



BrightStars Program Self-Assessment

A program self-assessment is a comprehensive evaluation of a program's strengths and weaknesses as observed by those working within or in partnership with the program.

A child care program self-assessment typically involves gathering information about different aspects of the program's environment and pedagogical practice. BrightStars requires programs to self-assess six different areas: indoor and outdoor space; health and safety practices; learning context; curriculum; family communication and involvement; cultural and linguistic competence and respect for diversity.

Child care programs may choose to complete a formal self-assessment, in which a standardized tool is used to evaluate the program. Or programs may use an informal self-assessment, in which no standardized tool is used but program staff observe and evaluate different aspects of the program and compile a summary of their observations.

Self-assessments are unique to each program. There is no single format or single method that programs must use. BrightStars understands that many programs will have questions about this requirement, and so has developed this document to assist providers in completing their self-assessment. In addition, BrightStars has compiled a list of resources related to assessment and evaluation that providers may find helpful (see *BrightStars Quality Improvement Guide* for a list of these resources).

How Does a Program Self-Assessment Relate to Other Documents Required by BrightStars?

The goal of BrightStars is to help child care providers learn about best practices in early learning and apply them to the care children receive. Programs applying for a BrightStars rating of 2 Stars or higher are required to submit a self-assessment summary. In this manner programs are able to independently gather information they need in order to consider possible improvements to their program. A comprehensive self-assessment is one of the first steps in program quality improvement. The information gathered through a self-assessment helps inform the program's Quality Improvement Plan, which is submitted 90 days after a program receives a star rating. The Quality Improvement Plan is monitored and updated annually.

Suggestions and Ideas to Guide Program Self-Assessment

Initial Questions

- ❖ When will the assessment occur?
- ❖ Who should be involved in the self-assessment process?
- ❖ What tools will be used to collect and document program information?
- ❖ How will the information be analyzed?
- ❖ What will be done with the information that is collected?
- ❖ Does the program have any goals for improving, changing or adapting any part of the program? How are these plans documented and monitored?

Things to Include in the Self-Assessment

- ❖ Date
- ❖ Introduction (including how information was collected)
- ❖ An assessment summary of the following areas is **required** by BrightStars: Indoor and Outdoor Space, Health and Safety Practices, Learning Context, Curriculum, Family Communication and Involvement, Cultural/Linguistic Competence and Respect for Diversity. Other areas can be included at the program's discretion.
- ❖ Strengths and areas for growth in each of the above areas.

Sample Guiding Questions

Indoor and Outdoor Space

- Is space large enough to accommodate child care children, adults, and furnishings? Are any spaces crowded or inaccessible?
- Is there adequate lighting and ventilation?
- Are any major repairs needed indoors, outdoors, to furniture or play equipment?
- Are there any safety hazards observed indoors or outdoors? Are there any improvements or changes you would make to these spaces?

Health and Safety Practices

- Does the program have any policies for promoting good health practices among children and staff?
- What provisions does the program have for handling emergencies?
- Should any improvements or changes be made to protect children's health and safety?

Learning Context¹

- What types of play materials does the program make accessible to children? Are the materials used with children safe and developmentally appropriate?
- What types of activities are used in the program to promote learning and development?
- Is the learning context inclusive of children with disabilities and diverse language learners?

Curriculum

- Does the program use a written curriculum?
- Is the curriculum developmentally appropriate for each age group enrolled?
- Does the preschool curriculum include components of the RI Early Learning Standards? How?

Family Communication and Involvement

- Does the program do any activities to promote family involvement? What are they?
- What types of resources are available to parents of children in the program?
- What is the program's policy or practice in communicating with families?
- Are families involved in setting goals for their child's learning and development?

Cultural/Linguistic Competence and Respect for Diversity

- Do program materials and activities reflect and promote diversity in race, culture, gender, abilities, and age?
- How does the program support children who are diverse language learners and children with special needs?
- Does the program welcome and support families from diverse backgrounds? How so?

¹ Learning context is the materials, routines, and activities that promote play and learning.

Program Self-Assessment Summary

SAMPLE ITEM

(The following is an example of parts of a program self-assessment. It does not represent a complete self-assessment.)

Program Name: _____

1. Date of Self-Assessment

The program self-assessment was conducted from August – October 2009.

2. Introduction

The program completed an informal self-assessment as part of our annual planning. The program used information from staff and parent observations, meetings, and surveys for the majority of measurement. DCYF regulations, RI Early Standards and Environment Rating Scales were also consulted for the self-assessment. Information collected in the self-assessment was analyzed for use in program planning and developing a long-term quality improvement plan.

3. Indoor and Outdoor Space

Staff observations, meetings, and parent evaluations were used to assess this area. Our indoor space requires more chairs for the children and staff to sit on during meals and activities. The diapering surface is ripped and needs to be replaced. Outdoors, the sandbox needs to be refilled and kept covered. Mulch should be added under the gross motor equipment. Program strengths include ample indoor space, convenient room for storage, and a variety of gross motor equipment.

4. Health and Safety Practices

DCYF regulations, Environment Rating Scales, and staff observations were used to assess this area. We found that our table washing and diapering procedures need to be corrected, and handwashing needs to be more diligent. Also need to make sure cords and outlets are not accessible to the children. Program strengths include regular evacuation drills (practiced more than required by licensing) and all staff are certified in CPR.

Resources:

- Harms, T., Clifford, R. & Cryer, D. 2005, *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-Revised Edition*, Teacher's College Press, New York. www.fpg.unc.edu/~ECERS
- NAEYC Accreditation of Programs for Young Children, <http://www.naeyc.org/academy/>
- RI Department of Education Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Programs, http://www.ride.ri.gov/Special_Populations/earlychild/