

# Standard 9: NAEYC Accreditation Criteria for Physical Environment

## Standard

**Program Standard:** The program has a safe and healthful environment that provides appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical environments. The environment includes facilities, equipment, and materials to facilitate child and staff learning and development.

**Rationale:** The program's design and maintenance of its physical environment support high-quality program activities and services as well as allow for optimal use and operation. Well-organized, equipped, and maintained environments support program quality by fostering the learning, comfort, health, and safety of those who use the program. Program quality is enhanced by also creating a welcoming and accessible setting for children, families, and staff.

### 9.A. Indoor and Outdoor Equipment, Materials, and Furnishings

#### 9.A.01 U I T P K

The following furnishings are available:

- equipment and furnishings for diaper changing and changing soiled underwear or other clothing that are located away from food preparation areas;
- hand-washing sinks within arm's length of diaper changing tables;
- a chair with a back and a seating height that allows the child to sit with his or her feet on the floor or ground (for each child over the age of one year);
- tables at a height that allows a child to sit comfortably with the table between underarm and waist;
- at least one cot, crib, mat, sleeping bag, or pad for each child who spends more than four hours a day in the program (no child is allowed to sleep on the floor without using rest equipment);
- at least one cot or mat with a blanket for an ill child;
- adaptations that allow children with disabilities and other special needs to fully participate in the program's activities; and
- A solid barrier or at least three-foot spacing that separates sleeping children from one another. (This indicator only is considered an Emerging Practice.)

#### 9.A.02 U I T P K

Individual space is provided for each child's belongings.

#### 9.A.03 U I T P K

Non-disposable materials are durable and in good repair. Equipment, materials, and furnishings are available that provide access for children with disabilities to the program's curriculum and activities.

#### 9.A.04 U I T P K

A variety of age- and developmentally appropriate materials and equipment are available indoors and outdoors for children throughout the day. This equipment includes

- dramatic play equipment;
- sensory materials such as sand, water, play dough, paint, and blocks;
- materials that support curriculum goals and objectives in literacy, math, science, social studies, and other content areas; and
- gross-motor equipment for activities such as pulling up; walking; climbing in, on, and over; moving through, around, and under; pushing; pulling; and riding.

9.A.05

U I T P K

The indoor environment is designed so staff can supervise children by sight and sound at all times without relying on artificial monitoring devices. In semiprivate areas, it is always possible for both children and adults to be observed by an adult from outside the area.

9.A.06

U I T P K

When climbers, climbing gyms, slides, and other play units are part of the indoor environment, the program provides safety surfacing that is rated and installed in the fall zone as recommended by the manufacturer for the fall height of the play equipment. Furnishings such as lofts are constructed to prevent falls (e.g., with appropriate barriers), or safety surfacing is installed in the fall zone.

9.A.07

U I T P K

Staff organize and group materials on low, open shelves to encourage children to use them independently. Staff rotate and adapt materials to promote learning and extend children's play opportunities.

9.A.08

U I T P K

Materials and equipment that facilitate focused individual play or play with peers are available in sufficient quantities to occupy each child in activities that meet his or her interests.

9.A.09

U I T P K

Program staff arrange the environment to be welcoming and accessible. A welcoming and accessible environment contains elements such as

- multicultural materials that promote appreciation for diversity while being respectful of the cultural traditions, values, and beliefs of families being served;
- clearly defined places where families can gather information regarding the daily schedule and upcoming events;
- clearly defined places where families sign in, sign out, and gather information about their child's day;
- places for displaying children's work; and
- features that moderate visual and auditory stimulation.

9.A.10

U I T P K

The indoor environment includes washable, soft elements that allow groups of children or adults and children to sit in close proximity for conversations or comforting.

9.A.11

U I T P K

Clear pathways are available for children to move from one area to another without disturbing other children's work and play.

9.A.12

U I T P K

Indoor space is designed and arranged to

- accommodate children individually, in small groups, and in a large group.
- divide space into areas that are supplied with materials organized in a manner to support children's play and learning.
- provide semiprivate areas where children can play or work alone or with a friend.
- provide children with disabilities full access (making adaptations as necessary) to the curriculum and activities in the indoor space.

9.A.13

U I T P K

Staff select and use materials, equipment, and furnishings to support the curriculum, meet program goals, and foster the achievement of desired outcomes for children. Adults have a comfortable place to sit, hold, and feed infants. Staff

place rocking chairs and glider chairs in locations that will avoid injury to children who may be on the floor. Nursing mothers have a place to breast-feed their children that meets their needs for comfort and privacy.

## **9.B. Outdoor Environmental Design**

### 9.B.01 U I T P K

Outdoor play areas, designed with equipment that is age and developmentally appropriate and that is located in clearly defined spaces with semiprivate areas where children can play alone or with a friend, accommodate

- motor experiences such as running, climbing, balancing, riding, jumping, crawling, scooting or swinging.
- activities such as dramatic play, block building, manipulative play, or art activities.
- exploration of the natural environment, including a variety of natural and manufactured surfaces, and areas with natural materials such as nonpoisonous plants, shrubs, and trees.

### 9.B.02 U I T P K

The program makes adaptations so children with disabilities can fully participate in the outdoor curriculum and activities.

### 9.B.03 U I T P K

Program staff provide an outdoor play area that is protected by fences or by natural barriers to prevent access to streets and to avoid other dangers, such as pits, water hazards, or wells.

### 9.B.04 U I T P K

The outdoor play area is arranged so that staff can supervise children by sight and sound. The program provides at least 75 square feet of outside play space for each child playing outside at any one time. The total amount of required play space is based on a maximum of one-third of the total center enrollment being outside at one time.

### 9.B.05 U I T P K

Sandboxes that are part of a program facility are constructed to allow for drainage, are covered when not in use, and are cleaned of foreign matter on a regular basis. Staff replace sand as often as necessary to keep the sand clean.

### 9.B.06 U I T P K

The outdoor play area protects children from

- injury from falls (resilient surfacing should extend six feet beyond the limits of stationary equipment).
- catch points, sharp points, and protruding hardware.
- entrapment (openings should measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches).
- tripping hazards.
- excessive wind and direct sunlight.

### 9.B.07 U I T P K

The findings of an assessment by a Certified Playground Safety Inspector are documented and available on-site. The assessment documents

- that play equipment is safe, protecting against death or permanently disabling injury for children from two years through kindergarten.
- that, through remedial action, the program has corrected any unsafe conditions, where applicable.
- that an inspection and maintenance program has been established and is performed on a regular basis to ensure ongoing safety.
- that the outdoor play area accommodates abilities, needs, and interests of each age group the program serves.

(This criterion is an Emerging Practice.)

## 9.C. Building and Physical Design

### 9.C.01 U I T P K

There is a minimum of 35 square feet of usable space per child in each of the primary indoor activity areas. (The primary activity area does not include diaper stations, cribs, large structures that cannot be removed or moved aside easily, toilets, any sick-child area, staff rooms, corridors, hallways, stairways, closets, lockers or cubbies, laundry rooms, janitor rooms, furnace rooms, storage areas, and built-in shelving. Specialty areas such as computer rooms, reading rooms, and lunchrooms, where children are expected to remain seated for short periods of time may be excluded from the minimum space requirement.)

### 9.C.02 U I T P K

The work environment for staff, including classrooms and staff rooms, is comfortable and clean and is in good repair. The work environment includes a place for adults to take a break from children; an adult-sized bathroom; a secure place for staff to store their personal belongings; and an administrative area for planning or preparing materials that is separated from the children's areas.

### 9.C.03 U I T P K

Facilities meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements. Accessibility includes access to buildings, toilets, sinks, drinking fountains, outdoor play space, and all classroom and therapy areas.

### 9.C.04 U I T P K

The program provides children who attend for more than two hours at a time natural light in at least some of the indoor areas occupied during the course of the day.

### 9.C.05 U I T P K

Toilets, drinking water, and hand-washing facilities are within 40 feet of the indoor areas that children use. The hand-washing sinks are accessible to staff and children (step stools are available if needed).

### 9.C.06 U I T P K

The routine frequency of cleaning and sanitation in the facility is carried out as indicated in the Cleaning and Sanitation Frequency Table on p. 51. Staff clean and sanitize toilet seats, toilet handles, toilet bowls, doorknobs, or cubicle handles and floors either daily or immediately if visibly soiled. Staff clean and sanitize potty chairs, if in use, after each child's use.

### 9.C.07 U I T P K

The building is well maintained:

- Walls, floors, furnishings, the outdoor play area, and equipment are kept in good repair and are safe, with no sharp edges, splinters, protruding or rusty nails, or missing parts.
- All areas, both indoors and outdoors, are free from glass, trash, sharp or hazardous items, and visible soil, and are in a clean condition.
- Staff observe all areas of the facility, both indoors and outdoors, and take steps to correct or avoid unsafe conditions.

### 9.C.08 U I T P K

Program staff protect children and adults from hazards, including electrical shock, burns or scalding, slipping, tripping, or falling. Floor coverings are secured to keep staff and children from tripping or slipping. The program excludes baby walkers.

### 9.C.09 U I T P K

Program staff make sure that stairwells and corridors are well lighted. There is emergency lighting with unobstructed and visible paths for entering and exiting as well as clearly marked regular and emergency exits.

9.C.10 U I T P K  
Fully equipped first-aid kits are readily available and maintained for each group of children. Staff take at least one kit to the outdoor play areas as well as on field trips and outings away from the site.

9.C.11 U I T P K  
Fully working fire extinguishers and fire alarms are installed in each classroom and are tagged and serviced annually. Fully working carbon monoxide detectors are installed in each classroom and are tagged and serviced annually. Smoke detectors, fire alarms and carbon monoxide detectors are tested monthly, and a written log of testing dates and battery changes is maintained and available.

9.C.12 U I T P K  
Any body of water, including swimming pools, built-in wading pools, ponds, and irrigation ditches, is enclosed by a fence at least four feet in height, with any gates childproofed to prevent entry by unattended children. To prevent drowning accidents, staff supervise all children by sight and sound in all areas with access to water in tubs, pails, and water tables.

9.C.13 U I T P K  
Areas that have been recently painted, carpeted, tiled, or otherwise renovated are ventilated before they are used by children.

9.C.14 U I T P K  
Vehicles that programs use are held to school bus standards or are multifunction school activity buses. These vehicles are labeled with the program's name and phone number. Program vehicle maintenance is performed according to manufacturers' recommended maintenance schedule. Documentation of maintenance is available on-site for each vehicle, showing date of regular and at least quarterly inspections and preventative maintenance. Staff carry out daily pre-trip inspections of vehicles and correct any unsafe conditions, including unsatisfactory air pressure in tires.

9.C.15 U I T P K  
Staff use vehicles and approved child and adult safety-restraint devices in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions, and they use the restraints at all times when transporting children.

9.C.16 I T  
Program staff identify choking hazards and remove them from the proximity and reach of infants and toddlers/twos.

9.C.17 U I T P K  
Bathrooms have barriers to prevent entry by unattended infants and toddlers/twos.

## **9.D Environmental Health**

9.D.01 U I T P K  
Documentary evidence, available on site, indicates that the building has been assessed for lead, radon, radiation, asbestos, fiberglass, or any other hazard from friable material. Evidence exists that the program has taken remedial or containment action to prevent exposure to children and adults if warranted by the assessment.

9.D.02 U I T P K  
When the water supply source is a well or other private source (i.e., not served by a public supply), on-site documentary evidence verifies that the local regulatory health authority has determined the water to be safe for human consumption.

9.D.03 U I T P K  
Program staff protect children and adults from exposure to high levels of air pollution from smog or heavy traffic by limiting outdoor and physical activity as a precaution during smog or other air pollution alerts.

9.D.04 U I T P K  
The program has taken measures in all rooms occupied by children to control noise levels so normal conversation can be heard without raising one's voice.

9.D.05 U I T P K  
All rooms that children use are heated, cooled, and ventilated to maintain room temperature and humidity level. The maintenance staff or contractor certifies that facility systems are maintained in compliance with national standards for facility use by children.

9.D.06 U I T P K  
The facility and outdoor play areas are entirely smoke free. No smoking is permitted in the presence of children.

9.D.07 U I T P K  
Areas used by staff or children who have allergies to dust mites or to components of furnishings or supplies are maintained by the program according to the recommendations of health professionals.

9.D.08 U I T P K  
The program maintains facilities so they are free from harmful animals, insect pests, and poisonous plants. Pesticides and herbicides, if used, are applied according to the manufacturer's instructions when children are not at the facility and in a manner that prevents skin contact, inhalation, and other exposure to children. The program uses the techniques known as Integrated Pest Management (IPM) so the least hazardous means are used to control pests and unwanted vegetation.

9.D.09 U I T P K  
Toxic substances (used only as directed by the manufacturer) are stored in original labeled container and kept in a locked room or cabinet, inaccessible to children, and away from medications and foods. Matches and lighters are not accessible, and gasoline and other flammable materials are stored (when needed) in a separate building.