

Montana Additional Notes to ECERS-R

Note: The Montana Notes that follow supersede the additional notes included in the book and the Notes for Clarification from North Carolina. These are the notes that will be used for assessments from April 1st until the next revision September 1st. It is important to disregard any NC Notes for Clarification that come out until the next September 1st revision.

General Notes

Items to be omitted from MT scoring: #38, #39, #40, #41, #42, #43

For detailed interpretation of the indicators please refer to the ECERS-R All About Book.

Accessibility

Materials should be stored on low, open, uncrowded shelves. Materials should be stored in bins or containers that clearly show what is inside, such as a see-through container or container label with a picture of what is inside. If materials are stored in containers, they should be without lids. If lids are used they should be easy to open and close by all children. Containers must not be too heavy that children cannot remove them independently from shelves. Materials must not be stored in such a way that bins must be tipped over rather than removed from the shelf by children or large heavy items stored above the children heads when playing.

For materials to be counted as accessible to children, they must be able to reach and use the materials for a period of 1 hour a day in a program of 8 hours or more. The 1 hour can be provided at one time or as a combination of several periods throughout the day. This does not mean that each child must have a full hour to use the materials. However, it is required that children have a reasonable chance to use the materials at some time if they wish. Less time is required for programs operating less than 8 hours a day, with the amount of time calculated proportionally, based on the ratio of 1 hour for programs of 8 hours or more. For example, if a program operated for 6 hours a day, this would be $\frac{3}{4}$ of a full-day program, so the time required would be $\frac{3}{4}$ of the 1 hour. Use this chart to determine the approximate amount of time needed in programs operating less than 8 hours.

Number of hours in operation	2 hours	3 hours	4 hours	5 hours	6 hours	7 hours
Approximate minutes required for accessibility	15	25	30	40	45	50

Materials are considered accessible only if it is observed that children freely access and are permitted to use most of the materials. If programs limit the amount of children in areas they must ensure that all children have a reasonable opportunity to access materials for a substantial portion of the day. A reasonable opportunity requires that materials are accessible throughout the day, both indoors and outdoors. If children request access to materials and are prevented from using them there must be other opportunities to use the same materials in other areas or other times of the day to receive credit. Some materials may not be accessible during the observation. For example; sand and water play may only be

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available in the afternoon. However the materials must be available for 1 hour to receive credit for "accessible" or 1/3 of the day to receive credit for "substantial portion of the day. Additional questions may be needed to gain information on other times of the day. Keep in mind that non-mobile infants do not have access to the materials if they are not placed within easy reach of the infant. For programs operating more than 5 hours a day, in order to meet much of the day there should be no significant extended periods of time where structured activities prevent access to materials. Access must be observed throughout the day.

Levels of quality build expectations from minimal to good to excellent. Consider not only the requirements of the indicator, but the level of quality documented as general practice throughout the observation.

Supervision

Keep in mind that you can only count the positive interactions from the staff that are regularly scheduled to work in a classroom with the children that are being observed. Only the negative interactions of other adults can be considered. In addition, the children listed on the classroom roster can't be moved to another classroom during the assessment. If children are transferred during the assessment it must be called because it is no longer a valid assessment.

With regards to supervision, staff must be able to hear the child at all times, must be able to see the child with a quick glance, and must be able to physically respond immediately, leaving no child unattended. Special attention during high risk activities, such as eating, etc. are required to adequately protect children. The ages and developmental level of the children should also be taken into consideration during these activities to determine the level of supervision needed. (TN 1/1/08)

Sanitizing

Disinfectant and/or anti-bacterial wipes do not count for sanitization purposes. Products that can be given credit as sanitizing solutions are: bleach and water solution; or a commercial product that states on the label or manufacturer's products sheet it kills 99.9% of germs, kills HIV virus, or is an EPA registered product. All commercial products used for sanitizing must be used according to manufacturer's instruction. Play materials that come into contact with bodily fluids must be cleaned and sanitized after each child's use. Toys that do not come into contact with bodily fluids should be sanitized weekly or when visibly soiled (page 106 Caring for Our Children.)

Caring for our Children has issued a new recommendation for use of a diluted bleach solution for sanitizing and disinfecting because many brand name companies have changed their bleach solution and there is no longer a consistent solution across different brands. The new recommendation advises us to: use only EPA registered products for sanitizing and disinfecting; follow the manufacturer's instructions for diluting the bleach solution and for the required contact time. Programs that use a sanitizing and/or disinfecting solution that is not bleach must get approval from their local sanitarian and have proof of approval on site at all times. Approval MUST include use for eating surfaces, diapering/toileting, handwashing surfaces, and sanitizing toys. If approval is not given for all of the above listed instances, then the approval must outline what is approved for use.

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Specific Notes for ECERS-R

1. Indoor Space

Montana Notes:

3.2 There must be a sound barrier between classrooms; such as a wall.

Montana Notes:

5.2 The natural light must be in the space(s) used for child care for more than 50% of the time children are allowed to attend. Natural light is not required in spaces used for nap, but those spaces must have enough light to allow adequate visual supervision of the children.

7.2 Ventilation should be able to be controlled in all spaces used for children (e.g. through heating/air conditioning systems, windows, opening doors, and ceiling fans etc.)

2. Furniture for routine care, play, and learning

Montana Notes:

1.1, 3.1 To give credit, furniture must be used for routine care, and not simply be present – not used for other purposes.

1.1, 3.1 Sleeping provisions for individual use only. Couches and other shared spaces are not acceptable sleeping provisions due to cross-contamination.

1.1, 3.1 To give credit for shelves, they must be used for storing materials that the children can reach and use. There should be enough low, open organized storage –shelves, containers, or crates – as long as the storage allows easy access without excessive crowding or rummaging for toys.

3.1 Credit can't be given for this indicator if the children's bedding is touching due to cross-contamination.

3.1 Siblings cannot share cubbies.

3.2 When picnic tables are used, consider how comfortable they are for the children and whether children can sit safely. If only one child has difficulty, or the furniture is used infrequently as compared to the other furnishings being considered for this indicator, do not score "no." If table and chairs cause safety risks, consider this in Item 12 Safety.

3. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort

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Montana Notes:

3.1 The floor covering must be large enough to permit at least one child to stretch out and lounge comfortably on the area with several toys to play with.

3.2, 7.2 When counting the numbers of soft toys, individual pieces belonging to a soft toy that has various pieces, can only count as one example, even though the individual parts might be what a child uses.

5.2 The intent of this indicator is that children should not be interrupted or disturbed when using the soft furnishings credited in 5.1. If children walk, or even run, past without disturbing the child, then this is acceptable

4. Room arrangement for play

Montana Notes:

1.2, 3.2 If there are two staff members in the room during the observation, but only 1 staff member at other times, this should be considered in scoring the item, as there may be issues that arise with only one staff in the room.

1.2, 3.2 It is not enough to simply position staff around the room. The caregivers must be able to see the space well enough at all times to ensure that it is possible to use effective, child-appropriate discipline to meet the safety needs of all of the children at all times; no matter where the child(ren) are in the classroom.

5. Space for Privacy

Montana Notes:

3.2 To score consider supervision and how spaces for privacy are used to see if children are adequately supervised. The ages, abilities, and impulsiveness of the children must be considered when scoring. Older, less impulsive children require less visual supervision than younger or more impulsive children. It is not enough to simply position staff around the room. The caregivers must be able to see the space well enough at all times to ensure that it is possible to use effective, child-appropriate discipline to meet the safety needs of all of the children at all times; no matter where the child(ren) are in the classroom.

6. Child related display

Decorative mirrors can be considered as part of the display if they are intentionally placed at the eye level of the majority of the children in care and are meant to be used by the children.

Montana Notes:

3.1 If the display depicts violent scenarios or is scary in nature than credit can't be given; for example skeletons chasing someone, characters with fangs.

5.1 Child-created display meets the intent of the entire indicator.

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7. Space for gross motor play

This indicator looks at space for play and not equipment

For a more detailed listing of Playground Safety Hazards, refer to the Playground Safety Sheet

Montana Notes:

1.2 Lofts are considered indoor climbing equipment. Scores are based on hazards present such as; height, entrapment issues, fall zones, insufficient cushioning, how it is used, ages of children, and supervision.

3.2 Lofts are considered indoor climbing equipment. Scores are based on hazards present such as; height, entrapment issues, fall zones, insufficient cushioning, how it is used, ages of children, and supervision.

1.2, 3.2 When there are more than 3 minor hazards or if there are 1 serious hazards outdoors, credit cannot not be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than 3 minor hazards credit can be given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc. may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result. If it is observed that children are using playground equipment that is required to be on a resilient surface and the surfacing is covered with ice and snow credit can't be given due to the serious safety risk.

1.2, 3.2 Indoor space for gross motor play and equipment is not held to the same standards as outside; however, safety as the primary focus should be insured. Consider the placement of equipment as well as the surface under equipment where children might fall. If indoor children's climbing equipment is used, mats or carpet are required to be placed under the equipment if it is over 12 inches in height. This is in reference to equipment specifically for climbing.

8. Gross motor equipment

This indicator looks at equipment and not space for gross motor play. Insufficient ground cover is marked off under Space for Gross Motor Play.

For a more detailed listing of Playground Safety Hazards, refer to the Playground Safety Sheet.

Indicator 1.2, 3.2

Montana Note:

When there are more than 3 minor hazards or if there are 1 serious hazards outdoors, credit cannot not be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than 3 minor hazards credit can be given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc. may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result

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1.3 Lofts are considered indoor climbing equipment. Scores are based on hazards present such as; height, entrapment issues, fall zones, insufficient cushioning, how it is used, ages of children, and supervision.

3.1 Inclement weather- Taken from *Caring for Our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards* -Children shall play outdoors daily when weather and air quality conditions do not pose a significant health risk. Outdoor play for infants may include riding in a carriage or stroller; however, infants shall be offered opportunities for gross motor play outdoors, as well.

Weather that poses a significant health risk shall include wind chill at or below 15 degrees F and heat index at or above 90 degrees F, as identified by the National Weather Service.

Air quality conditions that pose a significant health risk shall be identified by announcements from local health authorities or through ozone alerts. Such air quality conditions shall require that children remain indoors where air conditioners ventilate indoor air to the outdoors. Children with respiratory health problems such as asthma shall not play outdoors when local health authorities announce that the air quality is approaching unhealthy levels.

3.3 Lofts are considered indoor climbing equipment. Scores are based on hazards present such as; height, entrapment issues, fall zones, insufficient cushioning, how it is used, ages of children, and supervision.

5.2 This requires daily access to at least 7-9 skills; however, on days with inclement weather there should be at least 3-5 skills.

9. Greeting/departing

Montana Notes:

1.1, 3.1, 5.1, 7.1 The expectation is that the children are greeted before the parent leaves. It is important for the caregiver to acknowledge that the child is in their care and make them feel welcome.

1.1, 3.1 To count as a greeting, the person being greeted must perceive the greeting. Simply saying hello, to a child/parent who does not notice that he or she has been spoken to, does not count as being greeted. There is no specific definition of a “warm” greeting, but the recipient must perceive the interaction as being positive and welcoming. The greeting can be verbal or through welcoming body language, such as a smile that the parent/child responds to, or a hug for a child. Simply taking a child from a parent, without an obvious warm interaction that is perceived by the child, would not count as a greeting, even though the provider might physically hold the child.

7.3 The sharing of child related information must happen as the child is being dropped off at the family child care home. To give credit, it is not necessary to observe the sharing of information by every parent, but it must obviously be the usual practice (at least 50% of the time), and be observed at least once unless no greeting is observed. When only one parent is observed being greeted, the sharing of information must be observed. If two parents are greeted, sharing of information must be observed in one of those greetings. .If no greeting is observed, be sure to ask how this aspect of care is handled. The provider should elicit information from the parent if parents do not share information spontaneously.

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10. Meals/ snacks

Montana Notes:

1.1, 3.1 With regard to drinking water being offered between meals/snacks to children, score “No” if during the observation water is not offered to at least some of the children who cannot access their own water. Also score ‘No’ if water is not available to children who can ask for it or can get their own.

1.1, 3.1 Meals/snacks should be served to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers every 2-3 hours unless children are sleeping.

1.2, 3.2 The intent of this indicator is to determine whether the correct components of a meal or snack are being served to children. Use the Food Guide to determine whether the components are present. The guidelines also require ALL components be served together. Personal dietary preferences of the assessor (e.g., whole grain vs. white breads; fresh vs. canned vegetables, high vs. low sugar or fat content, etc.) are not to be used in determining the quality of foods served. Foods that are perishable should not be left out longer than 1 hour; such as formula. In the rare case; where children/parents bring food, 75% of meals must meet the USDA Guidelines. Providers may supplement if they choose in order to guarantee 75% compliance. Programs that choose to “offer” rather than “serve” food (i.e. family style serving, school-age multiple choice snacks) carry an additional responsibility to encourage appropriate choices and model good nutritional habits. Combination foods are foods with multiple components that have been packaged together or combined during the cooking process. Combination foods can be counted to meet up to two different components. Scoring consideration of combination foods should be balanced with other items on the menu. Foods that might be served together, but do not meet the definition of combination foods can count for up to 3 components (i.e. hamburgers, sandwiches, cereal and milk with added fruit). When vegetable garnishes are served in sufficient quantities, they may be considered to meet the requirement as a vegetable. Breading on meat products may not be counted. Cooked dry beans, such as kidney or black beans which are considered to be an excellent source of protein, can count as either a protein or vegetable. However green beans, like string or lima beans which aren’t considered to be good sources of protein, should only be counted as a vegetable. Milk must be served at every meal excluding snack where the provider can chose to serve 2 of the 4 meal components to the children.

1.3, 3.3 Eating surfaces; whether inside or out, must be cleaned and sanitized prior to, and following, use for food service. Follow the “2-step” process. Eating surfaces should be: 1) washed with a soap and water mixture to remove gross soil and, 2) sanitized with a bleach-water solution before and after being used for meals/snacks. To allow bleach-water solution to do its job, it should be allowed to sit for at least 10 seconds (preferably longer) before wiping dry or allowing to air dry. For other acceptable sanitizing agents, refer to the general notes. If proper sanitary measures are clearly practiced as part of the child care program, but an occasional lapse does occur, credit can be given. Occasional lapse for children equal to 75% of the time. To score adult hand-washing, the lapse equates to the impact it has or is going to have on the children. In the case where snack time is flexible and children come and go throughout a period of time, the same sanitary conditions are required (i.e., table sanitized between children using same places, children’s hands washed, etc.). If children finger feed themselves during meals, then children should have hands washed after eating. Recontamination of hands is addressed here. To allow staff to keep their focus on children while they are eating, a separate wipe may be used on each child’s

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hands that have finished eating and may leave the table. When the last child has finished eating, all children should be expected to wash hands (except children without head control). Hands must be washed with soap and running water at least 75% of the time.

1.3, 3.3 Hand hygiene, hand washing and hand sanitizer use: The 2011 edition of *Caring for Our Children* states that hand sanitizers can be used by adults and children 2 years of age and older in place of hand washing unless hands are visibly soiled (p. 113). Therefore, the use of hand sanitizers is acceptable when scoring these Indicators as long as the product contains 60–95% alcohol, manufacturer’s instructions are followed, and very close supervision of children is provided to ensure proper use and avoidance of ingestion or contact with eyes and mucous membranes. Check to be sure that the manufacturer’s directions for use are followed exactly. If not, do not give credit. Hand sanitizer must be kept in the original container showing alcohol content and directions for use. If children are not closely supervised when using the sanitizer, consider this in rating supervision- related Indicators for the Item specifically, and also in Safety and Supervision Items.

If hands are visibly dirty, hand washing, according to the required procedure, is still required—although the time for rubbing soapy hands together before rinsing has increased from 10 to 20 seconds. Antibacterial soaps should not be used.

Children using some shared art or sensory materials must wash hands, or use hand sanitizer according to directions, both before and after use. Moist or wet materials are more likely to spread germs than dry materials. For example, shared crayons would not require hand hygiene before or after use, but two children sharing play dough or finger-painting on one surface would require it. Similarly, hand hygiene would not be required before using shared dry sand (but would be required afterwards), but if water is shared, then hand hygiene is required both before and after use.

1.3, 3.3 An alternative EPA approved “sanitizer” cannot be used in place of bleach and water solution for the purposes of sanitizing tables/sinks, high chairs, or other food related surfaces, unless approval from the local sanitarian has been secured and documentation is on site.

3.2 With regard to drinking water being offered between meals/snacks to children consuming solid foods, score “No” if during the observation water is not offered to at least some of the children who cannot access their own water. Also score „No” if water is not available to children who can ask for it or get their own.

3.3 If the same sink is used by either children or adults for both diapering/toileting and food-related routines (including toothbrushing) or for other purposes (to wash toys/other classroom equipment; after wiping nose), it must be sanitized by spraying sink and faucets with a bleach solution after diapering/toileting use.

3.5 Credit can be received when information on children’s allergies and chronic medical conditions are posted in a confidential manner. In programs where the children spend significant amount of time in more than one classroom, the allergy information should be posted in the classroom in which they spend the majority (over 50%) of their time. However, it is required that any information on a child’s food allergies or

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medical conditions that effect the child's eating habits must be posted in the classroom where the child eats.

5.1 Staff and children are required to eat together family style during most meals. Staff and children must participate in the same meal. Some foods must be dished up so that children can serve themselves. Staff must sit at the table and eat with the children to help facilitate conversations, help with the meal service, and supervise children while eating. There must be at least one staff person at each table or an attempt made by staff to include all children in the conversations, make sure they are served and receive foods, and are closely supervised.

11. Nap

Montana Notes:

3.2 Two coverings are required for children over 12 months of age - One to cover the type of bedding used and one for the child to have access to in order to cover up with. Bedding should be washed weekly. With the exception of cots, sleeping provisions should be 2 inches thick.

1.2, 3.2 Credit for this indicator can't be given if the bedding is stored in such a way that it touches bedding which belongs to other children.

12. Toileting/ diapering

For proper sanitary diaper/pull-up changing procedure, refer to the Montana Diaper Change Procedure. For the purpose of the scales pull-ups are held to the same standards as diapers.

North Carolina Note: For information on changing children in "Pull-ups" or other disposable underwear, or with soiled clothing, see the 2011 edition of *Caring for Our Children*.

Montana Notes:

1.1, 3.1 When a diapering table is not used, an alternative diapering surface is considered adequate if the surface is nonporous, and can be cleaned and sanitized. In addition the surface must be long and wide enough to accommodate the child's whole body from head to foot. The diapering surface must minimize the chance for contamination of surrounding surfaces. Such a diapering surface is acceptable only if diapering can be completed without contamination of surrounding areas. When children are changed standing up while wearing a pull-up or diaper the same rules apply.

1.1, 3.1, 5.1

Reusable diapers such as cloth diapers must be placed in a separate covered container with waterproof liner when soiled. The container must be emptied (laundered, given to parent, or other disposal) daily and cleaned and disinfected daily.

1.3, 3.1 An alternative EPA approved "sanitizer" cannot be used in place of bleach and water solution for the purposes of sanitizing tables/sinks, high chairs, or other food related surfaces, unless approval from the local sanitarian has been secured and documentation is on site.

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1.3, 3.3 Since new research has shown that waterless washes are an inadequate sanitary measure, proper hand washing with soap and running water is required following diapering or toileting.

1.3, 3.3 Hand hygiene, hand washing and hand sanitizer use: The 2011 edition of *Caring for Our Children* states that hand sanitizers can be used by adults and children 2 years of age and older in place of hand washing unless hands are visibly soiled (p. 113). Therefore, the use of hand sanitizers is acceptable when scoring these Indicators as long as the product contains 60–95% alcohol, manufacturer's instructions are followed, and very close supervision of children is provided to ensure proper use and avoidance of ingestion or contact with eyes and mucous membranes. Check to be sure that the manufacturer's directions for use are followed exactly. If not, do not give credit. Hand sanitizer must be kept in the original container showing alcohol content and directions for use. If children are not closely supervised when using the sanitizer, consider this in rating supervision- related Indicators for the Item specifically, and also in Safety and Supervision Items.

If hands are visibly dirty, hand washing, according to the required procedure, is still required—although the time for rubbing soapy hands together before rinsing has increased from 10 to 20 seconds. Antibacterial soaps should not be used.

Children using some shared art or sensory materials must wash hands, or use hand sanitizer according to directions, both before and after use. Moist or wet materials are more likely to spread germs than dry materials. For example, shared crayons would not require hand hygiene before or after use, but two children sharing play dough or finger-painting on one surface would require it. Similarly, hand hygiene would not be required before using shared dry sand (but would be required afterwards), but if water is shared, then hand hygiene is required both before and after use.

3.4 Diapers/ Pull-ups should be visually checked approximately every 2 hours.

13. Health Practices

For proper Hand-washing procedure, refer to the MT Hand-washing Process

Montana Notes:

Indicator 1.1, 3.2

If outdoor sand area is not covered then mark off for exposure to animal feces.

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3.1 If the same sink is used by either children or adults for both diapering/toileting and food-related routines (including toothbrushing) or for other purposes (to wash toys/other classroom equipment; after wiping nose), it must be sanitized by spraying sink and faucets with a bleach solution after diapering/toileting use.

3.1 While combining all categories to determine 75%, priority should be given to hand-washing when dealing with bodily fluids (blood and mucous).

3.2 Play materials that come into contact with bodily fluids must be cleaned and sanitized after each child's use. Toys that do not come into contact with bodily fluids should be weekly or when visibly soiled. (page 106 Caring for Our Children.)

5.1 Caregivers must have spare clothing for children to use. Sunscreen and sun protection should be provided as needed regardless of time of day. Care should be taken to wash children's faces and wipe their noses.

5.2 Consider all aspects of how a provider models any issues of health practices that are observed. Do not base score on only one aspect of being a good health model. Consider, for example, whether the provider eats healthful foods, practices good hygiene habits in front of the children, wears appropriate clothing for the weather, washes hands when needed

7.2 Toothbrushes need to be labeled with child's name and stored in toothbrush storage device with bristles not touching and not touching any contaminated surface. Devices should be washed and sanitized or replaced when they become visibly dirty.

14. Safety Practices

For a more detailed listing of Playground Safety Hazards, refer to the Montana Playground Safety Sheet.

If sand/water play practices are observed that puts the children's safety at risk discount where applicable.

If outlet receptacles are tamper resistant they must be labeled TR from the manufacturer in order to be considered tamper-resistant. Otherwise outlet plugs are sufficient.

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Montana Notes:

1.1, 1.2, 3.1 When there are more than 3 minor hazards or if there is 1 serious hazard outdoors, or indoors than credit cannot not be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than 3 minor hazards credit can be given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc. may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result.

1.1, 3.1 Indoor space for gross motor play and equipment is not held to the same standards as outside; however, safety as the primary focus should be insured. Consider the placement of equipment as well as the surface under equipment where children might fall. If indoor children's climbing equipment is used, mats or carpet are required to be placed under the equipment if it is over 12 inches in height. This is in reference to equipment specifically for climbing.

1.1, 3.1 The water used by the children should be checked. The temperature should be considered even if the children can't turn the water on themselves as a distracted adult could turn the wrong faucet on.

1.1, 3.1 Spraying bleach water, or other chemicals over the children's heads, such as sanitizing table, is a safety hazard.

15. Books and Pictures**Montana Notes:**

1.1, 3.1, 5.1 To give credit for the books being accessible, the numbers of books required in these indicators must be met.

5.2 Some is defined, as being used daily and that there are at least two materials in addition to books accessible daily.

5.3 Since young children cannot read, the book area should be designed for children to view books by seeing the fronts of the books. If only the spines of the books are showing credit cannot be given. To give credit for this indicator, you must observe that 75% of the required number of books are organized with the fronts of the books visible.

5.4 Books and other language materials that contain graphic violence or frightening content are not considered appropriate for any preschool-kindergarten children. Discount if 25% or more of books accessible to children show violence that is graphic.

5.5 Informal reading is defined as a caregiver reading to 1, 2 or a small group of children outside of a structured, organized reading time. Informal reading must be observed at least once to get credit for this indicator.

16. Encouraging children to communicate**Montana Notes:**

3.1 Four instances must be observed during the observation during group time and free play.

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3.2 There should be enough materials to encourage communication without competition and conflict due to scarcity.

3.3 To score “Yes” there can be no child obviously ignored with little or no talking from the provider at all. Some children may receive less verbal interaction, but all must get some.

5.1 If no free play time is observed, score this indicator “No.”

5.2 Required materials should be accessible for a substantial portion of the day.

7.2 In order to give credit for this indicator, some evidence must be observed. Consider the ages and abilities of the children.

18. Informal use of language

Montana Notes:

1.1, 3.1 To score “Yes” there can be no child obviously ignored with little or no talking from the provider at all. Some children may receive less verbal interaction, but all must get some.

3.1 At least two examples of conversation must be observed during the observation.

7.1 This indicator requires that several instances, at least three or four, be observed throughout the observation as a sample of the ongoing behavior that staff exhibit towards all children, sometime during the day.

20. Art

Art materials that smell like food should not be used and toxic substances or materials labeled “Keep out of Reach of Children; such as shaving cream cannot be offered to the children for use in art activities.

Montana Notes:

3.1, 5.1 Crayons or other drawing materials (e.g., pencils, markers, chalk) are considered art materials in this item if used with plain paper or other plain surface, such as a chalkboard. They are not counted as art materials when used with coloring book pages or other pre-determined projects, except to meet the requirements for 1.1. When used with coloring books, etc, they are considered in item 19 Fine motor but not to meet the requirements for the art item.

3.2 “Some” means 50% of the time when art materials are used, children can do free art and are not required to follow an example.

7.2 Art activities related to other classroom experiences should allow children to do art in their own ways, while considering a topic being discussed and experienced in the class.

21. Music/ movement

Montana Notes:

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1.1 Any music counted as a “type” for this indicator must be appropriate for use with children, in that the music contains no violent or sexually explicit material or language that is unacceptable according to typical societal standards.

1.1, 3.2 Any musical experiences offered to the children in this indicator must be appropriate for use with children, in that the music contains no violent or sexually explicit material or language that is unacceptable according to typical societal standards. Some traditional children’s songs such as Three Blind Mice contain frightening or offensive lyrics. If songs with such lyrics are used with the children, score this indicator “Yes.” Music with religious content is considered appropriate as long as it does not contain frightening, violent, or negative content. Be sure to listen to the lyrics in order to judge the appropriateness. For assessment purposes, evaluate the severity of the lyrics and the impact on the children.

3.2 Songs initiated by the provider, such as a clean-up song, or a prayer sung at meals, count to meet the requirement of this indicator.

3.3 Children must have access to at least one movement activity at least once per week.

5.2 Variety can be considered in songs sung in the classroom in addition to tapes, records, and/or CDs.

22. Blocks

When determining if very small blocks should be considered under item 19 as fine motor materials or under item 22 as blocks, consider the size, intent, and placement.

There has been some inconsistency about the dimensions of blocks to be considered for this item, with some requiring that the blocks are “at least” 2 inches from the majority of sides, and others requiring “more than” 2 inches. To ensure reliability across assessors, blocks are now interpreted as having to be at least 2 inches for the majority of sides, rather than more than 2 inches.

Note: Interlocking blocks; such as Duplo’s are not considered here. They are considered under Fine Motor 19.

Montana Notes:

3.2 Some means that the space, although not necessarily large, does allow the children to successfully balance, build and create structures in their block play. The space size would allow two children to build successfully without undue interference from one another or from others.

5.1 The requirement for enough space for three children to use the block area at one time will depend on their ages, and what you would expect them to be able to build. Obviously, preschoolers need enough space to build substantial independent structures. Watch to see if conflict arises due to space limitations.

5.2 Centers should be organized to encourage independent use. Interest areas should be well defined and have accessories within the block area, so that the child doesn’t have to go to other places in the room to find accessories.

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5.4 If two or more block areas are present, all may be considered in calculating accessibility for substantial part of the day. However, only one must meet the criteria for a special block area. The other block area may be outdoors or in another indoor space.

7.3 Some block play, available outdoors means that the children have opportunities for more active block play without the space and noise restrictions associated with being indoors. A large number of blocks are not required but there should be enough blocks so children can explore, build and experiment without difficulty. The outdoor blocks do not need to be accessible daily, but should be available for the teacher to add to the other outdoor activities.

23. Sand/water

Montana Notes:

1.1, 3.1, 5.1, 7.1 If outside sand is not covered in the winter time, then not considered accessible due to accumulation of snow and ice on the sand. If sand is not covered all year round then also take off in Item 11: Health for exposure to animal feces.

3.1, 3.2 If 3.1 is scored “No” because there are no provisions for sand/water, then 3.2 must also be scored “No.”

3.1 Provision means that staff have made accessible the equipment and materials needed for children to be able to play in sand and/or water (or an appropriate substitute) in a meaningful way.

3.2 There must be at least two or more toys for children to use with sand or water (or an appropriate substitute) during the sensory activity.

5.2 For Montana, variety means 3-5 types, based on size of table, # of children using the table. Reference the intent of the requirement for variety in “All About” book.

5.3 Change the word “available” to “accessible.” To give credit, the materials must be accessible daily for at least 1 hour in an 8 hour program, prorated appropriately for shorter programs (see chart in general notes).

7.1 For Montana, due to weather considerations, it may be appropriate to have to move the sand/water table in and out, as long as daily access is available.

24. Dramatic play

Montana Notes

3.1 There should be enough dramatic play materials for children to be able to carry out meaningful pretend play. Some requires enough materials for several children to use at one time. This may vary with the age and ability of the children in the group, with more required for older children. Classrooms with more children will require more materials than classroom with fewer children.

25. Nature/science

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In Montana, for all pertinent indicators, natural live elements are okay; such as farm and ranch animals etc.

Montana Notes:

3.1 There should be more than one developmentally appropriate (useable for play or exploration games/materials/activities accessible to children from two of the nature/science categories.

3.2 If credit cannot be given for 3.1, then credit cannot be given for 3.2.

5.4 “Event” means that children have daily experience with either living plants or animals. The experiences can take place indoors or outdoors. In order to receive credit, living things (plants, animals, etc.) must be easily seen by the children. If these items are stored out of the view of children (on top of a shelf, behind a cabinet, etc.) the teacher must make these accessible by bringing them down to the children’s eye level. There must be clear evidence that this occurs on a daily basis and that the intent is for children to have meaningful experiences with living things.

26. Math/ numbers

Montana Notes:

5.2 Requirements for 5.1 must be met in order to give credit for 5.2.

27. Use of TV, video and or computers

If the assessor observes movies/videos being used that have violent or otherwise inappropriate material, discount the appropriate indicator. Otherwise, ask about the program’s/provider’s policy concerning use of TV and videos. No longer base your determination on what you see stored in the room. Do not reference movie/program names or ratings on summary reports. If audio-visual materials are used less than once a month while children are interested, mark this item NA.

Montana Notes:

3.3 The time children “use” the computer includes the time that the children watch other children use the computer.

5.1 To be considered “good for children,” materials for computer and TV viewing must be appropriate and educational.

7.1 Software encouraging creativity must be an option that is used regularly, at least, once a week or more frequently if computers are used. For computer software to encourage creativity in children, it must do more than simply have children “point and click” to get a response, and it must encourage thinking, rather than rote responses.

28. Promoting acceptance of Diversity

Montana Notes:

3.3 If no prejudice is observed, and the observer sees plenty of evidence that such behavior would be very unlikely, give credit.

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5.1 All of the materials, including books, pictures and other materials, must be located in the major spaces used by the children for much of the day. Some may be in one place, while others are in another space. Flannel board pieces, showing diversity, are given credit as materials if children can reach and use them. Flannel board pieces that children can only look at, as part of the display, are given credit as pictures. (NC Note)

5.1, 5.2 No credit can be given twice for any materials considered in 5.1 and 5.2.

5.1, 5.2 For Montana we will accept family and classroom pictures for diversity. Required materials should be accessible for a substantial portion of the day.

5.2 Note to Assessors: Delete the current note for clarification. Replace with "To give credit, three examples representing different elements of diversity (examples: clothing, skin tone, food, abilities, eating utensils and dishes, etc.) found in more than one type of prop must be accessible for use in dramatic play indoors or outdoors."

5.2 An example of diversity requires that there is a contrast between two props. For example, one white doll, contrasted with one African American doll represents one example, as does one play food item of a taco contrasted with a play food item of beans with rice. Four examples must be observed (each consisting of two props). Once an item is counted in one example, it cannot be counted in contrast with another prop to form a second example. Dolls are required as at least one of the examples. Small toy people used with doll house or blocks can be used to meet the doll requirement.

7.1 We will accept family and classroom pictures but we want to see that whatever is being displayed is meaningful to Montana children and that the display is well thought out and intentional.

7.2 Activities should be provided at least 4 times a year.

29. Supervision of gross motor activities

Montana Notes:

5.3, 7.1, 7.3 To give credit, these must be observed at least once.

30. General supervision

Montana Notes:

3.1 Discount if children are not adequately supervised while eating.

31. Discipline

Montana Notes:

3.1 Discount if teacher/caregiver uses harsh punishment, threatens, or physically disciplines any child.

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3.3 If the basic play needs of children in the group are rarely met, resulting in children spending long periods with nothing interesting to do or to learn, score 3.3 “no.” If 20 minutes or more of wait time, score 3.3 “no.” A wait of less than 3 minutes is acceptable. If the time with no access lasts for 3 or more minutes, use the whole time in calculating the 20 minutes time limit. Do not omit the first three minutes of the time without access.

7.2 If not observed, credit can be given if staff provide examples. These opportunities should occur at least once a week.

33. Interactions among children

Montana Notes:

3.1 No specific amount of time is required for the interactions to be encouraged. Observe to see whether encouragement is a regular practice, depending on the ages of the children, their moods, etc. Some encouragement should be seen for at least part of the observation, with more time required for children who are older.

3.3 Positive peer interaction must be observed occasionally during the observation. The rest of the interactions tend to be more neutral than negative.

7.2 If not observed, credit can be given if staff.

34. Schedule

Montana Notes:

7.1 Transitions should never require harsh treatment of children to avoid trouble and force compliance.

35. Free play

Montana Notes:

3.1 “Except in very bad weather”: Health experts are unanimous on the importance of fresh air and the negative health consequences of children spending too much time in closed, indoor settings. If a child is well enough to be at the center, the child is generally assumed to be well enough to go outside. Except in extreme weather, children are expected to go outside every day.

Classes of older children will go outdoors to play every day the temperature plus wind-chill factor is 15 degrees or above as long as conditions are safe, e.g. if ice is not a danger. When it is very cold outdoor play times can be shortened. The basic rule of thumb is one minute for each degree. If the temperature permits, the children can go outside in snow but not in freezing rain or sleet. The importance of appropriate clothing and outerwear should be considered rather than restricting outdoor play.

“Weather-permitting” or “Inclement weather” policy taken from Caring for our Children national health and safety performance standards.

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Children shall play outdoors daily when weather and air quality conditions do not pose a significant health risk.

Weather that poses a significant health risk shall include wind chill at or below 15 degrees F and heat index at or above 90 degrees F, as identified by the National Weather Service.

Air quality conditions that pose a significant health risk shall be identified by announcements from local health authorities or through ozone alerts. Such air quality conditions shall require that children remain indoors where air conditioners ventilate indoor air to the outdoors. Children with respiratory health problems such as asthma shall not play outdoors when local health authorities announce that the air quality is approaching unhealthy levels.

3.2 Consider relative dangers, developmental level of the child, and ease of quick access to the child when deciding whether supervision is extremely lax. For example, allowing children to play outdoors, unsupervised would be considered extremely lax supervision of free play, even if other parts of free play were supervised well.

3.3 Some toys, games and equipment means enough for children to use in free play without undue competition. There must also be enough materials accessible so children can make choices about what to play with.

5.1 "Except in very bad weather": Health experts are unanimous on the importance of fresh air and the negative health consequences of children spending too much time in closed, indoor settings. If a child is well enough to be at the center, the child is generally assumed to be well enough to go outside. Except in extreme weather, children are expected to go outside every day.

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36. Group time

Montana Notes:

1.1, 5.1 “Whole group” refers to all the children who are required to do the same activity. The term “whole group” applies even when some children, are exempt from participating in the required activity.

3.1 Some play activities requires that children are not kept together as a whole group most of the day.

3.2 Opportunities require that children have the chance to participate in one or more self-selected groups at least one time during the day. Credit cannot be given if the staff determines the makeup of the small groups.

5.3 Delete the word “some.” It should read “routines done in small groups or individually.” There should be clear indication that as part of the general practice, routines are done individually or in small groups.

37. Provisions for children with disabilities

ECERS 37, ITERS-R 32, FDCRS 35 and 40, and SACERS 44 should be scored NA unless a child with a disability that has been diagnosed through a formal assessment procedure and receives (or is eligible for) early intervention services is enrolled. Across all four scales, the following aspects should be considered when scoring: modifications, parent involvement, inclusion, and use of assessment information. Look for the extent of modifications needed to the schedule or classroom to include the child in daily activities, parent and staff communication regarding the child’s assessment information and ongoing therapy, and the use of assessment information into planning throughout the day. Some parents may not share all information with staff for various reasons. Consider the levels of quality when determining if staff and parents have shared enough information to meet the child’s needs. Even if staff put significant effort into asking about a child’s needs, if parents share no information, the child’s development is compromised.

Montana Notes:

3.3 Involvement can take place through formal meetings, informal conversations or phone or written communications.

3.4 Involvement means a child with a disability/special need sometimes participates with others in the class, and at other times may not. The child should sometimes (but not necessarily always) participate in play as well as routine care activities.

5.1 At the “good” level of quality, include any changes needed to allow the child with a disability to participate in many of the classroom activities with others.

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