

The New NAEYC Early Childhood Program Accreditation



The new NAEYC accreditation process is challenging! It takes time and effort, and at times, it seems overwhelming! The changes have raised the bar, setting even higher expectations than before, but the changes will make NAEYC Accreditation an even stronger mark of quality in early childhood education. Programs that have achieved NAEYC Accreditation have created a stronger and more committed team of teachers, administrators, and families working together to improve the quality of their program! NAEYC Accreditation draws more families, employers, and others to their programs.

CCK staff are still learning the new process but we have some tips for you. Programs should plan plenty of time to work through the four steps and the tasks necessary for each step. The steps include:

Enrollment: This step is the self study process, an invitation to tell your story. The self study provides a systematic approach to help all who are involved in the program to consider the current strengths and identify areas needing improvement. Visit the “self study” page on the NAEYC website (www.naeyc.org/selfstudy) to post questions, check for answers, or join a chat where people are simultaneously discussing a topic or step that you too are working on.

Application: Programs engage in a collaborative process to formally assess all aspects of their program using the tools built around the Accreditation Criteria to complete a formal assessment report. Programs gather evidence of their performance on each standard-considering information such as classroom and program observations, surveys of families and staff, written documentation, samples of lesson or activity plans, samples of children’s work, and administrative documents.

Candidacy: The program submits documentation in the form of the self assessment report. Administration, teaching staff and a majority of its families should agree that the program meets each of the 10 NAEYC Early childhood Program Standards and that it can demonstrate satisfactory performance of at least 80 percent of the Accreditation Criteria before submitting. The report is used by NAEYC Academy to assess its readiness for an on-site independent assessment.

Accreditation Decision: An on-site assessment is conducted by one or more assessors, individuals who are trained to measure program quality reliability using the new assessment process. This assessment samples specific criteria through direct observations and reviews of classroom and program portfolios as evidence assembled by the programs during its self study and self assessment process.

The results of the on-site assessment are then used by the NAEYC Academy to determine the accreditation decision. Programs awarded NAEYC accredited will be nationally recognized with the mark of quality. NAEYC accreditation is valid for five years. It is sustained through annual reports, reports of program changes, and results of unannounced visits.

Programs maintaining accreditation under the new system (as well as those accredited under the old system) should visit the website to become familiar with the new standards and criteria. Look for the “emerging criteria” for updates and timelines. Keep in mind that as of September 16, 2006, **all programs** are covered under the new process and it’s policies. You will also find the new Annual Report online. Accessing your Annual Report online will make updating changes in your program easier and quicker! *(for those programs already accredited, remember that you have ninety days to inform NAEYC of program changes such as an addition of a classroom; change in license status; change in director, etc.)*

Another positive change is the expansion of the Accreditation Scholarship Program to include **all** programs. Both programs seeking accreditation for the first time and programs maintaining accreditation can apply for a scholarship. Visit www.naeyc.org for more information. *(Scholarship applications must be received by NAEYC sixty days prior to the programs payment due date.)*

There is a lot of work involved in seeking NAEYC Accreditation but it is an exciting and rewarding process. CCK staff are available provide you with more information and support! **To find out more contact Pamela Smith, Accreditation Specialist at 617-471-6473 ext. 102 or psmith@qcap.org.**