

# Program Improvement Planning in Early Childhood Settings: A Planning Guide

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Every early childhood program administrator plans. The planning can be formal or informal, written or not, depending on his/her style, skillset, or need at hand. And the end result can vary widely depending on many variables. This planning guide is designed to provide some basic information about program improvement planning and give sample planning forms that can be used as is or modified to fit needs or preferences. ***A program improvement plan is a tool or strategy that helps to ensure your great ideas or plans actually come to fruition!!***

## Why create written program improvement plans?

Here is what others have said:

- **Planning without action is futile, action without planning is fatal.** -author unknown
- **A good plan implemented today is better than a perfect plan implemented tomorrow.**  
-George Patton
- **A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step.** -Lau Tsu
- **Your life will be no better than the plans you make and the action you take. You are the architect and builder of your own life, fortune, destiny.** -Alfred A. Montapert
- **An idea that is developed and put into action is more important than an idea that exists only as an idea.** –  
Buddha
- **Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.** -Vincent van Gogh
- **Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there.** -Will Rogers

*For instance, a program that is seeking NAEYC Accreditation would very well be using a number of different Program Improvement Plans (perhaps one for each Standard). Taken all together, these Plans would increase the likelihood that the program did in fact become NAEYC Accredited.*

While having a written plan does not guarantee success, it can greatly increase the chances that what you **want** to accomplish will actually **get** accomplished.

## What are the components of a written program improvement plan?

Improvement plans can take many forms but there are certain elements that need to be included to make the plan more functional. **A program improvement plan is much more than simply a “to do” list.**

Effective program improvement plans typically include the following:

- **Goals** What is it that you want to accomplish? You might like to reference a requirement, regulation, or criterion. (For example: to meet DPH licensing regulation *19a-79-6a (a) (8)*, or to meet NAEYC Standard 10 Criterion B.03)
- **Action Steps** What needs to get done to achieve that goal? Depending on the complexity of the goal, you may have many action steps. *OR it may mean that you actually have many action plans to achieve a challenging goal.*
- **Person responsible** *This* piece addresses an accountability aspect of plans. If an action step is not assigned to someone (or a group), then there is a very good chance that *no one* will actually do it!! Another reason for assigning the person(s) responsible is to help determine whether or not the plan is realistic. If you look at an improvement plan and it's the same person identified for most or all the action steps, it should cause you to ask:
  - Is it realistic for one person to do so many things?
  - Am I delegating enough?
  - Am I utilizing various individuals expertise?

*When creating goals, it is advised that you make them:*

***Specific*** (goals are clear and detailed)

***Measurable*** (results can be measured in some way)

***Attainable*** (it is possible to achieve this goal)

***Relevant*** (the goal will get to where you want to be)

***Time specific*** (deadlines exist for each step as well as for the project overall)

- Are there other people resources that I am overlooking (people resources both inside and outside of your program)?
- **Timeline** Without assigning a ‘due date’, work may get started.....but never get finished! Timelines are another piece of accountability. Support your desire to achieve the goal by delineating a “start date” and then an “end date”.

In addition to the basic components of goals, action steps, person responsible, and timeline, there are other components that you might want to include in your plan. They include:

- **Resources needed** In this section, you identify the resources that will assist you in that action step. Resources could be dollar amounts (How much will it cost for the trainer? How much will it cost in additional staff hours?), physical materials (i.e. resource books such as the ECERS or PAS) or other (i.e. assistance from the Mayor who needs to sign off on a grant application).
- **Constraints or Barriers** This information can be important for a number of reasons. The constraint may need to be addressed through its own improvement plan. And awareness of the constraint puts it on your radar screen and gives you a conscious opportunity to combat it (rather than being blind to it.....and continuing to be paralyzed by it).
- **Check in Person and Timeline** In essence, this is asking you to identify who will be monitoring the progress and at what frequency. Will you review your improvement plan at each month’s staff meeting? Will you review your plan at each quarterly Board meeting? Will you set aside one hour per month (written in on your planner) to monitor this work?

*If your needed resources are financial, you can identify where they will be coming from (i.e. parent fundraising, grants, etc.)*



**Accreditation Facilitation Project**

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**Program Improvement Plans as a Way of Doing Business**

If you have never done a formal, written improvement plan before, it may appear to be a lot of work. However, the end result - when planning is done appropriately – typically means success! The time it takes for you to create a formal written plan is well worth it when you see success on the other end.

**Appendix A: Sample Program Improvement Plan forms**

**ACTION PLAN**

Program Name: \_\_\_\_\_

ISSUE	ACTION REQUIRED	DATE TO BE COMPLETED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	RESULTS

**Accreditation Facilitation Project Program Improvement Plan**

Goal \_\_\_\_\_

Goal End Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check-in Dates: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Action Steps</b>  <i>What Will Be Done?</i>	<b>Person Responsible</b>  <i>Who will do it?</i>	<b>Start Date</b>  <i>By When? (Day/Month)</i>	<b>End Date</b>  <i>What is the projected end date?</i>	<b>Evaluation</b>  <i>What evidence do you have that the change you wanted has occurred?</i>
<b>Step 1:</b>				
<b>Step 2:</b>				
<b>Step 3:</b>				
<b>Step 4:</b>				
<b>Step 5:</b>				

## NAEYC Accreditation Work Plan

Program Name

Data Collected from: Family Survey

Date: October 8, 20XX

Criterion	Description	Plan	Teacher	Admin.	Goal Date	Completed
			Action Needed	Action Needed		
7.A.02, 7.A.03 2.A.04 3.B.01	Gather information from family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>K – revise family questionnaire</li> <li>PS&amp;K – highlight what we are doing in the classroom from info from families in the newsletter and website</li> </ul>	P.  All		Dec. 12	✓  ✓
7.A.08 4.E.02	Engage families to learn about and incorporate into curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PS – use Family conference form to help with joint decision-making and goal setting with the families; give copy to the families</li> </ul>	K. and A.		Dec. 12	✓

7.A.12	Families able to meet in formal and informal basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• K – put together a family directory and provide to families</li> <li>• Family events highlighted in the newsletter and on website</li> <li>• Classroom family events (ideas)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Harvest party</li> <li>○ Writers’ Tea</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	P.  All		Feb. 27  Dec. 12  Apr. 24	✓  ✓  ✓
7.B.06	Communicating one a weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making phone calls</li> <li>• Newsletter weekly</li> <li>• Website</li> </ul>	All		Dec. 12	✓
7.C.06 7.C.08	Transition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Vicky to establish a transition plan to first grade and make families aware.</li> </ul>	P.		June 3	✓
10F.02	Sharing info from surveys and the program improvement plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share with the families the school-wide communication goal</li> </ul>	All		Dec. 12	✓

## NAEYC Accreditation Work Plan

Data Collected from: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Criterion	Description	Plan	Teacher Action Needed	Admin. Action Needed	Goal Date