

Steps To Excellence Project

Application Packet for Centers
(Part I)



Steps To Excellence Project
Promoting Quality Child Care

County of Los Angeles Steps to Excellence Project (STEP)

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HELEN E. CHAVEZ
Program Specialist III, Office of Child Care

222 South Hill Street, 5th Floor
Los Angeles, California 90012
Office: (213) 974-4103
Fax: (213) 217-5106
www.childcare.lacounty.gov

Revised: August 2007

Policy Roundtable for Child Care

2006-2007

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Jacquelyn McCroskey, D.S.W.
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Robert Wiltse
*Department of Children and
Family Services*

Joan McGowan
Fifth Supervisorial District

Ruth Yoon
First Supervisorial District

Acknowledgements

The County of Los Angeles Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable) is grateful to the many organizations and individuals who contributed their experience and expertise to realizing the Steps to Excellence Project (STEP) from a BIG idea to execution. While it would be impossible to mention all of those who have contributed to the development of STEP, special thanks are extended to the following:

Organizations

Board of Supervisors, County of Los Angeles

California Department of Education, Child Development Division

Child Care Planning Committee

Child Care Planning Committee Inclusion Work Group

Early Identification and Intervention Collaborative for Los Angeles

Family Child Care Associations of Los Angeles County Representatives

First 5 LA

Los Angeles Unified School District Infant and Preschool Special Education Programs

Los Angeles Universal Preschool

Individuals

Jan Brown, UCLA Center for Improving Child Care Quality

Loren Clapp, Chief Administrative Office Graphic and Arts

Monica Mathur, Pediatric Therapy Network

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Steps To Excellence Project

Part I:

Application Guide
&
Application Forms

A). Introduction: Welcome to Step!

The County of Los Angeles Policy Roundtable (Roundtable) for Child Care applauds your commitment to providing high quality child development services and welcomes you to the County of Los Angeles Steps to Excellence Project (STEP), a child care quality rating and support system. STEP is designed to help parents make informed child care choices and is intended to help child care programs by:

- Identifying program standards that have been shown by research or best practice to positively impact child outcomes;
- Acknowledging programs that are providing high quality services;
- Largely aligning with existing systems, including Community Care Licensing at Step 1, Title 5 of the Education Code at Step 3, and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), and Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) at Step 5; and
- Coordinating support and technical assistance to help programs make incremental and substantial improvements to the quality of care provided.

Roundtable members recognize that the quality of care children receive during the early years has life long implications for their cognitive and social development. High quality child development services contribute to positive child outcomes, while mediocre or poor quality services do not. Licensed child care centers and family child care homes care for an estimated 226,000 children on a daily basis in Los Angeles County. This represents an incredible opportunity to support families and the healthy development of their children. However, California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing (CCL) regulations,

which are applied universally to licensed child care, focus specifically on health and safety standards. Health and safety standards are important, but not the exclusive benchmark of high quality care. By contrast, accreditation standards, as implemented by the NAEYC and the NAFCC, are comprehensive. Participation in these accreditation programs is voluntary and fewer than seven percent of centers and two percent of family child care homes in Los Angeles County are currently accredited.

STEP identifies standards which research and best practice have shown to impact child outcomes and defines incremental improvements which bridge the gap between basic compliance with CCL regulations to the significantly more comprehensive standards associated with accreditation. It is our intention that STEP will engage child care programs across the spectrum, offering support and recognition for efforts that result in program quality improvements.

There are six components to STEP:

1. Regulatory Compliance
2. Teacher/Child Relationships
3. Learning Environment
4. Identification and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs
5. Qualifications and Working Conditions
6. Family and Community Connections

With the exception of Regulatory Compliance, each component includes five steps. The first step is largely aligned with CCL regulations, the third step with Title 5 of the California Education Code and the fifth step with NAEYC accreditation standards. In addition, LAUP star ratings align with steps three, four and five of STEP.

Programs participating in STEP will prepare a Portfolio, documenting compliance with specific steps. In an effort to reduce the administrative burden of participating in multiple quality initiatives, a number of the STEP standards can be documented using forms and/or materials required by Title 5, NAEYC accreditation standards and/or LAUP. It is the Roundtable's intention that STEP be used as a tool for programs to assess their policies and operations, and where

appropriate, make changes. Instituting changes will require input and support from staff, participating families, Board members and others. We recommend that changes be undertaken only when they make sense to all the stakeholders and are truly integrated into the program's operation. When changes are made to simply earn a higher rating, it is unlikely that programs will be able to document meeting the standard.

The Roundtable looks forward to working with all programs that are committed to improving the quality of their services.

B). Ready, Set, Go!: Recommended Steps

We strongly recommend that the program administrator take time to review and complete the following steps:



1). Read this STEP application guide entirely. It is important for programs to take time to carefully review STEP instruments, resources and the application process.

2). Review the STEP Scoring Matrix. We recommend that the program administrator review the matrix attached to this application packet and the required documents to be included in the *Program Portfolio* prior to submitting an application.



3). Determine Interest in Requesting STEP Mini-Grant* Funds. Based on your initial review of the STEP Scoring Matrix, decide whether you need to make any changes or enhancements to your program. If so, you can choose to apply for an Office of Child Care mini-grant to fund these improvements (refer to page 10 for more information).

*STEP Mini-grants will be available to providers only during STEP's first pilot year (2007-2008).



4). Submit STEP Application Forms. Complete and submit three forms to participate in STEP (included on pages 13-15 of this application packet).

5). Conduct a Program Assessment. We recommend program administrators distribute the STEP Scoring Matrix and other materials to staff, families, and other interested community persons. In conjunction with these stakeholders, engage in an internal assessment, compiling documentation and determining where your program currently falls on the STEP Scoring Matrix.



6). Determine if Program Modifications are Needed and Implement Changes.

Based on a careful and objective review, decide if any changes are needed in program policies and/or operations to enhance the quality of services provided to children and families.

7). Prepare for the STEP Site Observation. Participation in STEP will require gathering and preparing some paperwork; we will refer to this compilation of STEP materials as the *STEP Program Portfolio*. It is recommended that all STEP materials be organized and stored in a single place such as a portable file box. (Refer to pages 17-31 for more information).



8). Participate in a Site Observation Visit. An on-site observation will be scheduled in advance and conducted during normal business hours by a trained Field Researcher. (Refer to page 11 for more information).

9). Receive STEP Rating. Programs will be notified of their rating by mail and the notification will include a summary of each component. (Refer to page 11 for more information about this process).

C). How to Participate in STEP: Completing STEP Application Forms

To start the process, programs need to submit three documents (forms are found on pages 13-15):

- 1) Intent to Participate Memo
- 2) Program Description
- 3) Regulatory Compliance

Clearance from the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing (CCL) will be absolutely essential. The Office of Child Care will verify with CCL that, in the past three years, the program has **not**:

- Held a probationary license;
- Been required to participate in a compliance plan;
- Been issued civil penalties, or
- Been the subject of legal action by the Environmental Health Division.

If your program has encountered any of these situations, it will be necessary to establish a **three year** track record without significant regulatory problems prior to participating in STEP. During that period, the program can also focus on other program improvements.

The Office of Child Care will verify the regulatory compliance of all applicants with CCL and will notify potential STEP applicants once this process is completed. **Upon receiving clearance from CCL, programs will be invited to either 1) request an on-site review or 2) request an Office of Child Care Mini-Grant by submitting a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) by December 1, 2007.** Programs choosing to implement a QIP must commit to finish implementing the plan by March 1, 2008 and to scheduling a STEP on-site review by May 1, 2008.

D). Submitting Mini-Grants Requests

During Year 1, limited resources will be available to assist programs in the STEP pilot communities to implement changes that will result in improved services to children and families. Eligible programs are invited to submit a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

and request funds (referred to as “Mini-Grants” in this guide) to implement the plan. QIPs must be directly related to the STEP rating scale, and completely implemented by March 1, 2008. Examples of activities that are eligible for funding include, but are not limited to:

- hiring a consultant to develop, update and translate the Parent Handbook and program brochures;
- purchasing resource manuals and display fixtures for community brochures;
- purchasing start-up materials to implement regular developmental screenings;
- purchasing curriculum materials and equipment as required by the environment rating scales;
- hiring substitutes to support release time for staff to participate in training or professional development activities.

On-site reviews will be scheduled with all programs using QIP funds on or before May 1, 2008. If your program is interested in obtaining a Mini-Grant, complete the Mini-Grant Application Form on page 16 and submit the required documentation detailed on that form.

Important Dates to Remember When Requesting a Mini-Grant:

Deadline to request Mini-Grant (submit STEP Application & QIP forms):	12/1/07
Deadline to implement QIP:	3/1/08
Deadline to schedule STEP site observation visit:	5/1/08

When submitting the Intent to Participate and Regulatory Clearance Forms, applicants will indicate if they propose to implement a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) prior to requesting the STEP on-site review.

Potential STEP participants will be notified by the Office of Child Care when CCL and other regulatory entities have verified a three year history of substantial compliance with

licensing regulations. At that time, programs having a three year history of substantial compliance with all regulations will be invited to request an on-site review or a QIP.

E). Introducing Change In Your Program

Implementing change can be difficult and time consuming. The result of such an effort can either be positive and energizing, or just plain frustrating. Therefore, it is recommended that before launching into a major effort to change policies or operating procedures, stakeholders assess if the proposed changes are achievable and sustainable. The STEP rating scale/matrix is purposely focused on elements that research or best practice have identified as impacting child outcomes. It is our expectation that by adopting policies or practices that are aligned with the rating scale and endorsed by stakeholders, the quality of services will be improved. If however, change is undertaken for the sole purpose of scoring highly on the STEP rating scale, it is unlikely that the change will be sustained over time or that the potential benefits will be realized.

F). STEP Resources to Support Quality Improvements

To facilitate the implementation of policy or programmatic changes, a variety of training and support services will be available to child care program staff during Year 1 of the project (2007-2008). The following page of this document describes some of the initial trainings that will be made available to program staff. Throughout the year, training information will be updated and posted on the Office of Child Care Web site (www.childcare.lacounty.gov). Please visit this website regularly to obtain the most up to date information regarding scheduled trainings. **STEP applicants will be required to complete separate training enrollment forms to participate in these trainings.**

G). STEP Site Observations

All site visits to participating STEP programs will be scheduled in advance and will be conducted during normal business hours by a trained Field Researcher.

During the on-site observation, teacher/child ratios and group sizes will be verified. **The Adult Involvement Scale and the appropriate Environmental Rating Scale(s) will be administered in at least 50 percent of the classrooms.** In addition, the *Program Portfolio* and documentation of compliance with the various components of STEP will be reviewed.

Classrooms that have been awarded a rating by LAUP will not be observed.

H). Announcement of STEP Quality Ratings

The Roundtable STEP Rating Sub-Committee will meet on a quarterly basis to review applicant materials. This Committee will consider the following results to determine the program's rating:

- Clearance from CCL
- Adult Involvement Scale Scores
- Environment Rating Scores
- Teacher and Staff to Child Ratios
- Portfolio materials for each of the following components:
 - Identification and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs
 - Qualifications and Working Conditions, and
 - Family and Community Connections

Programs will be notified of their rating by mail and the notification will include a summary of each component.

Important Notice: The STEP rating will be for a three year period. If a program wants to reapply during that period for the purpose of raising their rating, there will be a fee to cover the costs of the on-site observation and administrative review. As a result we are encouraging programs to carefully assess

their readiness for the STEP quality review process prior to scheduling their site visit.

1). Training & Support Services for STEP Applicants

During STEP first pilot year (2007-2008), the Office of Child Care will be hosting a variety of **training and support activities** to facilitate programs meeting STEP standards. A training schedule will be updated periodically and posted on the Office of Child Care Web site www.childcare.lacounty.gov.

The following is a list of proposed trainings for 2007-08:

Developmental Screening Tools:

High quality developmental screening tools provide information on whether children are developing and learning as expected, spot children at risk of learning disabilities and needing additional support to develop, learn, and prevent future learning difficulties, help determine interventions and curriculum modifications for targeted children to fully participate in classroom activities and routines, and identify children needing referrals to their local Regional Center and/or school district for formal assessments of learning disabilities or other special needs.

Trainings will be offered on the following tools:

- ***Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ):*** ASQ is a low-cost, reliable way to screen infants and young children for developmental delays during the crucial first five years of life. ASQ consists of a series of 19 easy to administer, parent-completed questionnaires.
- ***Parents Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS):*** PEDS is a fast, accurate, inexpensive screening tool for developmental and behavioral problems in children from birth to age eight. PEDS meets the accuracy standards set by the American Academy of Pediatrics and, because the response forms are completed by parents, fosters a collaborative, family focused approach to care.

Dual Language Learners:

Language development is a major task for young children. Increasing numbers of young children in Los Angeles County are developing these skills in two different languages. This training will focus on how early childhood educators can support the development of English and home languages.

Environment Rating Scales: The rating scales are commonly used by researchers to assess the quality of different types of child care settings, serving different age groups, and by programs to determine areas where improvement is needed. The scales focus on seven subscales: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Listening and Talking, Activities, Interaction, Program Structure, and Parents and Staff.

Cohort trainings will be offered on the following:

- ***Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS):*** This scale is designed to assess programs serving children birth to 30 months.
- ***Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ECERS):*** This scale is designed to assess programs serving children between 30 months and five years of age.

Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect (PCAN):

Developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and Zero to Three, PCAN is a curriculum designed to strengthen families through quality early care and education programs.

You must submit a separate application form to enroll in any of these trainings.

To download a brochure containing the training schedule and applications to attend the cohort training, visit:

www.childcare.lacounty.gov.

STEP Application Form 2

Intent to Participate in STEP – Program Description

Contact Information

1. Program: _____
2. License Number(s): Infant _____ Preschool _____ School Age* _____
3. Licensed Capacity for: Infants _____ Toddlers _____ Preschool _____
*(*STEP is not currently rating school age child care services.)*
4. Number of classrooms per age group: Infants ____ Toddlers ____ Preschool ____
5. Address: _____
Street City Zip Code
6. Primary Contact: _____ Title: _____
7. Email: _____ Phone: (____) _____
8. Alternate Contact: _____ Title: _____
9. Email: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Program Information

10. Days and hours of operation: _____
11. Funding Sources (check all that apply):
 - Contract with California Department of Education/Child Development Division
 - Head Start
 - Los Angeles Universal Preschool
 - Parent fees
 - Other: _____
12. Is the program accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children?
_____ Yes _____ No
13. Please indicate the languages spoken in the program on a daily basis:
 - English
 - Spanish
 - Mandarin
 - Cantonese
 - Korean
 - Other(s): _____
14. Organizational structure: Private nonprofit Private proprietary Public agency

Regulatory Compliance History - Centers

1. Agency Name: _____
2. Site Name (if different from agency): _____
3. Site Address: _____

Street
City
Zip Code
4. Contact Person: _____ Title: _____
5. Phone: (____) _____ Email: _____
6. License number(s) issued by the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division:
 - a. Infant Program: _____ Capacity _____
 - b. Preschool Program: _____ Capacity _____
 - i. Does the program operate with a Toddler Option? **Yes** (go to Item ii) **No** (go to Item 6c)
 - ii. If yes, what is the capacity of toddler program? _____
 - c. School-Age Program: _____ Capacity: _____
 - d. Licensing Analyst Name: _____ Phone: (____) _____
 - e. Please attach copies of current licenses and most recent Community Care Licensing inspection. If deficiencies were noted, provide documentation that they have been corrected.
7. Is this site required, per contract with the California Department of Education (CDE), to comply with Title 5 regulations?

Yes (go to Item 7a) **No** (go to Item 8)

 - a. CDE Consultant: _____ Phone: (____) _____
 - b. Attach a copy of your California Department of Education contract face sheet
8. Is this site funded by LAUP? **No** (continue to Item 9) **Yes** (attach a copy of most recent funding notification, including Star rating)
9. Is this site accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children?

No (go to Item 10) **Yes** (attach copy of your accreditation certificate and continue to Item 10)
10. Attach the most recent copies of the following documents:
 - Fire inspection - if deficiencies were noted, provide documentation that they have been corrected.
 - Environmental Health inspection - if deficiencies were noted, provide documentation that they have been corrected.

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

*Limited resources are available to help programs in the STEP pilot communities implement changes that will result in improved services to children and families during the 2007-08 Fiscal Year. In order to maximize these resources, Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) must be directly related to the STEP rating scale, and **completed by March 1, 2008**. All programs using QIP funds must schedule on-site reviews **by May 1, 2008**.*

1. Program: _____ Telephone: (____) _____

2. Address: _____
Street City Zip Code

3. Contact Person: _____ Email: _____

Answers to the following questions should be clear and concise – no more than two pages for questions 4 through 6.

4. Describe the policy, practice, or product to be changed or created. **State which component(s) of the STEP rating scale this activity is related to.**
5. Describe how this change will be implemented.
6. Describe how this change will impact staff performance, development, and/or retention.
7. Provide a timeline for implementing this change, including key milestones. All QIP activities must be completed by March 1, 2008.
8. Provide a detailed budget of resources needed to implement this change.
 - If the plan is to purchase equipment, please provide a justification for using a particular vendor, the catalogue and page number listing equipment, item price, and shipping costs.
 - If the plan is to hire a consultant, provide a justification for using this consultant, the hourly rate and hours needed to complete each deliverable.
 - If the plan is to print materials, specify the materials to be printed and provide at least two quotes.

Important Notice: All Mini-Grant Application Forms & QIPs are to be submitted to the Office of Child Care by **December 1, 2007** to allow time for processing of the request and implementation of the plan. The Office of Child Care reserves the right to reject Mini-Grant Applications that are incomplete or do not clearly relate to a component of the STEP rating scale.

A). Regulatory Compliance

Why focus on regulatory compliance?

- Child care centers in states with more stringent regulations have higher-quality care, and children in those programs score higher in tests of school readiness, language comprehension, and social behavior (*Building Quality Child Care in Los Angeles County: Key Research Findings and Recommendations*, compiled by the Center for Improving Child Care Quality at UCLA).
- Under standards implemented during the State budget crisis in 2003, the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) implemented a monitoring schedule which conducts on-site inspections of child care programs only once every five years, one of the least-frequent monitoring programs in the nation (*Sacramento Bee*, May 26, 2006).

Ensuring the health and safety of children is a critically important and fundamental component of high quality child care and development services. Participants in **STEP** are required to demonstrate a track record of meeting health and safety regulations, including responding quickly and thoroughly when deficiencies are noted.

Document your program's compliance by including a copy of this form and the following documents in your *Program Portfolio*:

- Notification from the Office of Child Care regarding clearance from CCLD and other regulatory bodies.
- Reports from most recent monitoring visits by CCLD, health department, and fire department
- CDE contract face sheet, if applicable.

B). Teacher/Child Relationships

Why focus on teacher/child relationships?

A variety of studies have documented that:

- adult-child ratios are a key structural dimension predictive of child care quality,
- smaller class size and lower adult-child ratios are correlated with greater program effects, and
- children with closer relationships to their preschool teachers have better thinking/attention skills, are more sociable over time and show fewer problem behaviors¹.

In an effort to facilitate documenting compliance with the various steps in STEP, participants have the option to use certain forms required by the California Department of Education/Child Development Division (CDE/CDD), the NAEYC, or STEP.

Document your program's compliance by including a completed copy of this page and one of the following forms describing adult and teacher to child ratios. Please indicate which reporting form you used:

- CDE/CDD
- NAEYC Accreditation Annual Report
- Steps to Excellence

A Field Researcher will conduct an observation of at least 50 percent of the classrooms using the Adult Involvement Scale (AIS). Each of the observed classrooms will be assigned an AIS score. Additional information on the AIS is included in the Resource Section.

¹ *Building Quality Child Care in Los Angeles County: Key Research Findings and Recommendations*, compiled by the Center for Improving Child Care Quality at UCLA.

Teacher/Child Relationships - STEP

Please complete the following chart to show the **minimum** staff to child ratios that are maintained throughout the day. If the ratios change throughout the day, please describe why.

Completed by Director		Date:			Completed by Field Researcher			Date:
	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Comments	
Infants								
# of children								
# of teachers								
# of assistants								
Group Size								
Toddlers								
# of children								
# of teachers								
# of assistants								
Group Size								
Preschoolers								
# of children								
# of teachers								
# of assistants								
Group Size								

Minimum qualifications for staff listed above are:

Assistants have:		Teachers have:	
	completed no academic units in child development		completed 6 units in child development and are currently enrolled in classes
	completed 6 academic units in child development		completed 12 units in child development
	completed 12 or more units in child development		completed 24 units in child development and 16 units in general education
	Other:		completed 24 units in child development, 16 general education units and 6 units in a specialized area
			completed an AA degree in child development
			completed an BA degree in child development
			Other:

C). Learning Environment

Why focus on the learning environment?

- Considerable research over the past 15 years has provided clear documentation of the effects of the quality of the classroom environment. Results shown to relate to the quality of the preschool environments include cognitive development, social skills, classroom behavior, and language development (*Pre-kindergarten Learning & Developmental Guidelines*, California Department of Education).
- Based on two national studies of child care that included samples in Southern California, less than 15 percent of available child care offers good quality environments (*Building Quality Child Care in Los Angeles County: Key Research Findings and Recommendations*, compiled by the Center for Improving Child Care Quality at UCLA).

How will compliance with this component be determined?

A Field Researcher will conduct an observation of at least 50 percent of the classrooms using the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) and/or the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS). These rating scales have been used extensively by researchers to assess quality and by programs as a self-assessment tool. Additional information is provided on the Environment Rating Scales in the Resource Section.

D). Identification and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

Why focus on the identification and inclusion of children with special needs?

- "Inclusion as an overarching program goal supports the growth and development of all children. Research indicates that the most effective programs are those in which [families, early childhood educators, special educators, and administrators] have shared values and goals for including children with disabilities or other special needs. Inclusion is understood to benefit all children, families, and communities."²
- "If every child had a high-quality developmental check-up – and communities followed up with services and treatment – thousands of children with problems would have better lives."³
- Identification of special needs accompanied by intervention during infancy or the preschool years can improve a child's health, learning and social emotional development in ways that might be impossible just a few years later.
- Supporting and accommodating children's individual needs, creates opportunities for them to participate in program activities alongside their peers. Using inclusive practices creates an environment where children and families feel that they belong, not as a guest or an outsider, but as a full member of the group.⁴

Document your program's compliance by including a copy of this form and:

- Providing copies of program materials, such as brochures and parent and staff handbooks that communicate the program's policies and procedures for early identification and intervention of children at risk for or with special needs and inclusion of all children.
- Providing a list of community resources inclusive of early intervention and support services, such as mental health services, parenting education, occupational therapy, and/or school district or Regional Center services,

² Health and Education Communication Consultants. (2000). *Prekindergarten Learning & Development Guidelines*. Sacramento: California Department of Education.

³ Dunkle, M. & Vismara, L. (2003) *A Different Kind of Test: Good developmental checkups are vital for school readiness*. Vol. 23(4). Retrieved June 14, 2007 from www.edweek.org.

⁴ Brault, L.M.J, (1992). *Successful Strategies for Integrating Infants and Toddlers: Recommendations for Practice*.

and the procedures for networking with these resources on behalf of enrolled children and their families.

- ❑ Providing the name of the screening tool used by the program, utilization schedule, and policies governing how results are shared with families.
- ❑ Providing an overview of the results of the screenings performed and the actions taken through documentation and anecdotal notes.
- ❑ Indicating if any children in the program currently have Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or other identified needs and describing how the program accommodates the children's needs in the daily routines, curriculum, and physical environment.

The forms that follow were designed to assist your reporting on these items.

Developmental Screenings and Inclusion Form

Facility:	Date:	
Classroom Contact:	Site Administrator:	
Time Period Covered:	Age Group:	Class Size:
Number of developmental screens conducted:		
Screening Tool:		
1. Total number of children at time of enrollment in your program with an existing Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP):		
2. Initial screenings conducted within _____ days of a child's entry to the program. <i>(number)</i>		
3. Screenings are conducted: <input type="checkbox"/> on entry <input type="checkbox"/> every 6 months <input type="checkbox"/> annually		
<input type="checkbox"/> Per screening tool specifications. Describe:		
4. What modifications and accommodations are implemented as a result of the screening? Explain:		
<hr/> <hr/>		
5. Number of children whose screening results indicated a need for further assessment:		
6. Number of children referred to: Regional Center _____ School District _____		
Health Provider: _____		Other: _____
<i>List names of providers:</i> _____		<i>Explain</i> _____

7. Results of referrals: *(indicate the number of children referred in each blank space)*

Regional Centers

- _____ Qualified for services
- _____ Did not qualify
- _____ Assessment currently scheduled
- _____ Regional Center not contacted

School Districts

- _____ Qualified for services
- _____ Did not qualify
- _____ Assessment currently scheduled
- _____ School district not contacted

8. What support services other than school district or regional center were requested?

9. Total number of children with an IFSP or IEP _____ (including children with existing IFSP/IEPs at time of enrollment **and** as result of screening process.)

10. How are IFSP and/or IEP goals and outcomes supported during program activities?
Give example(s):

11. Accommodation forms are completed and implemented for each child with an IFSP and/or IEP. Explain:

12. Describe how the program structure has been modified to enable integration of children with special needs such that each child becomes a part of the regular program:

13. How many hours of college coursework or professional development related to serving children with special needs have teaching staff in this classroom completed in the past two years:

E). Qualifications and Working Conditions

Why focus on qualifications and working conditions?

- Research has consistently found that overall administrative practices are crucial for ensuring high-quality outcomes for children and families. Without quality systems in place at the organizational level, high-quality interactions and learning environments at the classroom level cannot be sustained. (*Program Administration Scale* by Teri Talan and Paula Jorde Bloom)

Document your program's compliance by including a copy of this form in the *Program Portfolio* and indicating which forms are included to document the qualifications of administrative and teaching staff in your program. Please include copies of Child Development Permits or applications for permits for all teaching staff.

- Child Development Permits
- National Association for the Education of Young Children – Accreditation Annual Report
- Steps to Excellence

Include a copy of the Staff Handbook or other materials demonstrating:

- Staffing plan or organizational chart
- Description of benefits package
- Job descriptions for each position
- Policies on preparation time
- Staff development and education policies
- Salary scale
- Documentation of staff meetings for the past year

Administrative Staff Qualifications – STEP

Agency Name _____ Site Name _____

Classroom/Group Name _____ Age Range _____ Maximum Group Size _____

Name/Schedule	Title	Qualifications (Hours, Units, Permit or Degree)	Verified by:
			<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of transcript <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of Permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of application for permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of degree <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of professional development related to children with special needs
			<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of transcript <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of Permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of application for permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of degree <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of professional development related to children with special needs
			<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of transcript <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of Permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of application for permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of degree <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of professional development related to children with special needs

Please make additional copies to cover all administrative staff.

Teaching Staff Qualifications – STEP

Agency Name _____ Site Name _____

Classroom/Group Name _____ Age Range _____ Maximum Group Size _____

Name/Schedule	Title	Qualifications (Hours, Units, Permit or Degree)	Verified by:
			<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of transcript <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of Permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of application for permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of degree <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of professional development related to children with special needs
			<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of transcript <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of Permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of application for permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of degree <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of professional development related to children with special needs
			<input type="checkbox"/> Copy of transcript <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of Permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of application for permit <input type="checkbox"/> Copy of degree <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of professional development related to children with special needs

Please make additional copies as needed to cover all teaching staff.

F). Family and Community Connections

Why focus on family and community connections?

- Young children's learning and development are integrally connected to their families. To support and promote children's optimal learning, programs need to recognize the primacy of children's families, establish relationships with families based on mutual trust and respect, support and involve families in their children's educational growth and invite families to fully participate in the program. (*Family and Community Relationships*, National Association for the Education of Young Children)
- Linking families to services and opportunities has been demonstrated to be an effective strategy in strengthening families. (*Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education*, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation/Center for the Study of Social Policy)

Document your program's compliance by including a copy of this form and the Strategies for Family and Community Connections in the *Program Portfolio* and:

- Indicate which strategies your program currently is implementing for sections A, B, C and D by circling the numbers associated with those strategies in each section (see pages 30-31).
- Provide documentation related to each strategy currently being implemented by your program.

When documenting compliance with the strategies under Family Community Connections, please provide samples of materials shared with families and/or staff, and/or photos of activities involving children, families and the community.

Strategies for Family & Community Connections

Please indicate the strategies your program currently implements by circling the associated numbers. Sections C and D continue on the next page. Documentation on how your program implements each of these strategies is to be included in the Program Portfolio.

A. Program staff welcomes all families and encourages their involvement by providing:

1. A comprehensive orientation to all families
2. A detailed parent handbook that includes the program's mission statement and educational philosophy, and describes its policies and procedures.
3. Written materials in home languages of families.
4. Communications in home languages of families, securing adults to translate as needed.
5. A variety of opportunities exist for parents to contribute to the program (in-class helpers, field trips, donated items).
6. Materials and activities incorporating the cultures of enrolled families and the community at large.
7. Facilitation of two well-organized, annual group activities for children and their families.
8. Meeting and event times are determined by family schedules.
9. Opportunities for families to participate in positions of leadership and have decision-making roles in the program (e.g. board members, parent advisory, and program evaluation committee).
10. Staff use creative strategies to adapt programs to meet family needs.

B. The program fosters strong, reciprocal relationships by establishing intentional communication practices, such as:

1. A system utilizing families' preferred communication means.
2. Staff schedules that allow for meaningful communications with families.
3. One scheduled parent/teacher conference per year to discuss child's progress.
4. Two scheduled parent/teacher conferences per year to discuss child's progress, additional parent conferences available by request.
5. An annual, written developmental report.
6. Calendars of daily schedule and activities readily available to families.
7. A group information dissemination system, such as a newsletter.
8. Annual home visits by staff.
9. Opportunities for families to help shape program practices.
10. Intentional partnering with families, recognizing parents as their child's first and most important teacher.

C. The program promotes family strengths, including an understanding of parenting and child development, and facilitates social connections by offering:

1. Opportunities for mutual support among families.
2. Library services for families to check out books, toys, videos and resource materials.
3. Information and *coaching* about healthy child growth and development.
4. Work with families on strategies for creating consistency between home and the program relating to developmentally appropriate practices with children.
5. Child-specific, home-based activity ideas to families based on child's talents and opportunities for growth.
6. Physical space where parents can gather and meet.
7. A support person to families to address areas of need, e.g. social worker, legal advocate, early intervention specialist.
8. Opportunities to create family support plans and annual review of such plans (or more often, as needed).
9. Training and support for parents to develop their advocacy skills.
10. Support and encouragement for parents to become better informed primary decision makers for their child.

D. The program facilitates meaningful connections between community resources and families by:

1. Cultivating working relationships with public and community-based services, i.e. health, education, and social services.
2. Developing and maintaining a current list of community resources.
3. Linking families to identified liaisons in public and community-based services.
4. Qualified staff participating in assessment and evaluation meetings with families, such as development of Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
5. Initiating discussions about kindergarten at least one year prior to kindergarten entry.
6. Engaging in transition to school activities in partnership with established school/center liaisons and including such activities as information sessions, field trips/school visits, and on-site enrollment support.
7. Helping families navigate community resources and providing direct advocacy as needed.
8. Inviting community programs to share their areas of expertise with staff, parents and children (e.g. library, local artists, police, story tellers).
9. Informing families of relevant, local community events.
10. Relaying policy changes at local, state or national levels that effect early care and education services to families.

Steps To Excellence Project

Part II:

Resources for Excellence