

Understanding Satellite's Accreditation Process

Congratulations! You are about to embark on the next step of your accreditation journey—the accreditation process. You are demonstrating your commitment to creating and maintaining a family child care program of the highest quality through participation in the Satellite Family Child Care System's accreditation.

Key Elements of Accreditation

Accreditation timeline: Preparation for your first accreditation can take years! Your first accreditation occurs after your consultant is very familiar with you and your program. You have worked together to prepare for this first accreditation, and you both believe that your program is meeting the accreditation standards.

Reaccreditations occur 15-21 months after your last accreditation so long as you continue to meet accreditation standards.

During the accreditation process, you:

1. complete an accreditation packet.
2. are observed by your accreditation consultant.
3. distribute the family evaluation
4. provide all required documentation

Documentation required	Frequency
Home safety checklist	<i>4 times per year; also due at (re)accreditation</i>
Liability insurance	<i>Submit annually</i>
Car insurance	<i>Submit annually if transporting children</i>
Animal vaccinations	<i>Submit annually (if applicable)</i>
Continuing education record	<i>20 hours annually</i>
Child abuse and neglect training	<i>Every 2 years</i>
CPR	<i>Every 1 or 2 years (depends on expiration date on CPR card)</i>
Program policies	<i>Reviewed with each (re)accreditation</i>
Program/family contract	<i>Reviewed with each (re)accreditation</i>

Program policies and family contracts. These documents are reviewed by your consultant during the accreditation process. You might have them separated or as one document. Either is fine. Your consultant checks that:

1. you have all required components, as listed in the accreditation standards.
2. your policies, procedures, and family contracts are an accurate reflection of your family child care program.

The accreditation is an opportunity to focus on policies, procedures and contract details that need to be updated. This is also a time to notice which policies are not working best for your program and need changes. Your consultant is available to help you throughout the rest of the year in making those revisions, if desired.

Observations. Accreditation observations are different than most others you experience with Satellite. During these formal observations, the consultant tries not to impact the environment, children or adults. They have minimal interaction with you and the children (although not ignoring a child who is trying to interact with them). They sit quietly in an out of the way location, listening and watching the family child care educator work. The consultant's primary focus is on the family child care educator and the environment. If a child's behavior is challenging to you, your consultant considers that an opportunity to observe you working in more difficult circumstances, which is often very useful. So please try not to worry about children's behavior and their impact on an observation.

Accreditation observations are unannounced. Together, your consultant and you determine a two-week period for observations. If you're open, your consultant may come at any time during this two-week period. The minimal length of your observation is noted on the "Use of Each Accreditation Packet" page.

Additional details:

- Consultants offer programs choices for a two-week accreditation window. Programs are responsible for picking their window.
- Observation windows are often scheduled 2-3 months in advance. If you have a strong preference for when your observations occur, reserve your 2-week window early to maximize your choices.
- If the program has a planned closing during the chosen window of time—one instance or more of 2 hours during hours the program is regularly open—that window may not be chosen.
- If a program closes suddenly due to weather, building emergency or illness, the window can still be used if enough time remains in the consultant's schedule to complete the observations.
- Observations include all individuals working in the program during observations—we do not schedule black-out dates for staffing changes. *All individuals working in the program must meet accreditation standards in an accredited program.* However, if (in the judgment of the consultant) we do not observe enough of the

primary educator during our initial observations, additional observation hours will be added within the two-week window to ensure a complete picture of the program.

- The program must inform the consultant at least 24 hours in advance via email or phone call if the program will be off-site (*examples: field trip, walk to a park*). Include the time and place of the off-site outing so the consultant has the option to meet you there.
- Occasionally, accreditations are delayed when a program is not demonstrating alignment with the accreditation standards. If this occurs, the consultant and program work together to realign the program so that it can be accredited. This may be quick or it might be lengthy, depending on the individual program's circumstances.
- Accreditations expire exactly 24 months after issue. Programs not successfully completing the re-accreditation process before the expiration date become Satellite associate level participants. The program's accreditation status is removed. Accreditation status is returned upon the successful re-accreditation process.

Examples of when this may occur:

- *Program does not schedule their accreditation window with sufficient time for the accreditation's successful completion.*
- *Program does not demonstrate alignment with the standards during the accreditation, to the degree requiring a halt in the re-accreditation process.*
- *Program does not return required paperwork in a timely fashion.*

During the observation: Your consultant will be taking a LOT of notes. They are observing if you and your staff are meeting the Satellite accreditation standards and the requirements of the home-safety checklist. They are writing down examples of beautiful interactions and other excellent moments that they want to share with you. Your consultant knows that you might not have other adults in your program who understand how challenging this work is, and they will be highlighting your skills in their summary. They also note areas for improvement, questions and required changes. All this information is compiled into a summary document that you receive during the accreditation summary meeting.

Your consultant knows that children might behave unusually during a formal observation. They also know that you might be nervous or uncomfortable. Because they have made informal observations of your program throughout the year, they won't base their conclusions entirely on these formal observations. When the consultant writes the accreditation summary, they consider how they have seen you work previously as well as during the formal observations—providing a balanced picture of how you are meeting the accreditation standards.

Accreditation packets. There are 4 different accreditation packets. You complete one packet for your accreditation. You may—or may not—have a choice of accreditation packet. It just depends on where you are in your accreditation journey. The packets are

organized so that packets I and II focus on deeply embedding the accreditation standards into your program. Packets III and IV are designed for experienced programs who desire a framework for continual quality improvement of their program beyond meeting the standards.

Use of Each Accreditation Packet

Packet I

- First accreditation
- Used in subsequent years at the consultant's discretion.
- Includes full program observation of all hours the program is open.

Packet II

- Available for second accreditation and beyond
- Includes program observation minimum of 6 hours.
- Used if an established program changes location between accreditations.

Packets III and IV

Available if:

- ✓ There have been no significant changes (e.g. physical plant, program).
- ✓ There were no required changes from the previous reaccreditation.
- ✓ There were no significant family complaints during the prior year.
- ✓ There were no substantiated regulatory complaints during the prior year.
- ✓ There were no enforcement actions by licensing or certification during the prior 2 years.
- ✓ The educator accepts and embraces the accreditation standards.
- ✓ The educator shows the initiative to make changes.

Packet III

- Available for accreditation cycles 3 and beyond
- The educator prefers to do a project-based reaccreditation process.
- Includes program observation minimum of 3 hours.

Packet IV

- Available for accreditation cycles 5 and beyond
- Required: consultant and educator have worked together through one previous reaccreditation cycle
- The educator prefers a self-reaccreditation process
- Does not require a program observation *if* the consultant has observed the program during two or more quarterly visits the previous 12 months

After your accreditation: You will continue to receive support from Satellite for as long as you continue to participate and meet the accreditation standards. You are beginning a cycle of support and re-accreditations.

