Thinking More about Program Structure

FCCERS-R

Purpose: This document addresses many of the requirements for items found in the Program Structure subscale. The focus is primarily on indicators found at the 3, 5, and 7 level. It is important to review each item entirely to ensure that no indicator at the 1 or "inadequate" level applies to the program. Answering the questions and referring to the FCCERS-R will build familiarity with requirements, while offering a chance to reflect on current practices and situations.

Preparation: Refer to the FCCERS-R (spiral bound edition published in 2007) when completing the questions. To better understand the scale format and structure, review the instructions for scoring on page 8 in the FCCERS-R and the definitions of common terms on pages 9-11. It will also be helpful to refer to a copy of the most current NC Additional Notes (available at ncrlap.org). There are many questions, so completing them all will likely take several reflection/review sessions.

The items included consider many aspects related to how program structure contributes to children's opportunities to explore, learn, and become increasingly independent. There is a focus on the ways program structure creates a predictable sequence of events that include regular routines, significant opportunities for complex play, smooth transitions, ample time for interactions with adults and peers, responsive group activities, and inclusion of children with disabilities. These aspects provide a strong foundation for fun and enriching experiences, and strong relationships.

Tips:

- If you are confused about a question in the worksheet, look at the item in the FCCERS-R and check any Notes for Clarification and/or NC Additional Notes to identify the specific indicator and requirement to which it refers.

- Describe the current practices that occur when answering the questions. Remember, this is not about a "right answer" but rather a way to build understanding about what occurs every day.

- Using the worksheet on an ongoing basis can help verify that the program structure is supportive and developmentally appropriate. This process also emphasizes how specific aspects of program structure support providers in offering experiences that are positive and enriching.

- Answering the questions with someone else (other FCCH providers, technical assistance specialists, etc.) promotes sharing of perspectives and may draw attention to different details.

Date(s) completed: _____   Age groups: _____

Worksheet completed by: _____

Item 31 Schedule (p.60)

Do children experience a similar schedule each day? **Y / N**

Consider the daily schedule. Is it flexible and does it meet the needs of each child (e.g., children play, eat, nap, and are diapered/visit the toilet based on their own needs, routine care is scheduled to occur without much crying or other issues)? **Y / N**

Does play occur for at least one hour <u>indoors</u> every day? **Y / N**

Does play occur for at least one hour <u>outdoor</u>s, every day, weather permitting? **Y / N**   **Hint**: See Terms Used Throughout the Scale on page 11 of the FCCERS-R for a definition of "weather permitting" and/or refer to the Child Care Weather Watch Chart at ncrlap.org.

What conditions prevent outdoor play from occurring and how are decisions made about when outdoor play will occur?_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is there active gross motor play every day, including <u>indoors</u> when weather prevents outdoor play? **Y / N**

Each day, are there opportunities for activities the children choose independently and also planned activities? **Y / N**

What is done to reduce waiting or keep children engaged during transitions?

_____

_____

_____

> Does this prevent transitions when children must wait for more than 3 minutes at a time without activities? **Y / N** If **no**, what other strategies could be helpful?
>
> _____
>
> _____
>
> _____

Item 32 Free play (p.61)

Hint: Only times when children can choose both the materials they use and peers to interact with, are considered free play.

Each day does <u>free play</u> occur: Indoors? **Y / N**   Outdoors, weather permitting? **Y / N**

Does free play occur both indoors and outdoors, for much of every day? **Hint**: Refer to the definition of "much of the day" on pg. 10. **Y / N**

Think about any situations when children are limited in what they can do (e.g., group times, time in infant seats/swings/exersaucers, or using a room/ area with few play materials at certain times of the day):

Are these times consistently limited to 20 minutes or less? **Y / N**

During free play times both indoors and outdoors, consider the supervision that occurs. Does it (check all that apply):

- ☐ Protect children's health and safety?

- ☐ Facilitate children's play by helping with materials, offering other materials to support play, etc.?

- ☐ Provide educational interactions related to their play such as finding solutions and problem solving, adding information and new ideas, encouraging children to talk more about their activities?

During times children are playing, are there many types of materials and equipment for them to use? **Y / N**

Is this true both indoor and outdoors? **Y / N**

Are there materials to rotate or add for the children during free play times? **Y / N**

How often is something added or rotated? _____

Do any rotated materials (newly purchased or homemade) relate to current themes or children's interests? **Y / N**   If **yes**, give two examples: _____

_____

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Item 33 Group time (p.62)

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Hint: This item considers large and small group adult-directed activities. **Group activities are not required.** If group activities are never used, circle   **NA**   and skip to the next section.

List any small or large group activities or circle times, including how long they typically last. **Hint**: consider timing group times over a few days to verify the duration of group activities:

_____   _____

_____   _____

What happens if a child does not want to join or tries to leave during the group activities? Describe alternate activities, any instructions, etc._____

_____

_____

_____

Describe typical interactions with children during the group activities: _____

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Are group activities adjusted based on children's interest? Describe: _____

_____

_____

Are group times set up to be successful? For example, do group times (check all that apply):

- ☐ Occur where there is enough space to prevent crowding?
- ☐ Include engaging, age-appropriate content for all children expected to participate (e.g., not too academic for younger children, concepts are not simplistic for older children)?
- ☐ Offer children opportunities to participate, rather than only listen or respond to a few questions?
- ☐ Continue only as long as children are interested?

Are most play activities done in small groups or individually as children choose, rather than as a whole group? **Y / N**

In addition to group times, are there educational interactions with <u>individual children</u> and <u>small groups</u> daily? **Y / N**

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ITEM 34 Provisions for children with disabilities (p. 63)

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Only complete the questions in this section if there is a child with a diagnosed disability and completed assessment, or if there is a child receiving services, such as speech therapy. If there are multiple children with special needs, respond to the questions keeping each child in mind.

Does the provider have information from/about each child's assessment(s)? **Y / N**

Is each child able to fully participate in the classroom experiences? **Y / N**

Describe anything special that is done to help each child participate fully:

_____

_____

_____

If professionals recommend specific activities or experiences for the child, are these implemented? **Y / N**
If **yes**, describe: _____

_____

_____

Do parents and the provider exchange information about a child's special needs? **Y / N**   If **yes**, what topics are discussed? _____

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_____

    Are parents and the provider involved in joint goal setting for the child's experiences at the program? **Y / N**

    How often does communication with parents occur informally and how is this done?

    _____

    _____

    Are meetings also scheduled to discuss progress, feedback, goals, etc.? **Y / N** If **yes** how often do these occur? _____

Where does therapy occur?_____

Does the provider contribute to assessments or intervention plans, or attend IFSP/IEP meetings? **Y / N**

_____

Reflection for future planning: After completing this worksheet, it can be helpful to go back and think more about the answers. Were there any questions that were answered "no" instead of "yes?" If so, this could help identify areas to work on. It can also be helpful to break bigger topics into smaller steps so that changes and progress can be easily recognized. Hopefully this worksheet was a helpful beginning to an ongoing self-study practice and suggest continuing with an action plan after completing the reflection questions below.

List areas where strengths were noted in program structure:

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List areas where improvements could be made or there are new ideas to think about:

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_____

Are there any issues you will work to change right away? Describe how so:

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_____

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Are there issues that will take more time to change? What are these and what resources may be needed?

_____

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Want to find out more?

Not all FCCERS-R indicators are covered in this worksheet, so review the FCCERS-R carefully and seek out resources, as needed, since relying on these questions alone to prepare for an assessment will not be sufficient. We encourage you to review other resources found on the ncrlap.org website to stay informed about any updates and continue to build your understanding of the FCCERS-R and the assessment process.

- Look for general information about the assessment process and also specific FCCERS-R resources. These resources may offer ideas about what to focus on or supplement ideas you were already considering.

- Check out the answers to Frequently Asked Questions or send a new question to ncrlap@uncg.edu.

- Register for free online training webinars. Some are live webinars; others are pre-recorded and offer training credits (contact hours). Call 1-866-362-7527 or register online at ncrlap.org.

When planning for program enhancement, always consider the unique features of the program such as ages and abilities of the children enrolled, the number of providers, and overall goals and/or philosophy. Programs may also seek advice from their DCDEE Child Care Consultant, local CCR&R and/or Smart Start Partnerships, or other child care agencies.

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References:

Harms, T., Cryer, D., & Clifford, R. (2007). Family child care environment rating scale. (Revised edition). New York, NY. Teachers College Press.

NC Additional Notes (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.ncrlap.org.