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tip|sheet

Ideas and information about child development and early education for parents, professionals and the community-at-large.

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child care search

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Tips for Improving Your SACERS Score!

Part IV - Interactions & Program Structure

The following tips will help you assess your programs in both the Interactions and Program Structure components of the School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS).

Interactions

Greeting/Departure: Escort younger children (K-1 grade) to the center. Upon arrival have individual conversations with each child, introduce the options for the day, and integrate them into the program. Share information and relate warmly to parents and children when they depart.

Staff-Child Interactions: (This must be observed to be scored). Consistently respond to children in a warm, supportive manner (relaxed, cheerful voices, frequent smiling). Show respect for the children. Encourage autonomous behavior in the children.

Staff-Child Communication: Enter into conversations with children and encourage discussions. Do not use communication solely to manage behavior. Ask “why, how, and what-if” questions to elicit more complex answers from children and require more thought than just “yes” or “no” answers. Have frequent conversations that are back and forth, taking turns. Make an effort to talk with each child and verbally expand on their ideas.

Staff Supervision of Children: Adjust careful supervision of all children appropriately for different ages and abilities. Give children encouragement when needed. Show appreciation of children’s efforts and accomplishments.

Discipline: Use non-punitive discipline methods effectively. Give attention for positive, rather than negative, behaviors and redirect children from unacceptable to acceptable activities. Notify parents of program’s discipline policy in writing. Seek advice from parents and consultants concerning behavior problems.

Peer Interaction: Model good social skills such as being calm, listening, and empathizing. Help children develop appropriate social behaviors with peers and teach them to talk through conflicts with their peers rather than just solving it for them. Encourage children to display good social problem-solving skills and positive social behavior. Serve as sounding board for children and extend children’s problem-solving skills.

Interactions Between Staff & Parents: Make parents fully aware of program policies and practices. Regularly schedule parent conferences and welcome parents as part of the program. Provide information on parenting, health care, sports, and cultural activities for families. Involve parents in decision-making roles.

Staff Interactions: Communicate child-related information daily. Set time aside for staff communication. Interact with other staff in ways that are positive and add warmth and support. Divide responsibilities so that activities and problems are handled smoothly. Have planning time together at least bi-weekly for staff working with the same age group or in the same room. Clearly define responsibilities.

Tips for Improving Your SACERS Score! *Part IV - Interactions & Program Structure - con't*

Relationship Between Program Staff & School Classroom Teachers: Communicate regularly and cooperate with school classroom teachers to meet children's needs.

Program Structure

Schedule: Post a written schedule in the center. Include at least one indoor and one outdoor activity daily and reflect that on the written schedule. Have flexibility within the schedule. Have several age-appropriate activities available each day. Include a variety of activities that go on at the same time, some planned, some spontaneous. Be prepared for children upon their arrival. Have smooth transitions between activities. Plan field trips and special activities.

Free Choice: For at least two-thirds of the time, allow children to freely choose from a wide variety of age-appropriate games, materials, and activities. Encourage children to choose their own companions. Have opportunities for individual, small group, and large group activities. Periodically add new materials to extend choices and in response to children's interests.

Administrative relationship between program staff and program host: Have a Director that is responsible for the administration of the program. The Director should have regular meetings with program host to resolve difficulties and make plans.

Use of community resources: Regularly schedule use of recreational and cultural community resources. Have a sufficient number of adults available for supervision. Carefully plan in advance special trips to ensure a successful experience. Consider children's interests when trips are planned.

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