Niagara Region Quality Development Checklist

The NR Quality Development Checklist is specific to the unique context of the EarlyON setting. The checklist addresses conditions of quality important to children and families accessing EarlyON and the staff and educators that serve them. Each setting (licensed centers based child care, licensed home child care) has their own tools designed specifically for their context.

EarlyON Child and Family Centre

How is Quality Measured in Niagara?

Quality programming is consistent and intentional programming rooted in supporting strong early childhood development and child wellbeing. Niagara Region is committed to supporting high quality early years programs that support children to achieve their full potential. This Checklist will support quality in Niagara Region's early years and child care system using the following four pillars:

1. Governance, Leadership and Workforce
Strong leadership and governance structures that promote program accountability and sets the foundation for quality programming.

2. Pedagogy and How Does Learning Happen
Pedagogy that is guided by research, reflective practice and the principles of How Does Learning Happen? to build programs that supports child development.

3. Early Learning Environment
Environments that are safe, inclusive, accessible and thoughtfully designed to promote the well-being of children and educators.

4. Family and Community Engagement
Strong, collaborative relationships with families and community partners to ensure all children, families and educators are supported in partners in building a high quality system.

Framework Goal

To ensure all children have access to safe, inclusive, and enriching early learning environments by establishing a consistent, evidence-based framework. This will promote meaningful participation in children's lives, positive child outcomes, supports families, empowers and equips educators, fosters equitable access to resources and tools, and builds public confidence in the child care sector.

What is the purpose of this tool?

Niagara Region's Quality Framework is a vital component of the Inclusion Resource Service Model. This tool uses a standardized method for observing, understanding, and evaluating centers, and for developing recommendations to strengthen quality. It adopts a holistic, supportive approach to co-design, collaboration, and capacity building to promote consistency across Niagara's Early Year and Child Care Sector. It empowers educators, guides continuous improvement, and fosters safe, inclusive, and evidence-based early learning environments.

Administration of tool in EarlyON

Niagara Region's Quality Framework will be administered on an annual basis by the Service System and Performance Management Advisor (SSPMA) using a rolling yearly schedule. The SSPMA will complete 2-3 assessments per month. As an output of this assessment, a set of goals will be created to guide quality programming and professional development for the following year. The tool will only be administered at permanent EarlyON locations. Pop-ups and pilot locations are exempt from assessment, but the assumption is that the EarlyON Coordinator will be applying findings from this assessment at their permanent sites to any temporary sites.

Assessment

The SSPMA will assess centres on the each of the criteria listed below, providing a meets/does not meet designation. The SSPMA will also record notes based on observations and identify goals.

Example:

Condition of Quality	Criteria Met (Yes/No)	Notes	Goal
Referral Process: Centre Staff communicate and accurately execute the IQC referral process	No	Some staff are unclear on the referral process and are unable to accurately refer to an IQC	Provide additional training to ensure staff are able to communicate and execute the referral process for parents and families. Referral pathway visual to be added to the centre's internal communication board

Pillar: Governance, Leadership and Workforce

Condition of Quality
Data Reporting: There is timely and accurate reporting of collected data in all required databases
Referral Process: Centre Staff communicate and accurately execute the IQC referral process
Staffing: There is one RECE on the floor during all programming hours (with the exception of breaks)
Professional Development The agency is providing additional PD for their staff targeted toward growth opportunities
Staff Communication Staff are receiving regular, timely updates and information. Staff meetings are held regularly
Hiring Practices and Onboarding: Onboarding practices are clear, consistent and comprehensive. All new staff are provided time to complete onboarding
Coordinator Support and Level of Involvement: Coordinators maintain regular and meaningful communication with each site weekly through a variety of communication methods (in-person, phone, email). Coordinators build strong relationships with centre staff and help ensure that expectations, policies, and best practices are clearly understood and effectively implemented **To assess this criteria the following open ended question will be asked to the coordinator and staff:** How does the coordinator provide support and communication?
Hours of Operation: Centre hours of operation match what has been approved with the budget submission and consistently reviewed and adjusted in consultation with the region to meet family needs

Condition of Quality
Promotion of Programming: Site / agency is making prompt and accurate updates about: hours of operation, events, programming changes, outreach events, and promotional activities through web and social media channels. Agency is making intentional effort to promote EarlyON programming through outreach events and promotional weeks
Funding: Budget is reconciled and completed on time. Budget updates are communicated through the agency. There is innovative exploration of other funding sources

Pillar: Pedagogy and How Does Learning Happen?

Condition of Quality
Learning Centres: All learning areas are visible and available in program (i.e. dramatic play, literacy, science etc.)
Materials: Materials and books are accessible to children, represent a good variety and in good repair
DEI Materials: Materials that represent diversity, equity and inclusion are accessible and relevant for children and families that attend the centre (diverse cultures, family structures, inclusive materials)
Sensory Materials and Space: Sensory materials and space are available in programming. Sensory materials as part of tier 1 practices, are being utilized in the centre
Open and Inviting: All children and families are welcome in the centre and program . staff are trained and provided awareness on supporting children and families of diverse backgrounds and needs
Inclusive Practices: Use of tier 1 practices in program (i.e. visual schedules)
Outdoor Space: Dedicated outdoor programming on-site or in community with a strong connection to nature

Pillar: Early Learning Environment

Condition of Quality
Programming: Is there a mix of programming that includes: • Structured programming (circle time, music time) • Special events with pre- registration (daddy and me, community visits) • Free play time
HDLH: Four foundations of how does learning happen are visible and illustrated in programming
Documentation: Group pedagogical documentation is completed regularly and visible(social media, binders, bulletin boards, etc)
Staff Interaction: Positive staff interaction with children and families, community partners and other staff
Behaviour Guidance Staff referencing IQC recommendations and universal tier 1 strategies when IQC is absent

Pillar: Family and Community Engagement

Condition of Quality
Parent/Child Engagement: Parents are encouraged to engage with and support their child(rens) learning. Cell phone use is discouraged for parents
Check-in/Check-out Process: Followed by all families and is well supported by staff
Community Agencies and Connection: Community agencies are brokering in programming and services. Referrals are regularly occuring with other agencies
Resourcefulness: Collaboration with other EarlyON agencies (i.e. French circle time, Indigenous lead, library resources)
Customer Experience and Family Input: Mechanism to collect feedback from families to improve programming
Staff/Parent Interaction: Staff are comfortable engaging with parents, having difficult conversations and sharing information