



National Accreditation for Center-Based, Family Child Care, and Out of School Time Programs

Are you curious about the benefits of accreditation for your early childhood or out-of-school time program? Are you unsure what the process entails and how Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network can support you? MRTQ PDN can help answer your questions!

What is accreditation?

Accreditation is a voluntary undertaking designed to improve and validate the quality of out-of-school time and early care and education programs. Accreditation is one pathway to achieve recognition for the high quality practices in early childhood and youth settings.

The accreditation process involves extensive self-study and reflection to identify program strengths and address challenges based on national standards.

To receive accreditation, programs participate in a verification process that includes document review, onsite observations, and an interview (for NAFCC and COA) conducted by the accrediting organization to ensure that standards are met.

Who are the accrediting organizations?

- [National Association for Education of Young Children](#)
- [National Association for Family Child Care](#)
- [Council on Accreditation](#)

How do I determine if my program is ready? Consider:

- Do you have time to fully engage in the steps to accreditation?
- Is your staff (if applicable) willing and able to participate in the accreditation process?
- Are you and program stakeholders (staff, families, board of directors, parent agency, or owner) prepared to fully examine your program's policies and practices and implement changes as needed?

How do I determine if my program is eligible?

This chart shows the basic requirements for each of the accrediting organizations. For more detailed information visit the accrediting body's website.



Eligibility	NAEYC	NAFCC	COA
Licensed Family Child Care		✓	
Licensed Facility (Center)	✓		
School-Based Public or Non-Public	✓		✓
Licensed or Licensed-Exempt	✓ Must voluntarily comply with state licensing regulations	✓	✓
Must be open and in operation	✓	At least 12 months as a family child care program at the time of Accreditation observation	Provided services to consumers for at least six months

What is the process and time commitment?

Each of the accrediting organizations has a set process and timeline for programs to achieve accreditation, along with an associated fee schedule. This typically includes a self-study period where programs assess and evaluate their practices and procedures and implement quality improvements. The candidacy phase is a time for programs to gather and organize specific documentation for review, as specified by the accrediting organization. The site visit is an opportunity for the accrediting body to verify documentation and conduct observations and interviews. In order to maintain accreditation for the full term, programs must continue to adhere to the standards, submit annual reports and fees required.

Accreditation Process and Timeline	NAEYC	NAFCC	COA
Initial Preparedness Visit or Communication			✓
Self-Study	✓	✓	✓
Candidacy	✓		✓
On-Site Verification and Observation	✓	✓	✓
Annual Reports	✓	✓	✓



Accreditation Process and Timeline	NAEYC	NAFCC	COA
Maintaining Accreditation Application	✓ 4 th year annual report triggers renewal process	✓	
Average Time Frame for Completion	2 years	1 – 2 years	1 – 2 years
What or Who Is Accredited	Main facility or satellite facilities within a 5 mile radius	The family child care program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program • Percentage of programs • Entire organization
Term of Accreditation	5 years	3 years	4 years

What are the supports offered by Maine Roads to Quality Professional Development Network?

Programs interested in, or ready to pursue accreditation, have access to a variety of supports provided by MRTQ PDN.

- [Cohorts](#)
- [Virtual and On-Site Consultation](#)
- [Professional Development](#)
- [Quality Improvement Mini-Grants \(Step 3 to Step 4 or Maintaining Step 4\)](#)
- [Quality Improvement Toolkits](#) (scroll to bottom of the page)