



Guidelines for Using the NAC Self-study for Program Improvement and Accreditation Success (for 2007 version)

Because we believe that the director is key in providing leadership in program improvement and in maintaining on-going commitment to high quality care, he/she must have been in that position for a minimum of 6 months before requesting an on-site visit and must have been actively involved in the review and implementation of NAC Standards.

Because programs must build a history of compliance and document evidence of implementation of NAC Standards, new programs must be in business for at least one year before requesting an on-site visit.

Understanding and thoroughly implementing NAC Standards is a process that involves several steps. Suggested steps are listed in the Sample Time Line behind the Instructions Tab. We find that programs that engage in the self-study process for at least six months experience a greater success rate in achieving accreditation.

Programs have two years to complete the self-study process and submit a Request for Validation Visit. The validation visit will be scheduled within two months.

Accreditation standards and licensing are different processes. Only when a center fully meets a NAC Standard can it be rated as “Meets Standard.”

The Administrator’s Report

Although the director completes this section, it is imperative that standards in this section be discussed and understood by all staff members. Staff members must be fully aware of these standards since they will be asked to respond to interview and survey questions.

Documentation of formal education and on-going training must be submitted in the required format and must include all training received during the two years prior to requesting a validation visit. The validator will expect to find evidence of this report (certificates, diplomas, etc.) in personnel files. This form is available electronically and was e-mailed to you shortly after enrolling in the self-study. The form can be saved on your computer and edited as staff receives additional training.

Classroom Observations

Each standard and all indicators in the Classroom Observation are considered appropriate for all age groups unless indicated otherwise. It is not acceptable to mark a standard or indicator ‘NA’ unless that choice is listed with the standard. If you are unclear on how to implement a standard and/or an indicator in a particular age group, contact the NAC Office for clarification before you request a validation visit.

Directors are encouraged to familiarize staff with each standard and indicator before they begin making their observations. (See Sample Time Line behind the Instructions Tab.)

A Classroom Observation is to be completed on each group of children. This includes before/after school and summer care of school age children.

The first page of the Classroom Observation document is to be completed by those making observations. The top section is to be completed by the classroom teacher with the date of his/her self-assessment. The second section is completed by the director with the original and all subsequent date(s) of observation. The third section is reserved for use by the validator. This page is to be attached to the final Classroom Observation that is prepared for the validator's use.

The initial observation is a self-report to be made by the classroom teacher.

- The teacher checks each indicator under a standard that he/she judges is met and rates him/her self on each standard as 'Meets Standard' or 'Needs Improvement.'

The director makes observation in each classroom.

- The director checks each indicator under a standard that he/she judges is met and rates the teacher on each standard as 'Meets Standard' or 'Needs Improvement.'

The ratings of each classroom teacher and those of the director are compared. Discrepancies are discussed and a plan developed for improvement. The plan may include additional training, mentoring, and supervision on topics needing improvement.

After improvements are made, the director meets with individual classroom teachers to agree upon ratings and record them in a fresh Classroom Observation. Each indicator that is met must be checked. And, each standard must be marked as "Meets Standard" or "Needs Improvement."

The final Classroom Observations will be held at the center and be made available to the validator(s) on the day of the visit. A copy of the classroom schedule and staff work schedule is to be attached to each Classroom Observation.

Preparing for the Validation Visit

Tally parent and staff surveys and summarize the total on a blank survey form. These numbers will be checked for accuracy against the surveys by the validator.

Organize required documents for the validator's review as specified in the "Document Organization" included in the Self-Study Manual.

As noted in the Document Organization, some standards require review of children and staff confidential records. These documents should remain in children and staff files to be sampled on the day of the visit.

Required documents are listed by category in the Documents Required for Verification of Standards under the Instructions tab. Use this list only as a cross-reference to ensure that all documents are available.

The validator will use your final copy of the Administrator's Report and each Classroom Observation during the Validation Visit. To expedite the validator's work:

- There is to be no writing in the section that follows each standard and is labeled "For Validator's Use Only." Comments from the director may be written in the "Director's Response" space during the Exit Interview only.
- These final copies are to be copied on one side of the page only. Double-sided copies will not be accepted.

Remember that a validator must see a 'typical' day. Do not plan unusual activities or field trips. Do not bring in volunteers or additional paid staff. If circumstances appear to be out of the normal, the visit may be called off with no refund of fees.

The director may have one other full-time, on-site employee sit in on the Exit Interview. Consultants and mentors cannot be in the center on the day of the visit. Only the director can respond in writing to validator findings.

Submitting the Request for Validation Visit

It is expected that the self-study process has resulted in implementation of all NAC Standards before making a request for the validation visit.

The Request for Validation Visit must be received in the NAC office by the end of the expiration date of your self-study. It may take up to 2-3 months to have the validation visit and up to 3-4 months to receive an accreditation decision.

Certain documents must be submitted with the Request for Validation Visit form. These are listed at the top of the form. The NAC Office may require additional documents.

A final word

Notify NAC regarding any changes in your contact information, including e-mail addresses.

Visit our web site for additional information that might be helpful on your journey toward NAC Accreditation.

Staff hired after the Request for Validation Visit is submitted must be oriented to NAC Standards, as they will be held responsible for compliance.

Go to www.naccp.org. Click on 'Accreditation' for additional help.