

# Why NAEYC Accreditation?

NAEYC Accreditation of programs for young children represents the mark of quality in early childhood education. NAEYC Accreditation began in 1985 with the goal of providing an accrediting system that would raise the level of early childhood programs. Today, over 7,000 programs are NAEYC Accredited.

NAEYC accredited programs invest in early childhood education because they believe in the benefits to children and families. Early childhood experiences—from birth to age 8—have an enormous impact on children's lifelong learning and positively contribute to their health and development. Early childhood education programs with the mark of quality benefit children with greater readiness for and success in school.

It is for this reason that parents and families are seeking out NAEYC-accredited programs. Parents choosing an early childhood education program can be overwhelmed by trying to find the highest-quality program for their child. NAEYC Accreditation is the mark of quality that families are looking for. NAEYC Accreditation gives families the chance to make the Right Choice for Kids.

## Overview of the Four Steps

The four steps to achieving NAEYC Accreditation of programs for young children clarify the NAEYC Accreditation process, help programs prepare for each stage of the process, and ensure that the crucial components of program quality are in place along the way.

Programs accredited prior to September 2006 and programs pursuing **initial accreditation** must complete the four-step accreditation process. Programs that have already completed the four-step process will pursue a new term of accreditation through the renewal process.

### **Step 1: Enrollment/Self-Study**

*Align your program with the 10 NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards*

- Submit enrollment form and fee
- Register for TORCH
- Receive the Self-Study Kit within 4-6 weeks of submitting enrollment form
- Use Self-Study tools in TORCH to evaluate program quality and to inform quality improvement efforts
- Plan your program's accreditation timeline, considering submission deadlines for reaccreditation if applicable

### **Step 2: Application/Self-Assessment**

*Compile evidence on how your program meets the 10 NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards*

- Submit application and fee, selecting a Candidacy due date for Step 3

- Use Self-Assessment tools in TORCH to document that your program meets the 10 NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards
- Gather documentation that your program meets the Candidacy Requirements
- Download Candidacy Materials 8 weeks prior to self-selected Candidacy due date
- Complete Candidacy Materials

**Step 3: Candidacy**

*Demonstrate key components of high quality programming and preparedness for site visit*

- Submit Candidacy Materials and fee on or before Candidacy due date
- “Fine tune” program improvement efforts in preparation for site visit
- Receive Candidacy decision from the NAEYC Academy

**Step 4: Meeting the Standards**

*Demonstrate how your program meets the standards by allowing an NAEYC Assessor to observe your program in action and review evidence collected in Self-Assessment.*

For programs accepted as Candidates for NAEYC Accreditation:

- Receive contact from NAEYC Assessor(s)
- Provide NAEYC Assessor(s) with your program’s calendar and selected exclusion dates
- Submit changes in staff to NAEYC Academy (if applicable)
- Receive notification of 15-day window in which the site visit could occur
- Receive notification of site visit one business day prior to the visit
- Receive site visit within 6 months of Candidacy due date
- Receive accreditation decision within 3 months of site visit
- Accredited Programs: Celebrate your Accreditation Decision!

**Step 4: Maintaining the Standards**

*Demonstrate continued compliance with the 10 NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards.*

- Submit Annual Report on first through fourth anniversaries of accreditation anniversary date
- Update NAEYC with new information, including major programmatic changes, licensing/regulatory updates, and incidents that did or could have compromised the essential health or safety of any child.
- Submit to additional verification or random unannounced visits to demonstrate continued compliance with the program standards.

[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)