



**New Mexico's  
Preschool Program Standards  
For School Year 2016–2017**

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## Introduction

New Mexico has joined more than 36 states to become part of a movement toward standards-based, early childhood education. Nation-wide, standards are used to describe desired results, outcomes, or learning expectations for children below kindergarten age. In addition, standards are used to describe desired qualifications for personnel and facilities where early learning takes place. According to a joint position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE) there are **four essential features in the design of standards. They**

1. are significant with developmentally appropriate content and outcomes;
2. use informed and inclusive processes in their development and review;
3. provide ethical and appropriate implementation and assessment strategies, and;
4. utilize strong supports for early childhood programs, professionals, and families.

Essential feature number one—significant, developmentally appropriate content and outcomes—will be conceptualized in New Mexico’s Preschool Early Learning Outcomes. The recommended, second essential element— informed and inclusive processes—has been used in the development and review of this project. The last two elements presented in this document, reflect features three and four. Typically called program standards, these serve as expectations for the characteristics or quality of schools, child-care, Head Start centers, and other educational settings where children receive preschool services.

According to Schumacher, Irish, and Lombardi (2003), most recent congressional policy has pointed toward setting high learning or outcome standards that focus on what children are expected to learn. At the federal level, little attention has been given to improving the standards for the type, intensity, and quality of early childhood programs. This document attempts to do just that. Specifically, program standards are requirements that early childhood programs must meet in order to ensure conditions in which children are more likely to learn. These include best practices to inform instruction, child group size, personnel-child ratio, teacher education, methods to collaborate with families, required curriculum, and comprehensive services.

For the purpose of this document, we use the term “essential elements” to frame the quality standards for programs serving young children and their families. Quality standards are associated with better early learning opportunities because they help promote the conditions conducive to the positive teacher-child relationships so crucial for early development and learning (Vandell & Wolfe, 2000). As stated in New Mexico’s *Best Practices* (1999):

These essential elements of quality reflect current research on quality and philosophy statements of a variety of professional organizations, including but not limited to Zero to Three, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Head Start, and the Division of Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children.

## Method

This standardization work began with ongoing information and brainstorming with the Early Childhood Interagency Action Team and representatives from the New Mexico Child Development Board. In addition, the Program Standards Task Force, established during the summer of 2004, assisted in jump-starting the framework and writing the standards presented here.

As these New Mexico standards were being developed and implemented, it has been imperative that our standards of quality programs

- expand upon early learning experiences;
- avoid pressuring children;
- honor the individual strengths and needs of young children;
- encourage young children to value the process of learning;
- ensure developmentally appropriate teaching practices;
- support early childhood teachers in their roles as professional decision makers; and
- value diversity.

In addition to reviewing literature on the standards movement, the existing New Mexico program standards from the five major early education systems were reviewed: child care, public school, early intervention, child development, and Head Start. Standards from other states were also reviewed. Policy statements from early childhood and special education advocacy groups such as the NAEYC, the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children, the National Center for Children in Poverty, and the NAECS/SDE. The program standards for New Mexico proposed in this document represent the best ideas found, reworked, and rewritten by the task force.

In February 2016, the Public Education Department (PED) and the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) revised these program standards to better reflect policies and requirements for New Mexico preschool programs, including programs funded by New Mexico PreK and Title 1.

## Framework for the standards

The framework for the presentation of these early childhood program standards is: 1) a rationale for each essential element, 2) the standard, 3) contract compliance indicators of the standard, and 4) recommended quality indicators.

A **rationale** is an explanation of the fundamental reasons why each standard is important. It provides a connection to research in the field.

A **standard** is a descriptive statement established by experts in a field. It is used as a model of qualitative or quantitative characteristics for assessment of existing programs and for the development of new programs.

A **compliance indicator** is a component of the standard such as an outcome, condition, process, role, or function, that **must** be observed, measured, and used to determine the extent to which standards are met. **Compliance indicators** are “musts” and are monitored by the appropriate agency, the PED or CYFD.

The Preschool Program Standards are organized as follows:

- I. Family and Community Collaboration
- II. Professionalism
- III. Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- IV. Child Growth, Development, and Learning
- V. Developmentally Appropriate Content, Learning Environment, and Curriculum Implementation
- VI. Assessment of Children
- VII. Evaluation of Programs
- VIII. Administration of NM Preschool Programs

## Program Standards for New Mexico’s PreK and Title 1 Preschool Programs

### ***Essential Element I: Family and Community Collaboration***

*RATIONALE: Children live in the context of community, dependent upon the “adults who touch their lives directly through relationships, and indirectly through the decisions they make” (Gestwicki, 2004). Successful programs, according to Schorr (1997), work with families as parts of neighborhoods and communities; have a long-term, preventative orientation; and provide high quality, responsive, comprehensive services. Any institution interested in effectively serving the educational needs of young children should have teachers who hold deep understandings of child development and learning processes, use developmentally appropriate, inclusive instructional approaches, and provide comprehensive services to families and their children.*

#### **I-A. Preschool programs collaborate to support the establishment of a seamless continuum of quality early care and education programs in the community.**

Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool program personnel meet at least annually with early care and education programs in the community such as public schools; Head Start (Migrant, Tribal, Early); child care; and Family Infant Toddler (FIT) Programs to coordinate and strengthen early childhood programs, training, and initiatives. These meetings are verified by meeting agendas, sign-in sheets, and minutes.
- While honoring parental choice, preschool program personnel collaborate to ensure that competition for funding and children does not adversely impact community capacity and is equitably disbursed.
- Preschool administrators meet with early care and education program personnel in the community prior to requesting expansion of their preschool program.

#### **I-B. Preschool programs have a family-centered philosophy that guides all aspects of program planning and implementation.**

Compliance Indicators:

- PreK Program administrators must ensure that each preschool classroom documents in a notebook available for program monitors, 90 hours of family engagement activities that includes:
  - One home visit for each child prior to the start of school (for children who enroll after the start of the school year, the home visit must take place within two weeks of enrollment);
  - Three family/teacher conferences that align with the PreK Observational Assessment cycle;
  - A minimum of four family engagement activities/events, which are shared with families in a calendar; and
  - Documentation notebook must include the agenda and sign-in sheets for all activities.

- For PED—PreK Program administrators must develop a Family Preschool Handbook\*. Every effort is made to provide the materials in the family’s home language. The handbook must include:
  1. a plan that describes/defines the program’s family engagement approach and value for soliciting, documenting, and engaging families as an effective way to support each child’s full potential
  2. procedures for Eligibility, Recruitment, Enrollment and Attendance;
    - how families are informed of the availability of the preschool program;
    - how children are recruited;
    - priorities for enrollment;
    - the application process;
    - selection criteria;
    - how children are enrolled and dis-enrolled;
    - how program personnel work with the local school district’s child find policies and procedures; and
    - how children—who do not have existing individualized education programs (IEPs)—are screened and referred to child find.
  3. a description of the program’s developmentally appropriate classroom practices and curriculum model;
  4. procedures for transportation of children (if applicable);
  5. procedures for developmental and health screenings, including how and when results will be shared with families, and how follow-up will occur; Information regarding all preschool services provided (including special education preschool services)
  6. procedures for referring children with suspected developmental delays and/or disabilities to the district’s Child Find services, including, for PED programs, the *Natural Environments Plan; Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children in New Mexico’s Early Learning System*
  7. a detailed Transition Plan for supporting children moving into and out of the program; and,
  8. procedures for meals and snacks, including a statement that all food must be prepared by the district/school/program nutrition staff or food service contractor.

\*The PED Family Preschool Handbook can be completed as a section in the District or School Handbook. CYFD Programs must have a handbook in place per child care licensing regulations that includes the components listed above.

- 1) Preschool program administrators must develop and provide to staff a current, written *Family Engagement Plan* that includes appropriate meaningful opportunities to build trusting relationships. The *Family Engagement Plan* must include four-family engagement activities in addition to the three family/teacher conferences and one home visit. The plan must include how program personnel will use the children’s portfolios as well as the New Mexico Preschool parent materials to assist families in supporting their child’s learning (available at [www.newmexicoprek.org](http://www.newmexicoprek.org)).

**I-C. Preschool program personnel and families collaborate to ensure smooth transitions for children as they move between settings, between levels or grades, or from program to program.**

Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool programs must develop and provide to families and staff a written *Transition Plan* as part of the Family Preschool Handbook, detailing policies and procedures that assist families of children moving into the program, exiting the program, and/or transitioning into kindergarten. This does not take the place of the individual transition plan required for children with IEPs.
  - The *Transition Plan* must reflect the diversity and uniqueness of the children and of the community in which they reside.
  - The *Transition Plan* must include a series of transition activities that take place throughout the year to prepare the child and family for the upcoming changes and facilitate a positive transition to kindergarten, including transition to the K-3 Plus program, if applicable.

**I-D. Preschool program personnel and administration are culturally and linguistically responsive.**

Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool program personnel respect each child's language and demonstrate knowledge and skill related to second language acquisition.
- Preschool program personnel ensure that materials and visuals in the classroom reflect the culture and language of the children and families enrolled in the program.
- There is intentionality in the lesson plan to foster the relationship of children who speak languages other than English with English-speaking children (and vice-versa).
- A program policy is implemented that describes how the program supports children's home language while supporting English language development, and includes practices to communicate with families in their preferred language.
- PED Preschool program personnel must conduct a PreK Home Language Survey as part of the application process.

***Essential Element II: Professionalism***

RATIONALE: *Greater professional training and formal education of teachers have been linked to higher quality teacher-child interactions. A strong connection has been found between the number of years of formal early childhood teacher education and program quality (Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001). To be effective, administrators of early childhood programs require managerial and leadership skills and knowledge specific to the education of young children and their families.*

## **II-A. Professional personnel are qualified to work with young children and families by education, training, and experience.**

Compliance Indicators:

- Lead Teachers—
  - Each CYFD-funded preschool program classroom must have a licensed lead teacher with a *New Mexico Early Childhood Teacher License: Birth- Grade 3* or a *New Mexico Early Childhood Teacher License, Birth-PreK* or a *New Mexico Early Childhood Teacher License, PreK - Grade 3*. If the lead teacher does not hold one of these early childhood teacher licenses, he/she must annually successfully complete 6 credit-bearing college course hours toward a bachelor's degree in early childhood education which may qualify him/her for the *New Mexico Early Childhood Teacher License: Birth-Grade 3* or a *New Mexico Early Childhood Teacher License, Birth-PreK* or a *New Mexico Early Childhood Teacher License, PreK - Grade 3*.
  - Each PED-funded preschool program classroom must have a licensed teacher with a *New Mexico Early Childhood Teacher License: Birth- Grade 3* or a *New Mexico Early Childhood Teacher License, Birth-PreK* or a *New Mexico Early Childhood Teacher License, PreK - Grade 3*. If an early childhood-licensed teacher cannot be employed, the program may hire a teacher who holds an elementary or special education license **provided** that the teacher 1.) **completes** the Early Childhood Alternative License program (*coursework, OPAL or NMTEACH summative evaluation option*) within two years of hire or placement in any PreK classroom, OR 2.) annually completes at least **twelve (12) hours** of college credit in early childhood education toward a master's degree that will lead to an early childhood education license.
  - Every preschool classroom must be staffed at all times by a licensed teacher.
- Educational assistants—
  - Each CYFD-funded preschool program classroom with a child-personnel ration greater than 1:10 must have an educational with an associate of arts degree (AA) in early childhood education. Any educational assistant who does not currently possess an AA in early childhood education must provide evidence of completion of a minimum of six college credit hours towards the degree annually.
  - Each PED-funded preschool program classroom of 11 or more children must have an educational assistant with an associate of arts degree (AA) in early childhood education and hold the *Educational Assistant License* from the PED. Any educational assistant who does not currently possess an AA in early childhood education must provide evidence of completion of a minimum of

six college credit hours towards the degree annually. All educational assistants must hold a Level 3 license issued by PED.

- Preschool program personnel must all have a current professional development plan (PDP) with specific professional goals and timelines related to the current Preschool Program Standards. Personnel must document ongoing activities to increase knowledge, specialization, and qualifications in early childhood education, individualization, and family support. PDPs must include specific coursework that is entered into the database upon successful course completion. For CYFD, the PDP must be developed within ten days of hire date and update after each semester. For PED, timelines follow the established teacher evaluation process.
- Each PreK teacher, coordinator/administrator, educational assistant, and PED- or CYFD-approved long-term substitutes must successfully complete all required trainings. PreK requires the following trainings:
  - *PreK Database* training (can be completed at your computer)
  - *New Teacher Training* or *Returning Teacher Training as applicable to the individual, which covers the observation, documentation and curriculum planning cycle (AODCP)* (PreK site administrators must complete one of the above or the *Administrators' Training* on the AODCP.)
  - *Powerful and Productive Learning Environments that Promote Quality*, (formerly known as environmental rating scale training). This training must be completed in the first year of working in a PreK program and every three (3) years thereafter.
  - *Full Participation of Each Child (FOCUS requirement)*
  - *FOCUS-TQRIS: Criteria, Process, CQI*
  - *LETRS* (language essentials for teachers of reading and spelling) for Early Childhood (PED licensed staff only)
  - *New Mexico Pyramid Training for Social Emotional Development*
  - PED building principals who are **not** the designated PreK district administrator/coordinator must complete at least one PreK and one FOCUS training per year in addition to *environmental rating scale* training.

*(Note: For teachers and administrators new to PreK, LETRS (PED ONLY), and Pyramid Training must be completed within two years of hire or within two years of beginning a new PreK program.)*

## **II-B. Preschool program personnel are compensated with salaries and benefits that are comparable to other professional positions that have similar qualifications and responsibilities.**

Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool program teachers and educational assistants in PED preschool programs must be employees of the program/district/charter school. If a long-term substitute teacher or educational assistant must be hired to temporarily staff a preschool classroom, the program/district/charter/Regional Education Cooperative (REC) must inform the appropriate agency, PED or CYFD, within 10 days of the placement.

- Preschool program personnel benefits must include at least two hours per week for planning in addition to daily classroom preparation time.

**II-C. Administrators must have early childhood knowledge and experience or have on-site administrative personnel with early childhood knowledge and experience. Administrators will support quality early childhood practices.**

Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool program administrators in PED-funded programs must hold the *New Mexico Education Administration, PreK–12 License*, or the *New Mexico Early Childhood Teacher License: Birth through Third Grade*, or the *New Mexico Early Childhood Teacher License: Age Three through Grade Three*.
- Preschool program administrators in CYFD-funded programs must have a PDP that includes taking credit-bearing college courses in early childhood education and in the administration of early childhood education programs. CYFD-funded preschool program administrators must demonstrate continual progress toward meeting a PDP within an approved time frame.

***Essential Element III: Health, Safety, and Nutrition***

*RATIONALE: All children deserve to be in healthy and safe early care and education settings. There are risk factors associated with cognitive and emotional delay in young children—inadequate nutrition, environmental toxins, diminished familial interactions, trauma and abuse, and parental substance abuse (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2003). Many families need assistance in accessing health care, nutrition, and social services.*

**III-A. All appropriate local, state, and federal regulations pertaining to health, safety, and nutrition for young children in out-of-home care are met, including, but not limited to, buildings and grounds, equipment, sanitation, water quality, fire protection, storage and handling of food.**

Health Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool programs funded by CYFD must refer preschool participants to community health providers able to provide assessments for each child prior to the beginning of the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) month of attendance. These assessments are
  - physical examination
  - vision screening
  - dental screening
  - current immunizations
  - hearing screening
- Preschool programs funded by the PED must ensure that the following assessments are completed for each child by a school health professional prior to the beginning of preschool or within the first three (3) months of attendance. The school health professional must either conduct the assessments or arrange for another health provider to conduct the assessments on site. Parents who choose to

have their child assessed by their private provider must present evidence of such to the school. These assessments are

- physical examination
- vision screening
- dental screening
- current immunizations
- hearing screening

Safety Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool programs funded by CYFD must comply with all New Mexico child care licensing regulations.
- Preschool programs funded by CYFD must notify their CYFD program manager within three days if they have been sanctioned or have been placed under conditions of operation by child care licensing.
- Preschool programs funded by the PED must comply with the Standards for Excellence 6.29.1 NMAC.
- Preschool program facilities must be smoke-free, alcohol-free, and free of illegal substances.

Nutrition Compliance Indicators:

- **All CYFD NM PreK programs** must provide at least one meal for children in the 450-hour program (either breakfast or lunch) and two meals for children in the 900-hour program that meet USDA requirements per session. All programs will participate in the **Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)** and must meet food program guidelines. New Mexico PreK children must receive the meal provided at no cost to the parents, regardless of income eligibility for the food program. Cost for food that is above and beyond reimbursement by **CACFP** is the responsibility of the program.
- **All PED PreK programs** will serve at least one meal for children in the 450-hour program (either breakfast or lunch) and two meals for children in the 900-hour program that meet the USDA requirements per school session by participating in the school lunch program. Parents must complete the USDA application for free-or-reduced priced meals. If the family does not qualify for free meals, the parent must pay the cost of the meal. All meals and snacks served by the PreK program must meet USDA requirements.
  - Family-style meals are developmentally appropriate for preschool children.
  - Parents must not provide snacks.
  - Children’s food is not an allowable expense using PreK funds.
  - Food cannot be used as incentives.

*Essential Element IV: Child Growth, Development, and Learning*

*RATIONALE: Research has repeatedly demonstrated that the cognitive and social development of young children is strongly influenced by the quality of interaction and relationship between a teacher and child. A teacher can provide more warmth and responsive attention with a small group size and lower personnel-child ratio (NAEYC, National Health and Safety Performance Standards).*

**IV-A. Program personnel understand and commit to practices that build on each child’s culture, language, experiences, and abilities.**

Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool program personnel must modify the indoor and outdoor physical and learning environments to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities and developmental delays, with supports from appropriate service providers as indicated for the child with an IEP
- Preschool program staff must complete training specific to inclusionary practices.
- Unless the IEP is modified to indicate a different placement, children with special and/or behavioral needs must not be dismissed from the PreK Program solely because of their special and/or behavioral needs. Preschool program personnel collaborate with a team of family members and multi-disciplinary professionals to develop or update the IEP for each child with special needs, consistent with federal and state regulations.
- Preschool classrooms will provide inclusive settings for children with developmental delays and disabilities based on the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and consistent with a child’s individualized education program (IEP). The amount and location of services is determined by the student’s IEP team. The special education services and equipment required by a child’s IEP, including the cost of therapists and special education staff, can be funded by the district or charter school’s special education budget that includes both or either state operational funds and IDEA B funds (basic or preschool funds).
- PED preschool teachers are trained in the IEP process.
- Preschool teachers participate in the IEP process and are provided a copy of the IEP.
- Preschool program integrate ancillary services (e.g., occupational, speech/ language, and/or physical therapy) within regular program activities and routines to the maximum extent appropriate, as indicated for the child with an IEP.
- Preschool children are referred to Child Find and do not go through the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. The Child Find process takes the place of RTI.
- Depending on the group of children served and the nature and severity of the disabilities of children served, the adult-to-child ratio might be smaller.

***Essential Element V: Developmentally Appropriate Content,  
Learning Environment and Curriculum Implementation***

*RATIONALE: Young children’s learning is dependent on the development of language and cognitive and socio-emotional skills (Thompson & Happold, 2002). In early childhood, the development of these foundational skills lays the foundation for later learning. A developmentally appropriate setting for young children and families is positive, responsive, stimulating, and supportive. The classroom climate is inclusive, accommodating, and accessible to all children. Teachers facilitate the development of attitudes and behaviors that prepare children for school success including compassion, trust, creativity, self-control, and perseverance.*

**V-A. The physical environment and furnishings are planned to support active engagement, learning, participation, and membership of all children. The atmosphere of each classroom is child-oriented, inclusive, and comfortable for all children.**

Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool program classrooms must conduct a self-assessment using the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Third Edition (ECERS-3)* and PED classrooms must achieve a minimum average score of five (5) on both these scales. The purpose of the self-assessment is to identify areas for improvement such as
  - Adult-child interactions
  - Adequate materials and equipment are accessible to children—such as books, dolls, toys, and wall displays. These materials represent diverse cultures, ethnic groups, gender roles, family configurations, and abilities.
  - Adequate amount of space for indoor and outdoor activities, for adult planning and management activities, and for privacy.
  - Classroom environments have identifiable learning centers that are flexible and designed for children to self-select activities.
  - Accommodations, modifications, and adaptations are evident as needed for individual children.

**V-B. Each program has curricula based upon sound child development/early childhood principles; the needs, interests, desires, and relevant life experiences of the children and families served; the language, home experiences, and cultural values of the children served; and the program’s goals and objectives.**

Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool program curricula must be based on the *New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten (ELGs)* (available at [www.newmexicoprek.org](http://www.newmexicoprek.org)) and be designed to achieve long-range goals for children in all domains (i.e., physical, motor, social, emotional, language, and cognitive). The NM preschool curriculum must include all elements as described in the diagram below.

## The Elements of NM PreK Curriculum



- Preschool program personnel must adhere to the principles of *The Developmental-Interaction Approach: Defining and Describing New Mexico's Curriculum for Early Childhood Care & Education Programs*. (available at [www.newmexicoprek.org](http://www.newmexicoprek.org)) with activities based on sound child development/early childhood education principles; the needs, interests, desires, and relevant life experiences of the children and families served; the language, home, experiences, and cultural values of the children served; and the program's goals and objectives.

**V-C. Learning experiences are carefully planned and flexible with selection of materials and experiences reflecting diversity, individual differences, and the unique interests and preferences of the group. Play is a valued context for learning.**

Compliance Indicators:

Preschool programs must

- base curriculum plans on observed and documented interests and needs of the children;
- provide planned experiences for the development of cognitive skills, encouraging each child to understand concepts and to develop language fluency, literacy, numeracy, problem solving, and decision-making skills as indicated in the lesson plans, consultant reports, classroom walkthroughs, and classroom observations;
- include curriculum planning time and classroom preparation time in the program schedule;
- complete lesson plans on the required PreK form and post in the classrooms. The plans must describe teacher-initiated and child-initiated experiences that include

- individual activities and developmentally appropriate small- and whole- group activities for intentional instruction with alternating periods of active and quiet play. For PED-funded extended-day programs, small group time must occur daily at a time other than that scheduled for centers.
- Ensure daily, intentional, developmentally appropriate early literacy practices:
    - daily phonological awareness activities (i.e., songs, finger-plays, rhyming, beginning sounds)
    - oral language and vocabulary activities
    - alphabet knowledge activities
    - concepts of print activities
    - daily read alouds with comprehension strategies
    - daily, ongoing individual and small group (2-3 children) read alouds with documentation that each child is read to **at least** once weekly in 450 hour programs and twice weekly in 900 hour programs, in addition to larger group reading activities
    - opportunities for developmentally appropriate writing activities

### *Essential Element VI: Assessment of Children*

*RATIONALE: Assessment of individual development and learning is necessary for planning and implementing curriculum. Yet accurate assessment of young children is challenging because their development and learning are rapid, uneven, and embedded within specific cultural and linguistic contexts (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997). Assessment of young children relies heavily on the results of observations, descriptive data, collection of work by children, and demonstrated performance over time (NAEYC and NAECS/SDE, 1992).*

**VI-A. Assessment of children’s educational needs is an ongoing process of collecting information from multiple sources using varied approaches and should be used to plan for, and modify, program curricula and to address specific needs of individual children.**

Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool program personnel must monitor each child’s developmental progress, strengths, and needs.
- The PreK Observational Assessment is the **ONLY** assessment tool approved for use in the PreK program.
- All preschool teachers and educational assistants must complete child observational assessments including portfolio forms, and report data
  - within 45 calendar days of enrollment;
  - for Extended-day (900 hour) programs, by the first Friday in February
  - (450 hour PED programs only) by the first Friday in February (do not need to complete Portfolio Forms);
  - Within two weeks prior to the last day of the child’s attendance.
- Preschool programs must use observational assessments in a continuous, dynamic process in which results are used to inform instruction and modify curricula for all

- children. Assessment results may also be used by the interdisciplinary team, which includes family members, to develop the child's IEP.
- Preschool program staff must screen each child with a developmental screening instrument that includes a social-emotional component prior to the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) month of attendance. Programs must screen for early detection of children at risk for developmental delay and/or disability.
    - When possible, the dominant language of the child is used during screening. Appropriate referrals must be made to address all identified concerns.
    - All developmental screening instruments must be valid, reliable, non-biased, linguistically and culturally appropriate, and individually administered by trained personnel.
  - Preschool programs must inform families of screening and observational assessment results no later than the next scheduled parent-teacher conference.
  - Preschool programs must inform families of the child find assessment process and their legal rights of consent and refusal.
  - Preschool programs must align services to comply with the child's IEP, if a child has identified special needs.
  - Preschool programs must use *The New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines, Essential Indicators with Rubrics* as an ongoing assessment of children's progress and as a primary source of information for individualized lesson planning.
  - Preschool program administrators, teachers, and educational assistants must complete the required observational assessment training.
  - Preschool program personnel must implement classroom-based services with fidelity to New Mexico's Authentic Observation Documentation Curriculum Planning Process (AODCP) available at [www.NewMexicoPreK.org](http://www.NewMexicoPreK.org). Compliance with all participation and program data reporting requirements for the following:
    - the AODCP
    - exclusive use of *the New Mexico Preschool Observational Assessment* tools (no other assessment is allowed in NM PreK programs)
    - exclusive use of the New Mexico Preschool Lesson Plan

## ***Essential Element VII: Evaluation and Continual Improvement of Programs***

*RATIONALE: Systematic and comprehensive program evaluation is essential to ensure quality care and education. Program evaluation is guided by program goals, using varied, appropriate, conceptually and technically sound evidence to determine the extent to which programs meet the expected standards of quality and to examine intended—as well as unintended—results (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2003).*

### **VII-A. Program sites have specific goals and objectives within a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan that is evaluated annually by the state. All program components will be evaluated, including personnel/professional development, family satisfaction, and children’s progress using both formative and summative approaches.**

Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool programs must establish a process of CQI by completing a Quality Improvement Plan using a variety of self-assessment tools including environmental rating scales and student data.
- Preschool programs must use multiple measures to evaluate site programs including program data; child demographic and assessment data; and information about personnel qualifications, administrative practices, classroom quality assessments, and implementation data.
- Preschool programs must observe children’s progress in all developmental areas and in multiple settings using the PreK Observational Assessment to evaluate the effect of the program on children’s development and learning. Children’s gains over time are emphasized, not just upon exiting the program.
- Districts/schools must develop a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan that includes **at least two goals** using information from the: (1) Environmental Rating Scales (ERS), (2) NM Pyramid Model Strategies, (3) LETRS-EC Strategies, (4) Child Outcomes Assessment; and (5) Family Surveys. This plan will be documented using the NM Preschool CQI Planning Template, which will include specifications for how the administrator will measure success.
- Individual classrooms must also develop a CQI plan that includes **at least one goal** to improve instructional practices using the: (1) Environmental Rating Scales (ERS), (2) NM Pyramid Model Strategies, (3) LETRS-EC Strategies, (4) Child Outcomes Assessment; and (5) Family Survey. This plan will be documented using the NM Preschool CQI Planning Template, which will include specifications for how the teacher and administrator will measure success in that classroom.

## ***Essential Element VIII: Administration of NM Preschool Programs***

*RATIONALE: The early years in a child's life are a special and unique time for growth and learning. Quality preschool classrooms are busy, interactive environments that promote high-level learning experiences through developmentally appropriate, well-planned play activities. Comprehensive services such as extended-day childcare, health screenings, and parent education and support services are offered to ensure both the needs of the children and their families are being met. Strong teacher-parent relationships are nurtured through frequent formal and informal visits, many occurring in the homes of families. Braided funding streams promote combined classrooms that serve children from different backgrounds, income, and ability levels. A quality preschool is a sophisticated program that requires not only highly skilled teachers but the support from an administrator knowledgeable about early childhood growth, learning, and development.*

### **VIII-A. Preschool program administrators ensure that administrative tasks are successfully accomplished, and the program complies with all contractual obligations.**

#### Compliance Indicators:

- Preschool programs must participate in the New Mexico FOCUS Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS).
- Preschool program administrators must provide each principal, teacher, and educational assistant with his or her own copy of the *NM Preschool Program Standards, The Developmental-Interaction Approach, the Preschool Lesson Plan Form, the NM Essential Indicators with Rubrics*, and the *Statement of Assurances (PED ONLY)* prior to the first day of preschool program services.
- Preschool program teachers and educational assistants assigned to PreK classrooms must not be assigned to non-PreK duties during PreK contract hours.
- PreK program teachers, educational assistants, and program administrators must fully participate in the PreK consultant model of job-embedded professional development. This includes providing a minimum of 30 minutes release time for consultation with the assigned NM PreK consultant immediately following each visit.
- Ensure that PreK program administrators utilize the rubrics modified for PreK teachers and the PreK Classroom Walkthrough (monthly) to complete the **NMTEACH Educator Effectiveness System evaluations**.
- Preschool programs must inform the appropriate state agency, the PED, or the CYFD within 10 days of a long-term substitute teacher or assistant educational assistant being hired/placed in a PreK classroom.
- The program administrators must specify and ensure that PreK funds shall not be used for any religious, sectarian or denominational purposes, instruction or material.

- Preschool program administrators must maintain an inventory of equipment purchased using PreK funds.
- PreK programs funded for 450 hours must provide a minimum of 450 hours of classroom-based services. PreK programs funded for the Extended-Day Pilot must provide a minimum of 900 hours of classroom-based services. All PreK programs must also provide 90 hours for
  - One home visit for each child prior to the start of school (for children who enroll after the start of the school year, the home visit must take place within two weeks of enrollment);
  - Three family/teacher conferences that align with the PreK Observational Assessment cycle;
  - A minimum of four family engagement activities/events, which are shared with families in a calendar;
  - Documentation notebook must include the agenda and sign-in sheets for all activities; and
  - Professional development, transition, or other activities required by NM Preschool Program Standards.

### **Group/Class Size and Ratios**

#### Compliance Indicators

- Preschool program group/class size for four-year-olds must not exceed 20 children.
- Preschool program adult-child ratio for four-year-olds must be no greater than 1:10, with one lead teacher and one educational assistant if the group size is 11 or more.
- Depending on the group of children served and the nature and severity of their disabilities, the adult-to-child ratio and/or group size may be reduced to meet the needs of the children.

### **Enrollment**

#### Compliance Indicators

- PreK programs must be fully enrolled by the 30<sup>th</sup> day following the first day of child attendance. The appropriate agency, CYFD or PED, review the PreK database for enrollment information. The PreK database is the official record of enrollment.
- Preschool programs must enroll only children who have reached their fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) birthday before 12:01 AM on September 1<sup>st</sup> of the current year **and** who are not age-eligible for kindergarten (NMSA 6.30.9.10).
- Preschool programs should ensure that at least sixty-six per cent (66%) of the children served live within the attendance zone of a Title 1 elementary school.

### **Privacy and Confidentiality**

#### Compliance Indicator

- Preschool program administrators must ensure confidentiality of all children’s information in compliance with all federal and state confidentiality and privacy laws. For example, a secure filing system must be maintained and all preschool program personnel and other professionals must maintain discretion and confidentiality when sharing information about children and their families.

### **Date Entry/Reporting**

#### Compliance Indicators

- Preschool program administrators must ensure that current program, child, and personnel data is maintained on the NM preschool database and that information is updated monthly—by the 5<sup>th</sup> day of each month. The PreK database is the official record of enrollment, personnel education and license information.
- PreK program administrators must ensure that waiting list information is updated regularly by the 5<sup>th</sup> day of each month. The PreK database is the official record of waiting lists.
- PreK program administrators in CYFD-funded programs must report program progress by providing three (3) program reports in a format designated by the CYFD no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, and a final end-of-year report due no later than June 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.
- PreK program administrators in PED-funded programs must report program progress by providing three (3) program reports in a format designated by the PED no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> of October, as part of the continuation application, and a final end-of-year report due no later than May 15<sup>th</sup> of each year.

### **Meetings/Training**

#### Compliance Indicators

- PreK program coordinators must attend two (2) PreK administrator meetings, both fall and spring
- In PED-funded programs, PreK program administrators must attend the ECERS (Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales) training in their first year of New Mexico PreK and at least once every three years thereafter.
- PreK site administrators/principals must attend at least one NM PreK administrators’ meeting and required training annually.
- Preschool program and site administrators/principals (including Title 1 and special education preschool) must attend all required FOCUS trainings.
- Preschool program administrators must ensure that all preschool staff successfully complete the required PreK and FOCUS trainings.

### **Budget/Finances**

#### Compliance Indicators

- PreK program funds must supplement and expand existing resources and must not take the place of, or supplant, any funding that is being utilized for preschool services.
- PreK program administrators in CYFD-funded programs submit monthly invoices for reimbursement of program costs.

- PreK program business managers in PED-funded programs must submit a Request for Reimbursements (RfR) monthly, using the PED Operating Budget Management System (OBMS).
  - Foods for parent meetings must occur in the middle of the meeting and must meet all USDA requirements. Snack cannot occur as the first or last activity in a meeting. Candy, high-fat snacks, drinks other than milk, 100% fruit juice, or water, are not reimbursable. Receipts, agendas and sign-in sheets must accompany reimbursement requests (RfR).
  - All RfRs, except those for salaries and benefits only, must be accompanied by detailed invoices. Include lesson plans to support field trip and cooking activity expenditures.
  - T.E.A.C.H. scholarship costs will be reimbursed only after successful course completion. A copy of the grade report must accompany the RfR.
  - Indirect costs cannot exceed one percent of the program services award.
  - PreK funds cannot be used for out-of-state travel costs.

## **Plans**

### Compliance Indicators

- PreK administrators must ensure the completion of the following preschool program plans as part of the Family Preschool Handbook by the date specified in the Calendar of Due Dates:
  - *Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance Plan\**
  - *Family Engagement Plan and Family Activity Calendar\**
  - *Special Education Policies and Procedures Plan\**
  - *Transition Plan\**
  - *Professional Development Plan (CYFD)*
  - *Transportation Plan (if receiving transportation funding)\**
  - *Program and Classroom Quality Improvement Plans (QIP).*

*\*Must be included in the Family Preschool Handbook, please see page 6.*

(Program plans guidance may be found at [www.newmexicoprek.org](http://www.newmexicoprek.org).)

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