

Classroom Observation Guidelines

To make useful observations in a child care program, the observer needs to be unobtrusive and respectful of the program's needs to operate effectively.

Meeting the following guidelines will help:

- Observers should not interfere with the child care program's activities in any way while making observations. Be as unobtrusive as possible.
- Observers should station themselves around the perimeter of the room, moving around the perimeter to get a better view during the observation. If observing in a group, stay with the group.
- Observers may sit in a chair so a standing adult observer does not intimidate the children. Do not sit on other furniture such as shelves, tables, the children's chairs near an activity table or on play equipment.
- Refrain from talking with other observers, with the caregivers or the children while in the child care area. Take notes on a pad to help remember what you have seen and frame questions you can ask of the director later.
- Acknowledge children if they approach you, but do not otherwise take part in the activities of the children. You can tell them you are watching them play today, or that you have to finish your work.
- Move if you are in the way of caregivers or children.
- Do not look in drawers, cabinets or other closed spaces without first getting the permission of the adults who are working in that space.
- Keep your personal possessions with you at all times unless you are given a safe place to leave them in the facility. Do not allow children to have access to your things.
- Try to keep a neutral facial expression so that the children and staff are neither drawn to you nor concerned about your response to them.
- Treat all you see and hear as confidential. Do not repeat anything about the adults, children or facility that could be traced back to your observation unless the situation is appropriate for such sharing.

Adapted from materials developed by the National Training Institute for Child Care Health Consultants, University of North Carolina School of Public Health, Chapel Hill, NC. (Updated 1/27/03)