



10 NAEYC Program Standards of Quality

Based on research on the development and education of young children, the standards were created with input from experts and educators from around the country. The standards define what NAEYC—the world's largest organization of early childhood professionals—believes all early childhood programs should provide. Review this guide to help identify programs that meet NAEYC standards for high-quality programs.

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Standard 1: Relationships

- Children and adults feel welcome when they visit the program. Teachers help new children adjust to the program environment and make friends with other children.
- Teaching staff engage in warm, friendly conversations with the children and encourage and recognize children's work and accomplishments.
- Children are encouraged to play and work together.
- Teachers help children resolve conflicts by identifying feelings, describing problems, and trying alternative solutions. Teaching staff never physically punish children.

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Standard 2: Curriculum

- Ask about the program's curriculum and how it addresses all aspects of child development. The curriculum should not focus on just one area of development.
- Children are given opportunities to learn and develop through exploration and play, and teachers have opportunities to work with individual children and small groups on specific skills.
- Materials and equipment spark children's interest and encourage them to experiment and learn.
- Activities are designed to help children get better at reasoning, solving problems, getting along with others, using language, and developing other skills.
- Infants and toddlers play with toys and art materials that "do something" based on children's actions, such as jack-in-the-box, cups that fit inside one another, and playdough.

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Standard 3: Teaching

- Teachers carefully supervise all children.
- Teachers provide time each day for indoor and outdoor activities (weather permitting) and organize time and space so that children have opportunities to work or play individually and in groups.
- Children's recent work (for example, art and emergent writing) is displayed in the classroom to help children reflect on and extend their learning.
- Teachers modify strategies and materials to respond to the needs and interests of individual children, engaging each child and enhancing learning.

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Standard 4: Assessment of Child Progress

- The program supports children's learning using a variety of assessment methods, such as observations, checklists, and rating scales.
- Assessment methods are appropriate for each child's age & level of development and encompass all areas of development, including math, science, and other cognitive skills; language; social-emotional; and physical.
- Teachers use assessment methods and information to design goals for individual children and monitor their progress, as well as to improve the program and its teaching strategies.
- Families receive information about their child's development and learning on a regular basis, including through meetings or conferences

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Standard 5: Health

- Teaching staff have training in pediatric first aid.
- Infants are placed on their backs to sleep.
- The program has policies regarding regular hand washing & routinely cleans and sanitizes all surfaces in the facility.
- There is a clear plan for responding to illness, including how to decide whether a child needs to go home and how families will be notified.
- Snacks and meals are nutritious, and food is prepared and stored safely.

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Standard 6: Teachers

- Teaching staff have educational qualifications & specialized knowledge about young children & early childhood development. Ask, for example, how many teachers have Child Development Associate (CDA) credentials, associate's degrees, or higher degrees.
- The program makes provisions for ongoing staff development, including orientations for new staff and opportunities for continuing education.
- Teaching staff have training in the program's curriculum and work as a teaching team.

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Standard 7: Families

- All families are welcome and encouraged to be involved in all aspects of the program.
- Teachers and staff talk with families about their family structure and their views on childrearing and use that information to adapt the curriculum and teaching methods to the families served.
- The program uses a variety of strategies to communicate with families, including family conferences, new family orientations, and individual conversations.
- Program information—including policies and operating procedures—is provided in a language that families can understand.

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Standard 8: Community Relationships

- The program connects with and uses museums, parks, libraries, zoos, and other resources in the community.
- Representatives from community programs, such as musical performers and local artists, are invited to share their interests and talents with the children.
- The staff develop professional relationships with community agencies and organizations that further the program's capacity to meet the needs and interests of children and families.

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Standard 9: Physical Environment

- The facility is designed so that staff can supervise all children by sight and sound.
- The program has necessary furnishings, such as hand-washing sinks, child-size chairs and tables, and cots, cribs, beds, or sleeping pads.
- A variety of materials and equipment appropriate for children's ages and stages of development is available and kept clean, safe, and in good repair.
- Outdoor play areas have fences or natural barriers that prevent access to streets and other hazards.
- First-aid kits, fire extinguishers, fire alarms, and other safety equipment are installed and available.

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Standard 10: Leadership and Management

- The program administrator has the necessary educational qualifications, including a degree from a four-year college and specialized courses in early childhood education, child development, or related fields.
- The program is licensed and/or regulated by the applicable state agency.
- The program's written policies and procedures are shared with families and address issues such as the program's philosophy and curriculum goals, policies on guidance and discipline, and health and safety procedures.
- Appropriate group sizes and ratios of teaching staff to children are maintained (for example, infants—no more than 8 children in a group, with 2 teaching staff; toddlers—no more than 12 children in a group, with 2 teaching staff; and 4-year-olds—no more than 20 children in a group, with 2 teaching staff).