

# PARENT AWARE

## Environmental Self-Assessment Checklist

### Infant/Toddler Classrooms

Center Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Infant/Toddler Classroom Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Classroom Enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_

Lead Teacher Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Ages: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Environmental Self-Assessment is for teachers to evaluate the resources, practices, and learning environment in their infant/toddler classrooms. Teachers are encouraged to use this self-assessment to critically evaluate and celebrate their strengths, as well as identify areas for growth.

#### BEFORE YOU BEGIN THIS SELF-ASSESSMENT, THERE ARE A FEW THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW:

1. This survey is **NOT A TEST**. There are no right or wrong responses. The goal is to help you identify your own strengths and areas for growth.
2. You must complete all the questions in this assessment and create goals to earn a 2 Star Rating or higher. Your responses to individual items will not be used in the calculation of your Rating.
3. We hope the questions are interesting to you, and that you choose to answer all of the questions **HONESTLY**.

#### DIRECTIONS

There are three parts to the Environmental Self-Assessment. First, complete the self-assessment by responding to each item honestly. Second, review your responses to identify your strengths and areas for potential growth. Third, write goals and identify concrete action steps to accomplish these goals.

Some sections of the checklist include questions specific to infants, and others specific to toddlers. In these sections, please respond to the questions that represent the children in your classroom.

#### DEFINITIONS

**Always or A lot:** 90% of the time this holds true.

**Sometimes or Somewhat:** At least 50% of the time this holds true.

**Rarely or Not at All:** Less than 20% of the time or NEVER holds true.



# Foundational Quality

Supervision	Yes	No
Provider has supervision policies and procedures.		
Licensing ratios are met and children are within sight and hearing at all times, consistent with licensing regulations.		
Extra supervision is provided to children who are physically aggressive (such as children who push, hit, or bite) to reduce the possibility of injuries.		
Safety	Yes	No
Equipment and materials are in good repair.		
Precautions to protect against indoor and outdoor hazards have been taken (e.g., electrical outlets covered, no easy access to busy roads).		
A well-stocked First Aid kit and manual are quickly accessible.		
On a monthly basis, provider checks for information about the recall of products that are in use in the classroom.		
Provider uses infant bottles, plastic containers and toys that do not contain polyvinyl chloride (PVC), bisphenol A (BPA), phthalates or lead.		
There are special storage bins to put toys that have been in a child's mouth in, for cleaning.		
Infection Control	Yes	No
Appropriate supplies are accessible for maintaining cleanliness.		
Children are taught to use age-appropriate health practices (e.g., washing hands, brushing teeth, using tissues to blow noses, covering sneezes).		
Provider uses appropriate procedures to stop the spread of germs (e.g., MN Department of Health hand-washing, diapering, exclusion of sick children).		
Floors, tables, and toys are cleaned, sanitized, and disinfected on a regular basis.		
Furnishings for Play and Learning	Yes	No
Furnishings are child-sized.		
There is a cozy area where one to two can rest or play quietly.		
Toys are within reach of children (except when eating, sleeping, or on a field trip).		
Arrangement of Child Care Space	Yes	No
The child care space is arranged to direct movement around, rather than through, activity areas.		

## Social-Emotional Development and Environment

How much are the following like you?	Not at all	Somewhat	A lot
I respect children's varying developmental stages, abilities, and needs.			
I am sensitive to children's cultural, family, and socioeconomic backgrounds.			
I use positive guidance and redirection when children misbehave.			
I set limits to help children manage their emotions and behavior, rather than use harsh actions or language.			
I talk to children about the importance of respecting all people - even people who are different from us.			
I am warm and calm when I speak and interact with children.			
I show children I'm interested in what they are saying by making eye contact, getting down to their level, and using appropriate physical contact.			
I encourage children to listen to one another and solve their own conflicts.			
I help children name their feelings and offer ideas for how to appropriately express them.			

## Language Development

How much are the following like you?	Not at all	Somewhat	A lot
I try to expand children's language by introducing them to new words and ideas.			
I ask open-ended questions that challenge children to express their ideas.			
I give children simple directions that consist of three or four steps.			
I listen and respond to children's attempts to communicate both verbally and non-verbally.			
I encourage and create opportunities for children to talk to one another.			
I interact with children throughout the day, naming objects and actions, describing activities and routines, and asking questions.			
I imitate the sounds, words, gestures that infants and toddlers make, and introduce new sounds, words and gestures for infants and toddlers to imitate.			

# Learning – Blocks and Dramatic Play for Infants

RESOURCES: Take a moment to think about your classroom, are AT LEAST THREE of EACH of the following available and within reach of children?		Yes	No	
Blocks of various sizes and materials (e.g., smooth sides, can be stacked)?				
Soft dolls to grasp and squeeze?				
Play telephone?				
Non-breakable mirrors at eye level for crawling infants?				
Various pots and pans?				
Play materials representing a diversity of cultural and ethnic groups?				
Soft, washable animals?				
PRACTICES: How often do you do the following?		Rarely	Sometimes	Always
I engage infants in play by making sounds, hiding objects, or helping them manipulate a toy (e.g., zooming a truck).				
I engage in block play according to the child's ability, such as stacking block towers and knocking them over.				

## Learning – Blocks and Dramatic Play for Toddlers

Learning – Blocks and Dramatic Play for Toddlers			
RESOURCES: Take a moment to think about your classroom, are AT LEAST THREE of EACH of the following available and within reach of children?	Yes	No	
Block sets (with 10 blocks each) that are different in weight, size, or shape?			
Block accessories such as toy people, cars/trucks, animals, road signs, and/or garages?			
Play furniture (e.g., woodworking bench, kitchen, doll furnishings)?			
Puppets or dolls?			
Play telephone?			
Toy cars/trucks, common animals, and/or sets of people of different races, genders, and ages?			
Play kitchen/housekeeping materials (e.g., pots, pans, dishes, food)?			
Play materials representing a diversity of cultural and ethnic groups?			
Simple dress-up clothing such as washable caps, handbags, shirts?			
Soft, washable animals?			
PRACTICES: How often do you do the following?	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
I add or exchange from storage blocks, block accessories, and dramatic play items.			
I change dramatic play themes based on the ages and interests of children.			
I encourage children to try out various pretend roles in play or with objects used for make-believe.			
I create opportunities for children and their families to share experiences through storytelling, puppets, or other props.			
I engage in block play according to the child's ability, such as stacking block towers and knocking them over.			

# Learning – Books and Literacy

RESOURCES: Take a moment to think about your classroom, are the following available and within reach of children?	Yes	No	
A book for each child?			
INFANTS: Does the classroom have AT LEAST FIVE other books representing a mix of the following? - Board, cloth, or plastic books - Simple story books (i.e., with one picture to a page) - Activity books (e.g., <i>Pat the Bunny</i> )			
TODDLERS: Does the classroom have AT LEAST FIVE other books representing a mix of the following? - Multicultural books reflecting diverse races and cultures - Picture books - Books about routines (e.g., eating, sleeping) - Books with familiar objects used at home or at child care - Books with rhymes and repetition of phrases - Concept books (e.g., nature, science) - Photo albums with pictures of the children in the program			
Pictures and books that reflect the different cultures and backgrounds of children and families served in the program?			
Literacy games or activities?			
INFANT-SPECIFIC PRACTICES: How often do you do the following?	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
I read books to infants while holding them or sitting close to them.			
TODDLER-SPECIFIC PRACTICES: How often do you do the following?	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
I encourage toddlers to turn the pages of books.			
I encourage toddlers to choose a book to read.			
I use games and books to help children make the connection between words and pictures.			
I engage toddlers when reading books by asking questions simple "what" and "where" questions.			

## Learning – Fine Motor, Math and Science for Infants

RESOURCES: Take a moment to think about your classroom, are AT LEAST FIVE of EACH of the following available and within reach of children?	Yes	No
Rattles with different noises, colors, shapes and textures?		
Easy fit-together toys such as large Duplos?		
Hanging items for infants/toddler to bat at or grasp?		
Pop-up or activity boxes?		
Teething toys?		
Soft toys to grasp?		

## Learning – Fine Motor, Math and Science for Toddlers

RESOURCES: Take a moment to think about your classroom, are AT LEAST FIVE of EACH of the following available and within reach of children?	Yes	No	
Nesting cups?			
Puzzles with a single or few pieces that have knobs for easy grasping?			
Bead mazes?			
Large watercolor markers?			
Interlocking blocks or beads to string?			
Non-toxic finger paints?			
Lacing toys or cards with simple shapes?			
PRACTICES: How often do you do the following?	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
I offer opportunities for toddlers to play with objects that help them develop the small muscles in their hands (e.g., pulling objects apart, using nesting cups, playing with shape sorters).			
I provide opportunities for children to develop an understanding of space (e.g., filling/emptying, building, observing from different viewpoints).			

## Learning – Music, Movement and Art

RESOURCES: Take a moment to think about your classroom, are the following available to children?	Yes	No	
Toys that make noise (e.g., noise-making rattles)?			
At least one musical instrument per child?			
INFANTS: Developmentally appropriate art supplies for older infants (12+ months) and toddlers (e.g., large crayons, finger paints - non-toxic and washable)?			
TODDLER: Large, non-toxic crayons with paper?			
TODDLER: Modeling clay or Play Doh and rolling pin or small plastic utensils?			
TODDLER: Collage materials (safe size, materials) on contact paper?			
TODDLER: Drawing supplies (e.g., markers, crayons, colored pencils, non-toxic felt pens)?			
Is your supply of available art materials appropriate in the amount and offer sufficient variety?			
PRACTICES: How often do you do the following?	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
I expose children to simple art activities, at least three times/week.			
I initiate finger-plays (e.g., Itsy Bitsy Spider, Pat-a-Cake).			
I initiate singing (while using puppets, in different pitches).			
I audio record a child or group singing and play it for children to hear.			
I avoid playing loud background music that interferes with conversations.			
I expose children to a variety of music and introduce musical instruments from many cultures.			
I introduce children to a variety of musical experiences every day through singing during transitions or routines, playing different types of music, and dancing.			
I encourage the development of rhythm by bouncing infant on lap, dancing with infant in arms, helping infant clap in time to music.			
I focus on the artistic process rather than the product when introducing art projects.			



# Learning – Physical Activity and Development

RESOURCES: Take a moment to think about your classroom, are the following available for children?		Yes	No
A variety of equipment in good repair?			
A designated space for indoor active play when weather prohibits going outside?			
TODDLER: Large motor materials (e.g., push toys, materials for climbing or sliding)?			
TODDLER: Portable (i.e., moveable) equipment?			
TODDLER: Playground equipment/structures with safety mats?			
PRACTICES: How often do you do the following?	Rarely	Sometimes	Always
I provide opportunities for physical activity each day (i.e., 60-90 minutes for toddlers).			
I provide opportunities to engage in at least 60 minutes — and up to several hours — of unstructured physical activity each day.			
I provide parents/guardians with information about the importance of physical activity to their children's overall growth, development, and learning.			
I encourage large motor activities including extending arms and legs, sitting, rolling, crawling, and walking with supports.			
I touch and cuddle infants and toddlers throughout the day.			
INFANT: I provide infants with safe, open, and interesting spaces to encourage movement and activity with legs, feet, arms, and hands.			
INFANT: I offer many opportunities throughout the day for infants to spend time on their tummies (i.e., "tummy time").			
INFANT: I do physical activities with infants daily to encourage exploration.			
INFANT: I limit infants' use of equipment such as exersaucers, swings, and bouncy chairs to less than 30 minutes/day.			

## Learning – Screen Time

How much are the following like you?			Not at all	Somewhat	A lot
I do not allow infants or toddlers (under age 24 months) to watch television or video, or use computers for any amount of time.					
I do not use TV, DVDs, or computers with children under age 2.					
I do not use television/video viewing as a reward.					
	Yes	No	I don't know if we have a screen time policy		
The program has and follows a written policy on screen time in classrooms that includes staff behaviors, education and screen time use.					

## Healthy Eating for Infants

Do the following describe your program?		Yes	No	
The program has a designated space for mothers to breastfeed their infants (not a rest room).				
The program provides access to healthy beverages (e.g., water, 100% fruit juice, low-fat milk).				
The program communicates their support for breastfeeding to families.				
How often do you do the following?		Rarely	Sometimes	Always
I feed infants based on family cultural and parenting preferences. This plan is visibly posted.				
I give families information on how to store and label breast milk they bring to the program.				
How much are the following like you?		Not at all	Somewhat	A lot
I communicate with parents/guardians about infant feeding.				
I promote and support breastfeeding.				
I am trained on how to respond to infants' cues during feeding.				
I am trained on how to feed an infant, including the storage and safe handling of breast milk.				

# Healthy Eating for Toddlers

Do the following describe the eating environment at your program?		Yes	No	
Children are provided adequate time to eat meals and snacks.				
Children can predict when they will eat next and learn to regulate their eating accordingly.				
Dining furniture and eating utensils are developmentally appropriate.				
Family-style meal service is provided so young children have some choice in the types and amounts of food selected.				
How much are the following like you?		Not at all	Somewhat	A lot
I support and model healthy eating behaviors.				
I promote and maintain a pleasant mealtime environment, encouraging conversation and healthy eating.				
I never use food as a reward or punishment; children are encouraged but not forced to eat. (The two-bite rule is an example of forcing children to eat.)				
I sit with the children and eat the same foods.				
Do the following describe your child care menu?		Yes	No	
Accommodate cultural and ethnic diversity?				
Provide access to healthy beverages (e.g., water, 100% fruit juice, low-fat milk)?				
Accommodate food allergies and other special dietary needs?				
Limit (or avoid) foods that are high in sugar, saturated fat, and salt?				
Make drinking water available and accessible to children at all times?				
Follow the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans for meals and snacks?				
Follow Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) or US Department of Agriculture (USDA) guidelines regarding milk (i.e., 12-23 months served only whole milk, 24+ months serve low-fat or fat-free milk)?				
Do the following describe your program?		Yes	No	
Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide feedback to me on the children's menus.				
Parents/guardians receive information about healthy eating, including information on nutrition when they first enroll their children.				
Snack and lunch menus are posted in a place convenient for parents/guardians to review.				

## Promoting Acceptance and Diversity

Do the following describe the curricula, program materials, and/or environment in your classroom?		Yes	No	
Children learn about different cultures?				
Images of people in non-traditional roles are shown?				
Materials reflect a variety of cultures, languages, abilities and talents, including those of families served by the program?				
Materials acknowledge traditional holidays celebrated by the majority culture, as well as those holidays that are unique to the culturally diverse children and families in the program?				
	Yes	No	I don't know if we have an anti-bias policy	
The program has and follows anti-bias policies and procedures which are written in families' home languages.				
How much are the following like you?		Not at all	Somewhat	A lot
I expose children to languages other than their own.				
I communicate with children using the child's home language for common objects or people.				
I have received training on how to promote a multicultural classroom community.				
I highlight the diverse abilities and talents of children through books, posters, or materials.				
I make appropriate adjustments to meet the needs of children with different abilities.				
I communicate positive and supportive messages that challenge male/female roles, while also showing respect for the traditional role of men and women in other cultures.				
I model, through my attitudes, actions, and speech, respect for a variety of cultures, languages, abilities, and talents.				

## Provisions for Children with Special Needs

How much are the following like you?	Not at all	Somewhat	A lot
I follow Individual Education Plans (IEP), 504 Plans, or Individual Family Services Plans (IFSP) for children with a disability, as requested by parents.			
I am trained on how to meet the needs of the children with special needs.			
When special adaptive furnishings are required, I use them as directed by IEP, 504 Plan, IFSP or agreed upon by parents and staff.			
I seek health consultation on issues such as environmental adaptation, care provision, plan development, and training for children with special needs.			
I make adjustments, as needed, to allow children of all abilities and skill levels to participate.			
I work with families and other professionals to promote child development and independence.			

## Environmental Self-Assessment Goals

**Review items from the Environment Self-assessment (ESA) for which you answered “No,” “Sometimes,” “Somewhat,” “Rarely” or “Not at all.”  
Identify at least three of these and establish a goal for each one. These goals will be a part of your improvement plan.**

**If you marked items in the Foundational Quality Section as “No,” “Sometimes,” “Somewhat,” “Rarely” or “Not at all,”  
you must include these items in the three goals that you set.**

## Here is an example of how to develop a goal.

ESA Area	Goal	Steps to Accomplish Goal	Date Started	Date for Goal to be Accomplished
Healthy Eating	Use family-style meal service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Buy plastic serving bowls and easy-grip slide-on spoon holders that allow for easy gripping and holding.</li> <li>2. Consider children’s ages and family cultural practices when deciding which foods they can serve themselves.</li> <li>3. For the first week, all children to serve themselves one food, then two foods the second week, and so on.</li> </ol>	9/1/15	10/1/15

# Your goals

ESA Area	Goal	Steps to Accomplish Goal	Date Started	Date for Goal to be Accomplished



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