

## Program Management

Program management, in addition to establishing operational policies, considers how child care programs address whole child development and accommodate families, children, and teachers to ensure that they have the proper support for developmentally appropriate planning and instruction. Texas Rising Star assesses the child care program’s policies that support families and their staff. Some measures are required for certification, while others are points-based.

Measure	Scored by
Accommodating Children and Families	Required for certification
Compensatory Supports	Points awarded
Health and Nutrition Practices	Points awarded
Curriculum	Points awarded
Curriculum Planning and/or Child Progress Monitoring Supports	Points awarded

### Accommodating Children and Families

Each child care program must have a written policy and procedure stating how they will accommodate the children and families they serve as it relates to home language, differing abilities, or cultural backgrounds. At minimum, the policy must be included in the family handbook and may provide additional information within the staff handbook and/or a new family’s enrollment packet. To ensure that families know what accommodations can be made and how to request them, it is recommended that the program post the guidance on bulletin boards or the child care program’s website.

Some examples of accommodations are as follows:

- Language translations of program literature and family resources
- Providing an interpreter when conducting program meetings or meetings with families
- Specific materials or resources that are available for children with differing abilities
- Infusing a family’s cultural background into the classroom through photos, learning materials, labeling, and special events
- Allowing therapists to provide services within the child’s classroom (natural environment)
- Providing a designated space for therapy and intervention sessions, when applicable
- Documented lesson plan strategies to meet the needs of children requiring accommodations

Depending on the policy the program has indicated, the program must provide coordinated documentation to confirm that accommodations can be made to support the child or family. For example, if the program notes that all program correspondence is available in Spanish, it will need to show evidence of this policy in action.

### Compensatory Supports

Compensatory supports are formal supports that child care programs may use to increase staff retention and financial compensation. Supports are more than acts of appreciation (such as luncheons, dinners,



and employee of the month awards) or gifts (such as t-shirts, gift cards, or gift baskets). Although acts of appreciation help staff morale, they are not considered formal compensation.

Some examples of formal compensatory supports include:

- **Wage Scale**—indicates growth opportunities upon hiring or while employed
- **Benefits**—Life, Medical, Dental, and/or Vision Insurance or tuition discount
- **Paid Planning**—time to plan/prepare lessons without supervising children
- **Paid Leave**—holiday, sick, and/or personal
- **Educational Assistance**—stipends, grants, and/or reimbursed conference fees
- **Employee Recognition**—additional wages related to performance or position

## Health and Nutrition Practices

Child care programs may provide supports and resources that focus, in addition to academics, on a child's entire well-being. These additional supports and/or resources provide families and staff information regarding the overall health and safety of children as they grow and develop.

The following are practices that child care programs can use to demonstrate their focus on health and nutrition:

- **Frequent Rotations of Meal Planning**—Weekly lunch and snack menus are rotated at least four times a month to provide diverse meal planning. A resource for meal planning can be found [here](#).
- **Oral Health Policy** (resources included)—A written policy and/or procedure allowing oral health practices within the child care program. This policy must include access to oral health resources. A resource for oral health can be found [here](#).
- **Screen Time Policy** (resources included)—A written policy regarding screen time usage within the child care program must include access to resources for families to learn more about age-appropriate apps and information about setting screen time limits and restrictions. A resource for screen time can be found [here](#).
- **Breastfeeding Policy** (for programs that do not serve infants 0–17 months; resources included)—A written policy that allows breastfeeding at any age that may include the provision of a designated breastfeeding area in the facility, which allows a parent to breastfeed in comfort and privacy if desired. This policy must include access to resources for families to learn more about the benefits of breastfeeding. A resource for breastfeeding can be found [here](#).
- **Farm-to-Table Policy** (resources included)—A written policy and/or procedure that describes how the child care program supports and provides a farm-to-table program. This policy must include access to resources for families to understand the benefits of farm-fresh products and how they can implement activities at home, such as how to create a home garden, and a list of local farmer's markets. A resource for farm-to-table can be found [here](#).
- **Health Consultations**—Child care programs can consult with a health professional, such as a Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC) or Registered Nurse, about their facility's health and safety protocols. These consultations must be held within the most recent 12 months and documented to indicate what was discussed. A resource for CCHC can be found [here](#).



- **Parent and Staff Education**—Child care programs can provide professional development to families and staff on nutrition and health best practices. This training can be provided by an outside trainer; however, the child care program must host the training for it to be considered. A resource for obtaining a trainer can be found [here](#).
- **Family Benefits Resources**—Child care programs can provide families with information and resources to help them obtain health benefits, such as medical, dental, vision, and life insurance. A resource for family benefits can be found [here](#).
- **Hearing and Vision Screenings**—Child care programs can provide free or discounted hearing and/or vision screenings for the children served. Screenings must be administered by a licensed professional and be conducted at the facility. A resource for hearing and vision screenings can be found [here](#).
- **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**—Child care programs who actively participate in the CACFP and are in good standing must have documentation provided to demonstrate active participation. A resource for CACFP can be found [here](#).

**A child care program implementing at least five of these 10 practices can receive a score of three.**

## Curriculum

Using a developmentally appropriate curriculum across all age groups the child care program serves is critical to supporting a child’s growth and development. Curriculums have a scope and sequence of activities and learning objectives that help children reach certain developmental benchmarks as described in the [Infant, Toddler and Three-year-old Early Learning Guidelines](#) and the [Prekindergarten Guidelines](#).

Based on the needs and/or philosophy of the child care program, curriculums may be purchased from a third party (such as Frog Street, Creative Curriculum, or HighScope), created by the child care program, or emergent.

A third-party curriculum must meet a checklist of qualifiers, such as ensuring that it has a scope and sequence and provides various activities within multiple learning domains, including learning objectives, materials, and accommodations for children. The Texas Education Agency has provided an approved list of Pre-K [curriculum](#). An emergent curriculum or a curriculum created by a child care program must demonstrate how the activities planned are connected to learning objectives or the early learning guidelines.

If a classroom is using a developmentally appropriate curriculum, it must demonstrate that it aligns with early learning guidelines (which typically includes the classroom’s lesson plans).

For more information on curriculums or sample lesson plans, visit the [Digital Resource Collection](#).



## Curriculum Planning Supports

In order to ensure children receive developmentally appropriate learning opportunities, teachers need time to adequately plan and prepare their classroom activities. Additionally, having someone to reflect with and garner feedback from can help the teacher in ensuring that activities and lessons support all learners.

Child care programs that provide consistent planning supports to teachers ensure that lessons are intentional and prepared as well as build staff confidence and competency. Supports provided by the child care program should be described within the employee handbook and documented as applicable.

Types of supports include:

- **Planning Time**
  - Consistent time provided (daily, weekly, or monthly)
  - Not also supervising children
- **Resources**
  - Tangible or online access to planning tools
  - Lesson planning and activity books
- **Feedback**
  - Opportunities to receive feedback on lesson plans by other staff members
  - Typically provided by a curriculum coordinator, administrative staff, or peer mentor/lead teacher
  - Homes might use a local family child care network
- **Professional Development**
  - Training within the most recent 12 months (annually) specific to curriculum planning
  - Provided by child care program, third-party curriculum vendor, or other external trainer

## Child Progress Monitoring Tools or Assessments

Completion of child progress monitoring tools or assessments of a child's developmental progress provide teachers, parents, and families with information about how their child is developing alongside their peers and in relation to their milestones. Additionally, child progress monitoring tools/assessments help teachers and families work together to support children as they grow. At minimum, child care programs should complete developmental milestone checklists on each of the children they serve, ages 0 – 5 years. To utilize the free developmental milestone checklists provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Disease Control (CDC) please visit [https://www.cdc.gov/act-early/milestones/?CDC\\_AAref\\_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/act-early/milestones/?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html).

Formal child progress monitoring tools/assessments are preplanned and data-based assessments that measure what children have learned. These assessment tools are published by an authorized agency, and typically individuals must receive specific training in order to use them within their classrooms. Some formal child progress monitoring tools/assessments for preschool include Teaching Strategies GOLD® and CLI Engage CIRCLE Progress Monitoring.



Informal child progress monitoring tools/assessments are less rigorous and can be incorporated easily into daily activities to measure a child’s progress. These assessment tools evaluate skill comprehension and typically do not require the teachers to receive training to be used within their classrooms. Some informal child progress monitoring tools/assessments include developmental screening checklists, child care program–generated checklists, child portfolios, and anecdotal observations.

Child care programs that use informal or formal child progress monitoring tools/assessments must be able to provide documentation of their consistent use within classrooms and age groups (except school-age classrooms or classrooms offering wraparound care).

For more information about child progress monitoring, visit the Texas Education Agency’s [High Quality Pre-K Progress Monitoring](#) web page.

## **Child Assessments to Inform Instruction**

When a child care program uses formal or informal child progress monitoring tools/assessments to gauge children’s developmental progress, it is important that teachers reflect on the data or observation and scaffold (increase or decrease the skill level) the activities planned to meet the needs of the children in their classroom.

There are varying ways that a program can demonstrate the use of assessment data (formal or informal) to guide a teacher’s instructional planning for their classroom. These include a written policy in the staff handbook (informing teachers how to do this and how to document it), notetaking on lesson plans about scaffolding needs or overall success of the activity, or completion of program-generated forms, such as lesson plan checklists.

The child care program and/or the classroom teacher may be asked to provide evidence of this practice to support confirming that child assessments of developmental progress are used to inform their daily instruction when scoring the applicable measure in Category 2: Teacher-Child Interactions.

For more information about using child assessments to inform instruction, please visit the [Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center](#).