



Florida Approval Program Gold Seal Standard Criteria Checklist

School leaders may use this checklist to check compliance with Gold Seal standards in the addendum to the manual. Contact Tammy Hicks, FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Coordinator at tammy-hicks@acsi.org for more information.

Comments
✓ In compliance
+ In progress
- Not in compliance

Gold Seal standards in the addendum to the manual. Contact Tammy Hicks, ✓In compliance	
Validation Process	
1. A1.f: 5 Year Renewal	
o Schools must follow accreditation renewal procedures and submit a renewal application every 5 years.	
2. A1.e: Revocation of Accreditation	
o Changes in a program's accreditation status by ACSI may result from failure to meet or maintain accrediting standards. Programs will be notified in writing and given 30 days to respond before any change in status.	
Staff-to-Child Ratio	
3. B8	
o Schools must have a procedure for obtaining substitutes and maintain a substitute list for each classroom. Ratios, group size, and qualifications must meet national best practice standards.	
Staff Qualifications	
4. C3 and C4	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM 1.4.B	
o Staff qualifications must align with National Health and Safety Standards. Teachers/assistant teachers must be at least 18 years old, and volunteers must be at least 16 years old and supervised.	
5. C5	
o Associate/assistant teachers must have a high school diploma or GED.	
6. C9	
o New employees are not considered permanent until they demonstrate the ability to work effectively with young children and pass a health assessment.	
Staff Training/Continued Professional Development	
7. D1c, d	
o Pre-service orientation includes program policies, health and safety procedures, classroom management, observing experienced teachers, and assessment procedures.	
8. D4	
o Teaching staff who supervise or mentor others must complete specialized training in adult supervision, mentoring, and leadership.	
9. D5	

o Teaching staff are encouraged to join and participate in ACSI membership.	
Director Qualifications	
10. E2b	
o Directors must have a combination of coursework and experience, including four college-level courses in relevant fields and two years of experience as a lead teacher or director.	
Curriculum/Teaching Materials	
11. F6-F7	
o Programs must have sufficient materials and equipment to support curriculum plans and reflect cultural diversity.	
12. F9-F10	
o Staff must rotate and adapt materials to promote learning and extend play opportunities.	
13. F11a, b, c, d	
o Children must be provided with materials for art, music, dramatic play, math, science, and environmental education.	
Daily Schedule	
14. F12e, h, i	
o The daily schedule must balance activities, including group activities, choices, and spontaneous activities.	
Lesson Plans and Implementation	
15. F13b, c, d, e	
o Teachers must use children's interests to engage them, modify strategies based on individual needs, and include self-help activities in routines.	
15. F14a-i	
o Teachers must demonstrate knowledge of content and developmental areas, create engaging experiences, pose stimulating questions, guide skill acquisition, help children express ideas, use prior knowledge, employ varied teaching strategies, tailor learning opportunities, incorporate indoor and outdoor activities, and plan for revisiting experiences.	
16. F15	
o Teachers' lesson plans must be reviewed weekly by the director and/or administration.	
Inclusion	
18. F17	
o When children with special needs enroll, each child must have an individual program plan, professional evaluation, access to a referral system, and team-based progress reviews. Center policies must address procedures for serving children with disabilities.	
Child Assessment	
19. F18a-e	
o Teachers must use multiple sources for informal and formal assessments to identify learning, adapt curriculum, foster curiosity, and communicate progress to parents.	
Learning Environment	
20. G2	
o Each room must provide separate learning areas, control noise levels, and offer a minimum of six distinct learning areas.	
21. G3	

o Soft furniture, cushions, carpets, and other comforting items must be used to make classroom spaces inviting.	
22. G5	
o Teachers must create classroom displays of children's recent work at eye level to help them reflect and extend their learning.	
23. G8b, c	
o Outdoor play areas must be designed with age-appropriate equipment and facilitate motor experiences, dramatic play, block building, manipulative play, art activities, and exploration of the natural environment.	
Social Development	
24. H1	
o Children must have opportunities to recognize and name their own and others' feelings, regulate emotions, and understand others' perspectives.	
25. H2	
o Children must develop social group skills through positive interactions, friendships, learning to help, and constructive conflict resolution.	
26. H3	
o Children must develop positive identity through learning about their community and engaging in discussions about fairness, friendship, responsibility, authority, and differences.	
Social Development	
27. H5	
o Children have opportunities to engage in classroom experiences with members of their families.	
Literacy Support	
28. I1	
o Children's language development is promoted through songs, stories, books, and games. They have varied opportunities to be read to regularly in individualized ways, including one-to-one or in small groups (2-6 children).	
29. I2	
o Children have varied opportunities to develop competence in verbal and nonverbal communication by responding to questions, communicating needs, thoughts, and experiences, and describing things and events.	
30. I3	
o Children have multiple and varied opportunities to write, develop phonological awareness, and understand spoken language by using pictures, familiar objects, body language, and physical cues.	
Indoor Environment	
31. J2b	
o Hand-washing sinks must be within arm's length of diaper-changing tables.	
32. J2f	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standard 3.6.2.C	
o A solid barrier or at least three (3) feet of spacing must separate sleeping children from one another. FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standard C requires a minimum of 18 inches around individual napping and sleeping spaces, with a maximum of two sides against a solid barrier.	
33. J5	

o Cleaning materials, detergents, aerosol cans, health and beauty aids, and other toxic materials must be stored in their original labeled containers and used according to the manufacturer's instructions. All art and craft materials used in the program must be non-toxic, and no paint containing lead in excess of 0.06% is used in areas accessible to children.	
Outdoor Environment	
34. J10	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standard 3.4.4.A	
o At least 75 square feet of outside play space must be provided for each child playing outside at any one time. The total amount of required play space is based on a maximum of one-third of the total center enrollment being outside at one time.	
35. J14	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standard 2.6.E	
o Program staff must protect children and adults from exposure to high levels of air pollution from smog or heavy traffic by limiting outdoor and physical activity during smog or other air pollution alerts.	
36. J19a	
o The program must maintain facilities free from harmful animals, insect pests, and poisonous plants. Poisonous or potentially harmful plants must not be in areas accessible to children.	
37. J21	
o To protect against cold, heat, sun injury, and insect-borne disease, parents must provide their children with at least one change of clothing suitable for daily outdoor play.	
Personal Hygiene and Best Practices	
38. J24	
o Toilets, drinking water facilities, and hand-washing facilities must be within 40 feet of the indoor areas that children use. Hand-washing sinks must be accessible to staff and children (step stools are available if needed).	
39. J26	
o Sinks used for food preparation may not be used for handwashing or any other purpose.	
Nutrition and Food Safety	
40. J28d, e	
o The program must prepare written daily, weekly, and/or monthly menus that illustrate that meals and snacks are at regularly established times and are at least two (2) hours apart but not more than three (3) hours apart.	
41. J29	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards 3.9.3.B	
o The program must participate in the United States Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA's CACFP), or at least two (2) times a year, a registered dietitian or pediatric public health nutritionist must evaluate the provider's menus. [We recommend programs use menus from the USDA site which have been previously reviewed for compliance. See Seven CACFP Sample Cycle Menus and Child and Adult Care Food Program Food and Nutrition Service]	
42. J31	
o Mealtime must be relaxed and pleasant for children. Staff must sit and	

eat with the children while modeling appropriate behavior and using	
mealtime as a learning experience.	
43. J32a	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards 3.9.3.B	
o Staff must take steps and work with families to ensure that food and	
beverages brought from home meet the United States Department of	
Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA's CACFP) food	
guidelines.	
44. J32b	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standard 3.9.6.B	
o All formula and food brought from home must be labeled with the	
child's first and last name and the date. If the label is not completed by	
the parent, early learning and care personnel must label it upon receipt.	
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45. J32e	
o If food is intended to be shared, it must either be whole fruits or	
commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers.	
46. J33	
o For all infants and children with disabilities who have special feeding	
needs, a daily record must be kept documenting the type and quantity of	
food consumed, and this information must be provided to families.	
47. J36c	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standard 3.9.7.E	
o If staff warm formula or human milk, it must be warmed in water at no	
more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit for no more than five minutes. Heated	
bottles and foods must be tested before feeding to ensure even heat	
distribution and prevent injury.	
48. J36e	
o Except for breast milk, staff must serve only formula and infant food	
that come to the facility in factory-sealed containers and are prepared	
according to the manufacturer's instructions.	
49. J37c, d	
o The program supports breastfeeding by ensuring that staff gently mix,	
not shake, the milk before feeding to preserve its special infection-fighting	
and nutritional components, and by providing a comfortable place for	
breastfeeding and coordinating feedings with the infant's mother.	
50. J38a, b	
o The program does not feed cow's milk to infants younger than 12	
months and serves only whole milk to children aged 12 to 24 months. If	
the program provides food to infants, staff must work with families to	
ensure that the food is based on each infant's individual nutritional needs	
and developmental stage.	
51. J38d, e, f	
o Teaching staff must offer children fluids from a cup as soon as it is	
decided that a child is developmentally ready. They must not offer solid	
foods and fruit juices to infants younger than six months unless	
recommended by the child's health care provider and approved by	
families. Sweetened beverages are avoided.	

52. J39	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standard 3.6.1.C, F	
o Cots, mats, cribs, sheets, and blankets must be marked with individual children's names and washed at least once a week or more often if soiled. Linens used by more than one child must be washed between uses. Linens must be provided when children are sleeping, and pillows and blankets must be available. Program staff must identify and remove choking hazards.	
53. J40	
o Program staff must identify and remove choking hazards from the proximity and reach of children.	
54. J41	
o Before walking on surfaces that infants use specifically for play, adults and children must remove, replace, or cover with clean foot coverings any shoes they have worn outside that play area. If children or staff are barefoot in such areas, their feet must be visibly clean.	
55. J42	
o Adults must have a comfortable place to sit, hold, and feed infants. Staff must place rocking chairs and glider chairs in locations that will avoid injury to children who may be on the floor.	
56. J43	
o Infants and toddlers must not have bottles while in a crib or bed and must not eat from propped bottles at any time. They must not carry bottles, sippy cups, or regular cups while crawling or walking.	
57. J44	
o Teaching staff who are familiar with the infant must feed him or her whenever the infant seems hungry. Feeding must not be used in lieu of other forms of comfort.	
58. J45	
o At least once daily, in a program where children older than one year receive two or more meals, teaching staff must provide an opportunity for tooth brushing and gum-cleaning to remove food and plaque. After each feeding, infants' teeth and gums must be wiped with a disposable tissue or clean, soft cloth used only for one child and laundered daily.	
59. J46	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standard 3.6.3	
o Cribs must be inspected to ensure security. Drop-side cribs must not be used.	
60. J48c	
o Non-absorbent paper liners must be used in the diaper/changing area, and they must be large enough to cover the changing surface.	
61. J49	
o Bathrooms must have barriers to prevent entry by unattended infants and toddlers up to 2 years old.	
62. J51d	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standard 2.4.6.B	
o Written procedures must address all aspects of the arrival, departure, and transportation of children, including specific procedures for children with disabilities.	
63. J58	
o Staff must maintain areas used by staff or children who have allergies or any other special environmental health needs according to the	

recommendations of health professionals.	
Health and Safety	
64. J60	
o The program provides regular vision, speech and language, hearing, and developmental screenings for children either on-site or through referral to a community health agency. The program documents annual screenings for each child.	
65. J66	
o There is a health/medical consultant available to the program for questions and advice. The health consultant observes program practices and reviews and makes recommendations about the program's practices and written health policies to ensure health promotion and prevention of infection and injury. The consultation addresses physical, social-emotional, nutritional, and oral health, including the care and exclusion of ill children.	
Teacher-Child Interactions	
66. K1b, c	
Policies prescribe that each group of children be assigned teaching staff who have primary responsibility for working with that group. Every attempt is made to maintain continuity of relationships between teaching staff and children and among groups of children:	
o c. Policies encourage keeping infants and toddlers to age two (2) together with their teaching staff for nine (9) months or longer.	
Staff-to-Child Ratios Program Operations	
64. L10h, i, j, k, l	
o The program must:	
▪ Inform families about community events sponsored by local organizations, such as museum exhibits, concerts, storytelling, and theater intended for children	
▪ Invite members of the performing and visual arts community to share their interests and talents with the children.	
▪ Engage with other community organizations to cosponsor or participate in cultural events to enrich the experience of children and families.	
▪ Encourage staff to anticipate in local, state, or national early childhood education organizations and public-awareness activities.	
▪ Encourage and provide opportunities for staff to participate in community or statewide interagency councils or service integration efforts.	
65. L11a, b, c	
o Program leadership must:	
▪ Encourage staff and families to support community improvement or advocacy projects.	
▪ Build mutual relationships and communicate regularly with close neighbors, involving them in the program as appropriate.	
▪ Be knowledgeable about how policy changes at various levels affect services and resources for children and families.	
Family Engagement	
66. M1c, d, e	
o The program must have written policies and procedures that are updated at least annually and:	
▪ Are available in languages that families use and understand.	

▪ Include parent conflict resolution procedures.	
▪ Include program operations, such as tuition and fee schedules,	
payment and refunds, and attendance and vacation.	
67. M2	
o The program must offer a parent display/bulletin board covering	
program description, policy statements, philosophy, schedules, and	
menus. Information must be provided to families in a language they	
understand.	
68. M3	
o Families must be allowed to visit any area of the facility at any time	
during regular hours. Nursing mothers must have a place to breast-feed	
that meets their needs for comfort and privacy.	
69. M4	
o The program must have a procedure for transitioning children to	
another program or elementary school, including reviewing children's	
specific needs, a family needs assessment, and a mechanism to share	
summary information with informed consent.	
70. M6a, b, c	
o To better understand the cultural backgrounds of children, families,	
and the community, program staff must:	
▪ Participate in community cultural events and performances designed	
for children and their families.	
▪ Use various strategies to learn from families about their family	
structure, child-rearing practices, and cultural backgrounds.	
▪ Actively use information about families to adapt the program	
environment, curriculum, and teaching methods.	
71. M7d, f, g, h, j, k, l, p, q, r	
o Program staff must:	
▪ Share information with families about classroom rules, expectations,	
and routines throughout the year.	
▪ Inform parents about the program, curriculum, policy changes, and	
critical issues	
▪ Provide information regarding social services within the community.	
▪ Establish practices to foster strong reciprocal relationships with	
families.	
▪ Communicate with families about the program philosophy and	
curriculum objectives.	
▪ Facilitate opportunities for families to meet and support each other.	
▪ Work with families to plan events, considering their schedules and	
availability.	
▪ Encourage families to raise concerns and work collaboratively to find	
solutions.	
▪ Support families in making primary decisions about services for their	
children.	
▪ Use various techniques to negotiate difficulties with family members in	
a language they understand.	
72. F17, J51d	
o FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standards: FL APPROVAL PROGRAM Standard 2.4.6.B	
o Policies must address specific procedures (individual program plan)	
for serving children with disabilities (e.g., medical conditions, learning,	
and behavioral disabilities).	
73. 2.1.1 Ratios	

o The staff-to-child ratio is based on primary responsibility for the direct																										
	<table><tr><th>Age of Children</th><th>Staff: Child Ratio</th><th>Maximum Group Size</th></tr><tr><td>Birth up to 12 months</td><td>1:4</td><td>8</td></tr><tr><td>1 year up to 2 years</td><td>1:6</td><td>12</td></tr><tr><td>2 years</td><td>1:11 (1:9 Gold Seal Schools)</td><td>18</td></tr><tr><td>3 years</td><td>1:15 (1:10 Gold Seal Schools)</td><td>20</td></tr><tr><td>4 years</td><td>1:20 (1:12 Gold Seal Schools)</td><td>24</td></tr><tr><td>Kindergarten and up</td><td>1:25 (1:12 Gold Seal Schools)</td><td>24</td></tr><tr><td>Mixed Age Groups</td><td>See 2.1.2 Below</td><td></td></tr></table>	Age of Children	Staff: Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size	Birth up to 12 months	1:4	8	1 year up to 2 years	1:6	12	2 years	1:11 (1:9 Gold Seal Schools)	18	3 years	1:15 (1:10 Gold Seal Schools)	20	4 years	1:20 (1:12 Gold Seal Schools)	24	Kindergarten and up	1:25 (1:12 Gold Seal Schools)	24	Mixed Age Groups	See 2.1.2 Below		
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supervision of children and applies at all times while children are in care.																										
Ratios, group size, and qualifications of early educators must meet																										
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74. 2.1.2 Mixed Age Groups																										
o In groups of mixed age ranges:																										
▪ 2.1.2.1: Where children under one year of age are included, one																										
personnel must be responsible for no more than four children of any age																										
group at all times.																										
▪ 2.1.2.2: Where children one year of age but under two years of age																										
are included, one personnel must be responsible for no more than six																										
children of any age group at all times. For children two years of age and																										
older, the ratio is based on the youngest child in the group.																										
▪ 2.1.2.3: Groups may be limited to one age or include multiple ages. A																										
group consists of children assigned to a teacher or team for most of the																										
day in a defined space, ensuring appropriate group sizes are maintained.																										
75. 2.1.7.3 Swimming or Wading Ratios																										
o Minimum staff-to-child ratios for swimming or wading:																										
▪ Infant (Birth up to 1 year): 1:1																										
▪ Toddler (1 year up to 3 years): 1:1																										
▪ Preschooler (3 years up to 5 years): 1:4																										
▪ School-Age Children (5 years and up): 1:10																										
▪ Mixed Age Groups: Ratio based on age of the youngest child present																										

Staff Credentials	
76. 4.6 Staff Credentials	
o The facility must have a minimum of one credentialed personnel for every 20 children. A credentialed personnel is defined as an early learning and care professional with a Staff Credential Verification documented on their Training Transcript. Florida law requires VPK instructional personnel to possess an appropriate credential.	
77. 4.6.1 Calculating Number of Credentialed Personnel Necessary	
o Facilities with 19 or fewer children or operating less than eight hours per week are not subject to the staff credential requirement. For every 20 children, one credentialed personnel is required. Credentialed personnel must work at least 20 hours per week, excluding naptime, and be on-site during all operational hours for facilities operating 20 hours or less per week.	
78. 4.6.2 Training Documentation	
o A copy of the Training Transcript for each credentialed personnel must be maintained on-site in the employee personnel file and available for review. Facilities must maintain written documentation of credentialed personnel's work schedules for 12 months.	
79. 4.6.3 Staff Credential Renewal	
o To maintain an active National Early Childhood Credential, it must be renewed through the awarding agency or as a Florida Birth Through Five Childcare Credential. Formal education qualifications are always active and do not need renewal. Birth Through Five or School-Age Childcare Credentials must be renewed every five years.	
Recommendations:	

Completed by _____ Date _____