



National Association for the
Education of Young Children

Early Learning Program

Quality Assessment and Accreditation Policy Handbook

February 2025

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ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Programs eligible to obtain or retain NAEYC's Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation must be

- Serving children between the ages of 0–8 (infants, toddler/twos, preschoolers, and/or kindergartners).
- Located in the United States or its territories, unless affiliated with US Department of Defense schools and child development centers/programs.
- Willing to meet and demonstrate that they consistently meet each of the NAEYC Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation Standards.
- Regulated by the appropriate licensing or regulatory body unless legally prohibited from doing so. Appropriate licensing bodies are generally state licensing agencies. Appropriate regulatory bodies refer to other public agencies such as a board of education or the US military.
 - Programs that are not regulated by a public agency and are not legally prohibited from obtaining a state license must document that they have taken steps to obtain a state license. It is not necessary for the licensing process to be completed by the state before the program is eligible to apply for NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation.
 - Programs that are not regulated by a public agency and are legally prohibited from obtaining a state license must voluntarily comply with their state licensing requirements. The program must verify the following to demonstrate that they voluntarily comply with their state licensing requirements:
 - The program administrator has reviewed the state's licensing requirements.
 - The board chair, president, or owner of the program has reviewed the state's licensing requirements.
 - The program is voluntarily in compliance with the state's licensing requirements.
 - Upon registration of children in the program, families are provided with a copy of the state's licensing requirements and are informed that the program is voluntarily in compliance with the state's licensing requirements.
 - The program has documentation of fire and health inspections.
 - The program has completed a criminal background check on all staff and has complied with state and federal laws concerning background checks.
 - The program employs no individual convicted of a crime involving sexual abuse, child abuse, or neglect.

School-Age Eligibility

The NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation content launched in 2025 includes assessment items that are applicable to infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergarten-age children. Programs are only eligible to include classrooms that serve these age groups full time in their

quality assessment and accreditation status. Programs that provide care to kindergarten- or school-age children before or after school or during school breaks are not eligible to have those classrooms included in their status. Classrooms that are not eligible should not be included in the program's profile within the Early Learning Hub.

GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

The NAEYC Governing Board has delegated authority to the Council on Accreditation of Early Learning Programs to create the standards and develop and uphold the policies and procedures associated with the accreditation system.

The Council on Accreditation of Early Learning Programs

Principal Functions

The principal functions of the Council are to exercise professional judgment in making decisions pertaining to accreditation and to set standards. The Council works with staff to develop guidance documents and data-gathering instruments necessary to carry out these functions.

Composition

The Council consists of not fewer than eight members, who serve staggered three-year terms. It is comprised of a diverse membership, including but not limited to program and/or organizational auspices, professional experience, gender, ethnicity, and geographic variation. Council members bring a demonstrated commitment to the aims of early childhood education; an understanding of the nature of early learning programs, policies, and procedures; and respect for the confidential, fair, and impartial nature of accreditation decisions. A chairperson and chair-elect are designated yearly.

Appointment of Council Members

Only NAEYC members can apply for Council appointments. The Council includes a Member Selection Subcommittee to oversee the application and selection process each year. NAEYC publicly solicits members to apply for Council positions and asks current Council members to help seek and/or nominate prospective members. Interested applicants supply resumes, which are reviewed by the Member Selection Subcommittee with the Director of Early Learning Program Accreditation. Selections are made to achieve continued diversity and balance of Council membership.

Conduct and Confidentiality

Council members abide by standards of personal conduct that help the Council function effectively by thoroughly preparing for each Council meeting; reviewing all program information provided; assessing information critically and fairly; and conducting themselves in a professional, objective, and fair manner. This includes maintaining confidentiality and refraining from conflicts of interest.

Early Learning Program Staff

Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation is managed by a team of individuals led by the Director of Early Learning Program Accreditation. The department includes three teams that each have a specific function in ensuring that the accreditation system (1) operates efficiently, (2) assesses quality in valid and reliable ways, and (3) offers support for programs. Early Learning Program staff analyze trends in both accreditation data and early childhood research to make recommendations for updates and improvements to the Council.

Communicating with Early Learning Program Accreditation Council and Staff

Programs and the public can contact the accreditation system and the Council on Accreditation of Early Learning Programs by emailing qualityassurance@naeyc.org or by mailing correspondence to

Council on Accreditation of Early Learning Programs
National Association for the Education of Young Children
1401 H St. NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005

PROCESSES

NAEYC's new Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation System provides a three-tiered engagement opportunity that offers a more equitable, accessible, and inclusive experience for early learning programs that are committed to quality.

- The **Recognition** tier is an on-ramp for programs interested in program quality. Content related to this tier will focus on identifying the key policy components and baseline practices upon which high-quality early learning experiences and environments can be built. There will be clearly defined pathways and fewer barriers to entry for programs that are interested in becoming accredited. The assessment process for Recognition will be entirely based on document review. Programs must first achieve Recognition to move forward to Accreditation.
- **Accreditation** is the second tier. The content has been streamlined to include fewer, but still meaningful and rigorous, assessment items. These include both document-based and observation-based assessment items. Additionally, programs will have new opportunities to uplift and highlight their unique characteristics. Like Recognition, a review of documentary evidence will be the basis upon which an Accreditation decision is initially granted. However, accredited programs will remain accountable for maintaining high-quality practices over time through ongoing quality assurance measures. These include unannounced random site visits.
- **Accreditation+** is the third tier. The content is the same as the Accreditation tier, but there are higher requirements for ongoing engagement with quality assurance, including a required site visit. Accredited+ programs are also subject to unannounced random site visits.

All documentation is submitted through the Early Learning Hub via an online survey application that is aligned to the evidence types across the assessment items, by tier. Programs submit evidence as appropriate for the assessment item and ages served. Review of documentation will take place ahead of any site visit; therefore, it will not occur while an assessor is onsite at the program.

Recognition and Accreditation statuses will be awarded based on documentation review alone. Programs that successfully achieve Accreditation status will be subject to random site visits, where they will be assessed for the tier's observation-based assessment items.

Accreditation+ will be awarded once a program has successfully completed its required site visit, during which it will be assessed for the Accreditation tier's observation-based assessment items. Accreditation+ programs will also be subject to random site visits, where they will be assessed for Accreditation observation-based assessment items.

Getting Started: Registration

Early learning programs that wish to engage in the Quality Assessment and Accreditation System must first register on the Early Learning Hub, available via the NAEYC Portal, a one-stop shop for all your business with NAEYC. Registration is free.

Registered programs will be able to immediately work toward Recognition, the first step in NAEYC's Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation journey. Programs should use the resources on NAEYC's website to become familiar with the Recognition assessment items, to complete a self-assessment, and to engage their staff. Once ready to apply for Recognition, a program will complete the Recognition application, uploading documentation and detailed descriptions for each assessment item.

Tier 1: Recognition

Programs that are interested in working toward Accreditation will begin by applying for Recognition, which includes 40 documentation-based assessment items. These demonstrate a foundation of policies and structures on which a quality care and learning environment can be built. After submitting the Recognition application, programs must pay the Recognition application fee. Recognition status is valid for one year, and programs must reapply each year if they wish to remain at the Recognition tier.

Applicants must meet the eligibility requirements to move forward with the process. Eligibility requirements are mandatory conditions throughout the term of engagement.

When ready to apply for Recognition, the program will submit its documentation for review and scoring and will be required to pay the Recognition application fee. Programs will be notified of the decision of the Recognition application. Programs are awarded a Recognition term of one year. Programs can immediately begin working toward Accreditation.

If a program receives a "Deferred" decision after the initial Recognition application submission, the program can refine documentation and resubmit one time for reconsideration. Programs have 30 days following the deferral to resubmit documentation. Once documentation is submitted, the

program will receive an updated decision. If the program receives a deferral after the second submission, it is unable to submit documentation again and must resubmit the Recognition application and Recognition application fee to proceed.

If a program wishes to remain at Recognition, the Recognition application should be reviewed, updated, and submitted each year. Once the application has been scored, the program will receive a new Recognition term of one year and will be expected to pay the Recognition annual fee.

Initial Recognition Application Process



Tier 2: Accreditation

When ready to apply for Accreditation, programs will complete the Accreditation application, submitting their documentation for review and scoring for all Accreditation document-based assessment items. After submitting the Accreditation application, programs must pay the Accreditation application fee. After the Accreditation application fee has been paid, the Accreditation application will be reviewed and scored by an assessor.

If a program receives a “Deferred” decision after the application submission, it can refine its documentation and resubmit one time for reconsideration. Programs have 30 days following the deferral to resubmit documentation. Once documentation is submitted, the program will receive an updated decision. If the program receives a deferral after the second submission, it is unable to submit documentation again and must resubmit the Accreditation application and Accreditation application fee to proceed. Programs that have been deferred remain at Recognition status through their current term.

If successful, programs are accredited for a five-year term. Once Accreditation is awarded, programs can immediately request to be upgraded to Accreditation+.

Accredited programs are subject to random visits throughout the five-year term. When a program is selected for a random visit, there will be no notification sent to the program ahead of the visit. During a random visit, programs will be assessed on the Accreditation observation-based assessment items. If a program receives a “Deferred” decision following a site visit, the program will be regressed to “Recognition” immediately and will have 30 days after the decision is processed to appeal the decision.

Initial Accreditation Application Process



Tier 3: Accreditation+

When an upgrade to Accreditation+ has been selected, programs are expected to pay the Accreditation+ site visit fee. Once the fee has been paid, the program will be added to the queue for a site visit, where the program will be assessed on the Accreditation observation-based assessment items. Programs will receive a six-month window for their site visits.

Once the site visit is completed, the program will receive a decision report. If successful, programs are Accredited+ for a five-year term.

If a program receives a “Deferred” decision following a site visit, the program will be regressed to “Recognition” immediately and will have 30 days after the decision is processed to submit an appeal. If the appeal is unsuccessful, the program will need to reapply for Accreditation.

Accredited+ programs are subject to random visits throughout the five-year term. When a program is selected for a random visit, there will be no notification sent to the program ahead of the visit. During a random visit, programs will be assessed on the Accreditation observation-based assessment items. If a program receives a deferral decision following a site visit, it will be immediately regressed to “Recognition” and will have 30 days after the decision to submit an appeal.

If a program wishes to move to a lower tier, they can choose to do so at renewal via the Early Learning Hub or by contacting the NAEYC Support Team.

Initial Accreditation+ Application Process



Application Terms & Conditions

When applying for Recognition and Accreditation, programs must agree to the terms and conditions within the application to move forward.

Recognition Terms & Conditions

- This program has submitted documented evidence of meeting the current Recognition Tier Document-Based Assessment Items, which are available on the NAEYC website.
- The information submitted is true and accurate. False or misleading information may result in the cessation of the application review and/or revocation of the program’s recognition status.
- This program has uploaded evidence that is specific to the location and no generative artificial intelligence (AI) was used in creation of responses.
- This program’s information within the Early Learning Hub is up to date.

- If applicable, this program will continue to use data from its most recent Decision Report, annual comprehensive program evaluation and other sources to improve its quality.
- This program agrees to access and use resources provided by NAEYC and/or other sources the program deems credible to support ongoing quality improvement efforts.
- A Recognized Program shall be responsible for paying all annual fees.
- By participating in this Early Learning Program recognition process, the information provided may be used anonymously to analyze program trends and improve our services. Program data may be shared with third parties in accordance with current policies and procedures for data requests and defined data use agreements.
- NAEYC may notify programs when there are identified opportunities to participate in potential research activities. The program's choice to participate or not to participate in such research activities is completely voluntary and has no bearing on the recognition status obtained by the program.
- I understand that my submission does not guarantee that the program will be awarded Recognition Accreditation status.

Accreditation Terms & Conditions

- This program has submitted documented evidence of meeting the current Accreditation Tier Document-Based Assessment Items, which are available on the NAEYC website.
- The information submitted is true and accurate. False or misleading information may result in the cessation of the application review and/or revocation of the program's accreditation status.
- This program has uploaded evidence that is specific to the location and no generative artificial intelligence (AI) was used in creation of responses.
- I acknowledge and agree that all observation-based assessment items are to be implemented and always practiced as part of ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and quality assurance standards, including but not limited to in connection with this application.
- I acknowledge and agree that NAEYC authorized representatives are permitted to conduct site visits at my program at any time, without prior notice, and for any purpose related to evaluation of observation-based assessment items.
- This program's information within the Early Learning Hub is up to date.
- This program will continue to use any applicable data from its most recent Decision Report, annual comprehensive program evaluation and other sources to improve its quality.
- This program will continue to access and use resources provided by NAEYC and/or other sources the program deems credible to support ongoing quality improvement efforts.
- An Accredited Program shall be responsible for paying all annual fees.
- By participating in this Early Learning Program accreditation, the information provided may be used anonymously to analyze program trends and improve our services. Program data may be shared with third-parties in accordance with current policies and procedures for [data requests and defined data use agreements](#).
- NAEYC may notify programs when there are identified opportunities to participate in potential research activities. The program's choice to participate or not to participate in

such research activities is completely voluntary and has no bearing on the accreditation status obtained by the program.

- I understand that my submission does not guarantee that the program will be awarded Accreditation status.

Scoring and Administrative Review of Decisions

Applications and site visits are computer-scored according to scoring algorithms that ensure consistency in the evaluation process. However, the integrity of a score can also depend upon the accurate execution of the assessment and evaluation protocols. Therefore, all application and site visit decisions go through a process of administrative review prior to finalization of the scoring decision. Administrative review is conducted to ensure that the integrity of the data is accurate and that no technical issues occurred upon receipt of the data. This review includes

- Verifying that the correct application and assessment items have been received and that the age categories the program serves are aligned to data collection
- Verifying that no significant data loss has occurred that would jeopardize the validity of the scoring
- Verifying that if any required assessment items are listed as “not met,” there is a detailed description of evidence for the failed item
- Reviewing assessor and administrator evaluations of the visit to ensure no unexpected circumstances affected the quality of the visit

More in-depth administrative reviews may be conducted when there is reason to believe the integrity of the collected data or execution of the relevant protocols may adversely affect the accreditation decision. In such circumstances, the following elements are reviewed more closely:

- Verifying that the random sampling of classrooms for assessment is consistent with written protocols
- Ensuring that the assessor allotted the prescribed time for the observation assessment
- Confirming that assessor rating notes support the item ratings

If an administrative review reveals a substantial failure to follow protocol or some other circumstance that may have affected the program’s decision outcome, the Council for Accreditation may order a revisit at NAEYC’s expense.

Decision Definitions

Recognition and Accreditation decisions are not always issued as the result of a document-based or observation-based assessment. They can also be issued for operational reasons or following a quality assurance process. The following definitions can be given to programs:

Recognized: A decision of “Recognized” indicates that the program has demonstrated through documentation review that it

- Meets 100 percent of all required items
- Meets 80 percent of overall items

A decision of “Recognized” is valid for one year, provided the program remains compliant with other terms and conditions of Recognition, including eligibility requirements.

Accredited: A decision of “Accredited” indicates that the program has demonstrated through documentation review that it

- Meets 100 percent of all required items
- Meets 80 percent of overall document-based items
- Meets 70 percent of overall observation-based items in all classrooms observed

A decision of “Accredited” is valid for five years, provided the program remains compliant with other terms and conditions of Accreditation, including eligibility requirements and other applicable quality assurance requirements, including adhering to random site visits at any time throughout the five-year term.

Accredited+: A decision of “Accredited+” indicates that the program has demonstrated through observation-based assessment that it

- Meets 100 percent of all required items
- Meets 80 percent of overall document-based items
- Meets 70 percent of overall observation-based items in all classrooms observed

A decision of “Accredited+” is valid for five years, provided the program remains compliant with other terms and conditions of Accreditation+, including eligibility requirements and other applicable quality assurance requirements, including adhering to random site visits at any time throughout the five-year term.

Deferred: A “Deferred” decision indicates that a program’s assessment did not meet the threshold to successfully achieve the identified tier.

For “Deferred” decisions based on a document-based assessment, programs will have the opportunity to review the assessor feedback and resubmit the documentation and information. A “Deferred” decision is final if received after the resubmission. The program’s status will be regressed to “Recognition” after the 30-day appeal window.

When a program is deferred from an observation-based assessment during a site visit, the program’s status will be regressed to “Recognition” after the 30-day appeal window. The program can immediately apply for Accreditation again by completing the Accreditation application and paying the Accreditation application fee.

If a program receives a “Deferred” decision because it did not meet any required item that is required for Recognition, the program will be regressed to “Registered.”

Notification of Decisions

For Recognition or Accreditation application submissions, the decision report is available via the Early Learning Hub, *typically* within 90 days.

For site visits, the decision report is available via the Early Learning Hub, *typically* within 45 days.

Decision Effective Dates

The effective date of a decision is located on the program’s Early Learning Hub home page and on the program’s decision report. Due dates for program submission of annual reports and fees are set according to the effective date of the most recent decision.

The effective date of a “Deferred” decision is immediate after the program receives notification of the decision. The program will be able to appeal the decision via the portal for 30 days following the decision.

The effective date of an “Expired” decision is the last day of the program’s current term.

Maintaining Status

Once a program has achieved Recognition, Accreditation, or Accreditation+ status, there are policies and procedures it must follow to maintain its status in good standing. These requirements provide NAEYC with up-to-date information and increase the accountability and integrity of the system.

Recognition

To maintain good standing in Recognition status, programs must continually meet the following requirements:

- **Maintain eligibility requirements.** [See eligibility requirement section.](#)
- **Continue to meet the Recognition-specific assessment items.**
- **72-hour notifications** are required any time the program’s license or regulatory status has changed. Within 72 hours of occurrence, the program must report any changes or issues through the Early Learning Hub by selecting the “Incident Report” option. NAEYC Quality Assurance staff will contact the program to follow up. [See the 72-hour notification section.](#)

Note: Programs must complete the Recognition application and pay the Recognition application fee every year to remain at Recognition status.

Accreditation and Accreditation+

To maintain good standing in Accreditation or Accreditation+ status, programs must continually meet the following requirements:

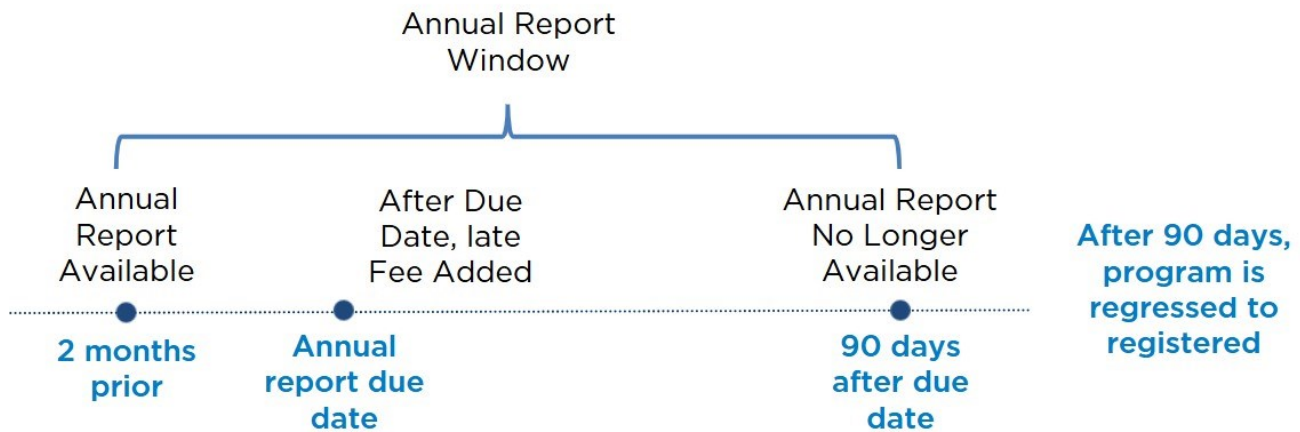
- **Maintain eligibility requirements.** [See eligibility requirement section.](#)
- **Continue to meet the Accreditation-specific assessment items.**
- **Annual reports** are due on the first, second, third, and fourth anniversaries of a program’s accreditation. They are completed by the program through the Early Learning Hub or as otherwise directed by NAEYC.
- **Annual fees** are due yearly to maintain Accreditation or Accreditation+ status. The first annual report and fee are due one year after Accreditation is awarded and are due every year after that as long as the program wishes to remain accredited, submits renewal documentation, and meets all Accreditation or Accreditation+ requirements.

- **Updating NAEYC regarding program information.** An accredited program is required to inform NAEYC about all substantive programmatic changes throughout all five years of its accreditation term. Disruptions of operation and notifications of withdrawal must be reported within 30 days using forms found on the NAEYC website. NAEYC understands and appreciates that programmatic changes are routine and a healthy part of the continuous improvement process. Most of these changes will not impact the accreditation of the program. Substantive changes include, but are not limited to
 - Changes in the management, oversight, and/or administrative ownership home of the program
 - Changes in geographic setting, including moving the program to a new location or establishing a satellite location
 - Changes in the number of children and/or ages of children/classrooms served
 - Changes that affect compliance with Accreditation eligibility requirements
- **72-hour notifications** are required to maintain compliance with NAEYC’s few but important required practices, such as lapses in supervision, child abuse or injury, or license suspensions. Within 72 hours of occurrence, the program must report any occurrences through the Early Learning Hub by selecting the “Incident Report” option. NAEYC Quality Assurance staff will contact the program to follow up. [See the 72-hour notification section.](#)
- **Respond to complaints.** NAEYC staff may ask the program to respond to credible complaints received about the program.
- **Respond to verification requests** that NAEYC staff may make in relation to 72-hour notifications, credible complaints, and major self-reported program changes. To verify continued practices, NAEYC may request documentation or may require an additional verification site visit during the term of the program’s accreditation.
- **Submit to a random visit.** Unannounced observation visits to a subset of randomly selected programs are crucial to ensuring the credibility of the accreditation system. If a program is selected for a random visit, it must allow the visit to occur and meet visit scoring standards to remain accredited.

Annual Reports

All accredited programs are required to submit annual reports, due on the first, second, third, and fourth anniversaries of a program’s accreditation. Annual reports are available within the Early Learning Hub two months ahead of the annual report due date. Programs will be charged a late fee if the report is not submitted by the due date. The report will no longer be available to the program 90 days after the due date.

After submitting their annual reports, programs will be required to pay the annual fee. If the annual fee is not paid within 90 days of the annual report due date, the program will be regressed to “Registered” status.



Renewal

Recognition

Programs are required to reapply for Recognition status each year. Within two months of the Recognition valid-until date (VUD), the program will be able to submit the Recognition application and pay the Recognition fee. If the program is successfully awarded Recognition status, a new one-year term will be granted.

If a program receives a “Deferred” decision after the renewal Recognition application submission, the program can refine documentation and resubmit one time for reconsideration. Programs have 30 days following the deferral to resubmit documentation. Once documentation is submitted, the program will receive an updated decision. If the program receives a deferral after the second submission, it is unable to submit documentation again. The program will be regressed to “Registered” status and must resubmit the Recognition application and Recognition application fee to proceed.

Renewal Recognition Application Process



Accreditation/Accreditation+

Programs at Accreditation and Accreditation+ are required to complete the Accreditation application for renewal. Documentation must be submitted within the renewal window. The Renewal window starts one year prior to the VUD and ends six months before the VUD; therefore, programs have six months to submit their documentation.



Accreditation

Accredited programs working to renew must complete the Accreditation application, submitting their documentation for review and scoring for all Accreditation document-based assessment items. After submission of the Accreditation application, the documentation will be assessed and scored.

If a program receives a “Deferred” decision after the renewal submission, the program can refine documentation and resubmit one time for reconsideration. Programs have 30 days following the deferral to resubmit documentation. Once documentation is submitted, the program will receive an updated decision. If the program receives a deferral after the second submission, it is unable to submit documentation again and must resubmit the Accreditation application and Accreditation application fee to proceed. Programs that have been deferred remain at Recognition status through their current term.

If a passing score is received, the program must pay the Accreditation annual fee. Once the annual fee has been paid, the program will be extended for another five-year term. If the fee is not paid by the VUD, the program will be regressed to “Recognition” status.

Accredited programs are subject to random visits throughout the five-year term. During a random visit, programs will be assessed on the Accreditation observation-based assessment items. If a program receives a “Deferred” decision following a site visit, the program will be immediately regressed to “Recognition” and will have 30 days after the decision is processed to submit an appeal via the Early Learning Hub.

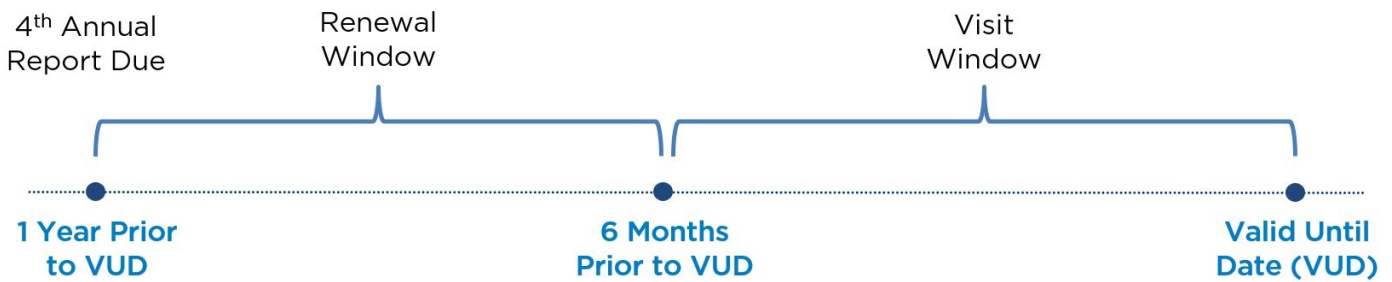
Renewal Accreditation Application Process



Accreditation+

Accredited+ programs working to renew will complete the Accreditation application, submitting their documentation for review and scoring for all Accreditation document-based assessment items. After the application has been assessed, the program will be notified of the results. If a program receives a “Deferred” decision after the renewal submission, it will have 30 days to resubmit documentation. Once documentation is submitted, the program will receive an updated decision.

If a passing score is received, the program will pay the Accreditation+ site visit fee. Once the fee has been paid, the program will be added to the queue for a site visit. The program will receive a six-month window. The program will receive a decision from the site visit typically within 90 days of the visit. After a successful site visit decision, the Accreditation+ annual fee is due. Once the annual fee has been paid, the VUD will be updated based on the new term.



Renewal Accreditation+ Application Process



POLICIES

Quality Assurance Policy

NAEYC's Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation System strives to be a standard bearer for high-quality early care and education programs. NAEYC has established procedures to ensure that its accredited programs maintain substantial compliance with current NAEYC early childhood program accreditation standards and critical practices during a program's five-year term of accreditation.

Critical practices are those related to the well-being and safety of children or the regulation of the program. They coincide with NAEYC's required assessment items relating to adequate child supervision, appropriate guidance practices, safe infant sleep, and licensing status.

Maintaining *substantial compliance* means a program does not experience adverse incidents related to critical practices of a scope and severity that calls into question its ability to ensure program quality on an ongoing basis.

NAEYC procedures for verification of continued compliance include:

- A requirement for programs to periodically confirm licensing/regulatory status
- A public feedback process for receiving reports of possible program noncompliance
- A requirement for programs to promptly report critical incidents (72-hour notification policy)
- NAEYC's formal program review process, in which a Scope and Severity Screen is applied to evaluate the extent of a possible program noncompliance and to determine consequences

Confirmation of Required Licensing/Regulatory Status

All NAEYC-accredited programs must maintain licensing or regulatory status as approved during the program's eligibility application for accreditation. A program must regularly provide NAEYC with information regarding its licensing or regulatory status at the application, site visit, annual report, and renewal periods and upon request.

If NAEYC determines that a program's licensing or regulatory status may not meet the eligibility requirement for accreditation, a program review process will be initiated. If it is determined that the program is not in good standing with state licensing, its NAEYC quality assessment and accreditation will be deferred.

72-Hour Notifications (Incident Reports)

NAEYC-recognized and -accredited programs are required to notify NAEYC within 72 hours of the occurrence of any of the following critical incidents:

- The death of any child
- Any suspected physical or psychological abuse of a child by program staff or any adult connected to the program

- Revocation or suspension of the program’s license to operate as outlined in the eligibility requirements
- Lapse in supervision of an **infant, toddler, or young 2-year-old**:
 - In an unsafe environment, a child cannot be easily heard and seen at all times by at least one member of the teaching staff.
 - In a safe environment, a child is out of the direct sight or sound supervision of all teaching staff for more than five minutes.
- Lapse in supervision of a **preschooler**:
 - In an unsafe environment, a child is out of the direct sight and sound supervision of all teaching staff for more than one minute.
 - In a safe environment, a child is out of direct sight or sound supervision of all teaching staff for more than 10 minutes.
- Lapse in supervision of a **kindergartner or school-age child**:
 - Child is out of sight and sound supervision for more than 10 minutes, in an unsafe environment.

Programs initiate 72-hour notifications through the Early Learning Hub or as otherwise indicated by NAEYC. NAEYC will acknowledge receipt of all such notifications within three business days. NAEYC Quality Assurance staff will review submissions and may contact the program to clarify information or to request additional information before submitting 72-hour notifications to the Program Review Process.

If NAEYC learns that a program did not provide a 72-hour notification in the timeframe required, NAEYC has the right to initiate a program review for the underlying issues as well as the failure to timely report.

Program Review: Assessment of the Scope and Severity of Program Noncompliance

Scope and Severity Committee

The Scope and Severity Committee is comprised of three early childhood education experts whose focus is quality assurance and assessment and who are appointed by the Council for NAEYC Accreditation.

Scope and Severity Evaluation Process

Within 60 days of receiving all necessary information from NAEYC Early Learning Program’s Quality Assurance staff, the Scope and Severity Committee will apply the Scope and Severity Screen, which considers

- The specific nature and frequency of other such incidents that may indicate a pattern of failure to meet the required assessment item
- The details pertaining to the incident, including the age of the child(ren) involved, the duration of the incident, the program’s relevant written policies and procedures, and the actual implementation of those policies and procedures at the time of the incident(s)

- The program's response to the incident(s), including its analysis of the root causes of the incident(s), its subsequent actions (such as personnel actions or implementation of new policies or procedures), and its ongoing plan for follow-up and prevention
- The status and results of any investigations by licensing, regulatory, medical examiner, police, or other authorities regarding the incident(s)
- The process and timeframe by which the notification of the incident(s) was received by NAEYC
- Whether the incident is reasonably attributable to the program; that is, whether in light of all the specific facts and circumstances surrounding the incident, it is fair and reasonable to hold the program itself responsible for the violation (as opposed to some circumstance beyond the program's control)

In the event that NAEYC is notified of or learns about an incident that is being investigated by a government authority(ies), but investigations by such government authority(ies) is not complete, the Scope and Severity Committee will decide whether it can render a decision without the completion of the investigation. This determination will be made depending on the severity of the violation(s).

Program Review Decision Outcomes

After conducting this review, the Scope and Severity Committee will make one of the following decisions:

- **72-hour review closed.** This decision will be rendered if the committee determines that
 - The incident did not result in a violation of a critical practice
 - The program demonstrates the capacity to maintain substantial compliance with current NAEYC early childhood program accreditation standards and critical practices
 - The incident is not reasonably attributable to the program
- **Additional verification is required.** This decision will be rendered if the committee determines that some question remains as to the program's demonstrated capacity to maintain substantial compliance with current NAEYC early childhood program accreditation standards and critical practices. A verification visit will be undertaken at the program's expense.
- **Accreditation is deferred.** This decision will be rendered if the committee determines one or both of the following:
 - The severity of the violation warrants deferral
 - Over a period of one year, the program has repeatedly and consistently had cases previously reviewed by NAEYC or the Scope and Severity Committee and therefore has not demonstrated capacity to maintain substantial compliance with current NAEYC early childhood program accreditation standards and/or critical practices

Decisions are made by a majority vote of the committee. The committee generally makes its decisions within three months of receiving all documentation from NAEYC.

Accreditation+ Surveys

Accreditation+ programs will be expected to engage educators and families in an ongoing survey process. This data collection is an opportunity for educators and families to provide feedback on their experiences with the program, ultimately providing critical data to support a program's quality improvement journey. Implementation of the Accreditation+ survey requirement will take place in 2026.

Site Visit Policy

Programs that have requested or would like to renew Accreditation+ status are subject to required site visits. Programs that have achieved Accreditation or Accreditation+ are subject to random site visits throughout their five-year term that focus on Accreditation Observation-Based Assessment Items. Observation visits to a subset of randomly selected programs are crucial to ensuring the credibility of the accreditation system. If a program is selected for a random visit, it must allow the visit to occur and meet visit scoring standards to remain accredited. It is crucial that Accredited programs keep their Early Learning Hub program record reflective of any exclusion, closure dates or holiday dates.

If a program has been selected for a random visit and does not allow NAEYC's Assessor to enter the facility to complete the site visit, the program will be "regressed" to Registered.

Programs applying for or renewing at Accreditation+ will receive a visit within 6 months and are also subject to random visits anytime throughout their five-year term.

Site visits initiated by any of the following will have an announced site visit: an Accreditation+ initial or renewal request, a visit initiated by Quality Assurance, or a randomly generated site visit for a program at Accreditation or Accreditation+ status. For announced visits, programs are provided with notification of the visit no more than seven days and no less than 2 PM local time the business day prior. Annually, 1% of the random visits for Accredited / Accredited+ programs will be unannounced, where no advanced notification is sent to the program.

For announced site visits, the assessor will reach out by phone and/or email to notify the program administrator they have been chosen for a random visit, or will receive their Accreditation+ visit, and will confirm the information within the program's profile. The assessor will verify classrooms, age groups, any logistics of getting to the program and/or access, if needed, and any other information needed to successfully execute the visit. The assessor will also provide their contact information for the program administrator to utilize if any unexpected closures happen prior to the visit taking place. The program must comply with hosting an onsite visit to maintain their Accreditation or Accreditation+ Status. The assessor will provide a high-level overview of the schedule including their arrival time and the need for someone to be available to answer questions about the program including philosophy, curriculum, important information about the day of assessment, staff schedules for the day and the ability to provide a tour of the program upon the assessor's arrival.

Appeal Policy

The Council for NAEYC Accreditation provides a formal appeal process for programs that receive an Accreditation “Deferred” decision. The program must submit its appeal within 30 days of the receipt of the “Deferred” decision via the Early Learning Hub. During the appeal window, there is no change in the program’s public accreditation status. Appeals are made to the Quality Assurance Committee of the Council for NAEYC Accreditation.

The Quality Assurance Committee reviews appeals that meet the established procedures. The appeal must show that NAEYC or the NAEYC assessor did one or more of the following:

- Did not follow established policies and/or procedures
- Made a substantive error, such as a factual error or mistake related to the execution of the site visit protocols
- NAEYC’s error or NAEYC’s failure to follow its established policies and/or procedures affected the outcome of the program’s accreditation decision

Appeals that do not meet these minimum requirements will not be forwarded to the Quality Assurance Committee for review. A pre-appeal screening will be conducted by Quality Assurance staff to determine if the appeal will be forwarded to the Council for NAEYC Accreditation. Resources have been developed to assist programs in understanding the appeals process.

The appeal letter must consist of a detailed description of the policy/procedural error(s) and/or substantive error(s) that affected the outcome of the program’s accreditation decision. In addition,

- The appeal letter can be no more than five pages in length, except to append relevant licensing, regulatory, or legal documents. Otherwise, information beyond that fifth page will not be considered.
- The appeal letter may not include new information related to unmet assessment items. The appeal letter, along with relevant information from NAEYC, will be provided to the Quality Assurance Committee for review.
- The appeal decision will be provided within 60 days from the deadline of the appeal due date.
- The appeal decision rendered by the Quality Assurance Committee of the Council for NAEYC Accreditation is final.
- If the original accreditation decision of “Deferred” is upheld, the program may pursue NAEYC quality assessment and accreditation by submitting a new application and applicable fees.

Once the formal appeal is received, NAEYC will verify the documents for completeness and may ask for additional documentation, if necessary. When the documents are complete, NAEYC will acknowledge receipt of the appeal.

Feedback Policy

NAEYC's Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation System has a formal process to review feedback on all aspects of accreditation filed in writing through the online feedback form. This includes feedback on the accreditation process, including policies, tools, assessors, customer service, and NAEYC standards and assessment items. It also includes feedback given about currently accredited programs, including

- A program's failure to meet NAEYC-recommended standards and practices related to the health and safety of children
- The false or misleading advertisement of NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation
- Misuse of NAEYC's intellectual property, including the NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation logo

Feedback must be submitted in writing, and the correspondent must provide their name and contact information. All feedback will be responded to in writing and may require a follow-up phone call. If proper contact information or requested additional information is not provided, the submission will be considered incomplete. Incomplete submissions will not be reviewed.

Any concerns reviewed during this process will only result in a review of the program's adherence to the NAEYC Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation Standards and Assessment Items. Incidents related to the well-being and safety of children or the regulation of the program should first be reported to the proper local licensing or regulatory authorities.

Feedback involving allegations related to NAEYC-required assessment items may be reviewed in conjunction with the 72-hour notification policy. This includes a review according to the scope and severity decisions policy.

If the program refuses to comply with this policy or is deemed to be nonresponsive to the NAEYC's Quality Assessment and Accreditation review, status may be withdrawn.

Confidentiality of Feedback

NAEYC will try to maintain the anonymity of the correspondent when reasonable under the circumstances and when such action does not interfere with or limit a program's ability to respond to the feedback. Sharing the correspondent's identity will only be done with consent from the correspondent and as required by law.

NAEYC reserves the right to contact local authorities with respect to any feedback inquiry or other information that reveals or suggests any potentially illegal or improper conduct in or related to an accredited program. NAEYC disclaims all liability for such actions.

Site Visit Disruption Policy

NAEYC realizes that there are factors that may prevent a program from hosting a site visit. If an Accredited+ program is awaiting a site visit and service to children is suspended due to weather emergencies, public health emergencies, other natural disasters, or for any other reason, it is a program's responsibility to complete a Site Visit Disruption form. Classes must be in session, and children must be physically present for a standard accreditation site visit to take place.

Accredited programs must also submit a Site Visit Disruption form if they are closed and not serving children for a period of time to ensure that we do not attempt to complete a random visit on a day when the program is not in operation.

If a program reports a site visit disruption to NAEYC, the program must also notify NAEYC once the program has resumed serving children. For Accredited+ programs who were in a six-month window, a new six-month window will be given, and the site visit planning will resume.

However, if a currently Accredited+ program does not resume serving children before six months prior to its VUD, the program will not receive a site visit, and its accreditation will expire on the valid until date.

In the event of an extenuating circumstance, NAEYC staff along with the Council will determine if a program can remain accredited after its valid until date. Extenuating circumstances include but are not limited to public health emergencies, natural disasters, or civil unrest.

Location Change Policy

If a program changes locations during its accreditation term, it is required to report the new location to NAEYC via the 72-hour report process. NAEYC will determine if the change in location has any impact on the accreditation status. In some cases, a program may not be eligible to keep its accreditation status if circumstances indicate that the change in location impacts the overall integrity of the previous decision awarded.

Ownership Transfer Policy

If a program transfers ownership during the one-year Recognition term or the five-year Accreditation term, the program will not retain its status and will need to start the process over by submitting a Recognition application. The program can continue using its Early Learning Hub record to begin the process once all information has been updated to reflect the new owner and administration.

In some situations, a program may be eligible to keep its accreditation status if circumstances indicate that the change in ownership will not change programmatic operational aspects, including administration and learning approach/curriculum.

Documentation Policy

Evidence to support document-based assessment items for Recognition and Accreditation is submitted through the Early Learning Hub's integrated survey application and must meet the following guidelines:

- No web link can be provided as documentation. If relevant information lives on a webpage, the program should copy the content into a file that is uploaded.
- Only files in PDF format should be provided for the family or staff handbook file(s).
- For family and staff handbooks, up to 10 files in PDF format can be uploaded.

PROCEDURES

Fees

NAEYC's Quality Assessment and Accreditation System is supported by the program fees charged across the tiered process, annually during a program's five-year term of Accreditation and Accreditation+, and for other special purposes. Fees may be increased at NAEYC's sole discretion, in response to analysis of income, expenses, predicted growth, and capacity needs of the accreditation system. The current fee schedule is available on the NAEYC website (www.naeyc.org). Failure to pay any of these fees may result in a program's loss of status.

Fees for Pursuing Accreditation

The following fees are applicable to all programs in the system. The fees vary by program size. These fees are nonrefundable.

Recognition Application Fee

Registered programs may apply for Recognition. Once the fee is submitted, the documentation will undergo review and scoring and if approved, the program will be awarded "Recognized" status for a one-year term. The program must reapply for Recognition if it chooses to remain "Recognized" by NAEYC. Programs can apply to advance to the next tier (Accreditation) at any time.

Accreditation Application Fee

Recognized programs may apply for Accreditation. Once the fee is submitted, documentation will undergo review and scoring and if approved, the program will be awarded "Accreditation" status for a five-year term. All accredited programs are required to submit yearly annual reports and fees to maintain their accreditation. Programs that are not approved can reapply at any time.

Accreditation+ Site Visit Fee

Accredited programs may request an Accreditation+ site visit to upgrade to "Accredited+" status. To receive a site visit and upgrade, programs must pay an Accreditation+ site visit fee. If the site visit passes, the program's existing Accreditation term will be upgraded to "Accredited+" for the remainder of the term.

Fees for Maintaining Accreditation

Accreditation Annual Fee

Accredited programs are required to submit yearly annual reports and fees to maintain their Accreditation status for the five-year term. The first annual report and fee are due one year after

Accreditation is awarded and are due every year after that as long as the program wishes to remain accredited, submits renewal documentation, and meets all Accreditation requirements.

Accreditation+ Annual Fee

Accredited+ programs are required to submit yearly annual reports and fees to maintain their Accreditation+ status for the five-year term. The first annual report and fee is due one year after Accreditation/Accreditation+ is awarded and is due every year after that as long as the program wishes to remain Accredited+, submits renewal documentation, and meets all Accreditation requirements.

Fees for Renewing for a New Term

Recognition Renewal Fee

The Recognition term is one year. All recognized programs must reapply and pay the Recognition renewal fee in order to remain Recognized.

Accreditation Renewal Application Fee

For programs wishing to renew into the Accreditation tier, the renewal application review is included in the annual fee: Programs must submit renewal documentation, but there is no additional fee required. If renewal documentation is approved, the program must continue to pay the Accreditation annual fee every year to remain accredited.

Accreditation+ Renewal Application Fee

For programs wishing to renew into the Accreditation+ tier, the renewal application review is included in the annual fee: Programs must submit renewal documentation, but there is no additional fee required. If renewal documentation is approved, the program must continue to pay the Accreditation+ annual fee every year to remain accredited.

Accreditation+ Site Visit Fee

Programs that wish to renew into the Accreditation+ tier and have already passed the documentation review must pay the Accreditation+ site visit fee. Once paid, the program will be placed into the queue for a visit. If not paid, the program will be moved to “Accredited” status.

Additional Fees

A **late fee** is paid any time an annual fee is late.

A **verification visit fee** is due when NAEYC orders a verification visit to be completed.

For programs located outside of the US, an **overseas visit surcharge** is due when an Accreditation+ site visit fee or a verification visit fee is due.

To extend the Accreditation term, programs must pay an **extension fee** plus the prorated amount of the annual fee for the duration of the extension. For example, a six-month extension would cost the extension fee plus 6/12 (50 percent) of the annual fee.

Failure to Pay Fees

If a program fails to pay any fees as detailed above, NAEYC may withdraw its accreditation. It is the responsibility of the program to closely monitor its information in the portal to ensure that fees are up to date and paid in a timely manner.

For a detailed list of fees, see the NAEYC website.

Site Visits

Scheduling Visits

Site visits for early learning program accreditation are conducted 12 months a year. NAEYC does not conduct accreditation visits on Saturdays, Sundays, or federal government holidays. NAEYC does not conduct accreditation visits on days a program is not operational (serving children) or on exclusion dates as entered in the Early Learning Hub.

Protocols Assuring a Consistent Site Visit Process

When a site visit is required, NAEYC assigns a trained, reliable assessor to conduct the site visit assessment and to submit specific documentation of the visit. Assessors follow a written protocol for the site visit process, which is publicly available to programs.

Site visit protocols are the same for random visits, verification visits, and Accreditation+ site visits.

Site Visit Assessment Tool

Assessors conduct all site visits using the Accreditation Observation-Based Assessment Tool. Instructions for using this tool are included in the site visit protocol. The tool is publicly available on NAEYC's website. The documents are subject to periodic revision depending upon changes in the content of the assessment tools, technology changes, and other operational changes in the accreditation system.

Video Monitoring of Site Visits

No video recording is permitted during site visits without prior authorization. Any unauthorized recording that is outside a program's regular monitoring system will be subject to internal administrative review and may impact a program's eligibility or status.

Assessors

NAEYC Assessor Selection

The reliability of NAEYC's assessor system is critical to the success of NAEYC's Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation System. NAEYC develops and maintains procedures regarding required qualifications, selection, conflict of interest, confidentiality, evaluation, termination, and retention of assessors. These procedures support the integrity and reliability of NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation. The assessor system includes procedures that ensure assessors are highly skilled professionals who represent diverse groups and the field's multiple sectors.

Conflict of Interest

In all cases, assessors must consider whether a potential conflict of interest exists. Assessors may have a conflict of interest that prevents them from accepting a particular visit assignment if they

- Have conducted a visit at the program within the past year
- Have previously worked for or consulted with the program or with a parent organization of the program
- Have a fiduciary connection to the program
- Have a direct personal relationship with the program administrator or with other principals of the program or the program's parent organization
- Know the program and have concerns about their ability to conduct an impartial assessment

This list is not exhaustive. If assessors have any doubts about whether there is a conflict of interest, they must contact NAEYC to discuss concerns and reach a resolution.

Restrictions on Gifts and Compensation for Assessors

Assessors will not request or accept any compensation or any gifts of substance from the program being reviewed or from anyone affiliated with the program. (*Gifts of substance* would include briefcases, tickets to athletic or entertainment events, etc.) If unsure as to whether something constitutes a gift of substance, assessors are advised to err on the side of declining gifts of any kind. Similarly, assessors will not expect elaborate hospitality during site visits. It is appropriate for institutions to provide snacks and nonalcoholic beverages for assessors as they conduct their work at the program. Programs must ensure that the assessor's workspace is comfortable and conducive to their work.

Satellite Locations

NAEYC-accredited programs may have satellite locations included in their accreditation. A satellite location is defined as an additional geographic location that houses one or more of a program's class(es) of children *and* the class(es) are under the same program administration and budget as the primary site.

For programs with **two to three locations**, the requirements for satellite locations are

- The primary program site can have no more than two satellite locations included as part of a single program accreditation.
- The satellite locations must be within a five-mile radius of the primary site.
- Each satellite location must serve fewer than 60 children.
- Each satellite location must have the same program administration and budget.

For programs with **four to 10 locations**, the requirements for satellite locations are

- The primary program site can have no more than nine satellite locations included as part of a single program accreditation.
- The program has no more than 20 groups served among the 10 locations.

- Each satellite location serves fewer than 60 children.
- Every site must be within 10 miles of the primary site.
- Each satellite location must have the same program administration and budget.

For Accreditation+, programs will be required to pay a second Accreditation+ site visit fee. At least one class from each location is observed and evaluated during a site visit. The accreditation decision outcome applies equally to all program sites.

Once accredited, all locations are included in the NAEYC-Accredited Program Search engine. Each location receives an accreditation certificate.

When a program no longer meets the satellite requirements and/or the sites no longer want to remain together for purposes of NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation, the sites may be de-clustered.

When a program is de-clustered, the site(s) that no longer meets the requirements or no longer wants to remain with the primary site will receive a standalone program ID and be required to start the accreditation process by submitting a Recognition application.

Multiple Programs Within the Same Facility

NAEYC Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation status is granted to the overall program and will not be granted to individual classes within a program. Throughout the NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation process, all eligible classes a program serves must be reported and may be observed during a site visit.

Eligible classes are considered any group of children within the program that serves infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and kindergarten-age children. Programs that provide care to kindergarten- or school-age children before or after school or during school breaks are not eligible to have those classrooms included in their Quality Assessment and Accreditation status.

A class can only be excluded from a program's NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation status if it is part of a separate entity *or* does not meet the age eligibility of the content/assessment items. A program pursuing NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation must notify NAEYC of all separate entities that operate classrooms within its facility. If a program wants to exclude a classroom, it must be able to demonstrate a separate budget, administration, and license.

Determining Factors

The following factors will be used to determine if a class or program within the same location can be excluded from NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation:

- **Budget:** Does the program/class have a single budget?
- **Administration:** Does the program/class have the same administration? Does the program/class have the same management, or is management from the same organization?
- **Licensing:** Does the program/class have the same license? Is the program regulated by the same agency?

If the program or class meets (answers “yes” to) two of these three conditions, then the program/class is part of the center. If two of the three questions are unmet (answered “no”), then the program/class is a different center.

Definitions

- **Budget:** A plan for conducting business operations based on the itemized allotment of funds. A budget may reflect multiple income sources and distinct allocations that roll up into a single fund.
- **Administration:** The management or running of an organization. This could include the director, owner, principal, or governing body.
- **Agency:** An organization or company with its own tax ID number that operates programming but could collaborate with other entities in the early learning space.
- **Program Merger:** A merger is designated when two or more programs begin to operate as one program. This applies to programs that are operating in the same physical space, intermingle children and teachers, and/or meet the satellite requirements. Programs are required to update the NAEYC portal to reflect their new operations. If the program is merging into another program’s physical space, the program that will no longer be in existence must complete a withdrawal form.

System Wide Evidence Process

The purpose of the system wide evidence process is to enable NAEYC to allow system users to undergo a streamlined evaluation of system wide, document-based evidence for the purposes of NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation. This process is reserved for NAEYC’s “large system users”—individual organizations and/or companies with five or more sites in the accreditation process.

The evaluation ratings are referenced for all of the system’s individual programs undergoing accreditation. This reduces program preparation time for NAEYC site visits. Determinations of compliance with NAEYC program assessment items are honored for one year, with annual reviews thereafter, subject to the continuation of the systemwide evidence program. Individual programs in participating systems are responsible for maintaining program-specific document evidence that will be made available during the application and renewal process.

The systemwide evidence review includes

- **First review:** After receipt of an application and payment and approval of the application, system users initially submit to NAEYC all evidence supporting system wide NAEYC assessment items.
- **Initial rating:** Two NAEYC assessors independently review and rate the system wide document evidence submitted, then the assessors conduct a reliability discussion to reach final consensus ratings for each item. An initial report is sent to the system, documenting ratings for each NAEYC item. Any items rated “no” will have assessor notes indicating why they were determined to be unmet.

- **System response and second review:** The system user has 30 days to submit revised or additional evidence supporting the items not fully met. Assessors review and rate the second evidence submission in the same manner as the initial ratings.
- **Final report:** A final report of the system’s ratings for system wide items is produced.

Program Use of NAEYC Quality Assessment and Accreditation System

Program Display of Status

Wherever a program’s quality assessment and accreditation status is provided to the public (website, brochure, etc.), the status must be accurate and complete. A program is only eligible to use the appropriate status for the tier that it has successfully achieved.

Use of Logos by Programs

The NAEYC early learning program Recognition and Accreditation logos are the exclusive property of NAEYC. However, NAEYC allows a participating program to use the logos in publications and displays (electronic or print) to highlight its current status. The use of the logo is governed by the following guidelines:

- A program may not use NAEYC’s name or logo or other intellectual property in any way without prior written consent from NAEYC.
- The logo may not be used by a program that has not yet been notified that it is accredited.
- When permitted, the current NAEYC early learning program Accreditation logo must be used. It can be found in the HELLO Community for each tier.
- Use of the logo shall be subject at all times to withdrawal or deferral by NAEYC when, in its sole judgment, NAEYC determines that continued use of the logo would not serve the best interests of NAEYC or the public.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accreditation Terms

Recognition tier: The first tier of NAEYC’s Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation System. Recognition includes 40 documentation-based assessment items that demonstrate a foundation of policies and structures on which a quality care and learning environment can be built. Recognition is not the equivalent of Accreditation. Successful programs are awarded a one-year term for Recognition.

Recognition application: An online survey application accessed via the Early Learning Hub that allows a program to submit documentation related to the 40 document-based assessment items that are required for the Recognition tier.

Accreditation tier: The second tier of NAEYC’s Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation System. Accreditation includes 125 documentation-based assessment items and 75 observation-based assessment items that demonstrate a program has high-quality policies,

structures, and practices necessary for a high-quality care and learning environment. Successful programs are awarded a five-year term for Accreditation.

Accreditation application: An online survey application accessed via the Early Learning Hub that allows a program to submit documentation related to the 125 document-based assessment items that are required for the Accreditation tier.

Accreditation+ tier: The third tier of NAEYC’s Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation System. Accreditation+ includes 125 documentation-based assessment items and 75 observation-based assessment items that demonstrate a program has high-quality policies, structures, and practices necessary for a high-quality care and learning environment *and* that it adheres to increased accountability protocols. Successful programs are awarded a five-year term for Accreditation+.

Assessment Terms

Required items: Assessment items that must be met by programs to earn Recognized or Accredited status. Required items exist at both the Recognition and Accreditation tiers.

Optional items: Assessment items that are not required for the achievement of Recognition or Accreditation. Optional items provide a nominal boost to scores and do not negatively affect scores if unmet.

Safe environment: A fully enclosed area, free of safety and environmental hazards, occupied by at least one supervising adult.

Fees and Policies

Annual report/fees: Accredited and Accredited+ programs are required to submit yearly annual reports and fees to maintain their Accreditation for the five-year term. The first annual report and fee are due one year after Accreditation or Accreditation+ is awarded and are due every year after that as long as the program wishes to remain accredited, submits renewal documentation, and meets all Accreditation or Accreditation+ requirements. Annual reports are completed by the program through the Early Learning Hub and are available two months ahead of the due date. A late fee is incurred if not paid by the due date. An Accredited or Accredited+ program is regressed to Recognized if the annual report is not completed and paid by 90 days past the due date.

72-hour notification (incident report): Required in cases of a supervision lapse, child abuse or injury, or license suspension. Recognized, Accredited, and Accredited+ programs must report these within 72 hours of occurrence by selecting the “Incident Report” option in the Early Learning Hub. NAEYC Quality Assurance staff will contact the program to follow up.

NAEYC Resources and Definitions

Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP): A framework of guidelines from NAEYC and one of its five foundational documents. NAEYC defines “developmentally appropriate practice” as methods that promote each child’s optimal development and learning through a strengths-based,

play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning. It encourages early childhood educators to create learning environments that are tailored to each child's individual needs and abilities. NAEYC's Early Learning Program Quality Assessment and Accreditation items have been aligned to DAP.

Early Learning Hub: The new online portal where programs will work on their Quality Assessment and Accreditation journey. The Early Learning Hub is accessed from the NAEYC Portal.

“Early Learning Programs Standards” position statement. One of five foundational documents NAEYC has developed in collaboration with the early childhood profession. This statement complements and supports the other foundational documents that (1) define developmentally appropriate practice, (2) set professional standards and competencies for early childhood educators, (3) define the profession's code of ethics, and (4) set forth recommendations to advance equity. These foundational statements are grounded in NAEYC's core values that emphasize diversity and inclusion and that respect the dignity and worth of every individual. The Quality Assessment and Accreditation Items have been aligned to the early learning program standards.

NAEYC Portal: The new online portal where users will be able to engage with NAEYC across all departments and services.

Site Visit Terms

Accreditation+ site visit: A planned site visit conducted by a NAEYC assessor for any program that has applied for or is renewing at the Accreditation+ tier. Programs receive a six-month window for when the site visit will occur.

Random visit: A site visit conducted by a NAEYC assessor where the program is assessed on the 75 observation-based assessment items that are part of the Accreditation and Accreditation+ tiers.

Verification visit: A site visit conducted by a NAEYC assessor that may be requested after a serious incident. The purpose of the visit is to ensure that the program meets all NAEYC accreditation requirements. During a verification visit, the program is assessed on the 75 observation-based assessment items that are part of the Accreditation and Accreditation+ tiers.