

EARLY CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE – REVISED (ECERS-R)

Statements of Developmentally Appropriate Practice for items included on the Tennessee Child Care Evaluation Program

SPACE AND FURNISHINGS

1. Indoor space

Children need sufficient space that is well lit and has a comfortable temperature for learning and playing. Indoor space that is well maintained and in good repair sends a message to the young child that is welcoming and inviting.

2. Furniture for routine care, play and learning

Children need appropriate furnishings to meet the demands of their daily schedules. Basic furniture such as cots, tables and chairs should be sturdy and appropriate to the size of the children in the group in order for children to be comfortable, have proper body support, and focus on learning, playing, and routine activities rather than their own discomfort. Caregivers need easy access to routine care furnishings, such as cots, in order to maintain proper supervision and provide smooth transitions between activities.

3. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort

Children need space and opportunity to relax and rest. Soft furnishings and toys allow children opportunities for relaxation and comfort. Cozy areas provide a space for quiet activities to occur and should be protected from active play so children can snuggle, daydream and lounge.

4. Room arrangement

Creative room arrangement promotes a child's positive self-image and encourages a wide variety of age appropriate activities. Well-defined interest centers where materials are accessible help children to understand about organization and returning materials to their proper place.

5. Space for privacy

Some children experience unacceptably high levels of stress when exposed to constant activity and interaction. Places where children can escape from the pressures of group care promote positive self-esteem. Providing a child with opportunities, space, and time to be alone can contribute to positive classroom behavior.

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6. Child related display

Every child needs to know that others value his/her play or work. Artwork or other individual work that is created by the children should be displayed in the classroom at the child's eye-level. This promotes feelings of positive self-esteem and sends the message to the child that his/her work is valued and appreciated.

7. Gross motor play

Children need daily opportunities to exercise large muscles, run in open spaces, and practice gross motor skills. (Safety is always a number one priority.) Space to develop children's large muscles through a variety of play experiences should be made safe by providing adequate cushioning for fall zones. All play equipment should be safe and effective monitoring should be implemented to teach children safe play behavior and to safeguard against accidents.

8. Gross motor equipment

Children need age appropriate stationary and portable equipment to promote a wide variety of skills that exercise large muscles while developing confidence and abilities. Equipment should be sound, sturdy, safe and accessible to children daily.

PERSONAL CARE ROUTINES

9. Greeting/Departing

Parents and children need a warm, welcoming, and pleasant atmosphere to make the daily greeting and departing routine a happy one. Positive greetings help to promote the children's self-esteem and create a welcoming environment for parents.

10. Meals/Snacks

Meals and snacks that follow USDA guidelines contribute to the health of children and provide a model for good nutritional habits for life-long practice. Proper hand washing along with careful food preparation teach children proper hygiene and promotes sanitary conditions.

11. Nap/Rest

Nap and/or rest time should be appropriately scheduled and supervised for the children in the group. Adequate separation of cots helps to prevent the spread of germs. Soft music or a soothing story helps

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to facilitate a peaceful rest time that is important in helping children to balance the day and renew their energy.

12. Toileting/Diapering

Young children need appropriate supervision of the toileting process in order to care for basic needs and to teach the importance of good health habits. The schedule should be individualized. Provisions, such as soap and steps near the sink, should be convenient and accessible so that children can wash hands after toileting; this promotes self-help skills and good personal hygiene. Diapering should always be managed in a manner that promotes safety and good health practices.

13. Health practices

Practicing preventive measures, such as washing hands after handling pets or wiping noses, help to educate children to achieve life-long health practices. Taking appropriate action when children are sick will minimize the spread of germs.

14. Safety practices

Protecting children is critical in providing quality care, whether through adequate supervision or minimizing hazards both inside and outside. Caregivers should anticipate potential safety problems and demonstrate, model, and teach children safe practices.

Language-Reasoning

15. Books and pictures

The use of books and pictures is an important means of learning for children as they make sense of the world around them. Books, pictures, and language materials should be available in sufficient number both for independent use in a reading center and for use by a teacher with children in formal and informal settings.

16. Encouraging children to communicate

Activities and materials that promote language development should be available for use throughout the classroom and the daily schedule. Teachers should establish an environment where language exploration and usage is encouraged.

17. Using language to develop reasoning skills

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Logical relationships and concepts should be presented in appropriate ways. Children learn through interaction with materials and people, both peers and adults, in the context of play and daily routines. Language provides the key tool for success and problem solving, as children are encouraged to talk through their thought processes.

18. Informal use of language

Language is a way for children to expand understanding. Caregivers should engage children in give and take conversations for enjoyment and learning. They should support child-to-child conversations as well.

Activities

19. Fine motor

Children need a variety of age-appropriate and developmentally-appropriate toys and materials that they can manipulate with their hands and play with at will. These activities strengthen fine motor control while encouraging skill development that contributes to academic readiness.

20. Art

Children benefit from exposure to child-initiated art activities that are open-ended and process oriented. Children's art should be respected and appreciated as individual, creative expression. Materials and opportunities to create art projects at a beginning and more advanced level should be available as children are developmentally ready for them.

21. Music/movement

Music and movement are valuable means of learning. Children need a supportive environment that includes a teacher and a variety of tools to encourage their self-expression through music and related activities.

22. Blocks

Block play, with a variety of blocks and accessories, allows children the opportunity to explore spatial, mathematical, and role-play possibilities. Powerful block play requires sufficient space in a protected area and time to expand on concepts and ideas.

23. Sand/water

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Sand and water play gives children the opportunity to learn concepts through active exploration with their senses. The addition of interesting props extends the learning potential offered through sensory play.

24. Dramatic play

Dramatic play gives children the opportunity to discover an array of roles and responsibilities. It provides a vehicle through which they make sense of their world. Dramatic play is enhanced by space, time, props, materials, and supportive teachers.

25. Nature/science

Science and nature activities and materials foster curiosity and experimentation benefiting the young learner through direct experience and application to other areas of learning. Concept and observation skills are strengthened through science procedures.

26. Math/number

Math skills, when introduced through appropriate hands-on methods, form a foundation for school readiness and later academic success. Math skills can be taught effectively through routines, schedule, and play activities.

27. Use of TV, video, and/or computer

TV/video viewing and computer use tend to be passive in comparison to active involvement with materials and people. The use of each should be confined to subject material that is age-appropriate and mentally stimulating. Time limits encourage more active learning. Participation should not be required.

28. Promoting acceptance of diversity

Children need to be exposed to the similarities and differences of people in positive ways through books, pictures, toys, materials, and interaction. This exposure encourages respect for others and lessens misunderstandings.

INTERACTIONS

29. Supervision of gross motor activities

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Caregivers should use gross motor activities as learning opportunities to promote positive social interactions and to encourage the development of skills and new experiences. Diligent supervision of gross motor activities, whether indoors or outdoors, is critical to preventing accidents and insuring safe, active play.

30. General supervision of children (other than gross motor)

During activities, caregivers must balance the level of supervision and control based upon the ages, abilities, and individual needs of the children. Adequate supervision and awareness of the whole group is required for children's health and safety and in the recognition of accomplishments, which is necessary for children's emotional well-being.

31. Discipline

The set-up of the environment, teacher expectations, available materials and opportunities, and daily schedule significantly impacts children's behavior in childcare. A classroom and curriculum geared toward developmentally appropriate practice will lead to generally good behavior that is the product of self-motivation rather than the result of punishment and control.

32. Staff-child interactions

Caregivers, who are nurturing and responsive, promote the development of mutual respect between children and adults. Children, who trust adults to provide for their physical, psychological, and emotional needs, develop their own sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

33. Interactions among children

Because self-regulation, proper emotional expression, and positive social relationships are such essential skills for later schooling and life, teachers must encourage children to develop acceptable behaviors by providing a setting that encourages real opportunities for initiative taking and competence building. Providing opportunities for children to work and play together, to solve conflicts in productive ways, and to participate in group activities are ways teachers promote positive social relationships.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

34. Schedule

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Children thrive on having a consistent routine that provides a balance of activities designed to meet individual needs and foster physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth. Best practice promotes a daily schedule with large amounts of time for play, smooth transitions between activities, and a balance between child-initiated and teacher-directed activities.

35. Free Play

When children are permitted to select materials and companions, and, as far as possible, manage play independently, they practice making decisions and having control of their world. Caregiver intervention should be in response to children's needs, an invitation, or an opportunity to expand play activities.

36. Group Time

In group-care situations, the focus needs to be on meeting individual needs and guiding children as they interact in small groups. Whole group activities should be kept to a minimum and limited to gatherings that follow the interests and involvement of the children.

37. Provisions for children with disabilities

Meeting the needs of children with disabilities requires knowledge of routine care needs, developmental levels, individual assessments, and the integration of the children in ongoing classroom activities. It also requires the involvement and establishment of a partnership between the parents and staff in setting attainable goals that will assist the child in reaching his/her full potential.