

Space & Materials

A safe, responsive, and engaging environment sets the stage for optimal early childhood experiences. An intentionally designed environment allows opportunities for children to experiment, practice their skills, analyze, socialize and problem solve. When the environment supports children's learning and development, they are better prepared for school, work, and life.

Step 1

Step 2



Step 3

Step 4

SM.1 Program serves nutritious meals and snacks to children.

Child care and early education programs play a critical role in supporting the health and wellness of children through the provision of nutritious foods. Early childhood professionals have an opportunity to instill healthy habits in young children that serve as a foundation for healthy choices throughout life.

To meet this indicator, programs will select one of two options and provide supporting evidence.

SM.2 Environment Rating Scale® (ERS®) observation conducted by an endorsed ERS® Assessor.

The ERS® is a series of reliable, valid, research-based observation tools designed to assess the early childhood environment.

To meet this indicator, evidence must be valid (dated within the previous 3 years) and represent, at minimum, 33% of the classrooms or groups served.

SM.3 Program develops a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that:

- Is guided by ERS® assessments,
- Includes both short-term and long-term goals,
- Includes action items to support overall quality improvement.

The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is part of the continuous quality improvement process in which programs assess their strengths and opportunities for growth, set achievable goals, and develop realistic plans for improvement.

To meet this indicator, evidence must reflect all the indicator components above and be dated within the previous 12-months.

SM.4 The Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers have completed professional development related to learning environments.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, the Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers must complete:

- At least 10 clock hours in Core Competency Area II. Learning Environment and Curriculum