase tax credits for child care for three million families and provides a new tax credit for businesses that offer child care services to their employees at a cost of \$500 million over five years.
- **Increases access to and promotes early learning and healthy child development.** To improve early learning, the initiative includes \$3 billion over five years to establish an Early Learning Fund that helps local communities improve the quality and safety of child care for children ages zero to five. The initiative also increases investment in Head Start and doubles the number of children served by Early Head Start to 80,000.
- **Improves the safety and quality of child care.** To help ensure safe, quality child care, the initiative: steps up enforcement of state health and safety standards in child care settings, facilitates background checks on child care providers, increases scholarships and training for child care providers, and invests in child care research and evaluation.
- **Expands access to safe after-school care.** To help create safe, positive learning environments for American school-age children who lack adult supervision during a typical week, the initiative increases the 21st Century Learning Center Program by \$800 million over five years to provide after-school care for up to half a million children a year.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 9, 1998

CHILD CARE EVENT: TOUR OF CENTER AND SPEECH

DATE:	Tuesday, March 10, 1998
LOCATION:	Housatonic Community-Technical College Bridgeport, Connecticut
TIME:	10:50 to 11:40 am
FROM:	Bruce Reed

I. PURPOSE

To underscore your commitment to making child care better, safer, and more affordable for America's working families by: (1) issuing an executive memorandum to improve federally-sponsored child care, and (2) releasing a new HHS report that reveals a pressing need for greater child care investment.

II. BACKGROUND

In Bridgeport, Connecticut, you will tour a model child care center at Housatonic Community-Technical College and then give a speech to a group of child care advocates, community leaders, elected officials, and students. Connecticut is the home of many congressional sponsors of child care legislation, including Senator Chris Dodd, and Reps. Barbara Kennelly, Nancy Johnson, and Rosa DeLauro. In addition, Connecticut recently passed bipartisan state legislation to promote early learning and improve child care quality.

Executive Memorandum to Improve Federally-Sponsored Child Care

You will direct executive agencies to take the following new steps to improve the quality of federally-sponsored child care:

- (1) Ensure proper thorough and timely background checks on child care workers in federally-sponsored child care.
- (2) Achieve 100 percent national accreditation of federally-sponsored child care by the year 2000. Accreditation is done by nonprofit, non-governmental professional organizations to validate safety and quality. Currently, 76 percent of military child care centers are accredited and 35 percent of non-military federal child care are accredited, as compared to an estimated 7 percent nationally.

(3) Explore opportunities for collaboration both within government and with the private sector to improve the quality and affordability of federally sponsored child care.

(4) Ensure that all federal workers have full information on child care benefits and options available to them.

Release of New HHS Report on Child Care

HHS' new report, *The Child Care and Development Block Grant - A Report of State Plans*, outlines the strategies that states have developed to administer the Child Care and Development Block Grant. The report contains two key findings:

- States need more resources to help working families afford child care. The welfare law allows states to use the Child Care and Development Block Grant to provide child care subsidies to lower-income working families -- defined as families with less than 85 percent of state median income. This new report shows that because of resource constraints, some states set eligibility levels far below what is allowed by federal law. For example, in 10 states, a family of three with as little as \$20,000 of income is not eligible for any help with child care costs. In as many as 37 states, a family of three with \$28,000 of income is not eligible for any help with child care subsidy. Further, most states have insufficient funds even to subsidize all families meeting their eligibility requirements.
- States have innovative strategies to improve child care quality, such as scholarships and basic training for child care providers, tax credits for businesses that offer child care services, initiatives to link the child care and health care communities, support for resource and referral services, and initiatives to expand school-age care.

New Report by the Children's Defense Fund

On Tuesday morning, the Children's Defense Fund will issue a report of state expenditures of the child care block grant. The report, titled *Locked Doors: States Struggling to meet the Child Care Needs of Low-Income Working Families*, makes the following findings, which are generally consistent with those of the HHS report:

- State child care subsidy programs are so underfunded that they cut off eligibility at family income levels far below what is allowed by federal law and what is needed by families.
- Even those low-income working families that do meet state income guidelines frequently cannot get the help they need. As of January 1998, about half the states had to turn away eligible low-income working families or put them on lengthy waiting lists for help.

Congressional Legislation on the Hill

Several Congressional leaders on child care are from Connecticut, including Senator Dodd, and Reps. Kennelly, Johnson, and DeLauro. All of their bills contain several elements included in your initiative, but most also include an initiative targeted to stay-at-home parents as well. In particular, Senator Dodd's bill, which is co-sponsored by 25 Senate Democrats, includes many of the elements of your initiative, such as a significant expansion of the Child Care and Development Block Grant, an expansion of the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, a tax credit for businesses that provide child care, an increase in the investment in after-school programs, and a fund targeted to early learning and quality improvements; it also includes a provision to assist stay-at-home parents.

Recent Action on Child Care in Connecticut

Connecticut passed landmark child care/school readiness legislation in the 1997 session, on a bipartisan basis. The legislation provides full access to child care for three and four years olds, with emphasis on quality, parent involvement, family literacy, transition to school, and health linkages. Programs must be accredited to receive state dollars. Health care is linked to the legislation by requiring child care providers to ensure that children have had necessary and timely health screens. The legislation invested \$60 million in this area.

Housatonic Community-Technical College's Early Childhood Laboratory School

Housatonic Community-Technical College enrolls 3,300 students and offers generalized two-year degree programs. The student body is 66% female and the average age is 29. The college's Early Childhood Laboratory School is a nationally-accredited center serving 40 children, in two classes of twenty. The ratio of teachers to children is roughly one to six. The staff ranges from those with Masters in Early Childhood Education to two former welfare recipients. Also, community college students serve as externs in the center to gain experience towards their degrees in early childhood education.

III. PARTICIPANTS

Speech Participants:

Mayor Joseph Ganim

Representative Chris Shays.

Senator Chris Dodd

Pamela Price, who is a parent of a five-year old daughter enrolled at the School. She is a former welfare recipient who is now attending the Technical College assisted by Pell Grants, and she is studying Early Childhood Education. She recently started working in an after-school program at a nearby elementary school.

You

Members of Congress Confirmed to Attend

Senator Chris Dodd (D-CT)
Rep. Chris Shays (R-CT)
Rep. Barbara Kennelly (D-CT)
Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-CT)
Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)

* The audience is made up of 150 leaders in child care policy in the state, including child care providers, business leaders, and parents.

VI. PRESS PLAN

Open Press.

V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

- Upon arrival, **you** will be greeted by elected officials and Dr. Janis Wurtz, President, Housatonic Community - Technical College and Marie Nulty, Director, Early Childhood Laboratory School.
- **You**, accompanied by Marie Nulty, Mayor Ganim, Representative Chris Shays and Representative Chris Dodd, will tour the classroom of the Early Childhood Laboratory School at Housatonic Community-Technical College.
- **You**, accompanied by Mayor Joseph Ganim, Representative Chris Shays, Senator Chris Dodd and Pamela Price, are announced onto stage to "Hail to the Chief" and "Ruffles and Flourishes."
- Mayor Joseph Ganim gives welcoming remarks and introduces Representative Chris Shays.
- Representative Chris Shays gives remarks and introduces Senator Chris Dodd.
- Senator Chris Dodd will make remarks and introduces Pamela Price.
- Pamela Price will make remarks and introduce **You**.
- **You** give remarks, work a ropeline, and depart.

VI. REMARKS

To be provided by June Shih.

PRESIDENT CLINTON CALLS FOR CHILD CARE THAT STRENGTHENS AMERICA'S FAMILIES

March 10, 1998

Today, President Clinton renewed his call to make child care better, safer, and more affordable for America's working families. In a speech in Connecticut, the President issued an executive directive to improve federally-sponsored child care, and announced the release of a new report by HHS which reveals a pressing need for greater child care investment.

ENSURING THE QUALITY OF THE FEDERAL CHILD CARE SYSTEM. The President believes that the federal government should lead the way in improving the child care it sponsors for its employees. The executive directive President Clinton issued today instructs all executive agencies to: (1) reach 100 percent national accreditation of federally-sponsored child care by the year 2000 (accreditation is done by nonprofit, non-governmental professional organizations to validate safety and quality; criteria include developmental programming, staff training, appropriate staff-to-child ratios, as well as health, safety and facility standards); (2) ensure proper background checks on child care workers in federally-sponsored child care; (3) explore public-private partnerships to improve child care quality and affordability; and (4) ensure that all federal workers have full information on child care benefits and options available to them. The executive branch of the federal government operates 1,024 child care centers -- 788 by the military, 109 by the General Services Administration, and 127 by other federal departments -- and the military sponsors nearly 10,000 professional family child care providers. In total, about 215,000 children are in federally-sponsored child care.

NEW REPORT POINTS TO INNOVATION BUT LIMITED RESOURCES IN THE STATES. *The Child Care and Development Block Grant: Report of State Plans* outlines strategies that the states have developed to administer the Child Care and Development Block Grant and meet the pressing child care needs of working families. The report reveals:

- **States need more resources to help working families afford child care.** The welfare law allows states to use the Child Care and Development Block Grant to provide child care subsidies to lower-income working families -- defined as families with less than 85 percent of state median income. This new report shows that because of resource constraints, some states set eligibility levels far below what is allowed by federal law. For example, in 10 states, a family of three with as little as \$20,000 of income is not eligible for any help with child care costs. In as many as 37 states, a family of three with \$28,000 of income is not eligible for a child care subsidy. Further, most states have insufficient funds even to subsidize all families meeting their eligibility requirements.
- **States have innovative strategies to improve child care quality,** such as scholarships and basic training for child care providers, tax credits for businesses that offer child care services, initiatives to link the child care and health care communities, support for resource and referral services, and initiatives to expand school-age care.

THE PRESIDENT'S CHILD CARE INITIATIVE ADDRESSES THE NEED FOR MORE RESOURCES AND BUILDS ON INNOVATION IN THE STATES. The President's balanced budget calls for an historic investment -- more than \$20 billion over five years -- to help working families pay for child care, build the supply of after-school programs, improve child care safety and quality, and promote early learning.

CONNECTICUT IS IMPROVING CHILD CARE QUALITY. Connecticut recently passed bipartisan School Readiness Legislation to improve child care quality and promote early learning.

**PRESIDENT CLINTON'S PROPOSAL:
CHILD CARE THAT STRENGTHENS AMERICAN FAMILIES**

"Not a single American family should ever have to choose between the job they need and the child they love."

President Bill Clinton
State of the Union Address, January 27, 1998

President Clinton's balanced budget includes an historic initiative to improve child care for America's working families. The initiative proposes over \$20 billion over five years for child care -- **to help working families pay for child care, build a good supply of after-school programs, improve the safety and quality of care, and promote early learning.**

ENSURING AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE, SAFE CHILD CARE. The President's child care initiative responds to the struggles our nation's working parents face in finding child care they can afford, trust and rely on. The new initiative:

- **Makes child care more affordable for working families.** To help working families struggling to meet the costs of child care, the initiative invests \$7.5 billion over five years to double the number of children receiving child care subsidies to more than two million by the year 2003. The initiative also invests \$4.8 billion over five years to increase tax credits for child care for three million families and provides a new tax credit for businesses that offer child care services to their employees at a cost of \$500 million over five years.
- **Increases access to and promotes early learning and healthy child development.** To improve early learning, the initiative includes \$3 billion over five years to establish an Early Learning Fund that helps local communities improve the quality and safety of child care for children ages zero to five. The initiative also increases investment in Head Start and doubles the number of children served by Early Head Start to 80,000.
- **Improves the safety and quality of child care.** To help ensure safe, quality child care, the initiative: steps up enforcement of state health and safety standards in child care settings, facilitates background checks on child care providers, increases scholarships and training for child care providers, and invests in child care research and evaluation.
- **Expands access to safe after-school care.** To help create safe, positive learning environments for American school-age children who lack adult supervision during a typical week, the initiative increases the 21st Century Learning Center Program by \$800 million over five years to provide after-school care for up to half a million children a year.

CHILD CARE EVENT IN CONNECTICUT

March 10, 1998

INTERNAL Q&A

Directive to Improve Federally-Sponsored Child Care

Q: Why is the President issuing a directive to improve federally-sponsored child care? Is it in bad shape?

A: Federally-sponsored child care is not in bad shape, but it is not uniformly excellent in quality. The directive that the President issued today will help ensure that the federal Government is a model child care provider. The President believes that the federal government -- both as a supplier of child care and as an employer that must recruit and retain a strong workforce -- should lead the way in improving the child care it sponsors for its employees. The directive calls for several steps to be taken: (1) ensuring proper background checks of child care workers in federally-sponsored child care; (2) achieving 100 percent national accreditation of federally-sponsored child care; (3) exploring partnerships among federal agencies and with the private sectors to improve child care quality and affordability; and (4) ensuring that all federal workers have full information on child care benefits and options available to them.

Q: Isn't the biggest problem with federally-sponsored child care that it's not affordable? Won't improving its quality just make it even more expensive?

A: It is true that today, many lower-income government workers cannot afford the care sponsored by the federal government. The President is committed to making child care more affordable for all Americans. His child care initiative has several components aimed at improving child care costs: (1) \$7.5 billion over five years to double, by the year 2003, the number of children currently served with child care subsidies; (2) \$4.8 billion over five years to provide greater tax relief to working parents paying for child care; and (3) a new tax credit to businesses that offer child care services to their workers. Government workers will benefit from these measures, as will all Americans. In addition, the President's directive instructs the Office of Personnel Management to ensure that federal workers know about the child care options and benefits, including subsidies available to them, and asks that his Cabinet explore public-private partnerships to improve child care affordability.

Q: How are background checks currently administered in federally-sponsored child care? Is there a big problem there?

A: The President believes that background checks are necessary to ensure that children in child care are safe. The Administration wants to be assured that this is happening in a

careful and systematic way in federally-sponsored child care -- and that monitoring of this process is vigilant. The military has developed a model system to do background checks of child care workers in the centers and family day-care homes it sponsors. The President's directive is aimed at bring a similar level of excellence to the non-military federally-sponsored child care. The President's directive requires that the Administrator of the General Services Administration review this issue and submit a plan to the President to ensure complete and timely criminal and civil background checks in all federally-sponsored child care.

NOTE: The Department of Defense conducts background checks -- using both the FBI and an internal clearance system -- on all child care workers in the child care centers and family child care homes it sponsors. Non-military federal agencies that sponsor child care are required by law to conduct criminal background checks -- through the FBI and through the state criminal history repositories -- on child care providers, as well as to comply with state and local requirements.

Q: Aren't non-military federally-sponsored child care centers already required by law to do background checks? What is the point of the directive?

A: Non-military federal agencies that sponsor child care are required by law to do background checks on child care providers, but there is no oversight mechanism to ensure that these checks are being done thoroughly and in a timely fashion. Although some centers do thorough and timely checks, others appear to comply with their statutory obligations in only a perfunctory manner. The President's directive instructs the Administrator of the General Services Administration to report to him on the thoroughness and timeliness of background checks of child care providers in all non-military federally-sponsored child care. The result should be a uniformly high level of care and accuracy in conducting background checks.

Q: What about background checks for child care workers nationwide?

The President has taken action to help improve background checks on child care workers nationwide. Last year, the President transmitted the National Crime Prevention and Privacy Compact to Congress, which will facilitate effective background checks on child care providers by eliminating state law barriers to the sharing of criminal history information for purposes other than ongoing criminal investigations. The President has urged enactment of this Compact so that child care agencies or parents wanting to do background checks can gain access to ratifying states' complete criminal records.

Q: What is accreditation? Why is President calling for all federally-sponsored child care center in the Executive Branch to be accredited?

A: Accreditation for child care is done by nonprofit, non-governmental professional

organizations to validate safety and quality. Criteria include developmental programming, staff training, appropriate staff-to-child ratios, as well as health, safety and facility standards. Currently, 76 percent of military child care centers are accredited and 35 percent of other federally-sponsored child care centers in the executive branch are accredited -- as compared to an estimated 7 percent nationally. The President believes all eligible, federally-sponsored child care should achieve nationally-recognized, independent accreditation to ensure and maintain quality.

Q: How is the President's Directive different from the legislation sponsored by Senator Jeffords and Congressman Gilman to improve federally-sponsored child care?

A: Both the President's directive and legislation proposed by Senators Dodd and Jeffords and Rep. Gilman aim to improve federally-sponsored child care. Both require federally-sponsored child care centers to be accredited by independent, nationally-recognized organizations. The congressional legislation would require that these child care centers achieve accreditation, to the fullest extent possible, within five years of enactment of the legislation. The President's executive memorandum sets a quicker time frame for accreditation and directs his Cabinet to ensure accreditation, to the fullest extent possible, by the year 2000.

The President's directive also addresses other issues not in the Jeffords/Gilman legislation, including: (1) ensuring proper background checks of child care workers in federally-sponsored child care; and (2) ensuring that all federal workers have full information on child care benefits and options available to them.

The pending legislation does one thing that cannot be done by executive action: it would require that all non-military federally-sponsored child care adopt health and safety standards developed by the General Services Administration.

Q: Does the Administration support the Jeffords/Gilman legislation?

A: While the Administration has not taken a formal position on the legislation, we have provided significant technical assistance to congressional staff as it has developed and support its essential elements. We look forward to continuing to work with Senators Dodd and Jeffords, Rep. Gilman and other Members of Congress to meet our mutual goals of improving child care in federally-sponsored facilities, and to making child care better, safer, and more affordable for all American parents who rely on it. Of course, some of this legislation will be rendered unnecessary by the President's executive directive.

Q: What does federally-sponsored child care look like?

A: The executive branch of the federal government operates 1,024 child care centers -- 788 by the military, 109 by the General Services Administration, and 127 by other federal

departments. In addition, the military sponsors nearly 10,000 professional family child care providers. In total, approximately 215,000 children are in the care of federally-sponsored child care in the executive branch. In addition, the judicial and legislative branches sponsor 5 child care centers, caring for 338 children.

Q: How does the military operate its child care system? Isn't it a good program because it spends so much money?

A: The Department of Defense's Child Care System serves approximately 200,000 children (aged zero to 12) daily, making it the largest employer-sponsored child care program in the nation. Through this system, the military offers full-day, part-day, and hourly child care, part-day preschools, before- and after-school programs for school age children, and extended hour care. Because of the Department of Defense's commitment to excellence in child care, since 1992, the number of military child care facilities that are accredited by the independent National Association for the Education of Young Children has risen from 55 to 353. Currently, over 75% of military child care programs are accredited, as compared to only 7% of other child care facilities nationwide.

While the military does invest significant resources into their child care system, it also finds ways to increase quality without large investments -- by setting and enforcing high quality standards (including unannounced inspections), supporting family day care networks, offering a strong resource and referral system, and providing a wide variety of care options, all of which increase quality without large investments.

Q: How does non-military, federally-sponsored child care operate?

A: Non-military federal agencies sponsor over 240 child care centers across the country in federally-owned and leased buildings. The centers are operated by profit and non-profit child care providers. Once a need is established, the General Services Administration or the agencies that occupy the building can supply space to establish a child care center. The sponsoring agency or agencies may continue to support the center by providing free rent, utilities, telephone services, and general maintenance, but may not provide subsidies for salaries, training for child care staff or tuition assistance.

All children of federal employees families are eligible to send their children to federally-sponsored child care centers. Under present law, fifty percent of the children attending the child care centers must be children of federal employees. Families in the community may use any slots not filled by children of federal workers, who are given priority for admission.

The centers are overseen by boards that contract with vendors for services or operate the centers themselves. Because federal child care is not uniform in operation, quality, or the amount of support the center gets from its sponsoring agency, there are many variations

among the centers operated by the non-military federal agencies.

Q: Are there federally-sponsored child care facilities in Connecticut? Are they accredited?

A: There are four child care centers sponsored by the federal government in Connecticut -- one by the General Services Administration, one by the Department of Transportation and the Coast Guard, one by the Department of Veteran's Affairs, and one by the Navy. All four require background checks; two are accredited (the GSA and Navy centers).

Q: What are the child care options for parents who work at the White House?

Employees of the Executive Office of the President (EOP) can enroll their children in the nearby U.S. Kids Child Development Center, a center accredited by the independent National Association for the Education of Young Children. Additionally, White House parents may enroll their children in any of the 26 other federal child care centers in the greater Washington, D.C. area.

New HHS Report

Q: What does the new HHS report tell us?

A: This report -- called *The Child Care and Development Block Grant: A Report of State Plans* -- outlines the strategies that the states have developed to administer the block grant and meet the pressing child care needs of working families. There are two important findings to the report. First, the report indicates that states could use more resources to help working families afford child care. With the current block grant funding level, states are not able to serve everyone that could be eligible under federal law with a child care subsidy. For example, in 10 states, a family of three with as little as \$20,000 of income does not have a chance for help with child care costs. And in as many as 37 states, a family of three with \$28,000 of income is not eligible for a child care subsidy. Further, most states have insufficient funds even to subsidize all families meeting their eligibility requirements. Second, the report tells us that states have designed innovative strategies to improve child care quality, such as scholarships and basic training for child care providers, tax credits for businesses that offer child care services, initiatives to link the child care and health care communities, support for resource and referral services, and initiatives to expand school-age care.

The President's child care initiative addresses the need for greater resources to the states for child care subsidies and builds on the innovative activities that states are employing to improve child care quality and build the supply of good care for the families who rely on it.

Q: How will the President's child care initiative respond to the issues raised in the

report?

- A: President Clinton's child care initiative responds to the need to help more hardworking Americans with the costs of child care by investing \$7.5 billion over five years in the Child Care and Development Block Grant -- an investment that would enable us to double the number of children currently served by the block grant.

In addition, the President's initiative builds on the promising efforts to improve child care quality underway in the states, such as those designed to improve consumer education, provide scholarships to child care providers, offer tax credits to employers that provide child care services to their workers, and to enforce state health and safety standards. The President's child care initiative builds on these state-level efforts by: (1) creating a Standards Enforcement Fund; (2) establishing a Child Care Provider Scholarship Fund; (3) offering a national tax credit to employers that offer child care services; (4) establishing an Early Learning Fund for activities to improve child care quality and promote early childhood development; and (5) providing after-school opportunities for 500,000 more children each year.

- Q: The Children's Defense Fund today released a state-by-state report on child care? Why is some of CDF's information different from that in the HHS report?**

- A: The two reports collected data for different periods of time using different approaches. For example, the HHS data reflect information submitted in the CCDBG plans prepared last summer as dictated by law, while the CDF data were collected through interviews with administrators in January 1998. But in general CDF's report and HHS's report are consistent in that they point to the insufficient funds available to states through the block grant to provide child care subsidies for working parents.

- Q: Do you agree with CDF's finding that we need to invest an additional \$20 billion over five years in the block grant? Why has the President proposed so much less than that?**

- A: The Administration believes that states need significant additional resources to enable them to make child care better, safer, and more affordable for the hardworking Americans who rely on it. We know that today states are able to serve far less than those eligible for child care subsidies under federal law, and that, more than ever, parents struggle to meet the high costs of child care. That is why the President has proposed an additional \$7.5 billion over five years for the Child and Development Block Grant -- an investment that would allow us to double by the year 2003 the number of children currently served with child care subsidies by the block grant. The President has also proposed other child care investments -- including greater tax relief for working families and for employers that offer child care services for their workers, scholarships for child care providers, and funds for standards enforcement and early learning activities. The President's child care initiative --

totaling over \$20 billion over five years -- represents the largest single child care investment in our nation's history.

General

Q: What is the President's child care initiative?

A: President Clinton's historic initiative to improve child care for America's working families represents the largest single investment in child care in the nation's history -- over \$20 billion over five years. President Clinton's initiative responds to the struggles our nation's working parents face in finding child care that they can afford, trust, and rely on. The President's proposal will help working families pay for child care, build the supply of good after-school programs, improve the safety and quality of care, and promote early learning.

- **Doubles the number of children receiving child care subsidies** to more than two million by the year 2003 by increasing funding for the Child Care and Development Block Grant by \$7.5 billion over 5 years.
- **Increases tax credits for three million working families to help them pay for child care** by investing \$4.8 billion over 5 years in the Child and Dependent Tax Credit. The President's proposal also provides a new tax credit for businesses that offer child care services for their employees.
- **Provides after-school care for 500,000 children per year** by expanding the 21st Century Community Learning Center program by \$800 million over 5 years to provide funds to school-community partnerships to establish or expand programs for school-age children.
- **Improves child care safety and quality and enhances early childhood development** by establishing a new Early Learning Fund as well as supporting enforcement of state child care health and safety standards, providing scholarships to up to 50,000 child care providers per year, and investing in research and consumer education.

Q: Are states spending the child care money in the new welfare reform law?

A: We are very encouraged by the state reports which show they have obligated over 99 percent of the child care funds available under the new welfare law for FY 1997. This demonstrates the tremendous need states have for child care, and President Clinton has continued to urge states to invest their dollars into helping working families. Several states, such as Illinois and Delaware, are committing substantial state dollars to ensure that low income families -- both working families and those transitioning from welfare to work -- have available child care. But let's be clear -- the President's initiative is not aimed at mothers on welfare. It is aimed at working parents. We know that working parents with annual incomes under \$14,400 that paid for child care for

children under five spent 25 percent of their income on child care -- and even then it is difficult to find accessible, quality care.

Q: Child Care has not been made a clear priority by the Congressional leadership. Do you really think you have a chance of getting anything done?

A: Since the President announced his child care initiative in January, legislation has been introduced by Republicans and Democrats that include proposals similar to the President's proposed initiative. Senators Chafee and Dodd each have introduced promising legislation in the Senate, and Representatives Johnson and Kennelly have introduced legislation in the House. The Administration believes that making child care better, safer and more affordable for the hardworking American families that rely on it has strong Congressional and public support. We will be working hard with Congress on a bipartisan basis to enact child care legislation this year that is right for America's children and families.

Q: Since much of the funding of this proposal is based on the tobacco settlement, aren't you counting your chickens before they've hatched? What will you do if the tobacco settlement does not go through?

A: First, the initiative is paid for in a number of ways -- only one part comes from tobacco revenues. Second, and more important, we believe that a national tobacco settlement will pass. The President supports strong tobacco legislation, and many Republicans and Democrats alike are working vigorously to craft comprehensive legislation. Of course, no offset proposed in a budget is guaranteed; the Congress can reject any proposed way of financing a program. If Congress does not pass comprehensive tobacco legislation, we will work with Congress to find other offsets. This is a high Administration priority, and we will find an effective funding mechanism.

Q: What's the Administration's position on proposals to support stay-at-home parents?

A: There are a number of proposals on the Hill to help stay-at-home parents, and we are working hard to evaluate their costs and effects. The President believes that we should respect and support parents in whatever choices they make, whether they work or stay at home. He has supported that choice in the past through a variety of actions to increase family income, such as expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit, increasing the minimum wage, and passing the \$500 per-child tax credit. These actions targeted to help families will cost approximately \$250 billion over the next five years. The President believes that by continuing to work together on a bipartisan basis and by taking the best proposals from both sides of the aisle, we will achieve legislation that benefits all America's families and children.

Q: Some conservatives claim that this is a big government proposal, which promotes institutionalized day care. Is this true?

A: No. The Administration is committed to helping parents make the choices that are right for their families, whatever child care arrangements they choose for their children. Most of the funding in the President's proposal goes directly to parents -- whether through tax cuts or through vouchers issued by states with child care block grant funding. The President's child care initiative is designed to provide maximum flexibility to parents so that all their child care choices are supported.