

Early Head Start - Child Care  
Partnership Baseline Tool:  
Environmental Health & Safety

Office of Head Start



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## Overview of the Environmental Health & Safety Baseline Tool

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### *Overview*

The Office of Head Start (OHS) will conduct baseline observations of the Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership (EHS-CCP) grantees' facilities and interviews to understand the Environmental Health & Safety (EnvHS) in the early stages of their grant. This baseline tool is one aspect of the work that OHS is doing in partnership with the Office of Child Care to understand the current capacity of the EHS-CCP grantees and their partners and to identify technical assistance or other supports needed.

### *Organization of the Baseline Tool*

#### *Interview:*

The EnvHS Baseline Tool includes interview questions with the EHS-CCP Director to understand the program's system for maintaining health and safety for all children.

#### *Observations:*

Observations will be conducted at the program's centers, classrooms, and FCC environments.



## Interview Questions – Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership Director

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### *Appropriate Release*

- ✓ With the EHS-CCP Director, review the program’s documented policies and procedures regarding the release of children and the emergency contact list of authorized parents and guardians to whom children can be released.
  - How do teaching staff know which adults are authorized to pick up children?
  - What process is in place to release children from the center or FCC setting?
  - How is information to support the process kept up to date? Is the information easily accessible?

### *Safe and Healthy Nutrition*

- ✓ Describe how the program:
  - Meets the individual nutritional needs and feeding requirements of all children
  - Complies with USDA nutrition requirements
  - Addresses special dietary needs of children
  - Accommodates the feeding and nutritional needs of children with disabilities
  - Ensures that foods posing a high risk of choking for infants and toddlers (e.g., hot dogs, whole grapes, hard raw vegetables, popcorn, whole nuts) are not given to them

### *Criminal Record Checks*

- ✓ With the EHS-CCP Director, review the program’s CRC tracking document. Ask the director to highlight new staff who joined as part of the Child Care Partnership.
- ✓ Are there any new staff who do not have a CRC?
- ✓ If the tracking document indicated that all of the new staff have a CRC, please validate the tracking document by selecting up to 10 of the new Child Care Partnership staff from the CRC tracking document. Enter the staff person’s name, date of hire, and date of CRC completion from the tracking document for each of the 10 selected staff members.
- ✓ Ask the grantee for the staff files for each of the selected staff. Review each file to confirm the data from the tracking sheet.



## Center Observation Questions

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### *Licensing*

- ✓ Does the program have a current child care license for this center or FCC home?

### *Inspections*

- ✓ Does the grantee conduct safety inspections of all facilities, including all indoor and outdoor learning environments?
- ✓ Review the results of the most current safety inspection for the setting you are observing. Are there any issues that have yet to be addressed?
- ✓ How do staff address issues identified during safety inspections?
- ✓ How often does the grantee perform safety inspections?
  - Daily
  - Weekly
  - Bi-Monthly
  - Monthly
  - Semi-annually
  - Annually
  - Less frequent than annually

### *Air Quality and Toxins*

- ✓ Is the environment free of air pollutants and toxins including:
  - Mold
  - Lead
  - Pesticides
  - Asbestos
  - Herbicides
  - Other

### *Cleanliness and Sanitation*

- ✓ Are toilets and handwashing facilities clean?



## Center Observation Questions (Continued)

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### *Age-Appropriateness and Accessibility*

- ✓ Are toilets and handwashing facilities adequate in number and easily accessible by children?
- ✓ Does the design of the playground and equipment promote the safety of children, including:
  - Appropriate height and accessibility?

### *Facility Maintenance and Repair*

- ✓ Do toilets and handwashing need to be repaired?
- ✓ Does the design of the playground and equipment promote the safety of children, including:
  - Equipment on shock-absorbing surface?
  - Equipment is stable and/or secured to the ground?

### *Safety Hazards*

- ✓ Are facilities, materials, and equipment free of any hazards that may cause harm to children, families, or staff?
- ✓ Do children have access to heating elements that could cause a burn?
- ✓ Does the design of the playground and equipment promote the safety of children, including:
  - No openings that could entrap a child's head or limbs?
  - Absence of sharp edges, rust, choking and/or strangulation hazards, garbage, and hazardous material (e.g., glass, needles, animal feces)?
- ✓ Are toxic substances accessible to children?

### *Emergency Prevention and Preparedness*

- ✓ Is a fire extinguisher available?
- ✓ Is the extinguisher easily accessible?
- ✓ Is there a service date on the fire extinguisher showing it has been updated at least
- ✓ Is there a smoke detector system?
- ✓ Is emergency lighting available that allows children and adults to clearly see pathways in case of a power failure?

### *Safe Outdoor Play Areas*

- ✓ Are outdoor play areas arranged so adults can see children and effectively supervise to prevent children from leaving and/or getting into unsafe areas?



## Classroom Observation Questions

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### *Air Quality and Toxins*

- ✓ Is the environment free of air pollutants and toxins including:
  - Mold
  - Lead
  - Pesticides
  - Asbestos
  - Herbicides
  - Other

### *Cleanliness and Sanitation*

- ✓ Are garbage and trash stored in a safe and sanitary manner that does not allow easy access by children?
- ✓ Are the following areas clean and free of dirt and debris?
  - Carpets
  - Floors
  - Furniture
  - Toys
  - Materials
  - Counters and shelves
  - Sinks
  - Bathrooms
- ✓ Is there evidence of pests?



## Classroom Observation Questions (Continued)

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### *Age-Appropriateness and Accessibility*

- ✓ Are toilets and handwashing facilities adequate in number and easily accessible by children?
- ✓ Were provisions made to ensure the safety, comfort, and participation of children with disabilities?
- ✓ Does the classroom provide at least 35 square feet of usable indoor space per child (excluding bathrooms, halls, kitchens, staff rooms, and storage space)?
- ✓ Are toys, materials, and furniture age-appropriate?
- ✓ Does the program ensure that sleeping arrangements for infants (e.g., cribs, playpens, bassinets) are free of soft bedding materials (e.g., soft mattresses, pillows, stuffed animals, fluffy blankets, comforters)?

### *Facility Maintenance and Repair*

- ✓ Are windows and glass doors constructed, secured, and adjusted to prevent children's injury and escape?
- ✓ Do toilets and handwashing facilities need to be repaired?
- ✓ Is there broken furniture that presents a risk of injury to children or adults?

### *Safety Hazards*

- ✓ Are facilities, materials, and equipment free of any hazards that may cause harm to children, families, or staff?
- ✓ Do children have access to heating elements that could cause a burn?
- ✓ Are electrical outlets accessible to children designed to prevent shock through the use of covers, installation of child-protection outlets (e.g., tamper-resistant outlets), or use of safety plugs?
- ✓ Are toxic substances accessible to children?

### *Emergency Prevention and Preparedness*

- ✓ Are exits clearly marked?
- ✓ Is there an evacuation route posted?
- ✓ Are emergency procedures posted?
- ✓ Is there a smoke detector system?
- ✓ Was the smoke detector system tested within the last 12 months?





## Classroom Observation Questions (Continued)

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### *Handwashing*

- ✓ Did you observe a situation that required handwashing? Check all situations you observed where handwashing should have occurred:
  - After diapering or toilet use
  - Before food preparation
  - Whenever hands were contaminated with blood or other bodily fluids
  - After handling pets or other animals
  - After handling garbage
- ✓ Did handwashing occur at the appropriate times and include the following?
  - Staff assisting children as needed
  - Staff and/or children washing hands with soap and water

### *Spilled Bodily Fluids*

- ✓ If bodily fluids were spilled during your observation, did clean-up include all of the following?
  - Nonporous gloves worn
  - Spills/fluids cleaned up immediately
  - All areas cleaned and sanitized
  - Contaminated materials placed in a plastic bag and secured

### *Diapering*

- ✓ If diapering was observed, did staff do all of the following when changing diapers?
  - Before bringing the child to the diaper-changing area, washed hands and brought supplies to the diaper-changing area
  - Always kept a hand on the child
  - Cleaned the child's diaper area
  - If wearing gloves, changed gloves prior to putting on clean diaper
  - Washed the child's hands and returned the child to a supervised area
  - Cleaned and disinfected the diaper-changing surface
  - Washed hands



## Classroom Observation Questions (Continued)

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### *Proper Handling of Breast Milk*

- ✓ Are any children currently on breast milk or formula?
- ✓ Is breast milk properly refrigerated and all containers labeled with the child's full name and the date the breast milk was collected?
- ✓ Is frozen breast milk defrosted in the refrigerator or under running water?
- ✓ Is prepared formula labeled with child's name and date of preparation?

### *Medication Management*

- ✓ Are any children currently receiving medications?
- ✓ Are over-the-counter medications in original containers, and does the program have written orders from a physician that includes dosage and length of time to administer the medication?
- ✓ Are non-emergency medications stored under lock and key?
- ✓ If children are currently receiving medication, compare labeling with information noted on the Medication Administration Log. Are all medications given as prescribed?
- ✓ Are prescribed medications in original containers with original prescription labels?
- ✓ Are all medications within their dates of expiration?

### *Infant/Toddler Group Ratio*

- ✓ How many infants/toddlers are currently present in the group?
- ✓ How many staff members are currently present with the group?

### *Supervision*

- ✓ Are staff within arm's reach of children sitting in a high chair or on a changing table, and holding any children who are bottle-feeding?
- ✓ Are all on-duty staff supervising and engaging with children in a way that ensures the children's safety?
- ✓ Did you observe an instance in which a child or children were unsupervised?
- ✓ Are clear systems in place to account for the whereabouts of each child (e.g., attendance logs and sign-in/out sheets, routine head counts)?

### *Positive Guidance*

- ✓ Did staff use positive child guidance when responding to undesired child behaviors rather than corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, unnecessary restraint, humiliation, isolation, or denial of food, water, or bathroom privileges?



## Family Child Care Observation Questions

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### *Licensing*

- ✓ Does the program have a current child care license for this center or FCC home?

### *Inspections*

- ✓ Does the grantee conduct safety inspections of all family child care homes, including all indoor and outdoor learning environments?
- ✓ Review the results of the most current safety inspection for the setting you are observing. Are there any issues that have yet to be addressed?
- ✓ How do staff address issues identified during safety inspections?
- ✓ How often does the grantee perform safety inspections?
  - Daily
  - Weekly
  - Bi-monthly
  - Monthly
  - Annually
  - Less frequent than annually

### *Air Quality and Toxins*

- ✓ Is the environment free of air pollutants and toxins, including:
  - Mold
  - Lead
  - Pesticides
  - Asbestos
  - Herbicides
  - Other

### *Cleanliness and Sanitation*

- ✓ Are garbage and trash stored in a safe and sanitary manner that does not allow easy access by children?



## Family Child Care Observation Questions (Continued)

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- ✓ Are the following areas clean and free of dirt and debris?
  - Carpets
  - Floors
  - Furniture
  - Toys
  - Materials
  - Counters and shelves
  - Sinks
  - Bathrooms

- ✓ Is there evidence of pests?

### *Age-Appropriateness and Accessibility*

- ✓ Are toilets and handwashing facilities adequate in number and easily accessible by children?
- ✓ Were provisions made to ensure the safety, comfort, and participation of children with disabilities?
- ✓ Does the classroom provide at least 35 square feet of usable indoor space per child (excluding bathrooms, halls, kitchens, staff rooms, and storage space)?
- ✓ Are toys, materials, and furniture age-appropriate?
- ✓ Does the program ensure that sleeping arrangements for infants (e.g., cribs, playpens, bassinets) are free of soft bedding materials (e.g., soft mattresses, pillows, stuffed animals, fluffy blankets, comforters)?
- ✓ Does the design of the playground and equipment promote the safety of children, including:
  - Appropriate height and accessibility?

### *Facility Maintenance and Repair*

- ✓ Are windows and glass doors constructed, secured, and adjusted to prevent children's injury and escape?
- ✓ Do toilets and handwashing need to be repaired?
- ✓ Is there broken furniture that presents a risk of injury to children or adults?
- ✓ Does the design of the playground and equipment promote the safety of children, including:
  - Equipment on shock-absorbing surface?
  - Equipment is stable and/or secured to the ground?



## Family Child Care Observation Questions (Continued)

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### *Safety Hazards*

- ✓ Are facilities, materials, and equipment free of any hazards that may cause harm to children, families, or staff?
- ✓ Do children have access to heating elements that could cause a burn?
- ✓ Are electrical outlets accessible to children designed to prevent shock through the use of covers, installation of child-protection outlets (e.g., tamper-resistant outlets), or use of safety plugs?
- ✓ Are children safe from the potential hazards posed by appliances (stove, refrigerator, microwave, etc.), such as appliances with frayed wires, hot stoves, and refrigerator coils?
- ✓ Are firearms and other weapons secured in areas not occupied by children?
- ✓ Does the provider ensure that alcohol and drugs are not consumed while children are present?
- ✓ Does the provider ensure that alcohol and drugs are inaccessible to children at all times?
- ✓ Are current health certificates available for pets documenting up-to-date immunizations, and are pets free from conditions that may pose a health threat?
- ✓ Does the provider ensure the safety of children at all times when pets are present?
- ✓ Does the design of the playground and equipment promote the safety of children, including:
  - No openings that could entrap a child's head or limbs?
  - Absence of sharp edges, rust, choking and/or strangulation hazards, garbage, and hazardous material (e.g., glass, needles, animal feces)?
- ✓ Are toxic substances accessible to children?



## Family Child Care Observation Questions (Continued)

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### *Emergency Prevention and Preparedness*

- ✓ Are exits clearly marked?
- ✓ Is there an evacuation route posted?
- ✓ Are emergency procedures posted in this setting?
- ✓ Is there a smoke detector system?
- ✓ Was the smoke detector system tested within the last 12 months?
- ✓ Are carbon monoxide detectors properly installed and currently functioning?
- ✓ If the FCC home has a basement, and local health officials recommend radon detectors, are radon detectors installed?
- ✓ Is a fire extinguisher available?
- ✓ Is the extinguisher easily accessible?
- ✓ Is there a service date on the fire extinguisher showing it has been updated at least annually?

### *Handwashing*

- ✓ Did you observe a situation that required handwashing? Check all situations you observed where handwashing should have occurred:
  - After diapering or toilet use
  - Before food preparation
  - Whenever hands were contaminated with blood or other bodily fluids
  - After handling pets or other animals
  - After handling garbage
- ✓ Did handwashing occur at the appropriate times and include the following?
  - Staff assisting children as needed
  - Staff and/or children washing hands with soap and water

### *Spilled Bodily Fluids*

- ✓ If bodily fluids were spilled during your observation, did clean-up include all of the following?
  - Nonporous gloves worn
  - Spills/fluids cleaned up immediately
  - All areas cleaned and sanitized
  - Contaminated materials placed in a plastic bag and secured



## Family Child Care Observation Questions (Continued)

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### *Diapering*

- ✓ If diapering was observed, did staff do all of the following when changing diapers?
  - Before bringing the child to the diaper-changing area, washed hands and brought supplies to the diaper-changing area
  - Always kept a hand on the child
  - Cleaned the child's diaper area
  - If wearing gloves, changed gloves prior to putting on clean diaper
  - Washed the child's hands and returned the child to a supervised area
  - Cleaned and disinfected the diaper-changing surface
  - Washed hands

### *Proper Handling of Breast Milk*

- ✓ Are any children currently on breast milk or formula?
- ✓ Is breast milk properly refrigerated and all containers labeled with the child's full name and the date the breast milk was collected?
- ✓ Is frozen breast milk defrosted in the refrigerator?
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### *Medication Management*

- ✓ Are any children currently receiving medications?
- ✓ Are over-the-counter medications in original containers, and does the program have written orders from a physician that includes dosage and length of time to administer the medication?
- ✓ Are non-emergency medications stored under lock and key?
- ✓ If children are currently receiving medication, compare labeling with information noted on the Medication Administration Log. Are all medications given as prescribed?
- ✓ Are prescribed medications in original containers with original prescription labels?
- ✓ Are all medications within their dates of expiration?



## Family Child Care Observation Questions (Continued)

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### *FCC Group Ratio*

- ✓ What age group does the FCC Provider serve?
- ✓ How many children are currently present in the group?
- ✓ Is there an assistant present?
- ✓ How many children under 2 years of age are present in the group?
- ✓ How many children under 18 months are currently present in the group?

### *Safe Outdoor Play Areas*

- ✓ Are outdoor play areas arranged so adults can see children and effectively supervise to prevent children from leaving and/or getting into unsafe areas?
- ✓ Is there a fence to prevent children's unsupervised access to all water hazards, such as swimming pools or other bodies of water?

### *Supervision*

- ✓ Are staff within arm's reach of children sitting in a high chair or on a changing table and holding any children who are bottle-feeding?
- ✓ Are all on-duty staff supervising and engaging with children in a way that ensures the children's safety?
- ✓ Did you observe an instance in which a child or children were unsupervised?
- ✓ Are clear systems in place to account for the whereabouts of each child (e.g., attendance logs and sign-in/out sheets, routine head counts)?
- ✓ Is a system in place to ensure the safety of any child not within view of the provider for any period (e.g., the provider needs to use the bathroom, or an infant is napping in one room while toddlers play in another room)?
- ✓ Does the provider ensure all children are supervised and within sight and reach when a body of water, road, or other potential hazard is present or when children are being transported?

### *Positive Guidance*

- ✓ Did staff use positive child guidance when responding to undesired child behavior rather than corporal punishment, emotional or physical abuse, unnecessary restraint, humiliation, isolation, or denial of food, water, or bathroom privileges?