

Observation and Documentation: Planning for Individual Needs Participant Guide

2 Hours
July 2026

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Training Evaluation

In a few days, you will receive an email from Develop asking you to complete an online training evaluation from this event called a Training and Trainer Evaluation Tool (TTET). We would really appreciate your input about trainer performance, the content, and the training environment so that we can make improvements along the way. We use your feedback when we revise courses and schedule training events.

Course Overview

KCF Content Area:

KCF Content Area: IV.A. Observing, Recording, and Assessing Development

CDA Subject Area:

CDA Subject Area VII: Observing and recording children's behavior

Course Description

Explore intentional observation and documentation practices that help early childhood educators deepen their understanding of each child's unique strengths, interests, needs, and development. Demonstrate strategies for gathering objective observation data and using them to support authentic assessment and individualized planning. Examine the role of observation in understanding children's behavior and planning learning experiences that promote lifelong learning and success.

Learning Objectives

Throughout this training, participants will:

- Review tools and strategies for implementing effective observation and documentation in early childhood settings.
- Demonstrate how observation data is used to understand children's development and guide planning that supports their individual learning and needs.

Course Outline:

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
A	10 minutes	Welcome/Introductions Objectives Review
B	30 minutes	Strategies for Effective Observation and Documentation
C	30 minutes	Using Observation Data to Plan for Individual Needs

Section	Section Time	Key Concepts
D	40 minutes	Observing to Understand Children's Behavior
E	10 minutes	Objectives Review/Closing
	Total Time: 2 hours	

Strategies for Effective Observation

Identify one strategy to implement or refine in your early childhood program to strengthen your observation and documentation practices

- Begin with a clear focus
- Observe with your senses
- Think of observation and documentation as research
- Gather information from family members
- Observe children in familiar settings throughout daily routines
- Observe in a variety of settings and at different times of the day
- Make a realistic schedule for observing
- Document in the moment or as soon as possible
- Take steps to minimize bias
- Ensure objectivity

Planning for Observation

This week, I plan to observe _____
(Name of child/children)

during _____ for _____
(Time of day/activity) (Length or time)

I will use _____ to document my observation.
(Documentation tool)

Planning for Matthew

Observation Notes	
Child:	Location:
Date:	Activity:
Time:	
Observation notes:	
Questions, concerns or thoughts following observation:	
Learning goals and strategies:	

Planning Strategies to Support Social and Emotional Development

Observation Notes	
Child:	Location:
Date:	Activity:
Time:	
Observation notes:	
What is the possible function of the behavior?	
What skills does this child need to learn to be successful?	
What support does this child need to be successful?	
Supportive Strategies:	
How can we support this child in the daily routine?	
When can we support this child in the daily routine?	
Where can we support this child in the daily routine?	

Final Reflection

- What is one area of observation or documentation you would like to refine or improve?
- What is one action you will take this week to strengthen your observation or documentation skills?
- How will you use your observation data to plan meaningful learning experiences for the children in your program?

Resources

- [National Institute for Early Education Research](#)
- [Early Childhood Indicators of Progress \(ECIPs\)](#)
- [Center for Inclusive Child Care](#)
- [Center on Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning](#)
- [National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations](#)
- [NAEYC Code of Ethics for Early Childhood Educators](#)
- [Talking with Families About Challenging Behaviors: Dos and Don'ts](#)
- [American Psychological Association Inclusive Language Guide](#)