

IQPPS Implementation Resource

Purpose of Tool: The IQPPS Implementation Resource is designed as a supportive tool to help preschool programs interpret and implement the Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards (IQPPS). It provides clarification of terms, resources, examples and considerations intended to support consistent, high-quality practices.

Implementation support is provided only where additional clarification or support was determined to be beneficial. As a result, not every criterion or indicator includes supplemental information.

Programs are encouraged to refer to the [Iowa Early Learning Standards \(IELS\)](#) for additional clarification regarding development across domains and content areas.

Program Standard 1: Relationships

Effective early childhood programs prioritize nurturing relationships, promote a positive sense of self, and encourage respect and cooperation among children. When programs create safe and engaging environments that build on children's interests, they begin to develop trusting relationships between adults and children. Through positive interactions with peers and the significant adults in their lives, young children develop and foster essential skills that support cooperation, motivation and understanding.

Additionally, high-quality programs support children in forming meaningful connections with their families, teachers, and communities. These relationships encourage children to explore, take risks, solve problems and engage deeply with the world around them. In turn, such relationships act as protective factors promoting overall well-being and reducing challenging behaviors.

By fostering positive relationships and supportive environments, programs ensure children develop the competencies essential for lifelong learning and well-being.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Creating Caring Environments	1.1	Teaching staff work in partnership with families to: a. establish and maintain regular ongoing, two-way communication b. create a positive, welcoming program environment that is contextually appropriate	This criterion refers to establishing and maintaining ongoing routines which provide consistent opportunities for reciprocal (two-way) communication with families. Examples: back and forth digital communication platforms and emails Non-examples: newsletters, open houses and parent communication bulletin boards

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Child- Centered Teaching	1.2R	Teaching staff foster a respectful and positive learning environment by: a. considering and treating all children with respect b. implementing activities, discussions and teaching practices that build confidence and a positive sense of self as well as teach respect and encourage the valuing of differences c. intervening when children tease or exclude others d. providing materials, models and visual representations that reflect all adult roles, abilities and backgrounds using appropriate and respectful language in interactions	This criterion refers to providing equitable opportunities for all children to actively engage as valued members of the classroom community. Ensure program policies support the use of inclusive language and guide the selection of unbiased materials. Indicator d: using classroom materials which reflect diversity and promote inclusive, non-stereotypical roles and experiences
	1.3R	Teaching staff follow written positive child guidance policies which: a. prohibit the use of physical punishment, psychological abuse or coercion b. address how disruptive and unsafe behaviors in children are handled c. limit or eliminate the use of suspension or expulsion	The criterion refers to creating, implementing and communicating the program's discipline policy in full alignment with the required indicators. Programs prohibit the use of threats, derogatory language and withholding of food.
	1.4	Teaching staff evaluate and change their responses to children based on individual needs. Teaching staff vary their interactions to be sensitive and attentive to: a. differing abilities b. temperaments c. activity levels d. cognitive development e. social development	This criterion refers to teaching staff intentionally adjusting their interactions and responses to meet the individual needs of children rather than responding to all children the same way.
	1.5	Teaching staff frequently talk with children and listen to children with attention and respect. They: a. respond to children's questions and requests b. use strategies to communicate effectively and build relationships with every child c. help children increase conversational exchanges through meaningful conversations with each child	This criterion refers to teaching staff engaging in responsive and respectful interactions to support children's communication. Programs implement practices addressing each indicator.
	1.6	Teaching staff will focus on supporting children's appropriate behavior by: a. teaching communication, interaction and executive functioning skills b. using environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support and other teaching strategies c. providing guidance that is consistent with the child's level of development	This criterion refers to teaching staff implementing prevention strategies, explicitly teaching social skills and intentionally adapting the classroom environment to support social competence.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Supporting Positive Relationships	1.7	Teaching staff intentionally support children as they practice social skills and build friendships by helping them: a. enter into play b. sustain play c. enhance play	This criterion refers to actively fostering peer connections by inviting children into interactions and supporting engagement with others. Support is responsive to individual needs, with staff gradually stepping back to encourage children's growing independence in their interactions.
	1.8	Teaching staff assist children in resolving conflicts by helping them: a. recognize and label their own and other's feelings b. employ strategies to manage feelings c. describe problems d. try alternative solutions	This criterion refers to teaching staff supporting children in identifying emotions, using problem-solving strategies and providing guidance while promoting independent conflict resolution.
	1.9	Teaching staff help children manage their behavior by guiding and supporting children to: a. persist when frustrated b. play cooperatively with other children c. use language to communicate needs d. learn turn taking e. gain control of physical impulses f. express negative emotions in ways that do not harm others or themselves g. use problem-solving techniques h. learn about self and others i. understand others may have different thoughts and opinions than their own	This criterion refers to providing responsive guidance to support self-regulation, social development, coaching persistence and modeling language. Teaching staff facilitate cooperation and scaffold problem-solving to build independence and perspective-taking.

Program Standard 2: Family and Community Connections

Programs build strong family and community partnerships supporting children's growth and development. Through routine communication and active collaboration, program staff and families work together to create a partnership that supports learning both in the classroom and beyond.

In addition, program staff establish connections with community organizations to link families with resources and opportunities. These partnerships strengthen the network of support among families, educators and the broader community to enhance children's learning.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Family Partnerships	2.1R	Program staff use a variety of formal and informal strategies and routines (including conversations) to become acquainted with and learn from families about their family structure; their child-rearing practices; and information families wish to share about their backgrounds.	The focus of this criterion is establishing and maintaining routines which provide consistent opportunities for reciprocal communication in which families are able to share information.
	2.2	The program provides information to families on volunteer opportunities including but not limited to: a. how to be involved in their child's learning environment or program b. options for participating in learning experiences c. opportunities that align with the family's interests and skills d. maintaining confidentiality of participating children and their families	The focus of this criterion is creating, implementing and communicating volunteer opportunities while ensuring confidentiality of families and participating children. Staff create meaningful and engaging volunteer opportunities such as inviting families to share their unique skills and interests.
	2.3	Program staff routinely communicate with the families of preschoolers about each child's progress and growth, individual activities and shared caregiving issues.	The focus of this criterion is establishing and maintaining weekly communication with families regarding children's development, keeping families informed about program activities and inviting collaboration around emerging caregiving needs or concerns.
	2.4	The program addresses family concerns and outlines the steps families can take to ask questions, raise concerns or provide feedback on an ongoing basis.	The focus of this criterion is to maintain open communication with families while being responsive to feedback. Families are informed of steps to take if additional support is needed.
	2.5	Program staff collaborate with families to prepare for and manage their children's transitions between programs, including special education programs. Staff provide information to families that can assist in advocating for and promoting a successful transition for their child.	The focus of this criterion is partnering with families to plan and support smooth transitions between settings, including entry into the program, movement between classrooms and transitions to kindergarten. Collaboration may be evident through communication, transition meetings and coordination with receiving programs or service providers.
	2.6	Families are provided opportunities to share information used to inform decisions related to ongoing program improvement.	The criterion refers to providing opportunities to share information through accessible methods such as surveys, meetings and informal input.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Community	2.7	Program staff provide access to a current list of child and family support services available in the community to support families' efforts to connect with resources (e.g., health, mental health, oral health, nutrition, child welfare, parenting programs, early intervention/special education, screening assessment services, and basic needs such as housing and child care subsidies). Resources should be contextually appropriate for enrolled families, based on the pattern of needs observed among families, and in response to families' requests.	This criterion refers to maintaining and sharing accessible, up-to-date local community resources and supporting families in connecting with relevant services when needed. Appropriate resources are responsive to the needs of participating children and families.
	2.8	Program staff develop partnerships and professional relationships with agencies, consultants, and organizations in the community that further the program's capacity to meet the needs and interests of the children and families they serve.	This criterion refers to building and maintaining collaborative community relationships which may include community visits, formal agreements, or communication shared with families through handbooks or newsletters.
	2.9	The program routinely shares information about local child-centered events with families.	No additional information needed.
	2.10	Program staff use knowledge of the families and communities served to adapt the curriculum, environment and materials to provide varied learning experiences for children.	This criterion refers to intentionally incorporating families and the local community into classroom activities. Examples: local businesses, neighborhood parks, museums or recreational areas Non-examples: generic books or posters about community helpers or resources

Program Standard 3: Curricula

High-quality preschool programs implement comprehensive, research-based curriculum aligned with the Iowa Early Learning Standards. Teachers use the curriculum to intentionally design engaging, play-based learning experiences reflecting children's interests, strengths and needs. Programs create learning environments rich with diverse materials and opportunities for exploration, discovery and collaboration.

Teachers create predictable yet flexible daily schedules which balance child-initiated and teacher-guided activities both indoors and outdoors. Routines and schedules support children's independence, curiosity and sense of belonging.

Through implementation of a high-quality curriculum, programs create supportive environments where all children are supported in developing skills and confidence needed for lifelong learning.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Essential Characteristics	3.1	The curriculum is aligned to the Iowa Early Learning Standards (IELS) and: a. is guided by a scope and sequence that includes plans and materials based on developmental progressions b. is developmentally appropriate, research- or evidence-based, and utilizes child-directed play c. encompasses all areas of development d. guides teaching staff's intentional implementation of learning opportunities consistent with the program's goals and objectives	This criterion refers to a comprehensive curriculum which guides instruction across all domains of learning. If needed, a supplemental curriculum is used to enhance specific skills or content areas and should <u>not</u> serve as the primary instructional framework. The curriculum is used to intentionally plan and implement learning experiences embedded throughout daily routines and schedules.
	3.2	The curriculum guides teaching staff to incorporate specific content, concepts, and activities which: a. foster development in the following domains: i. emotional well-being ii. physical iii. language iv. cognitive b. integrate key areas of content including: i. literacy ii. mathematics iii. science iv. technology v. creative expression and the arts vi. health and safety vii. social studies	This criterion refers to embedding the curriculum throughout daily routines, play and planned activities.
	3.3	The curriculum is implemented in a contextually appropriate manner which reflects responsiveness to: a. family home values and beliefs b. children's experiences c. languages	This criterion refers to implementing the curriculum in a manner, which is responsive to the children and families served. Examples of implementation may include ongoing communication in languages spoken by families, representational play props, inclusive art supplies and diverse literature.

	3.4	The curriculum guides the development of the learning environment to provide children with materials to study and explore, which reflect a variety of family structures representative of society. Materials and equipment: a. encourage and allow for exploration, experimentation and discovery b. offer a broad variety to promote interaction and independent use c. are rotated to reflect changing curriculum, new interests and skill levels d. accommodate children's individual needs and abilities	This criterion refers to how materials are intentionally selected, rotated, and adapted based on a curricular focus, children's interests, and developmental needs. Environmental examples may include diverse images, roles, languages, bilingual supports and accommodations for a wide range of abilities.
	3.5	The curriculum guides the development of a balanced daily schedule that is predictable yet flexible and aligned to individual needs of the children. The written schedule is posted and: a. incorporates child-initiated activities b. includes both indoor and outdoor experiences c. provides time and support for transitions d. is structured to support rest and activity	This criterion refers to the enacted schedule which is posted and includes a child-centered schedule aligned with the curriculum. While the schedule provides consistency and flow, it is not bound by time, allowing staff to adjust based on children's needs and learning opportunities. Examples of child-initiated activities: children creating their own artwork using open-ended materials, making choices about play location, materials, play partners and duration in both indoor and outdoor environments Indicator d: Rest may include naps or quiet, calming options such as reading, puzzles, or cozy spaces away from high activity areas.
	3.6	The schedule is incorporated into daily routines and conversations with children. It provides for learning opportunities, experiences, and projects that extend over the course of several days and incorporates time for: a. child-directed play b. creative expression c. large group d. small group	This criterion refers to the daily schedule that is intentionally designed and consistently implemented. Referencing the schedule throughout the day helps children anticipate transitions, reflect on past experiences, and make choices about upcoming activities. Indicator a: Child-directed play is play that is initiated, guided, and led by children based on their interests, choices, and ideas, with adults providing support and materials as needed. Indicator b: Creative expression is the process of children using materials, movement, music, dramatic play, or art to share their ideas, thoughts, and feelings in unique and meaningful ways.

	3.7	For preschool age children in a program that operates for more than 6 hours per day: a. A program must implement an intentional, age-appropriate approach to accommodate children's need to nap or rest. b. Programs provide a regular time every day at which children are encouraged but not forced to rest or nap. c. Programs provide alternative quiet learning activities for children who do not need or want to rest or nap. d. During nap time, one teaching staff member may be replaced by a staff member or trained volunteer who does not meet the required teaching qualifications.	No additional information needed.
	3.8	Children are offered opportunities to decide what the class will do together (e.g., unit of study, interest areas, which book to read or song to sing as a group) and teaching staff incorporate the interests of children throughout daily activities and routines leading to children feeling accepted and developing a sense of belonging in the classroom community.	This criterion refers to offering opportunities for children to provide input to determine materials, projects, and/or activities in the classroom. Examples may be reflected in lesson plans, routines and classroom environments, with teaching staff adapting activities, timing and approaches to support engagement and individualization.
Developmental Domains	3.9R	Children have varied opportunities to develop a sense of competence and positive attitudes toward learning, such as persistence, engagement, curiosity, and mastery.	This criterion refers to providing opportunities which may include play-based learning, exploration and discovery, child-initiated choices or long-term projects.
	3.10R	Children have varied opportunities to develop competence in verbal and nonverbal communication by: a. responding to questions b. communicating needs, thoughts and experiences c. describing things and events	This criterion refers to providing opportunities to model and scaffold communication using multiple strategies, including gestures, sign language, core boards and communication devices, ensuring all children can participate. Children may demonstrate understanding through receptive and/or expressive communication based on their abilities.
	3.11	Children develop vocabulary through varied opportunities which may include: a. conversations b. experiences c. books	This criterion refers to embedding vocabulary instruction naturally across the day. Examples: conversations during routines, play-based interactions, read-alouds, story retelling and discussion, sensory exploration, visual supports and repetition

	3.12	Children are provided varied opportunities and materials that support fine motor development to acquire: a. hand strength b. grasp c. eye-hand coordination d. finger dexterity and control e. bi-lateral coordination	This criterion refers to providing a variety of materials and experiences supporting fine motor development across daily routines and play. Examples: manipulatives (e.g., puzzles, beads), art tools (e.g., crayons, scissors) and practical life activities (e.g., buttoning, pouring) Indicator a: Hand strength is the ability to use the muscles in the hands and fingers to grasp, hold, squeeze and manipulate objects. Indicator b: Grasp refers to the way a child holds and controls objects. Indicator c: Eye-hand coordination is the ability to use vision to guide and coordinate hand movements during tasks. Indicator d: Finger dexterity and control is the ability to move fingers with precision and coordination to complete fine motor tasks. Indicator e: Bilateral coordination is the ability to use both hands together in a coordinated way, with each hand working together or performing different roles during an activity.
	3.13	Children have varied opportunities and are provided equipment to engage in large motor experiences which: a. stimulate a variety of skills b. enhance sensory-motor integration c. develop controlled movement d. enable children with varying abilities to have large motor experiences similar to those of their peers e. range from familiar to new and challenging f. help them learn physical games with rules and structure	This criterion refers to providing ample indoor and outdoor opportunities and equipment to support large motor development across daily routines and play. Experiences are intentionally planned to build balance, strength and coordination; promote sensory-motor integration and develop controlled movement. Activities range from familiar to new, are appropriately challenging (e.g., obstacle courses, bike paths, movement games) and include structured games with rules supporting turn-taking and cooperation. Educators ensure activities are inclusive and adapted so all children can actively participate in large motor experiences alongside their peers.

Content Areas	3.14R	Children have varied opportunities to develop phonological awareness by: a. playing with the sounds of language b. learning letters and the sounds they represent c. recognizing and producing words which have the same beginning or ending sounds d. self-initiated efforts to write letters that represent the sounds of words are supported	This criterion refers to providing varied opportunities for children to develop phonological awareness throughout daily routines and play. Phonological awareness instruction is embedded in meaningful activities and adapted to support a range of developmental levels. Indicator a: playing with the sounds of language may include experiences with syllables, word families and phonemes through rhymes, poems, songs and finger plays
	3.15R	Children have varied opportunities to: a. access various types of books including adaptive books, storybooks, factual books, books with rhymes, alphabet books and wordless books b. explore books on their own and have places that are conducive to the quiet enjoyment of books c. have books read to them in an engaging manner at least twice a day in full-day programs and at least once daily in half-day programs d. be read the same book on repeated occasions e. be read to regularly in individualized ways including one-on-one or in small groups of two to six children f. engage in conversations that help them understand the content of the book Teaching staff provide children with opportunities to: g. identify the parts of books and differentiate print from pictures h. ask and answer literal and inferential questions about books i. retell and reenact events in storybooks j. link books to other aspects of the curriculum	This criterion refers to providing children with opportunities to engage with a wide variety of books while developing emergent literacy skills. Indicators d, e & f: daily read-alouds in whole group, small group and one-to-one settings, repeated readings and discussions of familiar texts to deepen comprehension and language development
	3.16	Children have varied opportunities to become familiar with and understand the purpose of print by: a. labeling items belonging to a child with his or her name b. using print to describe rules and routines c. labeling materials throughout the classroom d. recognizing print and connecting it to spoken word with adult support	This criterion refers to providing opportunities for children to understand print carries meaning and is used for different purposes. Educators intentionally draw attention to print in daily experiences, supporting children in connecting spoken language to written words through dictation, modeling, conversation and shared reading of environmental print.

	3.17	Children are provided multiple and varied opportunities to write which include: a. writing materials and activities in all learning centers b. support to write on their own with access to the alphabet at eye level c. access to printed words around topics of current interest, environmental print and names of the children d. daily opportunities to write their own name with appropriate scaffolding e. supporting the developmental stages of writing f. daily opportunities to write words and messages or dictate their ideas g. teaching staff model functional use of writing h. discussing ways in which writing is used in daily life	This criterion refers to supporting children's early writing opportunities. Indicator e: Refer to the IELS which outline the developmental stages of writing.
	3.18R	Children are provided learning opportunities and materials to build an understanding of foundational math skills and practices related to: a. number sense, counting and subitizing b. recognizing, creating and extending patterns c. beginning operations (joining and separating sets) d. measurement e. geometry and attributes	This criterion refers to providing opportunities for children to explore early math concepts throughout daily routines and play experiences. Indicator a: Children build number sense by counting objects, practicing one-to-one correspondence, recognizing small quantities (subitizing) and exploring number relationships. They develop these skills through songs, games, books, real objects and manipulatives using number words and numerals. Indicator b: Children explore patterns by noticing, creating, and extending patterns using colors, shapes, sounds and movement. Indicator c: Children begin early operations by combining and taking apart sets of objects during play. Indicators d and e: Children learn about measurement, shapes and attributes by comparing objects using words (e.g. longer/shorter, heavier/lighter, full/empty), and by exploring standard and non-standard tools (e.g. blocks, cups, or hands). Children also sort and group objects by attributes such as color, size or shape, and build understanding of simple 2D and 3D shapes through hands-on materials like blocks and manipulatives.

	3.19	Children are provided varied opportunities to think, question and reason while engaging in scientific practices including: a. observation b. prediction c. collecting data d. analyzing results e. drawing and inferring conclusions f. representing information	This criterion refers to providing opportunities for children to make sense of the world around them through scientific thinking and inquiry. Indicator a: noticing, describing and comparing what is seen, heard or felt Indicator b: sharing ideas for what will happen before an activity or experiment Indicator c: counting or recording information Indicator d: comparing results and talking about patterns or changes Indicator e: explaining what is learned or discovered Indicator f: sharing ideas through drawings, charts, writing or discussion
	3.20	Children are provided varied opportunities and materials to learn key content and principles of science such as: a. the difference between living and non-living things b. life cycles of various organisms c. earth and sky d. structure and property of matter e. behavior of materials	This criterion refers to providing opportunities for children to explore key science concepts through play, observation and investigation. Indicator a: sorting objects and identifying what is alive or not alive Indicator b: observing and sequencing growth and change in living things Indicator c: exploring weather, seasons, sun, moon and shadows Indicator d: describing and comparing how materials look and feel (e.g. float/sink; hard/soft) Indicator e: observing how materials change or react (e.g. transformation of liquids and solids; dissolving and melting)

	3.21	Children have opportunities to access and use a broad range of technology tools individually and collaboratively to: a. explore and inquire b. integrate and enrich the curriculum c. extend learning within the classroom	The focus of this criterion is to provide opportunities for children to access and use a broad range of age-appropriate technology tools (both low and high-tech) such as cameras, digital recorders, microscopes, magnifying glasses, simple machines (gears, wheels, levers) and interactive devices. <u>Technology is used to support and enrich learning experiences rather than replace hands-on play and interaction.</u> Screen-based technology (e.g., tablets, smart boards, and videos) is used purposefully and in limited amounts to support instruction. The focus is on active engagement rather than passive viewing. Screen time is embedded within learning experiences and aligns with recommended practices for the use of screen-based technology. Programs may refer to the American Academy of Pediatrics for more information.
	3.22	Children are provided many and varied open-ended, process-oriented opportunities and materials to express themselves creatively through: a. music b. drama c. dance d. two- and three-dimensional art	The focus of this criterion is providing opportunities for children to express creativity through experiences which emphasize the creative process rather than a specific product. Children freely explore materials, make choices and express ideas in their own way. Children have access to a wide range of materials such as musical instruments, props for dramatic play and movement, and diverse art media for exploration and self-expression.
	3.23	Children are provided with varied opportunities and materials that encourage good health practices such as: a. serving and feeding themselves b. rest c. good nutrition d. exercise e. hand washing f. tooth brushing	The focus of this criterion is to provide opportunities and materials promoting healthy habits and independence. Healthy nutrition and exercise are reinforced through conversations, learning materials, classroom routines and experiences such as books, posters, food, movement activities and outdoor play.

Program Standard 4: Teaching Practices

Programs implement effective research-based teaching practices that are intentional, flexible and grounded in a deep understanding of child development. Teachers plan daily opportunities for child-initiated play and design learning experiences built on each child's interests, relationships and abilities.

Learning environments are thoughtfully organized to encourage exploration, discovery, and conceptual understanding; while schedules and transitions are structured to maintain engagement and prevent challenging behaviors. Through purposeful interactions, teachers scaffold learning, support language development, nurture independence and build executive functioning skills. Together, these teaching practices create inclusive and engaging classrooms where every child is supported in achieving success.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Planning and Organization	4.1R	Daily schedules reflect intentional time for child-initiated play, exploration and creative self-expression.	This criterion refers to intentionally planning for play by providing adequate time, space and materials. Play opportunities include active physical movement as well as pretend play where children lead the direction, make choices and determine how activities unfold. Programs use selected curricula to intentionally plan the amount of time provided for child-initiated play throughout the day.
	4.2	Teaching staff use their knowledge of children's relationships, interests, ideas and skills to tailor learning opportunities for individuals and groups.	The focus of this criterion refers to responding to children's interests and needs by intentionally modifying lesson plans, materials, projects or studies; or by adjusting pacing and instructional approaches.
	4.3	Teaching staff organize space and select materials in all content and developmental areas to stimulate: a. exploration b. experimentation c. discovery d. conceptual learning	This criterion refers to the intentional design of the learning environment to support active, hands-on learning across all developmental and content areas in preschool classrooms. This is demonstrated through a variety of open-ended materials across learning centers, clear organization of content-related materials and environments promoting active exploration and investigation.
	4.4	Teaching staff work to prevent challenging or disruptive behaviors at the universal level through: a. environmental design b. schedules that meet the needs and abilities of children c. implement classroom expectations and rules in a manner that is consistent and predictable d. visuals e. effective transitions f. engaging activities	This criterion refers to being proactive in preventing challenging behaviors by creating predictable and engaging environments that support all children. This includes intentional environmental design, developmentally appropriate schedules, clear expectations and the use of universal supports such as visuals and structured transitions.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	4.5	Teaching staff anticipate and take steps to address challenging behavior of individual children by: a. using positive behavior support strategies b. assessing the function of the child's behavior c. convening families and other early childhood professionals to develop individualized plans to address behavior	This criterion refers to recognizing and responding to challenging behaviors. Programs may refer to the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations for additional support. Indicator b: Identifying what happens immediately before a child's behavior and what occurs immediately after the behavior. For example: a request to clean up toys (antecedent) triggers a child's tantrum (behavior) which allows them to escape the task (consequence). Indicator c: Individualized plans may be formal or informal and should demonstrate a coordinated approach when challenging behaviors are present.
Instructional Strategies	4.6R	Teaching staff help children: a. identify and use prior knowledge b. express their ideas c. build on the meaning of their experiences d. reinforce learning e. extend current understandings	The focus of this criterion is supporting children to build knowledge and understanding through scaffolding, conversations and planned learning experiences. Indicator a: highlighting connections between children's experiences and interests to classroom learning Indicator b: facilitating reflections and discussions throughout daily routines or offering open-ended play and art materials Indicator c: encourage children to discuss, reflect and connect what they experience Indicator d: provide repeated opportunities to practice and give feedback or encouragement Indicator e: ask higher order thinking questions and scaffold play
	4.7	Teaching staff help all children, especially dual language learners, understand spoken language by using: a. pictures and labels b. familiar objects c. body language d. physical cues	The criterion refers to strategies for language development, while also supporting the use of children's native language at home or in the community. For dual language learners, staff intentionally support comprehension during both daily routines and planned instruction. Programs support children through multiple modes of communication such as narration and naming of routines by teaching staff, labels on materials, visual supports or child dictations.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	4.8	Teaching staff support the development and maintenance of children's home language and English language acquisition.	This criterion refers to supporting children's home language development while also promoting English language acquisition. This includes valuing and incorporating children's home languages within daily interactions, routines, learning environments and experiences alongside intentional support for English language growth.
	4.9	Teaching staff scaffold children's learning to increase executive functioning skills and independence through: a. offering encouragement b. making themselves available to children c. using demonstrations d. intentionally arranging the equipment e. modifying routines, procedures and the schedule f. making activities more or less difficult as children refine skills or gain new skills and knowledge	This criterion focuses on promoting success with executive function skills by providing intentional adjustments to help children develop working memory, cognitive flexibility and self-control to regulate their learning independently. Support is gradually reduced as children gain confidence and skill. Indicator c: such as modeling feelings and problem-solving skills throughout daily routines
	4.10	Teaching staff guide and support children as they learn to participate in daily cleanup and maintenance of the learning environment.	This criterion refers to modeling expectations, demonstrating cleanup procedures and providing clear, consistent guidance to encourage active participation and shared responsibility. Strategies to reinforce participation may include positive interactions, gradual release of responsibility, helping children build independence and developing ownership of their environment.
	4.11	Teaching staff promote children's engagement and learning by: a. responding to their need for and interest in practicing emerging skills b. guiding them in acquiring specific skills and explicitly teaching those skills c. enhancing and expanding activities that children choose to engage in repeatedly d. teaching self-help skills in meaningful and achievable parts	The focus of this criterion refers to teaching skills through meaningful, developmentally appropriate steps which support success and independence. Complex tasks are broken into achievable parts. Routines are supported through clear modeling, repetition and visual or verbal cues. Instruction embeds learning within child-led, purposeful activities and avoids rote or isolated tasks such as worksheets and/or flashcards.

Program Standard 5: Assessment

Effective programs use formal and informal assessments to monitor children's development, guide instruction and adjust the learning environment as necessary. Assessments are conducted in partnership with families, ensuring open communication and collaboration. Teaching staff use authentic assessment strategies to gather information which provide a comprehensive understanding of each child's strengths and areas for growth. A systematic and on-going assessment process facilitates reflection of children's progress and analysis of results to guide instructional decisions. This process also supports programs in identifying additional resources and enrichment opportunities for teaching staff.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Assessment Plan	5.1	The written assessment plan includes: a. conditions under which children will be assessed using ongoing, authentic observations in their natural environment b. how familiar adults will observe and assess each child's interests, strengths and needs c. purposes for assessment d. timelines associated with assessments e. procedures for keeping child records confidential	The focus of this criterion is on the <u>written</u> assessment plan which reflects current assessment practices. Indicator b: The assessment plan may clarify who is completing assessments as well as how various assessments are conducted (e.g. completed in groups, authentically during routines, individually, etc.).
	5.2	The written assessment plan addresses annual screenings to evaluate child development, including a child's development of language, cognition, gross motor, fine motor and emotional well-being. Information shared with families includes: a. all relevant data b. documentation and explanation of the concern c. potential next steps d. information for diagnostic evaluation or treatment	This criterion refers to the use of developmental screenings completed for all children. Results are used to identify children who may benefit from additional assessment or evaluation. Indicator d: Diagnostic assessments refer to a method used by a trained professional for determining a child's specific needs (if applicable).
	5.3	The written assessment plan describes how the program annually utilizes assessment results of children's development and learning to inform overall program or provider improvements.	The focus of this criterion is on the <u>written</u> assessment plan which reflects current practices informing program improvement.
Assessment Implementation	5.4	Programs use a variety of assessment methods that are: a. valid and reliable b. meaningful and accurate c. used in settings familiar to the children d. contextually appropriate and informed by families e. sensitive to children's abilities and home language	The focus of this criterion is the use of a variety of assessment methods which may include published assessments such as GOLD®, family input, home visit documentation, observations (from home or at school), child work samples or other such data collection methods. Indicator d: Contextually appropriate assessment methods are responsive to individual children and families

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	5.5	The program provides families opportunities to take an active role in the assessment of their child's development and learning through: a. communication of assessment information to families b. multiple and on-going opportunities for families to share observations from home to be included in the assessment process c. ongoing family involvement in planning and implementing assessments to inform educational goals	The focus of this criterion is family involvement in the assessment process. Home observations and information collected from families may include child strengths, interests, needs, growth in skill development or changes in behavior. Indicators b & c: Ongoing opportunities occur on a routine basis and are more frequent than 1-2 times per year. Examples: digital communication platforms with families or regularly scheduled school-home family engagement activities Non-examples: family-teacher conferences or information collected at the home visit
	5.6	Educators, families, other program/provider staff or specialized consultants have worked as a team to develop and implement individualized care or learning plans. This process may include: a. formal and informal assessment methods b. using positive behavior support strategies c. assessing function of the child's behavior d. creating a plan for progress monitoring e. determining eligibility for special education services	This criterion refers to the creation of individual care or learning plans which may be developed for children needing various levels of support. This criterion does not refer to only children needing early childhood special education services. A focus of this criterion is working as a team for implementation. Team members may include educators working directly with a child (e.g. teacher and assistant teacher), family members and other professionals as necessary such as an administrator, instructional coach or support staff (e.g. OT, SLP, PT, Counselor). Indicator a: Formal assessment methods may include developmental screenings, criterion referenced assessments or an early literacy screening. Informal assessment methods may include authentic observations or children's work samples. These may be combined to provide adequate information to guide planning and instruction.
	5.7R	The program uses an ongoing assessment process to evaluate all areas of children's development and learning. The assessment results are used at least weekly by teaching staff to: a. identify children's interests, strengths and needs b. adjust instructional practices, the curriculum and the environment c. adjust teaching practices to inform classroom instruction for large groups, small groups and individual children	The focus of this criterion is the implementation of a continuous assessment cycle to guide decision making in order to respond to and evaluate all areas of children's development and learning on a <u>weekly</u> basis. Examples of adjusting instruction or teaching practices may include modifications to the environment and materials, altering procedures, implementation of varying strategies or changes to the amount of time provided for an activity or learning topic based on interests or needs.

Program Standard 6: Learning Environments

Programs provide safe, accessible and developmentally appropriate learning environments.

A variety of materials and equipment are rotated as children's skills and interests develop and expand. These inclusive learning environments address all developmental domains and curriculum goals while providing access to all children. Programs foster children's exploration through play and offer nurturing spaces to create engaging learning environments.

Indoor and outdoor spaces are designed to allow staff to supervise children and accommodate individual, small-group and large-group activities. Additionally, indoor and outdoor areas are structured to minimize hazards and meet safety standards. Outdoor environments serve as an extension of the indoor classroom by offering opportunities in the content areas, as well as gross motor activity and interaction with natural materials. Programs ensure environments foster engagement, independence and equitable participation for every child.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Environmental Design	6.1R	There is a minimum of 35 square feet of usable space per child in each of the primary indoor activity areas and at least 75 square feet of outdoor gross motor environment play space for each child playing at any time.	This criterion refers to usable space indoors and outdoors for children. Usable indoor space is exclusive of bathrooms, halls, staff desks, storage places and kitchen areas or appliances. Usable outdoor space may include combined areas in order to total 75 square feet per child outdoors, however, all combined areas need to be accessible for children at the same time to meet this criterion.
	6.2R	Facilities meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements. Accessibility includes but is not limited to access to buildings, toilets, sinks, drinking fountains, outdoor play space, and all classroom and therapy areas.	Programs may refer to the Department webpage for more information on facilities accessibility .
	6.3R	Fully equipped first-aid kits are readily available and maintained for each group of children. Teaching staff take at least one kit to the outdoor play areas as well as on field trips and outings away from the site.	The focus of this criterion is to have an accessible first aid kit for addressing minor injury or trauma. When away from the program site, a first aid kit also includes emergency phone numbers, care plans for children and emergency medications needed for individual children.
	6.4	The indoor and outdoor environments are designed so teaching staff can supervise children by sight and sound at all times. In semiprivate areas, it is always possible for both children and adults to be observed by an adult from outside the area.	This criterion refers to both the indoor and outdoor learning environments. The focus is on the physical design of the space, not about the placement of teaching staff in the environment(s).

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	6.5R	A variety of age and developmentally appropriate materials are rotated as preschoolers' skill level changes over time and are available indoors and outdoors for children throughout the day. This equipment includes: a. dramatic play equipment b. sensory materials c. materials which support curriculum goals and objectives in all developmental domains and content areas d. gross motor equipment for activities	This criterion refers to the rotation of materials both indoors and outdoors to accommodate children's skill levels. Some combinations of each type of equipment are needed indoors and outdoors; not all are needed both indoors and outdoors. "Available throughout the day" is defined as accessible to children for a majority of the day. Indicator b: materials such as sand, water, play dough and paint Indicator d: Gross motor equipment provides for activities such as pulling up; walking; climbing in, on and over; moving through, around and under; pushing, pulling and riding.
	6.6	There are adequate learning materials in all environments: a. to facilitate focused individual play or play with peers b. to engage each child in activities that meet individual interests c. for children with disabilities and those who need individual accommodations to provide equitable access	The focus of this criterion is access to sufficient learning materials for all students to support engagement in play activities and alleviate children wandering around unoccupied.
Indoor Learning	6.7R	The indoor learning environment is designed to protect children and adults from hazards, including but not limited to sufficient lighting, electrical shock, burns or scalding, slipping, tripping, or falling. Floor coverings are secured to keep program staff and children from tripping or slipping.	The focus of this criterion is safety of the indoor learning environment which includes the use of electrical outlet covers, secured electrical cords and clear pathways.
	6.8	The indoor learning environment is designed, furnished and arranged to: a. align with principles for universal design b. provide learning centers with clear boundaries that are supplied with materials organized in a manner to support children's play and learning c. accommodate children individually, in small groups and in a large group d. provide semiprivate areas where children can play or work alone or with a friend e. provide children with disabilities full access (making adaptations as necessary) to move freely from one area to another without assistance or disturbing other children's work and play	The focus of this criterion is the design and furnishings of the learning environment. Indicator a: Principles for universal design guide the development of accommodations allowing for equitable use of equipment and materials, flexible learning environments and spaces to accommodate individual learning differences. Considerations may include flexible seating and appropriately sized furnishings (e.g. children's feet rest on the floor when seated, etc.).

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Outdoor Learning	6.9R	Program staff provide for an outdoor play area that is protected by a fence that: a. is fully enclosed b. has childproof gates c. is at least four feet in height d. prevents entry to bodies of water, traffic, or other such dangers	This criterion refers to fencing for the outdoor play area. Temporary fencing options are not sufficient for this criterion.
	6.10R	The outdoor play area protects children from: a. injury from falls b. catch points, sharp points, and protruding hardware c. entrapment d. tripping hazards e. excessive wind and direct sunlight	The focus of this criterion refers to providing a safe outdoor play area. Programs may refer to the National Program for Play Area Safety website as a resource. Indicator a: resilient surfacing six feet beyond the limits of stationary equipment Indicator c: openings measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches Indicator d: concrete footings, abrupt changes in surface elevations or other man-made elements; natural features such as tree roots, tree stumps or rocks are not considered tripping hazards Indicator e: refer to the Public Playground Safety Handbook for shade options
	6.11	Outdoor learning environments are designed and arranged to include: a. equipment that is age and developmentally appropriate, located in clearly defined spaces b. semiprivate areas where children can play alone or with a friend c. opportunities for motor experiences such as running, climbing, balancing, riding, jumping, crawling, scooting, or swinging d. activities such as dramatic play, block building, manipulative play, or art activities e. three or more natural materials such as grass, sand, rocks, non-poisonous plants, trees and variations in ground elevation, to promote exploration of the natural environment f. accommodations so children with disabilities have opportunities to fully participate in the outdoor curriculum and activities	The focus of this criterion refers to the design and materials included in the outdoor play area. Indicator a: Elementary-aged playground equipment, such as structures labeled for children ages 5-12, is not considered appropriate for preschool-aged children.

Program Standard 7: Health and Safety

Programs maintain safe and healthy environments to support children's well-being and development. Staff implement policies and procedures designed to provide a safe and healthy early learning experience. Routines are established for maintaining health records and implementing individualized care plans for children with special medical, health or dietary needs. Additionally, staff receive the required training for health and safety procedures while also promoting nutritious meals and snacks, hygiene, self-care routines and communicable disease prevention.

Facilities and equipment meet safety and accessibility standards, including fire, environmental, and ADA requirements. Collectively, these practices ensure all children are safe, healthy, and able to thrive in a nurturing environment.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Policies and Practices	7.1	The program maintains current health records for each child: a. The program must follow the requirements for enrollment related to immunizations established by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. [IAC 641-7] b. When a child is overdue for any routine health services, parents, legal guardians, or both provide evidence of an appointment for those services before the child's entry into the program and as a condition of remaining enrolled in the program, except for immunizations for which parents are using an allowable exemption. c. The program must follow the requirements for exclusions related to immunizations established by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. [IAC 641-7.3] Child health records are kept current by updating as needed, but at least annually, and include: d. current information about any health insurance coverage required for treatment in an emergency e. results of health examination, showing up-to-date immunizations and screening tests with an indication of normal or abnormal results and any follow-up required for abnormal results f. current emergency contact information for each child that is kept up to date by a specified method during the year g. names of individuals authorized by the family to have access to health information about the child h. instructions for any of the child's special health needs such as allergies or chronic illness (e.g., asthma, hearing or vision impairments, feeding needs, neuromuscular conditions, urinary or other ongoing health problems, seizures, diabetes)	Programs may refer to the Department of Education School Immunizations and Enrollment webpage and Student Health Requirements for Schools webpage for additional information when developing program policies related to child health records and immunizations.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	7.2R	Teaching staff supervise all children by sight and sound at all times. Supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible, as long as teachers check frequently on children who are out of sight (e.g., those who can use the toilet independently, who are in the library area, or who are napping).	This criterion refers to short intervals of supervision by sound only which would be defined as less than five minutes in length. While implementing this criterion, a supporting professional (e.g. music teacher, art teacher, librarian, special education consultant) may be considered a member of the teaching staff for supervision purposes only.
	7.3R	At least one staff member with current pediatric CPR and pediatric first-aid training is always present with each class of children.	This criterion refers to having a staff member with current certification present at all times which may be addressed by having all teaching staff (teachers and assistant teachers) maintain certification. Selection of training courses must ensure the inclusion of pediatric content (Child module for ages 1 to 12) and certification. Current certification includes the completion of a hands-on skills test. An online course alone is not sufficient.
	7.4	The program or provider works with families in developing care plans for children who require specialized medical care or who have special dietary, medical, religious or cultural feeding needs. This at minimum includes how: - an appropriately trained staff member is always present when children who require specialized medical care are in attendance - for each child with special health care needs, food allergies or special nutrition needs, the child's health provider gives the program an individualized care plan that is prepared in consultation with family members and specialists involved in the child's care - for children with special feeding needs, program staff keep a daily record documenting the type and quantity of food a child consumes and provide families with that information - staff are informed of and trained on medical care and/or special feeding needs - programs are held accountable to following established plans - families are provided necessary information to know that their child's needs are being met - families of a child with food allergies or special health needs are asked to give consent for posting information about that child's allergy or health needs - food allergy and/or health information is posted in a confidential and accessible area, if consent is given, in the food preparation area and in the areas of the facility the child uses	This criterion refers to the development of care plans for children as needed. Programs may choose to use the Individual Health Plan template available on the Department's website. Indicator a: Appropriately trained staff are trained in the specialized medical care required for the child in attendance. Indicator b and g: This criterion refers specifically to children with diagnosed food allergies or special nutritional needs because of medical conditions. A program may choose to honor family preferences regarding food (for example, vegetarian or kosher diet) in the absence of a diagnosed food allergy or medical condition without obtaining an individualized care plan from the physician as long as the request conforms with the nutritional guidelines of the US Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program. Indicator h: When information is posted, strategies are used which maintain confidentiality and alert new adults to the information.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	7.5	Safeguards are used with all medications for children: - Staff administer both prescription and over-the-counter medications to a child only if the child's record documents that the parent or legal guardian has given the program written permission. - The child's record includes instructions from the prescribing licensed health provider who has prescribed or recommended the medication for that child. - Any administrator or teaching staff who administers medication has: - specific training - a written performance evaluation updated annually by a health professional on the practice of the six right practices of medication administration Teaching staff who are required to administer special medical procedures have demonstrated to a health professional that they are competent in the procedures and are guided in writing about how to perform the procedure by the prescribing health care provider. - Medications are labeled with the child's first and last names, the date that either the prescription was filled or the recommendation was obtained from the child's licensed health care provider, the name of the medication or the period of use of the medication, the manufacturer's instructions or the original prescription label that details the name and strength of the medication, and instructions on how to administer and store it. - The procedures and protocols related to medication receipt, storage, waste and minimization are followed to include all medications being properly secured.	The focus of this criterion is medication safeguards. Policies must address all indicators listed. Statements indicating medication will not be administered in programs is not sufficient for this criterion.
	7.6R	The program follows these practices regarding environmental safety: current fire certificate on file fire extinguishers are serviced and tagged fire alarms are installed in each classroom and are tagged and serviced annually measurement of radon concentrations as applicable fully working carbon monoxide detectors are installed on each floor and tagged and serviced annually smoke detectors, fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are tested monthly and a written log of battery changes and testing dates is maintained and available	The focus of this criterion is environmental safety which includes fire safety practices. The National Fire Protection Association provides clarifying information. Indicator e: A carbon monoxide detector is not necessary for buildings with geothermal or electric heating or when there are no appliances using fuels such as gas, oil, kerosene, wood or charcoal.
	7.7R	The facility, outdoor play areas, and vehicles used to transport children are entirely tobacco- and nicotine-free. Smoking or vaping is not permitted in the presence of children.	No additional information needed.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	7.8	The program uses pest management strategies to remove visible pests (e.g., cockroaches, rodents, ants, and stinging insects) and eliminate conditions that promote pest infestations. Pesticides are only used as a last resort and applications occur when children are not present.	The focus of this criterion is the use of pest management tools and strategies such as the elimination of food, water and shelter that pests need to survive and keeping areas clean and clutter free.
Maintaining Healthy Environments	7.9	The program follows these practices regarding handwashing: a. Guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are followed. b. Staff members and those children who are developmentally able to learn personal hygiene, are taught handwashing procedures and are periodically monitored. c. Handwashing is required by all staff, volunteers and children when handwashing reduces the risk of transmission of infectious diseases to themselves and to others. d. Staff assist children with handwashing as needed to successfully complete the task. Children wash either independently or with staff assistance.	The focus of this criterion is the use of proper handwashing practices. Programs may refer to the CDC for additional resources and to align practices with this handwashing table .

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	7.10	Recommended procedures for standard precautions and the routine frequency of cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting all surfaces in the facility are followed and include the following: - Regular cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting schedules must be established and implemented. - When strong odors occur in the air, they are controlled using ventilation (not air freshening sprays or diffusers). - Scented products and aromatherapy are not used in any learning environments. - Surfaces that may come in contact with potentially infectious body fluids must be disposable or made of a material that can be sanitized. - Programs follow all OSHA requirements. - Staff use barriers and techniques that minimize contact of mucous membranes or of openings in skin with potentially infectious body fluids and reduce the spread of infectious disease. - When spills of bodily fluids occur, staff immediately clean and sanitize the affected area. - After cleaning, staff follow recommended sanitization procedures. - Staff clean rugs, carpeting and other soft materials or furnishings by blotting, spot cleaning with a detergent-disinfectant, and shampooing or steam cleaning. - Staff dispose of contaminated materials and diapers in a plastic bag with a secure tie that is placed in a closed container. - If a child has mouthed an object with saliva or other body secretion or excretion, the object is set aside for washing in a labeled bin or in another location created for that purpose. - Staff do not use hand-washing sinks for bathing children or removing smeared fecal material.	This criterion refers to the use of regular cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting schedules (indicator a). Programs may refer to the CDC webpage for additional information. If a program utilizes a cleaning service, it is the program's responsibility to ensure completion of all items within this criterion. Indicator b: ventilation includes opening doors, windows or using a fan Indicator c: candles, air fresheners, oil diffusers, scented warmers or other such items Indicator e: CDC's Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance
	7.11	Program staff provide information to families in writing about any unusual level or type of communicable disease to which their child was exposed, signs and symptoms of the disease, mode of transmission, period of communicability, and control measures that are being implemented at the program and that the families should implement at home. The program collaborates with local health authorities and, at least annually: - makes contact to keep current on relevant health information - maintains communication and obtains guidance when outbreaks of communicable disease occur	This criterion addresses sharing information related to communicable diseases and collaboration with local health authorities. Programs need to address both topics when implementing this criterion. Programs may refer to Childhood Illness and Exclusion Criteria for more information regarding communicable diseases.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	7.12	To protect against cold, heat, sun injury, and insect-borne disease, the program ensures: - Children wear clothing that is dry and layered for warmth in cold weather. - Children have the opportunity to play in the shade. When in the sun, they wear sun-protective clothing, applied skin protection, or both. Applied skin protection will be either sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher that is applied to exposed skin per the manufacturer's label and only with written parental permission. - When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellents, staff apply insect repellent per the manufacturer's label no more than once a day and only with written parental permission.	The focus of this criterion is protection from outdoor elements. Programs may refer to the following resources for information related to providing safe outdoor play areas: National Program for Play Area Safety Public Playground Safety Handbook Programs may refer to the Iowa HHS Weather Chart and Weather Think Ahead for additional information.
	7.13	Programs must take the following precautions for communal water play: - fresh potable water is used - children must wash their hands before and after water play - children are not allowed to drink the water - children with sores on their hands are not permitted to participate in communal water play - when the activity period is completed with a class of children, the water is drained	This criterion refers to group water play and the need to drain water between sessions of children from different classes (e.g. AM and PM session).

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	7.14	For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, the program makes sure that: - Steps for diapering and incontinence as outlined for student health services in Iowa are followed. - For children who require cloth diapers, the diaper has an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering are changed as a unit. - Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering. - Staff check children for signs that diapers or pull-ups are wet or contain feces at least every two hours when children are awake and when children awaken from rest. - Diapers are changed when wet or soiled. - Staff change children's diapers or soiled underwear in the designated changing areas and not elsewhere in the facility. - Each changing area is separated by a partial wall or at least three feet from other areas that children use and is used exclusively for one designated group of children. The program may use an underclothing changing area designated for this purpose. - At all times, caregivers have a hand on the child when being changed on an elevated surface. - Changing procedures are posted in the changing area and followed. - The changing procedures are used to evaluate teaching staff who change diapers. - Surfaces used for changing and on which changing materials are placed are not used for other purposes, including temporary placement of other objects, and especially not for any object involved with food or feeding. - Diaper changing areas must be easily cleanable and should be in good repair with no tears. - Containers that hold soiled diapers and diapering materials have a lid that opens and closes tightly using a hands-free device (e.g., a step can). - Containers are kept closed and are not accessible to children. - Staff members whose primary function is preparing food do not change diapers until their food preparation duties are completed for the day.	The focus of this criterion is supporting children with toileting and diapering. Programs may not have policies that exclude children who are not toilet trained. For more information, programs may refer to the Diapering and Incontinence Care pages of the Department's website. If the program does not currently have children in diapers or children who are in the process of toilet training, the program should still have policies, practices and space available to address this criterion. Indicator f: A designated changing area is defined as the area of space prepared for the purpose of changing diapers, training pants or underwear and all changing related materials are readily available.
Nutrition	7.15	Clean sanitary drinking water is made available to children throughout the day including during prolonged heat exposure.	This criterion refers to making water available throughout the day which may include the use of cups with a sink or pitcher of water, a drinking fountain or individual water bottles.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	7.16	If the program provides food for meals and snacks (whether catered or prepared on-site), the food is prepared, served, and stored in accordance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines.	The focus of this criterion is food service aligned with the USDA and CACFP . More information, including meal patterns tables, can also be found on the Nutrition Standards for CACFP Meals and Snacks webpage.
	7.17	The program serves meals and snacks at regularly established times. Meals and snacks are at least two hours apart but not more than three hours apart.	The focus of this criterion is offering meals and snacks at regular and appropriate times. The time span between meals and snacks is measured from the ending of one meal/snack to the beginning of the next meal/snack.
	7.18	The program takes steps to ensure food safety in its provision of meals and snacks: a. Program staff discards foods with expired dates. b. The program documents compliance and any corrections that it has made according to the recommendations of the program's health consultant, nutrition consultant, or a sanitarian that reflect consideration of federal and other applicable food safety standards. c. The program does not use plastic or polystyrene (Styrofoam) containers, plates, bags or wraps when microwaving children's food or beverages. d. In situations where sinks are used for both food preparation and other purposes, staff clean and sanitize the sinks before using them to prepare food.	This criterion refers to food safety when meals and snacks are served. Indicator d: Programs may refer to the CDC webpage for additional information related to cleaning and sanitizing sinks during food preparation.
	7.19	The program: a. prepares written menus b. posts menus where families can see them c. provides copies of menus to families d. keeps menus on file for review as needed	The focus of this criterion is meal planning and communication in which menus are planned and posted in advance. An unexpected daily revision may be made and posted to indicate menu changes or food served for the day.
	7.20	Staff take steps to ensure the safety of food brought from home to include: a. working with families to ensure foods meet the USDA's CACFP food guidelines b. providing food to supplement, if necessary c. making sure food requiring refrigeration stays cold until served d. ensuring food for sharing among the children are either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers e. labeling food or beverages for individual children with the child's name and date	This criterion refers to when families bring food from home for celebrations or choose to provide food for their child as an alternative to the program's meal.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	7.21	Staff do not offer children younger than four years these foods: hotdogs, whole or sliced into rounds; whole grapes; nuts; popcorn; raw peas or hard pretzels; chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. Staff cut foods into pieces no larger than ½ inch square for toddlers/twos, according to each child’s chewing and swallowing capability.	The focus of this criterion is food safety and the prevention of choking. Consideration should be given to both foods served by the program as well as any foods brought from home (if applicable). Programs may review the CACFP Serving Snacks Resource for additional information related to food safety and choking hazards. If the program is only serving children four years of age or older, this criterion is not applicable.

Standard 8: Professionalism

High-quality early childhood programs employ educators who are skilled, knowledgeable, and committed to fostering intentional learning opportunities for all children. Educators with specialized training in early childhood education are prepared to cultivate relationships with children, while using rich and meaningful language. In addition, they create inclusive and engaging learning environments that promote growth and learning for all children. Supported through ongoing professional development and evaluation, educators create conditions in which children can thrive and achieve their full potential.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Staff Qualifications	8.1R	Teachers hold an Iowa teaching license issued by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE) and must hold an early childhood endorsement that reflects their current teaching assignment.	The focus of this criterion is teacher licensure which includes an appropriate endorsement for preschool: • Teacher Endorsement #100 -- Prekindergarten through grade three, including special education • Teacher Endorsement #103 – Prekindergarten through kindergarten • Teacher Endorsement #106 – Prekindergarten through grade three • Teacher Endorsement #1001 – Birth through grade three inclusive settings. Any session serving a child receiving early childhood special education instructional services must have an appropriately licensed and endorsed teacher providing special education services. A Class B conditional license is appropriate if it is for both general education and special education. An ECSE only endorsement (#262) is not appropriate because it does not include PK general education. Programs may contact the BOEE for more information on licensure, including conditional endorsements and details about substitute teachers.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	8.2R	Assistant teachers/teacher aides (staff who implement program activities under direct supervision) have a high school diploma or GED and: a. 25% of assistant teachers/teacher aides have at least a paraeducator certificate with an early childhood concentration, Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) or equivalent b. 100% of assistant teachers/teacher aides who do not meet the above qualifications: i. are enrolled in a program leading to a paraeducator certificate with an early childhood concentration or CDA AND ii. are actively participating and demonstrating progress toward the paraeducator certificate with an early childhood concentration or CDA College-level course work is from regionally accredited institutions of higher education and may include distance learning or online coursework. If there is only one assistant teacher/teacher aide, then either of the requirements can be met.	This criterion applies to assistant teachers, rather than a one-on-one special education paraprofessional. Percentages for meeting teacher assistant qualifications are determined at the program level rather than by classroom or building. Equivalencies for a CDA and/or paraeducator certificate are further outlined in Qualifications for Preschool Teacher Assistants. A CDA credential must be issued by the Center for Professional Recognition; hours alone are not sufficient. More information related to the CDA may be found on the Iowa AEYC webpage. A paraeducator license must be issued by the BOEE and include both Level I Generalist AND Level II Early Childhood. Two years of college is equal to 48 semester hours.
	8.3	All teaching staff are evaluated by an appropriate supervisor and improve performance based on ongoing reflection and feedback from supervisors, peers, and families. Performance feedback is used to develop an annual individualized professional development plan between staff and supervisor.	This criterion is focused on both evaluations and individualized professional development plans which may be combined or separate. Individual professional development plans are completed annually.
	8.4	Before working alone with children and on an annual basis, all teaching staff are provided an orientation or updates to the program that address the fundamental aspects of program operation including: a. program philosophy, values and goals b. expectations for ethical conduct c. health, safety and emergency procedures d. individual needs of children they will be teaching e. accepted guidance and classroom management techniques f. daily activities and routines of the program g. Iowa Early Learning Standards h. program curriculum and assessment i. child abuse and neglect reporting procedures j. program policies and procedures k. Iowa Quality Preschool Program Standards and Criteria l. regulatory requirements m. identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect	This criterion refers to the need for an orientation or reviewing the fundamental aspects of a program on an annual basis with all teaching staff, including teachers and assistant teachers.
Professional Learning			

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
	8.5	All teaching staff have coursework or professional development specific to early childhood which may include training in: a. the Iowa Early Learning Standards b. the program's curriculum and learning approaches c. how to use the program's assessment procedures for child progress and program quality d. child development or developmentally appropriate practice Programs are encouraged to consider joint and collaborative training opportunities with neighboring early childhood programs and other community service agencies.	The focus of this criterion is professional development for all teaching staff which includes teachers and assistant teachers. When considering joint or collaborative training opportunities, 'neighboring' does not have to mean physically located near one another. Programs may collaborate with the broader early childhood community through participation in conferences, joint training, collaborative PLCs or other events. Indicator c: Examples may include use of the program's assessment as designed, implementation of assessment procedures, using assessment data to inform instruction or data collection methods.
	8.6	Teaching staff are offered continuous job-embedded coaching either within the program by pairing newer staff with those who are more seasoned, or through outside supports.	No additional information needed.

Standard 9: Leadership and Management

Programs implement clear administrative structures with policies and procedures to promote operational efficiency, accountability and compliance. Leaders support staff by providing an infrastructure allowing for planning and data-informed decision-making, while fostering a collaborative culture that engages families and community partners. By effectively managing financial, human, and material resources; programs create the conditions necessary for high-quality early learning environments.

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
Administrator Qualifications	9.1R	The program administrator has the educational qualifications and personal commitment required to serve as the program's operational and pedagogical leader. This criterion can be met in one of four ways: a. The administrator holds a current Iowa administrative license issued by the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE). b. The administrator: i. has at least a baccalaureate degree AND ii. has at least 9 credit-bearing hours of specialized college-level course work in administration, leadership and management (which can be in school administration, business management, communication, technology, early childhood management or administration, or some combination of these areas) AND iii. has at least 24 credit-bearing hours of specialized college-level course work in early childhood education, child development, elementary education or early childhood special education that encompasses child development and children's learning from birth through kindergarten; family and community relationships; the practices of observing, documenting and assessing young children; teaching and learning processes; and professional practices and development. c. The administrator documents that a plan is in place to meet the above qualifications within five years. d. The administrator can provide documentation of having achieved a combination of relevant formal education and experience as specified in the table titled Alternative Pathways to Achieve Educational Qualifications as a Program Administrator.	The focus of this criterion is educational qualifications for the program administrator which can align with any <u>one</u> of the four indicators: a, b, c or d. Indicator d: refer to the Alternative Pathways to Achieve Educational Qualifications as a Program Administrator
	9.2	The program has a designated program administrator with the educational qualifications detailed in criterion 9.1R. When a program has a total enrollment of fewer than 60 full-time equivalent (FTE) children, employs fewer than eight FTE staff, or both: a. The program may have a part-time administrator or an administrator who fulfills a dual role (e.g. teacher administrator). OR b. In multi-site programs, the sites may share an off-site administrator.	This criterion specifies when a part-time or full-time administrator is needed. Only <u>one</u> of the four indicators would apply: a, b, c or d. A full-time administrator is defined as having 75% or more time devoted to program administration and not working in a dual role (e.g. part-time as a classroom teacher).

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
		When a program has a total enrollment of 60 or more FTE children and employs eight or more FTE staff: c. The program has a full-time administrator. - OR d. In multi-site programs, individual facilities have on-site a full-time administrator or full-time manager under the direct supervision of an individual who meets the qualifications outlined for the program administrator.	For programs which operate on a part-day or part-year basis, full-time is defined as the time the program is in operation. The number of FTE children equals the maximum number of children present at any one time (across all sites for multi-site programs). The number of FTE staff equals the maximum number of staff needed to serve the FTE children across all sites, not including the designated program administrator.
	9.3	The professional development plan for administrators and leaders has been developed to include annual training which may include the following: a. current early childhood evidence-based or best practices b. leadership development (adult learning, conducting performance evaluations, adhering to personnel policies) c. fiscal management (budgeting, software training, payroll)	This criterion refers to annual professional development for administrators.
Staff Infrastructure	9.4	Hiring procedures ensure all employees who come in contact with children in the program or who have responsibility for children meet state and federal requirements.	The focus of this criterion is hiring procedures for all employees who come in contact with or have responsibilities for the children. This includes, but is not limited to, bus drivers, bus monitors, custodians, cooks, clerical or support staff. The Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE) completes background checks and criminal record checks as part of the licensure process.
	9.5	Upon hire, the program provides written personnel policies that outline and define employee: a. qualifications and specialized training required of staff and volunteer position b. roles and responsibilities c. salary and benefits packages d. resignation, termination and grievance procedures	This criterion refers to personnel policies which reflect current practice. Indicator a: Qualifications and training for volunteers may include requirement of background checks, confidentiality agreements and/or age restrictions.
	9.6	The program has written policies outlining staff breaks: a. Staff receive a minimum of a 15-minute break after 4 hours of working directly with children. b. Staff may request immediate breaks for brief periods of a few minutes when unable to perform their duties safely and appropriately.	This criterion refers to staff breaks in which written policies reflect current practice. The use of immediate breaks may be used to provide temporary relief due to an unforeseen need (e.g. staff member needs a bathroom break or becomes overwhelmed).

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	9.7	The program has a written policy outlining weekly planning time for teaching staff to include: a. a minimum of 60 minutes for collaborative planning during which staff are not supervising children b. review of assessment data, instructional planning and making environmental changes to support individual needs and learning goals c. accessing curricular resources for planning activities	This criterion refers to weekly planning time in which written policies reflect current practice. Indicator a: Collaborative planning may occur within a teaching team (teacher and assistant teacher), within a group of teachers, or between teaching staff, administration and/or coaches. The timeframe of 60 minutes is specific to indicator a. Practices aligned with indicators b and c may be separate from that time block.
Program Infrastructure	9.8	The program has written policies to promote wellness and safeguard the health and safety of children and adults. Procedures are in place that address: a. steps to reduce occupational hazards such as infectious diseases (e.g. exposure of pregnant staff to CMV (cytomegalovirus), chicken pox), injuries (e.g. back strain, falls), environmental exposure (e.g. indoor air pollution, noise stress) b. management plans and reporting requirements for staff and children with illness, including medication administration, and inclusion/exclusion c. supervision of children in instances when teaching staff are assigned to specific areas that are near equipment where injury could occur d. the providing of space, supervision and comfort for a child waiting for pick-up due to illness e. the providing of adequate nutrition for children and adults f. sleeping and napping arrangements g. sanitation and hygiene, including food handling and feeding h. maintenance of the facility and equipment i. prohibition of smoking, firearms and other significant hazards that pose risks to children and adults j. providing staff with access to resources that support wellness, including stress management and mental health supports	The focus of this criterion is policies addressing the health and safety of children and adults. Written policies should reflect current practice.
	9.9R	The program has written procedures addressing the maintenance of developmentally appropriate staff-child ratios within group size to facilitate adult-child interaction and constructive activities among children. Staff-child ratios within group size are maintained during all hours of operation, including: a. indoor time b. outdoor time c. field trips which require at least one adult above the standard classroom ratio	The focus of this criterion is staff-child ratios within group size. A group is defined as the children assigned to a teacher or teaching team for most of the day and who occupy an individual classroom or well-defined space that prevents intermingling of children from different groups within a larger room or area. Staff members providing support(s) as part of an IEP or serving as a one-on-one special education paraprofessional are not counted toward the adult-child ratio. However, the child is counted as part of the classroom ratio. The Preschool Ratio and Class Size Maximum by

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			Program Standards on the Department's Early Childhood Standards webpage provides additional information. The ratio remains in compliance when another adult, who is not part of the teaching staff, substitutes for the staff member for a few minutes.
	9.10R	The program has a written policy and procedures in place for child abuse and neglect which comply with applicable federal, state and local laws. Required policies include: a. Staff report all suspected incidents of child abuse and/or neglect by families, staff, volunteers or others to the appropriate local agencies. b. Staff who report suspicions of child abuse or neglect where they work are immune from discharge, retaliation or other disciplinary action for that reason alone unless it is proven that the report is malicious. c. Procedures to be followed if a staff member is accused of abuse or neglect of a child in the program protect the rights of the accused staff member as well as protect the children in the program.	This criterion refers to policies and procedures which reflect current practice protecting both the rights of children in the program and an accused staff person.
	9.11	Written procedures in the staff handbook address all aspects of the arrival, departure and transportation of children. The procedures: a. facilitate family-staff interaction b. ensure that all children transported during the program day are accounted for before, during and after transport c. ensure the safety of all children as pedestrians and as passengers d. address specific procedures for children with disabilities e. address special/unusual circumstances at arrival and departure	The focus of this criterion is procedures for arrival, departure and transportation of children. Written procedures should reflect current practice. Indicator a: Family-staff interactions are inclusive of children and adults.
	9.12	The program has written and posted disaster preparedness and emergency evacuation policies and procedures. The procedures: a. designate an appropriate person to assume authority and take action in an emergency when the administrator is not on site b. designate how and when to either shelter-in-place or evacuate and specify a location for the evacuation c. include plans for handling lost or missing children, security threats, utility failure and natural disasters d. include arrangements for emergency transport and escort from the program	The focus of this criterion is written policies and procedures posted in rooms where children and/or adults may gather (e.g. classrooms, library, office, staff lounge, indoor large motor area, etc.).

Subsection	Number	Criterion	Implementation Supports
		e. require documentation of monthly practice of evacuation procedures with yearly practice of other emergency procedures	
	9.13	The program has a written policy outlining expectations of confidentiality regarding information about enrolled children and their families. The policy addresses how the content of the child's file is immediately available to: a. administrators or teaching staff who have consent from a parent or legal guardian for access to records b. the child's parents or legal guardian c. regulatory authorities upon request	This criterion refers to the confidentiality of child and family information. Written policy should reflect current practice.