

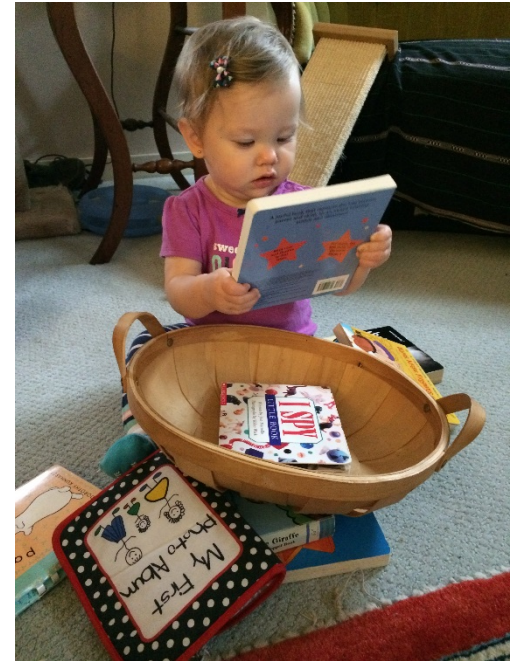
Early Learning Facility Design Criteria

Best Practices Checklist for Family Child Care Homes

A Resource to Identify Facility Improvements

April 2018

Adapted from
ELF Design Criteria - Classroom Best Practices **“Checklist”**
By Kathryn Tama, 2017



Dates of Use	
Provider Name	
User(s)	
Tools Needed	Camera to document possible improvements



Background

As it needs to be in Early Care and Education, most energy and attention goes to developing responsive relationships with the children, families and staff to provide quality programs. Along with the demands of a program’s daily operations, there is very little time for thinking about improving the physical facility. We get used to caregiving spaces with sinks and toilets that are difficult for children to use, not enough lighting, inadequate odor ventilation, worn flooring, unacceptable acoustic levels, etc. We make do and have for too many years. Our field needs to advocate and act to increase the quality of our facilities to provide optimal environments for children, staff and families-- ones that foster relationships, nurture development, promote health and wellness, and facilitate learning.

When funding is available for child care space improvements, it can be overwhelming to know where to start and what improvements to pursue. Few resources are available to help identify improvements and best practice solutions. The *Early Learning Facility Classroom Design Criteria - Best Practices Checklist* and *Guide* was developed as such a resource for center-based programs. **This version of the checklist was adapted for Family Child Care Homes**, and can be used to do a quick child care space assessment. Though not adapted for FCCH, the longer *Guide* can be used to determine why and what improvements to make. It provides the context of the best practice recommendations, further items to review, and options for resolving issues.

Instructions

Use this checklist as an initial review to identify areas for possible improvements. Taking photos of the areas is recommended, as they refresh one’s memory and come in handy when determining potential solutions. After the *Checklist* is completed, refer to the *Guide* for an explanation of why the item is considered best practice, additional conditions to review and suggested ideas for improvements.

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1 Diapering and Toileting Areas

Yes No NA

- Are the diapering & toileting areas in the caregiving area?
- Are the toilets child-sized and installed at child-height? If not, is a sturdy platform provided for children to use toilet?
- While diapering a child, can the provider look up & see into the caregiving space?
- If the provider has a diapering table, does it have stairs?
-

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

2 Child-Height Sinks

Yes No NA

- Are there child sinks in diapering and toileting areas?
- Are sinks installed at child-height? If not, is a sturdy platform provided for children to use sinks?
- Are there child-height sinks located near the child care’s eating and art areas?
- When children use the sinks, water stays in the sink & does not splash or drip onto the floor.
- Do children dry their hands with paper towels? (No shared cloth towels.)
- Is there excellent line-of-sight of children using all sinks?
- Is there a child-height sink in the outdoor yard?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

3 Adult-Height Sinks

Yes No NA

- Is there 1 adult-height sink dedicated for diapering?
- Is there 1 adult-height sink dedicated for food prep and washing dishes?
- Are the sinks located in the areas the activities take place?
- Do the adult sinks have single lever handles and swivel faucets?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

4 Provider Support Areas

Yes No NA

- Is there dedicated space in the home for the provider to do administrative tasks? Desk/counter space, adult chair, file storage, etc.?
- Is there excellent line-of-sight from the provider’s support areas into the classroom.

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

5 Ease of Visual Supervision

Yes No NA

- Is the child care space configured for excellent visual supervision of each activity area?
- Are the activity areas defined by low shelving or partitions?

If ceiling hangings are allowed, are they placed so as not to create a visual barrier?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & information and recommendations.

6 Natural Light

Yes No NA

Does the child care space have at least 2 windows, doors or skylights that let in natural daylight?

Does the child care space have child-height windows that have an outside view?

If there are no child-height windows, is there a platform/loft that brings the child up to the window?

Are the window coverings easy to clean and operate? Are they opened during the day to let natural light in caregiving area?

If there is glare & excessive brightness in the child care space, is it mitigated by the window coverings and/or awnings?

Are the windows clear of display items that can block light?

If needed, are the walls and ceiling painted colors that reflect light?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

7 Optimal Electrical Lighting

Yes No NA

Are all activity areas well lit?

Is the reading area well lit? No shadows are present.

Are the provider support spaces, desk, sinks, counters, etc. well lit?

Are the lights dimmable in the child care space?

Do the ceiling light fixtures have a lens covering the light bulb?

Are the light switches conveniently located, in the caregiving space, for providers to operate?

Does the caregiving area have some residential type of lighting (i.e. not just fluorescent panels)?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

8 Acoustic Levels

Yes No NA

In the child care space, can you and the children be clearly heard & understood in normal conversation without raising your voices?

When the child care space is empty, is it quiet? There is no background noise coming from inside or outside the room(s).

Do the ceilings have sound absorbing material or are they designed to redirect sound?

Are the infant & toddler spaces located in the quietest part of the home?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

9 Usable Square Feet of Activity Space per Child

Yes No NA

Does the program have ample space for child care children, play materials and furnishings without being crowded? **Usable** play space square footage is the total room square footage minus the square footage for used for diapering, toileting and teacher areas, circulation paths, etc. State licensing requires at least 35 square feet of usable play space/child for child care centers, but 50 square feet is recommended best practice.

___ ___ ___ Is there an outdoor area that allows for vigorous physical activities?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for how to calculate.

10 Sculpted Learning Environments – (Define Activity Areas, Support Relationship Building, Maximize Sq. Ft.)

Yes No NA

___ ___ ___ Are the activity areas arranged/sculpted along the perimeter of the child care space, with circulation paths well-defined?

___ ___ ___ Are low walls, shelving or partitions used to define activity areas?

___ ___ ___ Does the child care area have intimate spaces to encourage relationship building? (child-adult & child-child)

___ ___ ___ Does the program entrance have child-parent transition space? A place for parent and child to sit, or to exchange information with the provider?

___ ___ ___ Does the child care space include private spaces for children to decompress, rest and rejuvenate?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

11 Convenient, Plentiful and Organized Storage

Yes No NA

___ ___ ___ Is there storage in the child care space for frequently used items?

___ ___ ___ Is there storage located where materials are most often used? (e.g. upper wall cabinets over art area)

___ ___ ___ Is there storage outside the caregiving area for infrequently used and/or large items?

___ ___ ___ Are all items properly stored? Items are not stored in corners, hallways, diapering, toileting areas creating safety hazards.

___ ___ ___ Are all the storage spaces well organized?

___ ___ ___ Are materials stored in containers that easily fit into the storage unit & allow for clear visual access?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

12 Thoughtful Visual Environment

Yes No NA

___ ___ ___ Is the child care space clutter-free? Clutter-free tops of cubbies, storage units, cabinets, and shelving.

___ ___ ___ Is the children’s work displayed in well-defined spaces & located at child-height?

___ ___ ___ Are the windows & ceilings mainly clear and are not used as display space?

___ ___ ___ Are there plants, lamps, area rugs, futon/sofa, residential color pallet, etc. in the child care space?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

13 Direct Access to Outdoors

Yes No NA

___ ___ ___ Does the program have direct access to its outdoor yard?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health, safety & developmental information and recommendations.

14 Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning - Air Quality

Yes No NA

- Is the child care space well heated & cooled? There are no drafts or cold spots.
- Do the heating & cooling systems operate quietly?
- Are the filters changed every month when system is used?
- Are yearly maintenance inspections performed on each system?
- Can the provider control the heating & cooling systems in each room?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

15 Ventilation and Fresh Air Circulation - Air Quality

Yes No NA

- Do the caregiving areas have a source of fresh air?
- Is fresh air able to circulate throughout the child care space using windows, ceiling fans, or ventilation systems?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

16 Effective Venting of Odors - Air Quality

Yes No NA

- Are all areas of the child care space odor free?
- Are ventilation fans provided for diapering, toileting & food prep areas?
- Do all the ventilation fans vent the air to the outdoors and not back into the home?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

17 Mildew, Mold and Moisture Leaks - Air Quality

Yes No NA

- Is the child care space free of stale or musty smells?
- Are the following free of leaks: toilets, sinks, ceiling, walls, windows, appliances, etc.?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

18 Reduce Toxins in Environment - Air Quality

Yes No NA

- Do the interior and exterior entries have walk-off mats? See ["Guide"](#) for walk-off mat definition.
- Are non-toxic products and microfiber cloths and mops used to clean the classroom?
- Is a high-efficiency vacuum cleaner, with a HEPA filter, used to clean the flooring?
- Have bleach solutions been replaced with approved alternatives?
- Does the child care space have a radon detector?

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

19 Flooring - Air Quality & Safety

- | Yes | No | NA | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is all the flooring in good condition? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the flooring easy to clean and non-toxic? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are the floors are vacuumed and cleaned daily? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are the rugs professionally steam-cleaned 2-4 times a year? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the flooring appropriate for activity taking place in the area? Water resistant flooring under sinks, art and meal areas, etc. |

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

20 General Safety

- | Yes | No | NA | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do all doors have hinge guards. See Best Practices " Guide " - General Safety for Definition for hinge guards. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do all walls, furniture, shelving, cabinets, doors, etc. are in good condition and no sharp edges, rips, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are all the electrical outlets the tamper-resistant type? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does the child care space have sufficient number of outlets to avoid use of extension cords? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there no sharp edges in infant/toddler play spaces? Use ½ inch bullnose edges for wall corners, counters, shelving, etc. |

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.

21 Facility Maintenance

- | Yes | No | NA | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you, as the homeowner, or your landlord if you rent, have a preventative maintenance program? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are routine inspections conducted monthly to identify potential problems? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the interior painted every 3 years? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the exterior painted every 5-10 years? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are the windows operable, have secure screens, and sound weather stripping? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are the doors and weather stripping in good condition? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the roof in good condition? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are the ceilings and walls in good condition (no water stains, peeling, holes, etc.)? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there no moisture leaks around toilets, sinks, appliances, etc.? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are the appliances in good condition? |

See [Best Practices Guide](#) for additional items to review, health & safety information and recommendations.