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The Model Work Standards

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Model Work Standards

for Teaching Staff in Center-Based Child Care

Center for the Study of
Child Care Employment

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Table of Contents

PREAMBLE

When the Model Work Standards were first crafted more than two decades ago, they were built on the premise that quality child care jobs are the cornerstone of high-quality services for children and families. These standards:

DECLARE

- The right of educators of young children to work under conditions that support their economic, physical, and socioemotional well-being;

- The importance of educators of young children receiving appropriate supports from their workplace and from the community in which they work in order to meet the expectations of providing high-quality early learning experiences; and

- The need for educators of young children to be active participants in decision-making that affects their work lives.

ACKNOWLEDGE

- The complex role of early childhood educators — it is a job that requires knowledge of child development; competence in putting that knowledge into practice; skill in observing, assessing, and documenting children's learning; emotional strength and physical endurance; intense human interaction; compassion for self and others; a high level of self-esteem and self-confidence in order to instill the same in children; and a commitment to engage families; and

- The responsibility and challenge of recognizing the vital impact early educators have on young children and their families, both for today and for our future.

The intent of these standards is to make it possible for those who choose teaching young children as a career to reasonably and responsibly support themselves and their families without having to hold second jobs, be dependent on another wage earner, or rely on other income supports. It is also our intent that early educators feel pride in their career choice, rather than the need to defend it to others or question it themselves. In short, these standards are about

RIGHTS, RAISES, AND RESPECT FOR THE
EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE

INTRODUCTION

Why do we need Model Work Standards?

When the Model Work Standards were first crafted more than two decades ago, they were built on the premise of Good Child Care Jobs = Good Care for Children. Today, we revise these standards to reflect a 21st-century context in which "quality improvement" efforts have consistently missed the mark when it comes to addressing the needs of the adults providing early care and education. We have yet to fully embrace the fact that the needs of the children and the needs of the adults are interconnected. As documented in the *Early Childhood Workforce Index 2018* (Whitebook, McLean, Austin, & Edwards, 2018), little has changed to improve wages and working conditions. It is with renewed focus and commitment that the **Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE)** has updated the Model Work Standards, in collaboration with some of the original authors and with the permission of the Center for the Child Care Workforce, now a project of the American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation (CCW/AFTEF).

How were the Model Work Standards created?

The original Model Work Standards were developed by the Center for the Child Care Workforce after engaging early childhood educators from around the country in a process of envisioning a high-quality work environment. Through a nationwide postcard campaign, focus groups, and professional gatherings, educators themselves helped create a set of standards that reflected the value of their work and the knowledge, skill, and dedication they bring to it. *Creating Better Child Care Jobs: Model Work Standards for Teaching Staff in Center-Based Child Care* was first published in 1998. Similar documents were created soon after for family child care and school-age care providers.

Between then and now, a major shift took place in our industry. The Worthy Wage Campaign of the 1990s was overshadowed by a new focus taking hold in states throughout the country: the development and implementation of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS). In defining "high quality" and designing systems to rate quality, states have predominately focused workforce-related standards on the amount of education and training educators receive but have done little to identify standards that address compensation, adult well-being, and other aspects of the work environment or to require programs to meet such standards.

Many programs have risen to the challenge of meeting higher standards but now struggle to sustain the improvements they've made. Many educators of young children improved their educational qualifications to help their programs achieve higher ratings, but most of them did not see a commensurate boost in pay. As the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) *Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education* consensus report notes, there exists a "misalignment of compensation and educational advancement" in the current funding of early care and education systems (NASEM, 2018).

As a result, some educators have found more lucrative positions after attaining a degree, and many of them continue to leave the field each year. Some programs have gone out of business or declined to participate in quality improvement efforts because they cannot recruit or retain qualified staff. These are the consequences of trying to improve the learning environments of children without simultaneously improving the work environments of those who care for and educate them.

Today, we recognize the need to once again amplify the voices of early educators and make progress towards achieving jobs that garner the rights, raises, and respect they deserve. Attending to the quality of the work environment is about achieving economic and social justice for and valuing the work of those who teach our youngest children. It is also the only way we will achieve and sustain high-quality early learning opportunities for young children.

The good news is that in re-creating these Model Work Standards, we didn't have to start from scratch. For the most part, they are as relevant today as they were 20 years ago because the original vision remains our goal.

How are Model Work Standards different from other standards, and why are they needed?

In states throughout the country, early learning standards and professional competencies are being developed to define the "high quality" that everyone wants. Tools like the national accreditation standards and quality rating systems identify the types of environments and activities necessary to promote children's optimal development. These standards and systems also set forth the qualifications and competencies that adults should have in order to meet children's needs. Model work standards have been developed to complete the picture of a high-quality early care and education program. When they are used in concert with other widely accepted quality indicators (i.e., early learning standards used in quality rating systems and accreditation), we draw attention to the critical role the work environment plays. Educators who are supported in their workplaces can more effectively engage with children, build relationships with families, and identify the practices and policies necessary to achieve high-quality services.

Through a self-assessment process, the Model Work Standards can help child care programs develop an improvement plan that assures quality careers for adults and quality care for children. These standards also complement other efforts to address the adult work environment, particularly SEQUAL (Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning), also published by CSCCE (see the *Model Work Standards and SEQUAL* box on p. 4).

Model Work Standards & SEQUAL

The Model Work Standards and SEQUAL (Supportive Environmental Quality Underlying Adult Learning) for Teaching Staff are both tools that focus on the adult work environment. Together, they support complementary goals: collecting data on the workplace and supporting the change process.

SEQUAL is a survey tool designed to collect data on how the workplace helps or hinders a program's ability to engage in good teaching practices, and how a workplace generates supports or barriers for continued learning on the job. It assesses five overarching domains of the workplace that support professional growth and high-quality care and invites teaching staff to rate the work environment on a variety of scales under these domains: 1) Teaching Supports; 2) Learning Community; 3) Job Crafting; 4) Adult Well-Being; and 5) Program Leadership. The data collected is analyzed by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) and is summarized and shared with participating programs.

The **Model Work Standards** are presented as statements that specifically identify what a high-quality program is striving to achieve. Through a self-assessment process, teaching staff and administrators will be able to reflect on their program's particular strengths and determine priorities for making changes. The group may decide to establish a leadership team with representation from both teaching and administrative staff to develop an action plan that identifies concrete goals, a process of achieving them, and a means to measure progress.

Model Work Standards & Accreditation/QRIS Standards

National accreditation standards and state standards established as part of their Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) identify the type of environments and activities that promote children's learning and development, engage families, and enhance daily operation of a program. Model work standards in general were developed to complete the picture of a high-quality program for young children by defining the necessary components of the adult work environment. While there may be some overlap among these varied sets of standards, the Model Work Standards are meant to complement, not replace, accreditation and early learning standards. While it may be possible to become accredited or achieve a high rating without meeting these Model Work Standards, maintaining a high level of quality over time depends on a workforce that stays because their working conditions encourage retention. Currently, high quality is often achieved because teachers are sacrificing their own time, resources, and economic security — a scenario that ultimately fuels staff turnover.

How are the Model Work Standards organized and ranked?

The Model Work Standards are divided into nine categories, including Wages and Benefits, Employment Policies and Practices, Professional Development, and more. These standards align with the "Policy Guidelines on the Promotion of Decent Work for Early Childhood Education Personnel" published by the International Labour Office (2014).

In order to develop a plan for improving the work environment, teaching staff rank each standard individually as it applies to their child care program. Ranking is on a five-point scale based on these markers:

1 - Not Met

2 - In Planning Stage

3 - In Progress

4 - Near Completion

5 - Consistently Met

A child care center with strong leadership and commitment to the teaching staff may have achieved many of these standards already, and others may seem within its grasp. Yet, it is still likely that some standards are unattainable given currently available resources. These latter standards are included, not to frustrate, but as a reminder — to others as well as ourselves — of our vision and our commitment to social and economic justice for the child care workforce. They will help us ground our priorities as advocates.

Note that, within this document, the terms "teacher," "teaching staff," and "educator" are used interchangeably in reference to the zero-to-five early childhood teaching workforce.
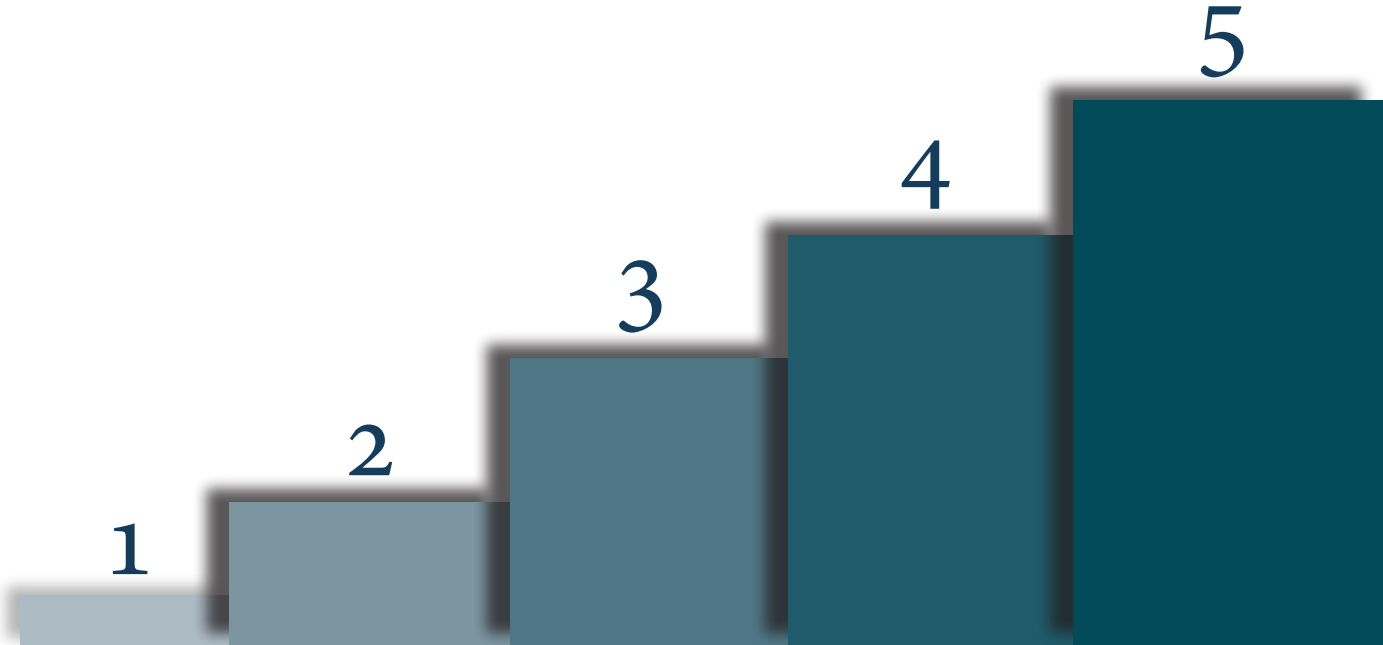
How can the Model Work Standards be used to create change?

The goal of assessing a work environment is ultimately to create a plan for change. Because educators have the highest stake in the process, they must be at the center of this endeavor. However, a variety of stakeholders may need to be involved in the change process, including directors, administrators, parents, boards of directors, higher education faculty, and community advocates. Following the Model Work Standards is a guide that addresses the various stakeholders in more detail (see **Appendix B: Notes to Stakeholders** on p. 55).

Honoring the diverse perspectives that are brought to this process will be both a challenge and a strength for achieving success. For this reason, we suggest that before getting started with the actual assessment, a "leadership team" be identified as representative of the teaching staff. The team should include both lead and assistant educators and, if desired, an administrator and/or parent who accepts the role of team member. This group will do the work of identifying standards to be addressed in an action plan. For educators who are represented by a union, this process can be used to improve the current collective bargaining agreement.

As a starting point, consider developing an agreement about how the educators and others will work together to use this tool. What do people need from one another to create a positive working relationship? Put an agreement in writing and use it as a reminder if communication or support breaks down and the group needs to get back on track. Undoubtedly, your agreement will call for mutual respect among educators, directors, and parents. It will promote the recognition of educators as professionals, not only in relation to children, but to other adults, as well. It will acknowledge that sometimes the role of director as manager responsible for the program's operations is in tension with their role as an advocate for teaching staff. Finally, your agreement will note the importance of parent involvement and support in achieving and maintaining a high-quality program.

How can you implement the Model Work Standards in your own setting?

Once an assessment leadership team has been identified and an agreement for working together is in place, follow these steps:

1. *Assess the current work environment using the Model Work Standards.*
   If your staff is small, you may choose to undertake this assessment as a whole group, either with or without the director, depending on how well you all communicate. Alternatively, provide each staff member with a copy of the standards and ask them to assess the program individually. Whatever method you choose, it is important that all voices are heard.

2. *Consider the group's responses and determine where there is consensus among staff and where there is disagreement.*
   This step can be assigned to a leadership team. Where there is disagreement, it will be important to work towards understanding why the staff have varying perspectives on a particular standard. A group meeting may need to be planned for this purpose and facilitated to ensure confidentiality of responses, if so desired. This step alone could result in clearer communication about program policies and practices.

3. *Discuss where you want to focus your improvement efforts.*
   Begin by acknowledging all the standards you already consistently meet, then choose a focus for continued work. You may choose to focus your attention on just one of the nine categories, or you may choose to look more closely at specific rankings across several categories — for example, paying attention to standards that are "near completion" or ones that are "in the planning stage." All staff should be provided the opportunity to have input in making this decision through a voting or consensus-building process.

4. *Choose one to three standards that all staff agree are important to address.*
   Some important questions will need to be addressed regarding these priorities before moving forward with developing the action plan:

   - **Does meeting this standard require significant financial resources?**
     Some plans could have a very specific dollar amount attached, and an important step in the process would be working with program administrators and boards of directors who manage the budgets. Some programs dedicated to this process decide how much money they can allocate or will need to raise to make changes (e.g., $5,000 for the coming year) and then they select action items based on the resources available.

- **Does meeting this standard require particular expertise that we do not have?**
  If the answer is "yes," the leadership team would need to determine who else must be brought into the discussion and/or creation of the plan.

- **Do current policies or practices need to change to meet this standard, what are they, and what is the process for making such changes?**
  For example, it might mean that board or administrative approval is required before moving forward. Or it could be that a change in one specific policy could impact others and staff would need to embrace a broader range of changes.

5. *Create a written action plan to address each standard chosen.*
    You are invited to use the action plan worksheet provided in the **Appendices** or to develop your own. Use one worksheet for each standard you address. You may want to start with a standard that you believe will be readily achievable and meaningful to the teaching staff, for example increasing the number of sick days staff have available to them or improving the staff lounge/workspace. The plan should include: the goal you are trying to achieve (the goal may be to consistently meet a standard or to make progress towards meeting it); a timeline; types of resources and supports necessary to advance the plan; and a clear statement of who will take responsibility for various components of the plan.

6. *Document your progress.*
    Documentation will help you evaluate, learn from, and adapt strategies to sustain continued efforts as you move on to another standard.

7. *Celebrate and broadcast your accomplishments.*
    Every victory, no matter how large or small, moves you closer to your goal of creating sustainable careers for early educators.

MODEL WORK STANDARDS

The following standards cover nine topic areas. Taken as a whole, they describe a high-quality work environment for early educators in center-based child care programs. The nine areas include: 1) Wages; 2) Benefits; 3) Employment Policies and Practices; 4) Payment for Professional Responsibilities; 5) Professional Development; 6) Staffing and Teaching Supports; 7) Communication and Team Building; 8) Decision Making and Problem Solving; and 9) Health, Safety, and Physical Setting. In assessing your program, you may want to focus on a single area first or look at the whole and then narrow your focus.

After each topic section, there is room to add notes on your priorities in this area to facilitate the development of an action plan around one or more of these standards.

I. WAGES

1.1 Salary scales for all positions are provided to every employee in a written format, either online or in a printed program policy document.

1.2 Salary scales identify different levels of pay for educators according to their levels of education and years of experience and are not based on the ages of the children with whom they work (e.g., if an infant-toddler educator and a preschool educator have the same credentials, they are both on the same wage scale).

1.3 Earning an early childhood degree or specialized credential is immediately rewarded with an increase in compensation.

1.4 Salary scales assure a living wage for all. The establishment of salary scales leads to the ultimate goal of achieving salary and benefit parity with K-3 teachers when education and experience are equivalent.

1.5 Until salaries reach target levels, salary scales are reviewed annually and revised as additional funds become available (e.g., subsidy rate increases or other new public or private investments are made). Minimally, an annual cost of living adjustment is provided to all employees.

1.6 Wages are paid in full when the program has an unexpected closure (e.g., inclement weather days) or when teaching staff are released due to low enrollment.

1.7 There is no differential in pay for work that includes direct care of children and that which fulfills professional responsibilities beyond direct care (e.g., planning time, staff meetings, recordkeeping, etc.).

1.8 Any staff member who is qualified to perform a higher-paid position and is assigned to work in that position for two consecutive weeks or more is paid at the higher rate of pay for all hours worked in that position.

1.9 In a 40-hour work week, one paid 15-minute break for each four-hour period is scheduled, as well as an unpaid 30-minute lunch break.

1.10 As required by federal law, all work by teaching staff that is more than 40 hours per week is paid at the overtime rate of time and a half.

Area(s) of Strength:

Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:

II. BENEFITS

Health Care, Retirement, and Other

2.1 All employees have access to health care coverage. Full-time employees are offered employer-paid health insurance, with 75 percent of the premium covered by the employer. Health insurance for part-time employees is prorated.

2.2 A negotiable package equivalent to 10 percent of salary is available for benefits such as: child care for employee's own children; family member health coverage; short- and long-term disability insurance; dental insurance; optical insurance; and life insurance.

2.3 All employees have access to retirement savings. A retirement savings plan (e.g., 401K or IRA) is available with an employer contribution, which equals no less than 3 percent of salary, and includes an option for employee contributions.

Paid Time Off: Sick Leave, Holidays, and Vacation

2.4 Staff receive at least 12 paid sick/personal days per year, which can be taken to care for sick family members, as well.

2.5 At least one year's worth of unused sick days can be carried over to the next year in recognition of the frequent exposure to illness that child care teachers experience.

2.6 A minimum of eight holidays are paid each year. When holidays fall on a weekend, the day before or after is the paid holiday.

2.7 Employees may use personal or vacation time for religious or cultural holidays when the center is not closed.

2.8 Employees accrue paid vacation time based on longevity in their program: minimally five days per year during the first year of employment; 10 days per year during years two through four; and 15 days per year with five or more years of employment. Part-time employees earn paid time off on a prorated basis.

2.9 Up to five days of paid vacation time may be carried over into the following year.

Unpaid Leave

2.10 There are written policies describing the conditions and approval procedures under which an unpaid leave of absence may be taken by employees.

2.11 Up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave is allowed each year for the birth or adoption of a child, acceptance of a foster child, or employee or family member illness. The employee is guaranteed continued health coverage and their job back at the same rate of pay and benefits as prior to the leave.

Area(s) of Strength:

Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:

III. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES & PRACTICES

3.1 Employees are not discriminated against based on personal characteristics, including but not limited to: race; skin color; age; religion; sex; sexual orientation; gender expression; disability; marital status; political persuasion; national origin or ancestry; immigration status; physical appearance; income level or source of income; student status; union activity; or criminal record (except as required by licensing regulations). Some, but not all of the above, are covered by federal law.

3.2 Staff files are kept in a secure and locked location, only accessible by appropriate personnel. Personnel information is considered confidential.

3.3 All staff are made aware of the child care center's plan to ensure the safety and privacy of children, families, and staff in regards to ensuring a safe space from immigration enforcement. Federal guidelines list schools, including "known and licensed child care and other early care and education programs," as "sensitive locations" where immigration enforcement actions should generally be avoided.

Job Descriptions

3.4 Job descriptions are accurate, specific, and include minimum qualifications for the position.

3.5 Job descriptions and job expectations are reviewed at least annually or in the event of changes in employee responsibilities; teaching staff have input into revisions of their own job description.

Orientation

3.6 At the time of hire, written policies and procedures for the program are provided to employees, including but not limited to: job descriptions; personnel policies; salary/benefit schedules; staff disciplinary policies; policies on developing employees for promotions and leadership; program policies; expectation for staff involvement in parent meetings, conferences, fundraising events, and other activities; and health policies for both children and staff.

3.7 Orientation is provided before a new employee begins teaching responsibilities and engages the expertise of current staff. Orientation includes a thorough review of employment policies, the evaluation cycle/process, grievance procedures, health and safety practices, and the employee's legal rights in the workplace.

Work Schedules

3.8 Staff work schedules and classroom assignments are set at the time of hire.

3.9 Classroom assignments are stable and are not routinely changed in response to daily fluctuations in child enrollments. No arbitrary or capricious changes occur.

3.10 When work schedules must be changed temporarily, staff input is considered.

3.11 When work schedules must be changed permanently, a minimum of two weeks notice is given.

3.12 The individual needs of staff to maintain a healthy work/family balance are considered when establishing work schedules.

Evaluations

3.13 Staff are evaluated three months after the date of hire or at the end of a probationary/orientation period if less than six months and then at least annually thereafter.

3.14 The annual evaluation process includes: 1) a self-evaluation completed by the employee; 2) a written evaluation by the supervisor; and 3) a meeting between the employee and the supervisor to discuss the evaluation. A peer or team evaluation may be an addition to this process.

3.15 A procedure is in place for employee evaluation of supervisors.

Promotion & Opportunity

3.16 Program recruitment, retention, and promotion policies and practices reflect a commitment to promoting racial, gender, and ethnic diversity and representation across all positions.

3.17 Policies promote equity by developing current employees for promotions and leadership positions.

3.18 In hiring for teaching positions, the interviewing/decision-making committee shall include at least two teaching staff members, at least one of them working in the room where the vacancy has occured.

3.19 In hiring for supervisory or management positions, the interviewing/decision-making committee shall include at least one teaching staff member.

Grievances

3.20 Grievance procedures state who can initiate a complaint, how it must be initiated, who receives the complaint, when the complaint must be filed, and how the complaint will be resolved.

3.21 Employees have the right to have another person present at any point in the grievance process.

3.22 No retaliatory action is taken against staff who implement the grievance procedure.

Discharge

3.23 Employees are not discharged without just cause.

3.24 No discharge for unsatisfactory job performance takes place until the employee has been warned of unsatisfactory performance in writing and has been given reasonable time to improve. Written notice of discharge, stating reasons for dismissal, is given to the employee. Exceptions to this standard are described in 3.25.

3.25 Grounds for immediate dismissal, with no prior notice, include: the display of physical violence harmful to children or adults or property; a guilty verdict or substantiated state investigation of child abuse or neglect; evidence of alcohol and/or other drug abuse; misuse of funds; falsification of documents; and violation of confidentiality agreements.

3.26 Any staff member who has their work duties changed or is placed on leave due to an investigation for alleged child abuse and/or neglect will continue to receive full pay and benefits until the investigation is complete.

3.27 In the case of a layoff, employees receive a minimum of two weeks notice and full payment of wages for those two weeks, whether working or not.

Area(s) of Strength:

Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:

IV. PAYMENT FOR PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Work schedules encompass paid contact time with children as well as paid time for completing other professional responsibilities that are not compatible with child supervision, as defined in the job description. This time is reflected in the program's staffing pattern or through the employment of qualified substitutes or floater teachers.

4.2 There is time within the classroom schedule to set up the classroom and to clean up after the day's activities.

4.3 Educators who have professional responsibilities in addition to the direct care and education of children receive a minimum of five hours per week of paid time, without responsibility for children, to engage in such activities as: curriculum planning; gathering and preparing materials; team meetings and staff collaboration; observation and assessment of children's growth and development; and documentation, reporting, and reflection on classroom practices.

4.4 Additional paid time is allocated for meeting with a supervisor, coach, or mentor or for serving in such a role; being in a leadership role (e.g., on a committee or board); and conducting parent/guardian conferences and other family engagement activities.

4.5 Paid staff meetings engaging all staff are held at least once per month.

4.6 The program is closed at least one day each year for renewing the physical environment and one day for long-range program planning. These days are paid time for participating staff.

4.7 Staff have a minimum of 40 hours of paid time for continuing education and professional development each year, the content of which is determined collaboratively with program administration.

4.8 Teaching staff can use professional development time for individualized and state-mandated in-service training, attending college classes or community-based training, observation time in other child care programs, and/or release time for activities related to child care advocacy.

4.9 After six months of employment, each member of the teaching staff is allocated minimally $200/year for professional development expenses. Unused amounts can be carried over to the next year.

4.10 Information about educational funding is available to staff who wish to pursue college degrees in early childhood education or child development. If there are no funding opportunities available in the community, the program prioritizes support for educational funding in their annual budget and/or fundraising activities.

Area(s) of Strength:

Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

5.1 Reflective supervision is provided to each staff member by a supervisor, coach, or mentor. This supervision is individualized to meet the needs of each staff member and to engage their curiosity and deeper thinking.

5.2 Guidance is available to staff in the development of a personalized professional development plan that sets challenging but reachable goals. Resources are provided as needed to assist in achieving goals.

5.3 A professional development plan is determined through a mutual process between a staff member and the supervisor/coach. Areas for improvement identified in the annual evaluation are considered in this plan, as well.

5.4 Ongoing feedback on progress towards goals is relayed through reflective supervision provided by a supervisor, coach, or mentor. Feedback is open, honest, and based on observations that occur on a regular basis and at least monthly.

5.5 The center provides accessible and affordable professional development opportunities that promote collaboration and community building with other professionals — both those who work within the program itself and those who work in other programs and across early childhood settings.

5.6 Continuing education and training choices reflect the learning styles and interests of individual staff members and include opportunities for staff to engage in sequential, in-depth (i.e., multiple-session) learning experiences.

5.7 Staff are provided encouragement and support to share their professional development experiences. This process could employ a variety of formats, such as a presentation at a staff meeting, demonstrating new learning in another classroom, or conducting in-service training for co-workers to share information with a team.

5.8 All staff participate in ongoing anti-bias/anti-racism training as part of their professional development; training focuses on working with adults as well as children.

5.9 Opportunities to serve as a mentor or to be mentored are available. Appropriate training is available for staff serving as mentors.

5.10 Opportunities exist for staff to observe one another and work together to improve teaching practices and expand their repertoire of teaching skills.

5.11 Information is available to staff regarding opportunities for professional development and support outside of the center (e.g., support groups, professional associations, informal networks, and advocacy groups).

Area(s) of Strength:

Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:

VI. STAFFING & TEACHING SUPPORTS

6.1 Professional support is available to teaching staff, either at the site or in the community, including through (but not limited to): office managers; human resources managers; physical and mental health care professionals; social workers; language translators; nutritionists and cooks; bus/van drivers; and maintenance/cleaning staff.

6.2 The program consistently maintains sufficient staff for group sizes and adult/child ratios that ensure individual attention for each child every day, with awareness of national guidelines.

6.3 Trained and qualified substitutes or floater teachers are available and arranged by the program administration for all staff leave time, including sick, vacation, personal, and professional leave.

6.4 Trained and qualified substitutes or floater teachers are available for coverage during times when a teacher's responsibilities are not compatible with supervision of children (e.g., planning time, peer-to-peer reflection, paperwork).

6.5 The program has learning materials, equipment, furnishings, and curriculum and assessment tools to address the developmental needs of all the children enrolled in the program.

6.6 Equipment and materials are repaired or replaced as needed and in a timely manner.

6.7 All required curriculum and assessment tools are available to staff at the program's expense.

6.8 A staff room or designated area is fully equipped with supplies needed for adult break time (e.g., a place to eat and store snacks/lunches), comfortable adult furnishings, workspace, and access to technology (e.g., computers, fax, email, and Internet use).

6.9 There is a professional library where staff can access books, journals, videos, and online resources to support their work with children.

6.10 Staff have access to petty cash funds for immediate consumable supplies, and a system is in place for requesting funds when needs are apparent.

6.11 Staff have input in determining the program's operating budget for supplies and equipment.

6.12 Peer support is available to all staff, from entry level to those with the greatest education and experience.

6.13 Professional support and information about community resources are available to staff working with families and their children who are experiencing trauma or who have special needs or challenging behaviors.

6.14 Sufficient resources are available within the program or through external sources to support staff when there are communication and/or language barriers (e.g., translation services, curriculum supports for dual language learners, etc.).

Area(s) of Strength:

Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:

VII. COMMUNICATION & TEAM BUILDING

7.1 Communication among teaching staff, administration, and supervisory staff models respect for the value of the work and the value of each individual's contributions.

7.2 An effective communication system ensures that everyone on staff is informed about new procedures, policies, and events. The communication system respects the various learning styles of staff (i.e., it incorporates both visual and verbal messages and "walks" people through new procedures).

7.3 Communication honors the primary language of each employee, and whenever possible and practical, written policies and procedures for the program are translated into the employee's primary language.

7.4 Proposed changes in policies and procedures are circulated in writing to all staff, and a sufficient period is allowed for meaningful staff input and response before changes are adopted or implemented.

7.5 Staff meetings are designed with the primary purpose of enhancing staff communication and collaboration, building a cohesive community, and working together to understand the needs of children, solve problems, and improve program quality. Announcements, reminders, and general issues of efficient program operation are secondary.

7.6 Staff have input into the agenda of staff meetings, the agenda is distributed in advance of meetings, and a written record of the meeting is kept and posted.

7.7 Opportunities exist for staff members to work collaboratively on projects, share resources, and solve problems together outside of staff meeting time.

7.8 In addition to adhering to a non-discrimination policy, the program intentionally honors, respects, and affirms each individual staff member. Fulfillment of this goal is evaluated regularly with staff input.

7.9 The program encourages collegiality, a sense of community, and a positive work climate through team-building activities, group projects, and the creation of traditions/rituals among staff. The program does not tolerate bullying among adults; employees experiencing bullying can use the grievance procedure to address it.

Area(s) of Strength:

Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:

VIII. DECISION MAKING & PROBLEM SOLVING

8.1 Teaching staff make decisions regarding daily activities, room arrangements, and other matters that affect their day-to-day practice.

8.2 Teaching staff share decision-making with the administration in situations where decisions impact their work life. These decisions include, but are not limited to: staffing for paid leave time; scheduling; rotation of responsibilities; choosing curriculum and assessment materials; ordering materials for the classroom; screening and interviewing new staff; and managing staff turnover with consideration for the needs of children and staff.

8.3 Staff are engaged in setting program goals, identifying priorities to meet the goals, and measuring progress.

8.4 The program philosophy and vision are created jointly by administrative and teaching staff and reviewed at least annually for changes/modifications.

8.5 All staff members, including the administration, are committed to examining what is not working and open to and supportive of trying new ideas.

8.6 Problems are viewed as opportunities for program improvement.

Area(s) of Strength:

Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:

IX. HEALTH, SAFETY, & PHYSICAL SETTING

9.1 The program accepts responsibility for providing a safe and healthy work environment for employees.

9.2 Personal protective equipment or clothing (e.g., disposable gloves) are available without cost to the employee.

9.3 At the time of hire, staff receive training on safe methods for handling objects and children (e.g., lifting toddlers, handling food, dispersing medications), management of infectious diseases, and security procedures and systems.

9.4 Regularly used equipment (e.g., diapering tables, storage areas) are designed on ergonomic principles and are at a height and location that allow staff to use gestures and postures that are safe.

9.5 Adult-size chairs and workstations are available in all classrooms; adult restroom facilities are available at the center.

9.6 Clear policies delineate the conditions under which children are excluded from the classroom because of illness or injury, and these policies are consistently implemented.

9.7 Copies of workplace inspection reports from building, health, safety, and/or licensing officials are posted.

9.8 No retaliatory action is taken against employees who refuse to perform work that is in violation of regulations, after notifying the employer of the violation.

9.9 Security measures, as identified with input from all staff, are in place to ensure staff members' physical well-being (e.g., alarms and other security systems; a safe and well-lit parking area; well-rehearsed emergency plans; no teacher alone at the end of the day).

9.10 Policies are in place to assure a work environment that is free of sexual harassment, racial discrimination, bullying, and other forms of abuse.

9.11 The program provides in-service training for staff on management of stress and other issues relating to physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

Physical Setting

9.12 There is adequate classroom space designed with the developmental needs of children in mind. Staff have input into room arrangements and are provided resources, training, and support to improve classroom space.

9.13 Classrooms have comfortable places for adults to sit and be with children.

9.14 Staff are encouraged to add artifacts, photographs, and other objects that reflect their lives as well as the lives of the children.

9.15 The staff room or designated area allows for both staff interaction and a relatively quiet place for reflection and breaks.

9.16 Staff have a safe place to put personal belongings and a work area for preparation and planning.

9.17 The physical setting is evaluated periodically for the health and safety needs of employees; improvements are planned in response to staff needs.

9.18 Reasonable accommodations are made for staff with special needs, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

9.19 Overall maintenance of the facility is the responsibility of persons other than teaching staff.

Area(s) of Strength:

Area(s) to Prioritize for Making Changes:

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

The Model Work Standards are presented as statements that specifically identify what a high-quality program is striving to achieve. Through a self-assessment process, teaching staff and administrators can reflect on their program's particular strengths and determine priorities for making changes. The group may decide to establish a leadership team with representation from both teaching and administrative staff to develop an action plan that identifies concrete goals, a process of achieving them, and a means to measure progress.

On the following pages, you'll find an assessment sheet for each standard to facilitate your review process. Please rank each standard individually as it applies to your child care program. Ranking is on a five-point scale based on these markers:

1 - Not Met

2 - In Planning Stage

3 - In Progress

4 - Near Completion
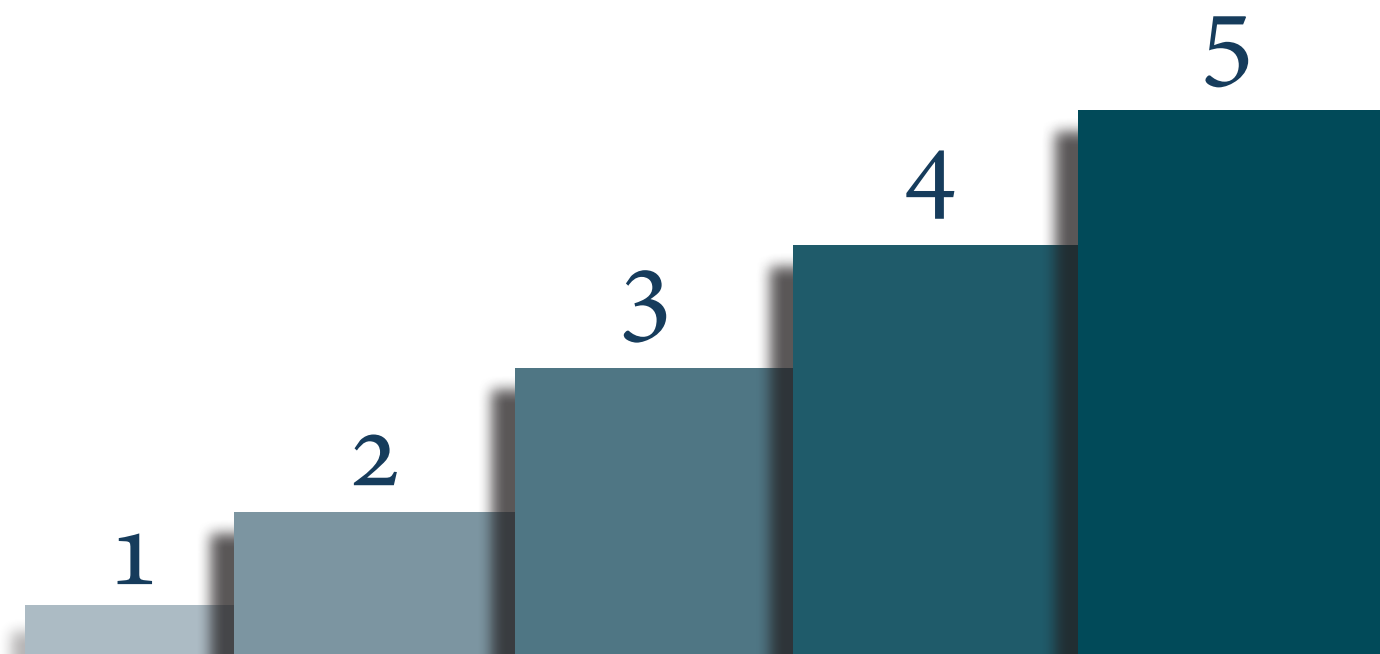
5 - Consistently Met

Assessment Sheet

Standard I - Wages

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
1.1 Salary scales for all positions are provided to every employee in a written format, either online or in a printed program policy document.	
1.2 Salary scales identify different levels of pay for educators according to their levels of education and years of experience and are not based on the ages of the children with whom they work (e.g., if an infant-toddler educator and a preschool educator have the same credentials, they are both on the same wage scale).	
1.3 Earning an early childhood degree or specialized credential is immediately rewarded with an increase in compensation.	
1.4 Salary scales assure a living wage for all. The establishment of salary scales leads to the ultimate goal of achieving salary and benefit parity with K-3 teachers when education and experience are equivalent.	
1.5 Until salaries reach target levels, salary scales are reviewed annually and revised as additional funds become available (e.g., subsidy rate increases or other new public or private investments are made). Minimally, an annual cost of living adjustment is provided to all employees.	
1.6 Wages are paid in full when the program has an unexpected closure (e.g., inclement weather days) or when teaching staff are released due to low enrollment.	
1.7 There is no differential in pay for work that includes direct care of children and that which fulfills professional responsibilities beyond direct care (e.g., planning time, staff meetings, recordkeeping, etc.).	
1.8 Any staff member who is qualified to perform a higher-paid position and is assigned to work in that position for two consecutive weeks or more is paid at the higher rate of pay for all hours worked in that position.	
1.9 In a 40-hour work week, one paid 15-minute break for each four-hour period is scheduled, as well as an unpaid 30-minute lunch break.	
1.10 As required by federal law, all work by teaching staff that is more than 40 hours per week is paid at the overtime rate of time and a half.	

Assessment Sheet
Standard I - Wages, Cont'd

Record scoring and relevant notes below.

Score Distribution, Standard I -Wages

Number of Items	5 Consistently Met	4 Near Completion	3 In Progress	2 In Planning Stage	1 Not Met
10					

Notes on Wages:

Assessment Sheet
Standard II - Benefits

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
2.1 All employees have access to health care coverage. Full-time employees are offered employer-paid health insurance, with 75 percent of the premium covered by the employer. Health insurance for part-time employees is prorated.	
2.2 A negotiable package equivalent to 10 percent of salary is available for benefits such as: child care for employee's own children; family member health coverage; short- and long-term disability insurance; dental insurance; optical insurance; and life insurance.	
2.3 All employees have access to retirement savings. A retirement savings plan (e.g., 401K or IRA) is available with an employer contribution, which equals no less than 3 percent of salary, and includes an option for employee contributions.	
2.4 Staff receive at least 12 paid sick/personal days per year, which can be taken to care for sick family members, as well.	
2.5 At least one year's worth of unused sick days can be carried over to the next year in recognition of the frequent exposure to illness that child care teachers experience.	
2.6 A minimum of eight holidays are paid each year. When holidays fall on a weekend, the day before or after is the paid holiday.	
2.7 Employees may use personal or vacation time for religious or cultural holidays when the center is not closed.	
2.8 Employees accrue paid vacation time based on longevity in their program: minimally five days per year during the first year of employment; 10 days per year during years two through four; and 15 days per year with five or more years of employment. Part-time employees earn paid time off on a prorated basis.	
2.9 Up to five days of paid vacation time may be carried over into the following year.	
2.10 There are written policies describing the conditions and approval procedures under which an unpaid leave of absence may be taken by employees.	
2.11 Up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave is allowed each year for the birth or adoption of a child, acceptance of a foster child, or employee or family member illness. The employee is guaranteed continued health coverage and their job back at the same rate of pay and benefits as prior to the leave.	

Assessment Sheet
Standard II - Benefits, Cont'd

Record scoring and relevant notes below.

Score Distribution, Standard II - Benefits

Number of Items	5 Consistently Met	4 Near Completion	3 In Progress	2 In Planning Stage	1 Not Met
11					

Notes on Benefits:

Assessment Sheet
Standard III - Employment Policies & Practices

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
3.1 Employees are not discriminated against based on personal characteristics, including but not limited to: race; skin color; age; religion; sex; sexual orientation; gender expression; disability; marital status; political persuasion; national origin or ancestry; immigration status; physical appearance; income level or source of income; student status; union activity; or criminal record (except as required by licensing regulations). Some, but not all of the above, are covered by federal law.	
3.2 Staff files are kept in a secure and locked location, only accessible by appropriate personnel. Personnel information is considered confidential.	
3.3 All staff are made aware of the child care center's plan to ensure the safety and privacy of children, families, and staff in regards to ensuring a safe space from immigration enforcement. Federal guidelines list schools, including "known and licensed child care and other early care and education programs," as "sensitive locations" where immigration enforcement actions should generally be avoided.	
3.4 Job descriptions are accurate, specific, and include minimum qualifications for the position.	
3.5 Job descriptions and job expectations are reviewed at least annually or in the event of changes in employee responsibilities; teaching staff have input into revisions of their own job description.	
3.6 At the time of hire, written policies and procedures for the program are provided to employees, including but not limited to: job descriptions; personnel policies; salary/benefit schedules; staff disciplinary policies; policies on developing employees for promotions and leadership; program policies; expectation for staff involvement in parent meetings, conferences, fundraising events, and other activities; and health policies for both children and staff.	
3.7 Orientation is provided before a new employee begins teaching responsibilities and engages the expertise of current staff. Orientation includes a thorough review of employment policies, the evaluation cycle/process, grievance procedures, health and safety practices, and the employee's legal rights in the workplace.	
3.8 Staff work schedules and classroom assignments are set at the time of hire.	

Assessment Sheet
Standard III - Employment Policies & Practices, Cont'd

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
3.9 Classroom assignments are stable and are not routinely changed in response to daily fluctuations in child enrollments. No arbitrary or capricious changes occur.	
3.10 When work schedules must be changed temporarily, staff input is considered.	
3.11 When work schedules must be changed permanently, a minimum of two weeks notice is given.	
3.12 The individual needs of staff to maintain a healthy work/family balance are considered when establishing work schedules.	
3.13 Staff are evaluated three months after the date of hire or at the end of a probationary/ orientation period if less than six months and then at least annually thereafter.	
3.14 The annual evaluation process includes: 1) a self-evaluation completed by the employee; 2) a written evaluation by the supervisor; and 3) a meeting between the employee and the supervisor to discuss the evaluation. A peer or team evaluation may be an addition to this process.	
3.15 A procedure is in place for employee evaluation of supervisors.	
3.16 Program recruitment, retention, and promotion policies and practices reflect a commitment to promoting racial, gender, and ethnic diversity and representation across all positions.	
3.17 Policies promote equity by developing current employees for promotions and leadership positions.	
3.18 In hiring for teaching positions, the interviewing/decision-making committee shall include at least two teaching staff members, at least one of them working in the room where the vacancy has occured.	
3.19 In hiring for supervisory or management positions, the interviewing/decision-making committee shall include at least one teaching staff member.	
3.20 Grievance procedures state who can initiate a complaint, how it must be initiated, who receives the complaint, when the complaint must be filed, and how the complaint will be resolved.	
3.21 Employees have the right to have another person present at any point in the grievance process.	

Assessment Sheet
Standard III - Employment Policies & Practices, Cont'd

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
3.22 No retaliatory action is taken against staff who implement the grievance procedure.	
3.23 Employees are not discharged without just cause.	
3.24 No discharge for unsatisfactory job performance takes place until the employee has been warned of unsatisfactory performance in writing and has been given reasonable time to improve. Written notice of discharge, stating reasons for dismissal, is given to the employee. Exceptions to this standard are described in 3.25.	
3.25 Grounds for immediate dismissal, with no prior notice, include: the display of physical violence harmful to children or adults or property; a guilty verdict or substantiated state investigation of child abuse or neglect; evidence of alcohol and/or other drug abuse; misuse of funds; falsification of documents; and violation of confidentiality agreements.	
3.26 Any staff member who has their work duties changed or is placed on leave due to an investigation for alleged child abuse and/or neglect will continue to receive full pay and benefits until the investigation is complete.	
3.27 In the case of a layoff, employees receive a minimum of two weeks notice and full payment of wages for those two weeks, whether working or not.	

Assessment Sheet
Standard III - Employment Policies & Practices, Cont'd

Record scoring and relevant notes below.

Score Distribution, Standard III - Employment Policies & Practices

Number of Items	5 Consistently Met	4 Near Completion	3 In Progress	2 In Planning Stage	1 Not Met
27					

Notes on Employment Policies & Practices:

Assessment Sheet
Standard IV - Payment for Professional Responsibilities

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
4.1 Work schedules encompass paid contact time with children as well as paid time for completing other professional responsibilities that are not compatible with child supervision, as defined in the job description. This time is reflected in the program's staffing pattern or through the employment of qualified substitutes or floater teachers.	
4.2 There is time within the classroom schedule to set up the classroom and to clean up after the day's activities.	
4.3 Educators who have professional responsibilities in addition to the direct care and education of children receive a minimum of five hours per week of paid time, without responsibility for children, to engage in such activities as: curriculum planning; gathering and preparing materials; team meetings and staff collaboration; observation and assessment of children's growth and development; and documentation, reporting, and reflection on classroom practices.	
4.4 Additional paid time is allocated for meeting with a supervisor, coach, or mentor or for serving in such a role; being in a leadership role (e.g., on a committee or board); and conducting parent/guardian conferences and other family engagement activities.	
4.5 Paid staff meetings engaging all staff are held at least once per month.	
4.6 The program is closed at least one day each year for renewing the physical environment and one day for long-range program planning. These days are paid time for participating staff.	
4.7 Staff have a minimum of 40 hours of paid time for continuing education and professional development each year, the content of which is determined collaboratively with program administration.	
4.8 Teaching staff can use professional development time for individualized and state-mandated in-service training, attending college classes or community-based training, observation time in other child care programs, and/or release time for activities related to child care advocacy.	
4.9 After six months of employment, each member of the teaching staff is allocated minimally $200/year for professional development expenses. Unused amounts can be carried over to the next year.	

Assessment Sheet

Standard IV - Payment for Professional Responsibilities, Cont'd

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
4.10 Information about educational funding is available to staff who wish to pursue college degrees in early childhood education or child development. If there are no funding opportunities available in the community, the program prioritizes support for educational funding in their annual budget and/or fundraising activities.	

Assessment Sheet
Standard IV - Payment for Professional Responsibilities, Cont'd

Record scoring and relevant notes below.

Score Distribution, Standard IV - Payment for Professional Responsibilities

Number of Items	5 Consistently Met	4 Near Completion	3 In Progress	2 In Planning Stage	1 Not Met
10					

Notes on Payment for Professional Responsibilities:

Assessment Sheet

Standard V - Professional Development

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
5.1 Reflective supervision is provided to each staff member by a supervisor, coach, or mentor. This supervision is individualized to meet the needs of each staff member and to engage their curiosity and deeper thinking.	
5.2 Guidance is available to staff in the development of a personalized professional development plan that sets challenging but reachable goals. Resources are provided as needed to assist in achieving goals.	
5.3 A professional development plan is determined through a mutual process between a staff member and the supervisor/coach. Areas for improvement identified in the annual evaluation are considered in this plan, as well.	
5.4 Ongoing feedback on progress towards goals is relayed through reflective supervision provided by a supervisor, coach, or mentor. Feedback is open, honest, and based on observations that occur on a regular basis and at least monthly.	
5.5 The center provides accessible and affordable professional development opportunities that promote collaboration and community building with other professionals — both those who work within the program itself and those who work in other programs and across early childhood settings.	
5.6 Continuing education and training choices reflect the learning styles and interests of individual staff members and include opportunities for staff to engage in sequential, in-depth (i.e., multiple-session) learning experiences.	
5.7 Staff are provided encouragement and support to share their professional development experiences. This process could employ a variety of formats, such as a presentation at a staff meeting, demonstrating new learning in another classroom, or conducting in-service training for co-workers to share information with a team.	
5.8 All staff participate in ongoing anti-bias/anti-racism training as part of their professional development; training focuses on working with adults as well as children.	
5.9 Opportunities to serve as a mentor or to be mentored are available. Appropriate training is available for staff serving as mentors.	
5.10 Opportunities exist for staff to observe one another and work together to improve teaching practices and expand their repertoire of teaching skills.	

Assessment Sheet

Standard V - Professional Development, Cont'd

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
5.11 Information is available to staff regarding opportunities for professional development and support outside of the center (e.g., support groups, professional associations, informal networks, and advocacy groups).	

Assessment Sheet
Standard V - Professional Development, Cont'd

Record scoring and relevant notes below.

Score Distribution, Standard V - Professional Development

Number of Items	5 Consistently Met	4 Near Completion	3 In Progress	2 In Planning Stage	1 Not Met
11					

Notes on Professional Development:

Assessment Sheet
Standard VI - Staffing & Teaching Supports

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
6.1 Professional support is available to teaching staff, either at the site or in the community, including through (but not limited to): office managers; human resources managers; physical and mental health care professionals; social workers; language translators; nutritionists and cooks; bus/van drivers; and maintenance/cleaning staff.	
6.2 The program consistently maintains sufficient staff for group sizes and adult/child ratios that ensure individual attention for each child every day, with awareness of national guidelines.	
6.3 Trained and qualified substitutes or floater teachers are available and arranged by the program administration for all staff leave time, including sick, vacation, personal, and professional leave.	
6.4 Trained and qualified substitutes or floater teachers are available for coverage during times when a teacher's responsibilities are not compatible with supervision of children (e.g., planning time, peer-to-peer reflection, paperwork).	
6.5 The program has learning materials, equipment, furnishings, and curriculum and assessment tools to address the developmental needs of all the children enrolled in the program.	
6.6 Equipment and materials are repaired or replaced as needed and in a timely manner.	
6.7 All required curriculum and assessment tools are available to staff at the program's expense.	
6.8 A staff room or designated area is fully equipped with supplies needed for adult break time (e.g., a place to eat and store snacks/lunches), comfortable adult furnishings, workspace, and access to technology (e.g., computers, fax, email, and Internet use).	
6.9 There is a professional library where staff can access books, journals, videos, and online resources to support their work with children.	
6.10 Staff have access to petty cash funds for immediate consumable supplies, and a system is in place for requesting funds when needs are apparent.	
6.11 Staff have input in determining the program's operating budget for supplies and equipment.	
6.12 Peer support is available to all staff, from entry level to those with the greatest education and experience.	

Assessment Sheet

Standard VI - Staffing & Teaching Supports, Cont'd

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
6.13 Professional support and information about community resources are available to staff working with families and their children who are experiencing trauma or who have special needs or challenging behaviors.	
6.14 Sufficient resources are available within the program or through external sources to support staff when there are communication and/or language barriers (e.g., translation services, curriculum supports for dual language learners, etc.).	

Assessment Sheet
Standard VI - Staffing & Teaching Supports, Cont'd

Record scoring and relevant notes below.

Score Distribution, Standard V - Staffing & Teaching Supports

Number of Items	5 Consistently Met	4 Near Completion	3 In Progress	2 In Planning Stage	1 Not Met
14					

Notes on Staffing & Teaching Supports:

Assessment Sheet
Standard VII - Communication & Team Building

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
7.1 Communication among teaching staff, administration, and supervisory staff models respect for the value of the work and the value of each individual's contributions.	
7.2 An effective communication system ensures that everyone on staff is informed about new procedures, policies, and events. The communication system respects the various learning styles of staff (i.e., it incorporates both visual and verbal messages and "walks" people through new procedures).	
7.3 Communication honors the primary language of each employee, and whenever possible and practical, written policies and procedures for the program are translated into the employee's primary language.	
7.4 Proposed changes in policies and procedures are circulated in writing to all staff, and a sufficient period is allowed for meaningful staff input and response before changes are adopted or implemented.	
7.5 Staff meetings are designed with the primary purpose of enhancing staff communication and collaboration, building a cohesive community, and working together to understand the needs of children, solve problems, and improve program quality. Announcements, reminders, and general issues of efficient program operation are secondary.	
7.6 Staff have input into the agenda of staff meetings, the agenda is distributed in advance of meetings, and a written record of the meeting is kept and posted.	
7.7 Opportunities exist for staff members to work collaboratively on projects, share resources, and solve problems together outside of staff meeting time.	
7.8 In addition to adhering to a non-discrimination policy, the program intentionally honors, respects, and affirms each individual staff member. Fulfillment of this goal is evaluated regularly with staff input.	
7.9 The program encourages collegiality, a sense of community, and a positive work climate through team-building activities, group projects, and the creation of traditions/rituals among staff. The program does not tolerate bullying among adults; employees experiencing bullying can use the grievance procedure to address it.	

Assessment Sheet

Standard VII - Communication & Team Building, Cont'd

Record scoring and relevant notes below.

Score Distribution, Standard VII - Communication & Team Building

Number of Items	5 Consistently Met	4 Near Completion	3 In Progress	2 In Planning Stage	1 Not Met
9					

Notes on Communication & Team Building:

Assessment Sheet

Standard VIII - Decision Making & Problem Solving

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
8.1 Teaching staff make decisions regarding daily activities, room arrangements, and other matters that affect their day-to-day practice.	
8.2 Teaching staff share decision-making with the administration in situations where decisions impact their work life. These decisions include, but are not limited to: staffing for paid leave time; scheduling; rotation of responsibilities; choosing curriculum and assessment materials; ordering materials for the classroom; screening and interviewing new staff; and managing staff turnover with consideration for the needs of children and staff.	
8.3 Staff are engaged in setting program goals, identifying priorities to meet the goals, and measuring progress.	
8.4 The program philosophy and vision are created jointly by administrative and teaching staff and reviewed at least annually for changes/modifications.	
8.5 All staff members, including the administration, are committed to examining what is not working and open to and supportive of trying new ideas.	
8.6 Problems are viewed as opportunities for program improvement.	

Assessment Sheet
Standard VIII - Decision Making & Problem Solving, Cont'd

Record scoring and relevant notes below.

Score Distribution, Standard VIII - Decision Making & Problem Solving

Number of Items	5 Consistently Met	4 Near Completion	3 In Progress	2 In Planning Stage	1 Not Met
6					

Notes on Decision Making & Problem Solving:

Assessment Sheet
Standard IX - Health, Safety, & Physical Setting

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
9.1 The program accepts responsibility for providing a safe and healthy work environment for employees.	
9.2 Personal protective equipment or clothing (e.g., disposable gloves) are available without cost to the employee.	
9.3 At the time of hire, staff receive training on safe methods for handling objects and children (e.g., lifting toddlers, handling food, dispersing medications), management of infectious diseases, and security procedures and systems.	
9.4 Regularly used equipment (e.g., diapering tables, storage areas) are designed on ergonomic principles and are at a height and location that allow staff to use gestures and postures that are safe.	
9.5 Adult-size chairs and workstations are available in all classrooms; adult restroom facilities are available at the center.	
9.6 Clear policies delineate the conditions under which children are excluded from the classroom because of illness or injury, and these policies are consistently implemented.	
9.7 Copies of workplace inspection reports from building, health, safety, and/or licensing officials are posted.	
9.8 No retaliatory action is taken against employees who refuse to perform work that is in violation of regulations, after notifying the employer of the violation.	
9.9 Security measures, as identified with input from all staff, are in place to ensure staff members' physical well-being (e.g., alarms and other security systems; a safe and well-lit parking area; well-rehearsed emergency plans; no teacher alone at the end of the day).	
9.10 Policies are in place to assure a work environment that is free of sexual harassment, racial discrimination, bullying, and other forms of abuse.	
9.11 The program provides in-service training for staff on management of stress and other issues relating to physical, emotional, and mental well-being.	
9.12 There is adequate classroom space designed with the developmental needs of children in mind. Staff have input into room arrangements and are provided resources, training, and support to improve classroom space.	

Assessment Sheet
Standard IX - Health, Safety, & Physical Setting, Cont'd

Rank each standard using the following markers:

1 - Not Met; 2 - In Planning Stage; 3 - In Progress; 4 - Near Completion; 5 - Consistently Met

Item	Score
9.13 Classrooms have comfortable places for adults to sit and be with children.	
9.14 Staff are encouraged to add artifacts, photographs, and other objects that reflect their lives as well as the lives of the children.	
9.15 The staff room or designated area allows for both staff interaction and a relatively quiet place for reflection and breaks.	
9.16 Staff have a safe place to put personal belongings and a work area for preparation and planning.	
9.17 The physical setting is evaluated periodically for the health and safety needs of employees; improvements are planned in response to staff needs.	
9.18 Reasonable accommodations are made for staff with special needs, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).	
9.19 Overall maintenance of the facility is the responsibility of persons other than teaching staff.	

Assessment Sheet
Standard IX - Health, Safety, & Physical Setting, Cont'd

Record scoring and relevant notes below.

Score Distribution, Standard IX - Health, Safety, & Physical Setting, Cont'd

Number of Items	5 Consistently Met	4 Near Completion	3 In Progress	2 In Planning Stage	1 Not Met
19					

Notes on Health, Safety, & Physical Setting:

APPENDICES

A GUIDE FOR USING THE MODEL WORK STANDARDS

These Model Work Standards have multiple uses and are intended to serve multiple audiences. They can be used as:

- A **self-assessment tool** for evaluating the workplace, as described in the introduction;
- A **planning tool** for reflecting on the current work environment, setting goals for improvement, and measuring success;
- An **educational tool** to articulate what center-based early educators need to ensure their well-being and help them better serve children and families; and
- An **organizing and advocacy tool** for enlisting wider support for the resources needed to make lasting change.

When these standards were originally created, we tapped into the knowledge and experience of the child care workforce itself in their design. We also looked to them to lead the change. It was a time in our history when the child care workforce was discovering its own sense of empowerment and embracing new opportunities. Over time, we have learned that achieving the changes we envision is a complex task, one that will take leadership from multiple sources and a willingness to work collaboratively.

A child care center with strong leadership and commitment to the teaching staff may have achieved many of these standards already, and others may seem within its grasp. Yet, it is still likely that there are some standards that are unattainable given currently available resources. These latter standards are included, not to frustrate, but as a reminder — to others as well as ourselves — of our vision and our commitment to social and economic justice for the child care workforce. They will help us ground our priorities as advocates.

Improving a work environment requires an investment of time, energy, and money. Some improvements may only imply a minimal financial cost, but require a significant investment in changing the interpersonal climate of a workplace. Others may challenge programs to re-prioritize existing resources or seek additional funding sources. Still others may call for a community-wide plan to unite forces and take bold action.

The Model Work Standards, therefore, are intended to be used in numerous ways, including:

- At child care centers as a vehicle for immediately beginning to improve job conditions;

- By college faculty, professional development staff, and other adult educators as part of pre-service and continuing education of early childhood educators to: 1) build a knowledge base regarding the link between good child care jobs and good care and education for children; and 2) develop advocacy and leadership skills to help create change;

- In local communities where representatives of the early care and education workforce, support agencies, and community stakeholders can identify collaborative efforts to address needs; and

- With policymakers and funders to raise awareness about the funding and resources that will be necessary to make lasting, comprehensive improvements in the nation's child care system, including early educators' work environments.

APPENDIX B

NOTES TO STAKEHOLDERS

Implementing the Model Work Standards is likely to meet with the greatest success when all stakeholders embrace their role in the change process. In the following section, we offer some specific guidance to various stakeholders.

Using the Model Work Standards: A Note for Educators

How often have we heard it said that despite poor wages and working conditions, "we do it for the children"? In fact, current research and best practice tell us that improving the work environment and supports to educators is critical to improving the care and education that we offer children (IOM & NRC, 2015). Providing educators with what they need to build long-term, consistent relationships with children *is* "doing it for the children." Improving working conditions, gaining skills through education, and earning a living wage in order to remain in the field *are all* "doing it for the children." Asking for what you need and working in cooperation with other adults may not be easy, but undertaking the challenge is worth it for yourself and for the children in your care.

You will need the support of your program administration to make real change. Many child care directors will support these standards and will be equally involved and invested in improving early care and education jobs. If you are presenting them to your director for the first time, be open to their concerns and questions, be willing to learn from their business experience. Likewise, you can expect others to learn from your classroom experience.

What if the director or the administration does not support the Model Work Standards or working together to achieve them? In that case, you can gather with co-workers during off-hours and develop strategies for approaching your administrator that will help them understand the importance of this work and why it is meaningful to the staff and to the center's outcomes. Assess your current work environment, discuss your priorities for change as suggested in the introduction of this tool, and then take the following steps.

- Practice articulating to others why these changes are important. How will they help you, the administration, the parents, and the children? How will they improve the quality of child care that the center provides?
- Decide on a plan for communicating with the director or administration about the change(s) you want and why.
- Listen respectfully to the response, even if it differs from your own.
- Offer to work cooperatively to find solutions or compromises.
- Seek allies in your community and in other early childhood programs.

Using the Model Work Standards: A Note for Directors/Administrators

As a child care center director, you did not create the problems of low wages, inadequate benefits, and high turnover in the field, and they are not your problems to solve alone. But you do have a leadership role in helping to recruit and retain an excellent teaching staff. The Model Work Standards can help you to:

- Learn from the teaching staff in your program about what would make the greatest difference to them in their work lives;

- Prioritize the use of your limited resources where they will have the greatest impact on staff retention;

- Educate the teaching staff about the economic realities of operating the program, where the money comes from, and how it is currently spent;

- Improve program quality by improving early care and education jobs;

- Acknowledge the positive working conditions your center does have and measure the progress you've made; and

- Focus your arguments for increased public and private support for quality early care and education in your community;

There are also some ways in which using these standards could be difficult. You may sometimes be caught between a rock and a hard place — receiving demands or requests from staff that you feel you cannot meet, even if you would like to. The teaching staff may also have ideas or priorities that are different from your own, and you may be asked to share some of your decision-making power. The following are ways that you can help your center get started in using the Model Work Standards.

- Approach this work with the same level of commitment as when you address QRIS or accreditation standards.

- Begin with a staff development session devoted exclusively to this topic. Establish the ground rules for working together and then really listen to staff concerns, suspending both your judgments and your defense of current practices.

- As you work through the steps described in the Introduction, use small work groups, create oppor-tunities for individual reflection, and delegate tasks to keep everyone involved. Make documenting progress an ongoing agenda item at staff meetings.

- If you are part of a directors' network, find support from other directors: What have they done?How did they do it? What can you work on together?

Using the Model Work Standards: A Note for Parents & Governing Boards

Creating a high-quality learning environment for young children and a high-quality work environment for early educators is a costly endeavor. The cost of a high-quality program is more than most parents can afford to pay, and they shouldn't have to shoulder this cost alone if we agree that there is a public benefit. Currently, when we set fees based on what we believe parents can afford to pay, we too often sacrifice the well-being of early educators and consequently fuel teacher turnover.

Early educators are most likely to continue in the profession, building their careers in early childhood education, if they have a supportive work environment and can earn a decent living for themselves and their families. This is why your engagement in improving early care and education is important. Working with your child care program to create better child care jobs will give you a deeper understanding of the true value of early care and education. Joining with child care advocates to secure the public and private resources they need is also an excellent way to strengthen a partnership with your child's teacher. Here are some ways you can help.

- Provide feedback and input into the Model Work Standards "action plan," as requested by the staff of your child care program.
- Agree to serve on a committee, participate in fundraising efforts, or respond to other requests for involvement.
- Consider your own workplace and/or community groups that you are involved in. Do you have access to any resources that could be useful in improving child care jobs?
- Talk to your employer about child care issues and what your workplace could offer.
- Advocate for increased public investment in the child care workforce.

Using the Model Work Standards: A Note for Higher Education Faculty

In the process of teaching and mentoring students, early childhood faculty have the opportunity to make the connection between the quality of the adult work environment and the ability of early educators to create and implement the best teaching and learning environments for young children. The Model Work Standards are a useful tool for describing a quality work environment and a guide for job-seeking educators in deciding which programs will offer the best opportunities for putting into practice a curriculum that is developmentally and culturally appropriate for the young children they will teach.

The Model Work Standards also create an opportunity to guide students in developing an advocacy response when they encounter programs and practices that do not support educators in their efforts toward excellence for children. Using the processes offered in this document, students can learn a very specific method of advocating for change. Among other skills, the students will develop an understanding of how systems and institutions impact the practices and programs where they work.

By using the Model Work Standards in the ways described, new and seasoned early educators can strengthen their abilities to speak up and take a stand for working conditions that impact their well-being as well as the learning opportunities for young children. They can learn and practice the leadership skills involved in communicating their knowledge and experiences for the purpose of improving our early childhood work environments.

Using the Model Work Standards in Your Community

There are undoubtedly others in your community who are interested in improving early care and education job quality. If community conversations are already happening, join them! If you don't see this process taking place, extend an invitation. You may need to start small and identify a champion in your community to help facilitate this endeavor. Potential partners include: local employers and small business owners; local government; organized labor; women's organizations; places of worship; public and private schools; philanthropic groups or individuals; early childhood organizations; and social justice advocacy groups. Together, you can learn from one another, advocate with a united message, and strategize about ways the community could help. Within a community, Model Work Standards can:

- Enhance respect for the profession of early education;

- Provide community-wide recognition of programs offering high-quality work environments and showcase their accomplishments;

- Promote careers in child care centers that recognize the value of a quality work environment;

- Inform all professionals—those just entering the field as well as seasoned professionals—that these standards exist and can be useful in making decisions about future professional growth;

- Educate consumers about the importance of well-supported and adequately compensated staff to achieve the goals of high-quality child care;

- Identify new resources and potential sources of funding; and

- Build a strong advocacy network.

APPENDIX C

ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

MODEL WORK STANDARDS: AN ACTION PLAN WORKSHEET

Make a copy of this worksheet for each standard you address.

The standard we are working to improve:

What we have now:

Our goal:
Note: The goal may be to meet the standard fully or to simply achieve a step in the direction of meeting the standard.

Estimated time: *(Anticipated date of completion of this goal)* _____

Estimated cost, if any: _____
Note: While some standards may require minimal (if any) additional resources, others may demand significant financial investment. In the latter case, action steps in your plan will include financing strategies.

Action Plan Steps

Use the following table to identify:

1. **What** needs to be done? List the specific steps needed to meet the goal, one per line.

2. **Who?** Determine who will be responsible for each specific action step. In addition to staff, identify parents and members of the community who could be helpful in reaching your goal and how and when they will be contacted.

3. **When?** Create a timeline, perhaps starting with the end point (when you hope to achieve the goal).

4. **How** are we doing? **Note** your progress. The action plan is likely to change or need to be re-evaluated along the way as new opportunities and new barriers present themselves. Be open and flexible, but keep sight of the goal. Check on your progress frequently and report at staff meetings, through the staff bulletin board, etc.

You may also choose to keep a journal of notes for future reference and to offer help or advice to programs that follow in your footsteps.

What?	Who?	When?	Notes on our progress

EVALUATION

Engage all collaborators in answering the following questions. You may choose to have people respond individually to these questions and then meet together to discuss or engage in a group process.

Do you believe we succeeded in reaching our goal?   Circle one: Yes   Partially   No

If yes (or partially), how should we celebrate and broadcast the news?

If no (or partially), what barriers still stand in our way?

Through this process, what did you learn?

- **About yourself as a participant in this process**

- **About our "team"**

- **About our program**

Was the time and expense involved what you expected?   Yes   No

Why or why not?

How do you feel about our process? Include suggestions for improvement.

What would you like to see us take on next?

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATIONS

Established in 1999, the **Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE)** is focused on achieving comprehensive public investments that enable the early childhood workforce to deliver high-quality care and education for all children. To achieve this goal, CSCCE conducts research and policy analysis about the characteristics of those who care for and educate young children and examines policy solutions aimed at improving how our nation prepares, supports, and rewards these early educators to ensure young children's optimal development. CSCCE provides research and expert analysis on topics that include compensation and economic insecurity among early educators, early childhood teacher preparation and access to educational opportunities, work environments, and early childhood workforce data sources and systems. CSCCE also works directly with policymakers and a range of national, state, and local organizations to assess policy proposals and provide technical assistance on implementing sound early care and education workforce policy.

For more information on CSCCE's work, mission, and workforce resources, please visit:
cscce.berkeley.edu

The **American Federation of Teachers (AFT)** is a union of professionals under the AFL-CIO that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, health care, and public services for our students, their families, and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work of our members. In 2002, AFT became the home of the Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW), the authoring organization of the original Model Work Standards.

For more information on AFT's mission and early childhood resources, please visit:
aft.org/earlychildhood