

LISC
CONNECTICUT

Child Care

Physical Environment

CHECKLIST

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Updated October 2023 by [Local Initiatives Support Corporation Connecticut](#) with support from Local Initiatives Support Corporation Phoenix.

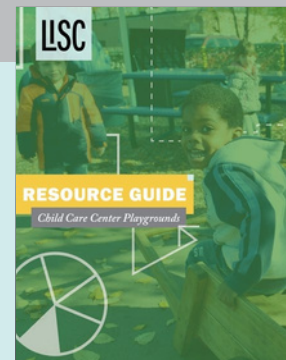
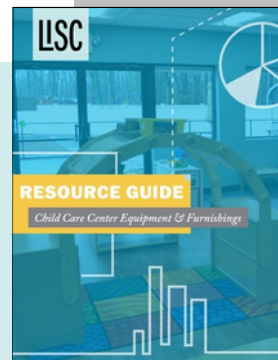
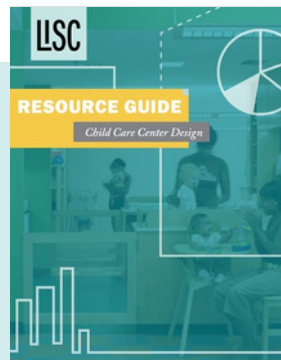
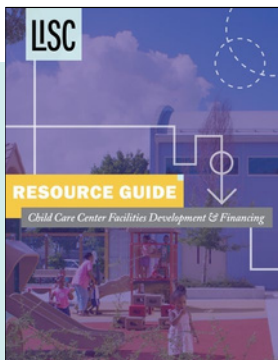
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With the support of our generous partners, LISC forges resilient and inclusive communities of opportunity across America – great places to live, work, do business and raise families.

INTRODUCTION

This Checklist was created to help center-based early childhood programs assess the quality of their physical environment. It relies on standards developed by experts in the early care and education field and on experience gained by LISC staff and consultants in their work with programs across the country. A basic assumption of the Checklist is that your program space already meets applicable state building codes, health department regulations and state licensing requirements for child care facilities.

Reviewing a child care space with this tool can help you identify aspects of the physical facility that interfere with your efforts to provide high quality care, including a good working environment for your staff and a family-friendly space for parents. It may help with setting priorities for renovation or reconfiguration of your space. It may also help raise your expectations for the facility and motivate you to work toward a higher standard of quality.

This tool is for your program's internal use, and is intended to help you reach your goals for quality space. Look at each response and its list of features carefully, and resist the impulse to inflate or exaggerate your ratings. The Checklist will be most useful if it is an objective and honest appraisal of your space.

INSTRUCTIONS

The Checklist Key at the right shows the rating scale you should use to rate each response. Rate each checklist item based on this numeric scale from 0 to 4 or by marking "not applicable." Each item also has one or more icons, pictured in the Key, to indicate whether it is related to Health and Safety; Quality; or Maintenance, Repair and Aesthetics.

Use the Checklist as you review the space, examining each item and noting whether your space or furnishings meet the criteria or contain the features described. Reviewing the number and type of features checked under each item can help you determine which number on the scale best represents that particular aspect of your space.

You will note that each item also has a space to identify whether it is a priority item (PRI). You can either mark priorities as you go through the checklist or you may find it easier to think about which items are priorities after you have completed all of the checklist sections. There is no single way to identify priorities. In almost every case a health and safety concern should be a priority. A low scoring item that affects how you implement your program or keeps you from achieving your goals is also likely to be a priority. For example, if your program values creating a welcoming environment for families, but scores low on its reception area, this could be a high priority to address.

KEY

- 0**
Does not exist
in the center, but should
- 1**
Inadequate:
requires improvement
or repair
- 2**
Fair:
should be improved
- 3**
Good:
good quality or in
good condition
- 4**
Excellent:
first-rate or top quality
- N/A**
Not applicable:
doesn't apply to the home
- PRI**
Priority! Don't forget to
identify priority items



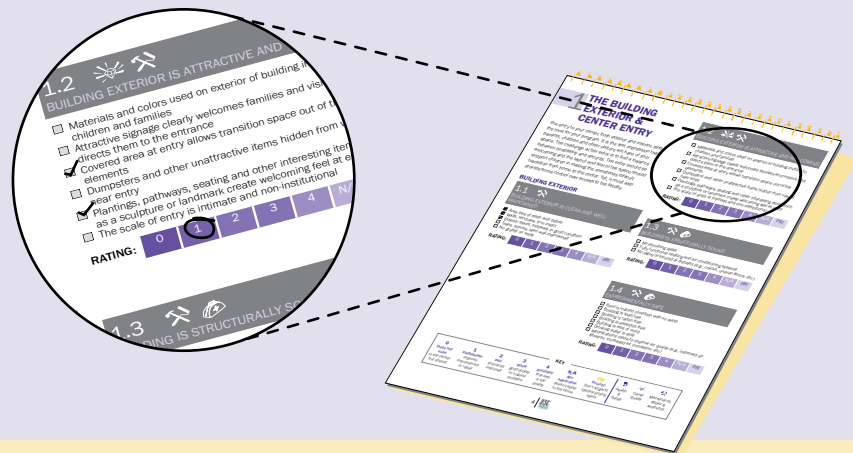
Health & Safety



Center Quality



Maintenance, Repair
& Aesthetics



NOTE: This Checklist is based in part on the following resources: Early Childhood and Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scales, Head Start and Early Head Start Program Standards, Consumer Products Safety Commission, NAEYC Accreditation Standards, and National Program for Playground Safety.

1 THE BUILDING EXTERIOR & CENTER ENTRY

The entry to your center, both exterior and interior, sets the tone for your program. It is the first impression that parents, children and other visitors will have of your space. The challenge at the entry is to find a balance between hospitality and security. The entry should be welcoming and the layout and feel of the space should support children in making the sometimes difficult transition from home to the center. Yet, it must also provide some control over access to the facility.

BUILDING EXTERIOR

1.1

BUILDING EXTERIOR IS CLEAN AND WELL-MAINTAINED

- Area free of trash and debris
- Walls, windows, trim intact
- Exterior stairs, sidewalk in good condition
- Trees, shrubs, lawn well-maintained
- No graffiti on walls

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.2

BUILDING EXTERIOR IS ATTRACTIVE AND WELCOMING

- Materials and colors used on exterior of building inviting to children and families
- Attractive signage clearly welcomes families and visitors and directs them to the entrance
- Covered area at entry allows transition space out of the elements
- Dumpsters and other unattractive items hidden from view if near entry
- Plantings, pathways, seating and other interesting items such as a sculpture or landmark create welcoming feel at entry
- The scale of entry is intimate and non-institutional

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.3

BUILDING IS STRUCTURALLY SOUND

- No plumbing leaks
- Fully functional heating and air conditioning systems
- No signs of structural distress (e.g., cracks, uneven floors, etc.)

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.4




ENVIRONMENTALLY SAFE

- Roof is in good condition with no leaks
- Building is lead-free
- Building is radon-free
- Building is asbestos-free
- Building is free of mold
- Drinking water is safe
- Modifications made to improve air quality (e.g., improved air filtration, increased air circulation, etc.)

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

0 Does not exist in the center, but should	1 Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	2 Fair: should be improved	3 Good: good quality or in good condition	4 Excellent: first-rate or top quality	N/A Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	PR! Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
--	--	--------------------------------------	---	--	---	---	---	--	--

1.5

BUILDING IS ENERGY EFFICIENT

- Double paned, energy efficient windows
- Sufficiently insulated
- Energy efficient lighting
- Programmable thermostat to match HVAC schedule to occupants
- Energy efficient appliances

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.6

PARKING AREA IS SAFE AND CONVENIENT

- Located near center entrance
- Sufficient parking for staff and families
- Parking area and pathways well-lit
- Parking area safe
- Drop-off area located where children don't have to cross in front of moving vehicles

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.7

OUTDOOR LIGHTING IS ADEQUATE AND WELCOMING

- Security lighting on building and playground
- Exterior lighting makes center more welcoming after dark

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.8

BUILDING IS ACCESSIBLE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.9

ENTRANCE TO CENTER IS SAFE AND SECURE

- Clearly marked
- Has exterior lighting
- Security system controls access to center and screens visitors via intercom, personal contact or technology
- Pathways free of hazards (e.g., debris, snow, ice)

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

RECEPTION AND CIRCULATION

1.10




RECEPTION AREA IS WELL-DEFINED AND SECURE

- Signage directs visitors to reception area
- Clearly defined space for reception
- Controlled access to children's space
- Clear view of visitors entering center
- Serves as transition into the center

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

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1.11

LOOK AND FEEL OF RECEPTION AREA WELCOMES CHILDREN AND ADULTS

Offers space for families to congregate, including seating
 Sets a positive and child-friendly tone
 Reflects program philosophy through displays and décor
 Storage for car seats & strollers is provided

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.12

FLOORING AND WALLS ARE CLEAN, DURABLE AND IN GOOD REPAIR

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.13

DISPLAY BOARDS OR AREAS ARE AVAILABLE

In reception area
 In corridors outside classrooms
 Enclosed in glass where required by code

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.14

CIRCULATION THROUGHOUT THE FACILITY IS EFFICIENT AND SUPPORTS PROGRAMMING

Clearly defined pathways through the center allow children, families and visitors to easily move through the space without passing through other classrooms
 Warm and welcoming, not institutional
 Hallways are clean, well-lit and clutter-free
 Enough room to maneuver strollers and equipment
 Signage to direct visitors through center and to identify spaces

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

1.15

STAIRWAYS ARE SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE




Well-lit
 Non-slip treads on steps
 Handrails at child and adult height
 Clean, clutter-free

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____



KEY

0 Does not exist in the center, but should	1 Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	2 Fair: should be improved	3 Good: good quality or in good condition	4 Excellent: first-rate or top quality	N/A Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	PR! Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
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2 PROGRAM SUPPORT SPACE

A child care center is not just for children; it is also a work environment for the adults managing the center and caring for its children. The adult spaces should be comfortable, functional, attractive and well-equipped. Work in child care can be physically and emotionally demanding, with long hours and modest pay. Providing a professional work environment that shows respect for the staff and an understanding of their needs is crucial to ensuring their commitment and professionalism.

The facility is also used by parents and other visitors, and how the space is arranged can welcome them and encourage their involvement, or discourage it. To that end, the space, equipment and materials should convey a message about the values and philosophy of your program.

2.1

SEPARATE OFFICE SPACE IS SUFFICIENT

Office space provides opportunities for confidential conversations between staff and with families
 Sufficient number of administrative offices to meet center's staffing needs
 Space for files, materials, office equipment

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.2

MEETING SPACE IS SUFFICIENT

Sufficient amount of space for staff and parent meetings
 If it is in a multi-purpose space, storage is available for tables, chairs
 Comfortable and functional adult-sized furnishings in good repair
 Good acoustics

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.3

ADULT LAVATORIES MEET PROGRAM NEEDS

Sufficient number for staff and visitors
 Conveniently located
 In good repair
 No-touch fixtures and dispensers are provided

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.4




APPROPRIATE WORK SPACE IS DEDICATED FOR TEACHERS AND STAFF OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

Resource area with work surface and curriculum materials, tools, and supplies
 Access to computer and phone
 Functional, attractive and in good repair

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

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2.5

SECURE AND ACCESSIBLE STORAGE SPACE FOR STAFF IS AVAILABLE IN OFFICES, CLASSROOMS, CLOSETS OR OTHER STORAGE AREAS

- Locked storage for personal possessions
- Storage for files, paperwork, children's records
- Closed storage for classroom materials
- Sufficient storage for bulk supplies, seasonal items, etc.
- Appropriate storage for first aid supplies

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.6

APPROPRIATE SPACE FOR STAFF BREAKS AND TIME AWAY FROM CHILDREN

- Comfortable adult-sized furnishings in good repair
- Access to phone
- Refrigerator, microwave and area for personal items

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.7

APPROPRIATE SPACE IS DESIGNATED FOR A SICK CHILD TO REST WHILE WAITING FOR PARENT

- Near lavatory
- Room for cot to rest
- Easily supervised

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.8

FACILITY FEATURES ENGAGE PARENTS IN THE PROGRAM

- Area set aside for parent resources and information
- Individual parent mailboxes in classrooms
- Décor and display reflect family culture and interests
- Spaces outside the classroom invite parents to linger, meet other parents, talk to teachers or spend time with a child before leaving

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.9

TELEPHONE SYSTEM IS ADEQUATE

- Sufficient number of phone lines to handle needs of program
- Working telephone or intercom in each classroom
- Telephone system provides intercom between classrooms and office

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.10




HEATING AND AIR CONDITIONING IS EFFECTIVE

- Heating consistent and comfortable
- Cooling consistent and comfortable
- Cooling units do not block windows
- Systems can be manually controlled
- Improves air quality through filtration and purification

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

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2.11

LIGHTING IS SUFFICIENT IN ADMINISTRATIVE, STAFF AND PUBLIC AREAS

Balance of natural and artificial lighting
Fluorescent lighting is not the exclusive artificial light source

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.12

KITCHEN IS SAFE AND APPROPRIATELY EQUIPPED FOR TYPE OF FOOD SERVICE PLANNED

Conveniently located
Clean and efficiently laid out
Closed storage for dishes, utensils, bulk foods, including locked storage for any potentially hazardous items
Appropriate equipment for type of food service, in good working condition
Adequate provisions for handling waste and recyclables
System for record keeping, posting notices

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.13

KITCHEN IS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S COOKING ACTIVITIES

Layout of kitchen allows children to safely watch or participate in cooking activities, including a child-height counter space
Kitchen is located near classrooms where it is convenient for staff to access and use

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.14

LAUNDRY AREA IS WELL-DESIGNED AND CENTRALLY LOCATED

Protected from child access
Close proximity to infant/toddler rooms
Full-sized heavy duty washer and dryer
Laundry sink with hot and cold water
Counter with space to organize clean laundry
Storage for supplies and soiled items
Adequate lighting
Acoustic treatment to manage sound transmission

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.15

MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL CLOSET IS SAFE AND FUNCTIONAL

Locking door
Control panels for electrical and telecommunications equipment easily accessible for servicing
Acoustic insulation if near classrooms or offices
Adequate lighting
Located near service entrance and accessible through non-classroom space

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

2.16




CUSTODIAL FACILITIES ARE SAFE AND FUNCTIONAL

Locking door
Provisions for waste handling and disposal
Slop sink on floor or janitorial sink
Space for brooms, mops, vacuum cleaner
Secure storage for cleaning supplies
Adequate lighting

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

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3 CHILDREN'S SPACES

Each group of children and their teachers (as defined by NAEYC guidelines) should have its own distinct classroom space with walls to provide acoustical separation from other classrooms. Although some connections between classrooms through windows or shared bathrooms or changing areas can facilitate teacher communication and provide children with views beyond their own room, it is critical to provide a distinct space for each group.

Each classroom should also have its own individual identity with colors, décor, equipment, display and materials that differ from other classrooms, rather than creating a uniform institutional appearance. Colors should be in tones that will blend harmoniously with the multitude of shades found in children's toys and materials. Find opportunities to use natural materials rather than plastic, to create order instead of clutter, and to create a space that reflects the lives and work of the teachers and children using the space.

Please note that this section does not cover classroom toys and materials. When assessing your center's physical environment, keep in mind that equipping the classrooms with appropriate educational toys and materials is essential to providing a quality program. Information on this is included in the Appendix.



CLASSROOM

3.1

ALL GROUPS OF CHILDREN (as defined by NAEYC guidelines) ARE IN DISTINCT CLASSROOM SPACES ACOUSTICALLY SEPARATED BY WALLS

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.2

CHILDREN'S LAVATORY IS LOCATED DIRECTLY ADJACENT TO CLASSROOM




Opens directly into classroom
Location and design provide good sightlines into lavatory from the classroom
No-touch fixtures and dispensers are provided

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

Note: This section should be completed for each classroom in the center. Please photocopy or make an electronic copy if additional copies are needed.

KEY

0 Does not exist in the center, but should	1 Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	2 Fair: should be improved	3 Good: good quality or in good condition	4 Excellent: first-rate or top quality	N/A Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	PR! Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
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3.3

CHILDREN'S LABORATORY IS WELL-DESIGNED FOR CHILD CARE USE

Fixtures, soap, paper dispensers correct size and height
 Ventilated with mechanical exhaust fan
 Drain in floor

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.4

CLASSROOM OFFERS AMPLE SPACE

NOTE: Early childhood experts agree that more than the minimal licensing requirement of generally 35 sq-ft. per child is needed to support a high quality learning environment. Optimal square footage is generally considered 50-70 sq-ft. per child depending on the age and number of children.

Activity area exceeds licensing minimum
 Allows for flexible use as children's needs change
 Space does not feel crowded

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

TIP: When measuring classroom square footage make sure to subtract the area occupied by large furniture such as cubbies, refrigerators, and cabinetry.

3.5

CLASSROOM ENTRY IS WELL-DESIGNED

Provides for a distinct and separate area that allows families and visitors to enter without disrupting classroom activities
 Each child has his or her own cubby for all personal belongings
 Parent notice board and sign-in
 Transition area/seating for removing outdoor clothes, etc.

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.6




ARRANGEMENT OF CLASSROOM SPACE IS FUNCTIONAL

Clear pathways through the space
 Mix of floor surfaces: non-skid resilient flooring and carpet
 Not crowded or cluttered
 Sufficient space for cots when children are napping
 Room arranged for wheelchair access if needed

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

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3.7

CLASSROOM SPACE IS SAFE

- Pillars and posts wrapped with soft covering
- Space easily supervised
- Heating units and pipes securely covered
- All outlets are child-safe or covered
- Cords secured out of children's sight and reach
- Hazardous substances and sharp objects stored out of children's sight and reach
- Doors have view panels for safe entry or exit from rooms
- Protective barrier/shatterproof glass on windows at child-height
- Operable windows have secure screens
- Operable windows above the first floor have child-safe barriers
- Shelf and cubby units anchored to wall or floor

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.8

ARRANGEMENT AND LAYOUT OF CLASSROOM SPACE SUPPORTS PROGRAMMING

- Separate zones for quiet, active and messy play
- Interest areas well-defined using furnishings, room dividers and architectural features
- Compatible activities adjacent to each other
- Materials displayed and accessible to children
- Interest areas placed near resources to support the activity (art near water, computer near electric outlet, blocks on rug)
- Room organized to promote independence and exploration

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.9

SPACE SUPPORTS TEACHERS

- Adult-height sink in classroom (other than diaper sink)
- Adult-height work surface
- Telephone and/or intercom system

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.10




AESTHETICS AND MOOD CREATE A COMFORTABLE AND SOOTHING ENVIRONMENT

- Harmonious color scheme
- Furnishings and rugs create a unified look
- Muted color palette
- Many soft elements in the space
- Emphasis on natural materials and nature

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

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3.11

CHILDREN'S FURNISHINGS ARE SUFFICIENT, APPROPRIATE AND CLEAN

Sturdy, well-made, in good repair
 Cubbies, tables, chairs and shelves have a unified appearance
 Appropriate size and scale for age group
 Each child has chair, cubby, storage for individual work, and a cot or crib
 Soft furnishings available

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.12

CLASSROOM IS IN GOOD REPAIR

Ceiling, floor, floor coverings and walls free of splinters, peeling paint, water stains or excessive wear
 Windows, heating units, other fixed features intact and in good condition
 Air circulation allowing for ventilation
 Regular maintenance of HVAC system

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.13

CLASSROOM HAS ACTIVITY SINK FOR CHILDREN

Sink and counter at child-height
 Soap and paper towels flush-mounted at child-height

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____



KEY

0 Does not exist in the center, but should	1 Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	2 Fair: should be improved	3 Good: good quality or in good condition	4 Excellent: first-rate or top quality	N/A Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	PR! Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
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3.14

SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF EXTERIOR WINDOWS PROVIDE GOOD AMOUNT OF NATURAL DAYLIGHT AND VISIBILITY TO OUTDOORS

Access to child-height windows to the outdoors
Lofts or raised platforms up to higher windows
Window coverings adjust to control level of natural light

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.15

INTERIOR WINDOWS ALLOW FOR VISIBILITY AND SECURITY BETWEEN CLASSROOMS WHILE STILL PROVIDING ACOUSTICAL SEPARATION

Windows to other classrooms and/or corridors
Windows or observation spaces allow parents, staff and visitors to see into classrooms
Safety glass used where glass is child-height

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____



3.16

CLASSROOM OFFERS AMPLE STORAGE SPACE

Sufficient space for children's materials and supplies used on a regular basis
Closed storage space available in classroom for children's supplies and teacher materials
Individual storage for children's belongings
Easily accessed storage for cots/mats
Secure storage of medicines/hazardous materials

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.17

HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEM IS SAFE AND RESPONSIVE

Temperature controlled within individual classroom
Air temperature consistent and comfortable
Depending on climate, radiant heating in flooring, especially in infant/toddler rooms

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____



KEY

0 Does not exist in the center, but should	1 Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	2 Fair: should be improved	3 Good: good quality or in good condition	4 Excellent: first-rate or top quality	N/A Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	PR! Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
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3.18

LIGHTING IS VARIED AND ADJUSTABLE

Balance of natural and artificial lighting in each classroom
 Fluorescent lighting not the only light source of artificial light
 Different lighting used for different activity areas
 Light level can be adjusted by turning some fixtures on and off
 Classroom lighting has dimmer switches

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

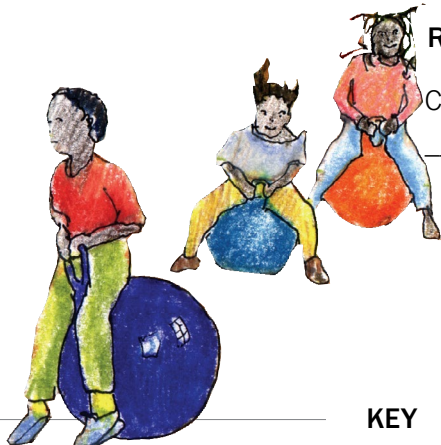
3.19

ELECTRIC SERVICE IS AMPLE

Sufficient number of outlets to avoid use of extension cords
 Circuit breakers are not thrown because of overloads to system

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____



3.20

APPROPRIATE ACOUSTICAL FEATURES REDUCE NOISE LEVEL OF CENTER

Absence of ambient noises such as buzzing lights, electronic hums, ventilation system motors, etc.
 Limited transmission of sound from adjoining rooms or outside street noise
 Efforts made to soften and absorb excessive noise – use of acoustic tiles and panels, fabric, cushions, rugs, upholstered furniture
 Absence of high ceilings that would contribute to poor acoustics

CLASSROOM 1	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 2	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 3	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
CLASSROOM 4	0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!

COMMENTS: _____

OTHER CHILDREN'S SPACES

3.21

THERE IS A WELL-DESIGNED INDOOR GROSS MOTOR SPACE




Designated space for active indoor play available
 Suitable climbing, jumping, crawling and balance equipment
 Safety mats or protective flooring
 Suitable wheeled toys for different age groups
 Convenient storage for gross motor equipment
 Depending on the need of children, space is accessible for all abilities

RATING:

0	1	2	3	4	N/A	PR!
---	---	---	---	---	-----	-----

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

0 Does not exist in the center, but should	1 Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	2 Fair: should be improved	3 Good: good quality or in good condition	4 Excellent: first-rate or top quality	N/A Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	PR! Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
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INFANT AND TODDLER ROOMS

In addition to the information above, there are further considerations for infant and toddler rooms. Infants and toddlers spend much of their time on the floor so it should be soft, warm, and clean. Equipment should be sturdy, age appropriate and scrupulously clean.

3.22 FLOOR SURFACE IS VARIED

FOR INFANTS:

Well-padded carpet, low carpeted risers in crawling spaces
Easily cleaned, resilient flooring in eating areas and at changing table

FOR TODDLERS:

Mix of carpet/area rugs and washable flooring
Floor level changes with carpeted risers or steps

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.23 DIAPER CHANGING AREA IS ACCESSIBLE AND HYGIENIC

Location of diaper area allows teacher to continue to supervise classroom
Sink location is separate from food prep area
Diaper sink separate from other sinks and adjacent to diaper area
Changing table has safety rail and non-porous surface
Storage of soiled diapers convenient, hygienic and air-tight
Diapering and sanitizing supplies stored securely
For toddlers, changing table has steps
Area is ventilated with mechanical exhaust fan
Diaper and wipe storage accessible with one hand while teacher still has one hand on child
Sink features wrist-controlled faucets
No-touch fixtures and dispensers are provided

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.24

SPACE FOR INFANT AND TODDLER ACTIVITIES IS SUFFICIENT AND APPROPRIATE

Sufficient usable floor space for crawling, climbing, and other activities (after subtracting floor space used for cribs, feeding and diapering activities)
Well-defined napping area such as an alcove or separate crib area (if this meets licensing regulations for supervision and visibility)
Available space for children to get out of the group, rest or watch the activities

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

3.25




INFANT AND TODDLER FURNISHINGS ARE APPROPRIATE

Comfortable adult seating, suitable for holding or rocking children
Soft surfaces: futons, water mattress, other textures if allowed by licensing
Secure railings and surfaces for children to pull themselves to standing position
Pictures and non-breakable mirrors at crawler's eye level
Low open shelves for toys
Bins to isolate toys that have been in a child's mouth
Equipment to sanitize infant toys
Sturdy furnishings designed for use with these age groups
Cribs and evacuation crib(s) as required by licensing
Individual feeding chairs
No use of walkers
Limited use of "containment" equipment such as Exersaucers, swings, etc.
Elevated enclosed play platform

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

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4 OUTDOOR PLAY AREAS

Outdoor play spaces are frequently an afterthought when planning or evaluating child care environments. As a result, many child care playgrounds include one or more pieces of play equipment but offer little else. If the outdoor space is considered an extension of the classroom, it will be designed to support a range of activities: physical activity, exploration, fantasy play, sand and water play, interaction with nature and safe plants, as well as space for quiet contemplation.

4.1

PLAY AREA IS WELL-LOCATED

Classrooms open to outdoor play space
 If no direct access from classrooms, distance to play area is short and does not require crossing traffic
 Convenient access to bathroom, sink, drinking water

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.2

PLAY AREA PROVIDES SUFFICIENT SPACE

Minimum 75 square feet per child of usable outdoor play space for 50% of the total center population
 Separate play spaces for infants, toddlers and preschool children

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.3

PLAY AREA HAS SEPARATE ZONES

Areas for quiet activities and active play
 Areas for large group play and individual or small group play
 Distinct area for fixed play structures
 If center is located in housing complex or office building, active zone is away from building
 Good teacher sightlines
 Accessible area for children with disabilities

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

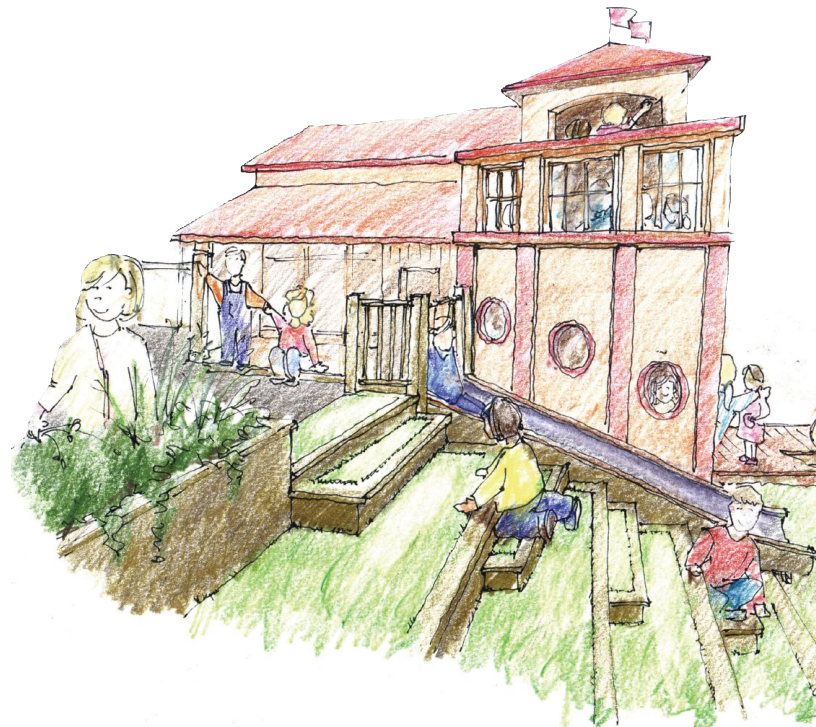
COMMENTS: _____

4.4




CLEAR PATHWAYS DIRECT CHILDREN THROUGH THE PLAY AREA AND AROUND ACTIVITY AREAS/EQUIPMENT

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____



KEY

0 Does not exist in the center, but should	1 Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	2 Fair: should be improved	3 Good: good quality or in good condition	4 Excellent: first-rate or top quality	N/A Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	PR! Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
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4.5

PLAY STRUCTURES AND EQUIPMENT PROVIDE DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAY

Appropriate size and scale for age group
Provide a variety of options for climbing, jumping, balancing and sliding

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.6

AGE APPROPRIATE RIDING TOYS ARE AVAILABLE

Several types for each age group
Clearly delineated hard surface riding path separate from quiet activities

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.7

A RANGE OF OTHER OUTDOOR PLAY OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVIDED

Sand and water play
Garden area with access to sun and water
Dramatic play area with props and enclosure (canopy, play house, tent)
Large flat surface for running, circle and ball games
Art area with outdoor easels or chalk surfaces, tables or other flat surfaces
Block and building activities

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.8

IF THE PROGRAM SERVES INFANTS AND TODDLERS, AGE APPROPRIATE AREAS/ACTIVITIES ARE PROVIDED

Safe and interesting places to crawl, pull up and climb
Self-contained and protected from other children
Playground surface does not feature materials that are hazardous if ingested such as small chips, bark, fiber, or gravel

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.9

NATURAL FEATURES ARE INCLUDED WHENEVER POSSIBLE

Gardening opportunities for children
Tree, shrubs, child-safe plants
Rocks or boulders
Small hills or slopes
Bird feeders or houses

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.10




SUFFICIENT STORAGE IS AVAILABLE FOR OUTDOOR AND SEASONAL EQUIPMENT

Storage for large equipment such as riding toys and strollers
Secure and weatherproof
Well-organized and easy to use
Smaller point of use storage units placed around playground for toys and "loose parts"

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

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4.11

PLAY AREA IS ACCESSIBLE FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Slope of paths and ramps meets accessibility guidelines
Activity areas are barrier-free

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.12

GROUND SURFACES ARE VARIED, INCLUDING DIFFERENT TYPES OF GRASS, DIRT OR SAND, HARD SURFACE FOR RIDING TOYS, SUITABLE SAFETY SURFACING UNDER ANY EQUIPMENT, ETC.

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____



4.13

PLAY AREA IS CLEAN

Litter free
No animal waste
Garbage and recyclables kept in closed receptacle outside play area
Sandboxes covered when not in use
Wading pools and water tables emptied and cleaned after use
Free of insect nests and signs of rodents
Mats, tiles, and pour-surfaces are well-maintained to prevent tripping hazards

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.14



PLAY AREA IS SAFE

Complies with National Program for Playground Safety guidelines on equipment, fall zones and safety surfaces (www.uni.edu/playground)
Play structures in good repair and inspected regularly
Easy to supervise – clear sightlines, no large obstructions
Checked daily for hazards
Has emergency telephone and first aid kit
Play area has good drainage, does not collect water

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

0 Does not exist in the center, but should	1 Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	2 Fair: should be improved	3 Good: good quality or in good condition	4 Excellent: first-rate or top quality	N/A Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	PR! Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
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4.15

SHADE IS AVAILABLE TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM THE ELEMENTS

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.16

COVERED PLAY AREA IS AVAILABLE SO CHILDREN CAN BE OUTDOORS IN ALL WEATHER

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.17

PLAY AREA IS SECURE

Fenced with appropriate height for the area (minimum four feet), with self-closing gates and a childproof mechanism
Play area is for exclusive use of the center's children, teachers and parents
Center entrance does not pass through play area

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.18

PLAYGROUND STRUCTURES ARE IN GOOD REPAIR

No loose, broken or missing parts
Free of splinters and rust
No open S-hooks on equipment
No protruding bolts
Free of cracks and holes
Concrete footers on equipment are covered

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

4.19




PLAY STRUCTURES ARE SAFE

No gaps in equipment where clothing could be caught (generally a gap between 3¹/₂ - 9 inches)
No head entrapments or pinch hazards
Climbing structure platforms have a maximum height of 24 inches for infants and toddlers and 48 inches for children under 5 years
Climbing structure platforms have guardrails
Climbing structures have more than one way on and off
Steps, ramps and ladders end at a platform that holds more than one child
Swings are separate from climbing structures and are at least 18-24 inches apart
Only bucket style swings with straps are used for infants and toddlers
Preschool slides are a maximum height of 6 feet
Infant/toddler slides have a gradual slope
Slides have non-metal surface

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PR!

COMMENTS: _____

KEY

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4.20

APPROPRIATE FALL/SAFETY ZONES AROUND PLAY EQUIPMENT

Stationary equipment such as climbers have a fall zone at least 6 feet in all directions

Slides higher than 4 feet have a fall zone (use zone) of safety surfacing equal to the slide height plus 4 feet (for example a 6 foot slide would have a fall zone extending 10 feet from the end of the slide)

Swings have use zones of safety surfacing at least double the height of the swing beam (for example a swing on a 10 foot pole requires 20 feet of fall zone surfacing and clearance in front and 20 feet in the back).

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI!

COMMENTS: _____

4.21

SUITABLE MATERIAL USED AT ADEQUATE DEPTH IN ALL FALL/USE ZONES

Equipment 6 feet or higher has at least 12 inches of wood chips, double shredded bark, engineered wood fiber or fine pea gravel or has a synthetic surface such as poured-in-place surfacing or rubber mats/tiles

Equipment 4-6 feet high has one of the above surfacing materials or may also have 12 inches of sand or medium gravel

Border around loose-fill surfacing




No equipment is placed on asphalt, cement, dirt, grass or rocks

RATING: 0 1 2 3 4 N/A PRI!

COMMENTS: _____



KEY

0 Does not exist in the center, but should	1 Inadequate: requires improvement or repair	2 Fair: should be improved	3 Good: good quality or in good condition	4 Excellent: first-rate or top quality	N/A Not applicable: doesn't apply to the home	PRI! Priority! Don't forget to identify priority items	 Health & Safety	 Center Quality	 Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics
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NEXT STEPS

Now that you have used the Checklist to review your center's physical space you should have a better sense of its strengths and weaknesses. Hopefully while you were completing the Checklist you identified priorities and made notes on the specifics of your findings. If your center is like most others, you no doubt identified a number of items that need improvement. The next logical question to ask is where do you go from here?

Start by going back through the Checklist and your findings to reflect on the results, and share them with others such as staff and board members. Pay attention to any particular trends and overarching strengths and weaknesses of the facility that became apparent while you were completing the Checklist.

Here are some specific steps you can take to help your organization develop a plan for addressing the facilities issues identified through your review.



1. IDENTIFY PRIORITY ITEMS THAT NEED ATTENTION

Go back through the Checklist and pull out any items that were identified as priorities, but scored low:

PRIORITY ITEM	SCORE
1. _____ _____	
2. _____ _____	
3. _____ _____	
4. _____ _____	
5. _____ _____	
6. _____ _____	
7. _____ _____	
8. _____ _____	
9. _____ _____	
10. _____ _____	

KEY

0
Does not exist
in the center, but should

1
Inadequate:
requires improvement or repair

2
Fair:
should be improved

3
Good:
good quality or in good condition

4
Excellent:
first-rate or top quality

N/A
Not applicable:
doesn't apply to the home

PRI
Priority!
Don't forget to identify priority items


Health & Safety


Center Quality


Maintenance, Repair & Aesthetics

2. CATEGORIZE THE PRIORITY ITEMS




Use the chart below to categorize each of the priority items above according to the size and scope of the project and the level of effort and investment that will be required:

LIGHT REPAIR/ AESTHETIC IMPROVEMENT/ GENERAL MAINTENANCE	MODEST RENOVATION PROJECT	MAJOR RENOVATION TO AN EXISTING FACILITY	REQUIRES MOVING TO OR BUILDING A NEW FACILITY TO ACCOMPLISH
<p>Hints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> minimal in cost can often be done by staff or volunteer can be accomplished without structural work can be done in a short time frame <p>Example: Painting the center’s hallways</p>	<p>Hints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may require some structural work can be achieved without a major fundraising campaign likely to require the assistance of an outside professional will not generally require full architectural plans <p>Example: Installing a sink in a classroom</p>	<p>Hints:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> typically require a major fundraising effort needs involvement of a full construction team including an architect <p>Examples: Building an addition to an existing center, re-configuring existing space to increase square footage, providing missing features such as storage or staff support spaces</p>	<p>Hint:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cannot be achieved within the confines of the existing building or site regardless of the financial investment <p>Example: Insufficient square footage in classrooms in a building that won’t accommodate any expansion</p>
1.	1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.	3.
4.	4.	4.	4.
5.	5.	5.	5.

3. LOOK FOR TRENDS

Once you have placed all of the priority items into one of the columns in the chart above, try to identify specific themes. For example, if 80% of the items fall into the category of “requires a new facility,” this is an indication that your efforts should be focused on seeking alternative space. On the other hand, if the majority of your items fall into the “light repair” or “modest renovation” categories, you will be able to begin tackling these items immediately without a long planning process or substantial resources.

KEY

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4. DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

The vast majority of programs will benefit from some additional planning and the development of specific action plans for addressing facility improvement priorities. The chart that follows is designed to help you think about the steps you should take.

Complete one chart for each major priority item. [Photocopy this page for additional priority items you want to address.](#) It may make sense in some cases to combine several items into one broader category for the purpose of this exercise. For example, if you have multiple priority items under “center entry/reception,” you may want to create one broader category of “entry.”

CHECKLIST NUMBER AND ITEM (or major category):

_____ : _____

TYPE OF PROJECT (repair, minor renovation, etc.):

DESCRIBE THE IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF YOUR PROGRAM IF THIS ITEM IS NOT ADDRESSED

What will happen if you don't address this item?
What benefit will be achieved by addressing this item?

WHAT IS NEEDED TO ADDRESS THIS ITEM?

Financial resources
Professional experts
Staff time

POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

Foundations
Individuals
Operating reserves
Capital campaign

PROPOSED TIMELINE

How long do you expect this to take?
When will the project begin?
When do you hope to have it completed?




ACTION STEPS

What are the next steps?

- raising money
- identifying professionals
- seeking approvals (landlord, licensing, neighbors, etc.)

Who will be responsible for carrying out these steps?
Who will track your progress?

KEY

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APPENDIX: TOYS AND MATERIALS

CLASSROOM TOYS AND MATERIALS

Toys and materials are key elements in developing a high quality classroom environment. Select attractive, well-constructed toys that stimulate the imagination. Look for open-ended toys that will maintain children’s interest. Reduce the visual chaos of your space by selecting toys made from natural materials or muted colors rather than the very bright plastic that is so prevalent in children’s toys. Choose toys that suit the age and development of the children in the group – some should be easy to master and others more challenging. Provide several of the more popular toys, particularly for toddlers and young three-year-olds. Look for materials that will build on the interests of individual children as well as the group. Offer children safe and interesting materials to use in their play.

OUTDOOR TOYS AND MATERIALS

Even a beautifully landscaped and equipped outdoor play area requires a variety of props, toys and materials that children can use in their play. A mix of containers, sturdy dolls and animals, vehicles, balls, child-size tools, and dress ups can be placed in appropriate areas around the playground. For toddlers and preschoolers, add various natural materials: shells, colored pebbles, pieces of wood, baskets, and other materials sorted into weatherproof containers. Planning for storage and display of the outdoor toys and materials is important to their effective use.




FOR DETAILED INFORMATION ON SELECTING MATERIALS SEE:

- **The Creative Curriculum** by Diane Trister Dodge and Laura J. Colker provides detailed curriculum plans for interest areas and suggestions for materials and furnishings to equip each area.
- **Designs for Living and Learning** by Deb Curtis and Margie Carter includes beautiful photographs and thoughtful ideas about developing a child care environment.
- **Playgrounds that Work: Creating Outdoor Play Environments for Children Birth to Eight Years** by Pauline Berry offers a practical guide to creating appropriate outdoor learning environments.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE MATERIALS

LISC has produced a series of resource guides on all aspects of child care facilities design and development, including outdoor playgrounds. These guides may be helpful during your planning process. More information is provided on the inside cover.

KEY

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