

# Monitoring Child Care Centers: A Guide for American Indian and Alaska Native Grantees

CCDF Health and Safety Requirements Series  
Republished March 2017



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**

# Monitoring Child Care Centers: A Guide for American Indian and Alaska Native Grantees

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# PURPOSE OF THIS TRAINING GUIDE

We all want child care facilities where children are provided with the love and care they need to be safe and to grow up healthy, confident, and ready to learn. Therefore, it is important that we make sure that **every** child care facility funded through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is providing safe, healthy, and high-quality care.

## Using this Guide

To meet these goals, this guide outlines the many important skills, tools, and strategies needed by Tribal CCDF Lead Agency staff to implement a monitoring program and meet the variety of challenges they will encounter in their work. This training guide includes:

- ◆ Monitoring and enforcement policy guidelines.
- ◆ Effective communication skills.
- ◆ How to conduct a monitoring visit.
- ◆ Tips on handling commonly found situations in the monitoring process.

The multi-media training package includes:

- ◆ Guide on Monitoring Child Care Homes.
- ◆ Guide on Monitoring Child Care Centers.
- ◆ Guide on Developing Child Care Monitoring and Enforcements Systems.
- ◆ Comprehensive Appendices.
- ◆ One video on monitoring family child care homes.
- ◆ Two videos on monitoring child care centers.

A number of appendices, referenced throughout the guide, provide details of policies and procedures, pertinent resources to use with each part of the process, sample letters, and check lists and examples of various policies and monitoring skills. The full text of [Caring for Our Children Basics: Health and Safety Foundations for Early Care and Education](#) may also be a valuable resource.

Three videos, one on family child care and two on child care centers, supplement the written training guides by showing actual monitoring visits to Tribal facilities. The video clips demonstrate positive interactions between provider and monitor and serve as models for conducting a monitoring visit – how to begin the visit, put the provider at ease, observe how the provider works with the children, observe compliance with health and safety standards, and complete the visit. Voice-overs explain what is happening at each step of the visit, why that step is important to the monitoring process, and other best practice information.

We hope that you will find this multi-media training package easy to use and helpful to you in the monitoring of Tribal child care facilities.

# MONITORING

## YOU Are the Staff Providing Monitoring

As the CCDF Administrator or monitor, you are the one responsible for monitoring the child care providers that your tribe currently uses, or will be using. You and/or the CCDF monitor will be going into the facilities to check on whether they meet the Tribal standards. For the purposes of this guide, standards are defined as the health and safety requirements that Tribal child care providers must meet. You will need to go into the center, make the director comfortable, and look at: how the staff interact with children, the program and program equipment, meal preparation and mealtime, napping, playground areas; and if it is all safe. You will need to know the Tribe's standards, what each standard means, and how to determine if the provider is meeting them.

You and your staff will have to develop both the written standards and the check lists that help you document whether or not each provider is meeting the standards. You should also develop a guide to the standards that explains what a provider must do to comply with each standard. This guide will help you and/or your staff to determine compliance with each standard and also should help you enforce the standards consistently in all the centers you visit; that is, this guide will help you expect the same things for each standard at each visit.

Therefore, this training is meant for you and/or your program staff who will be visiting centers on a regular basis to inspect them to ensure they meet your CCDF health and safety standards and, if applicable, your Tribal standards. The training will help you to:

- ◆ Better understand the nervousness that a provider may feel when the “Tribal government” is coming in to inspect the center and how to make the provider feel comfortable with you and your work.
- ◆ Be prepared to conduct these inspections and use them as an opportunity to support your providers.
- ◆ Monitoring child care centers.

## Reasons to Monitor

While enforcement of standards is the primary purpose of monitoring, other purposes include:

- ◆ Assisting providers in understanding and meeting the standards.
- ◆ Giving providers new information on health and safety best practices.
- ◆ Identifying challenges that providers and staff may be having and assisting them in meeting those challenges.
- ◆ Building child care quality through providing resources to centers.
- ◆ Reassuring parents that the centers they choose for child care are safe and healthy places for their children.

We must always remember that **our primary purpose in setting standards and monitoring is to make sure that children are being protected from harm** and that the care they are given is safe, healthy, and helping to prepare them for school and life.

# STANDARDS

Let's start with the standards that you will use in your program. CCDF regulations mandate Tribal Lead Agencies have health and safety standards, applicable to all CCDF-funded providers.

CCDF regulations require that you monitor CCDF-funded providers for compliance with the standards you establish.

### Do You Know Your Standards?

You need to discuss/study your standards with your supervisor and other staff (if applicable) to understand what each one means. As someone who monitors, you need to demonstrate that you understand what each standard means and how the provider can meet it.

Some standards can be met in a variety of ways; there is not just one way to meet them. The important point for the provider to know is the compliance threshold for each specific standard; that is, what is expected to be considered to have met the requirement.

Let's say you have a standard that says that providers must "store drugs and medicines out of the reach of children." What are the options for meeting that standard? For example, if the center administers medication, must the medicines be stored in a high cabinet? Must the cabinet be locked at all times?

As you prepare to study the standards, it may be useful to write notes to help you explain to the provider what each standard means and how they can put it in place. Formal notes for the standards are often known as Interpretive Guidelines. Interpretive Guidelines explain what each standard means, how a provider can meet the standard, and how the monitor will determine compliance. These notes are very helpful to make sure that you and other monitors are consistent in what your Tribal Lead Agency expects of each center for each standard. Here are two examples of Interpretive Guidelines from the State of Indiana:

#### Example 1:

##### **470 IAC 3-4.7.9 Inspections**

**Authority: IC 12-13-5-3**

**Affected: IC 12-17.2-4**

**Sec. 9 (a) The division may, at any time, monitor, visit, or inspect the child care center.**

**(b) The center shall provide the division access to the premises, personnel, children in care, and records.**

**(c) The center shall provide access to personnel from other state agencies or other persons who provide inspections at the request of the division.**

**(d) Failure to permit immediate access to the child care center may result in suspension or revocation of the child care license.**

##### **Intent:**

*To ensure that the Division can readily determine if the Center is operating in compliance with licensing rules at all times of the Center's operation.*

##### **Threshold of Compliance:**

*A finding of noncompliance would result from the Center's failure to allow entrance during hours of operation.*

In the example above, the text of the standard is shown in bold. The standard specifies what the child care program is required to do and what may happen if the program fails to meet the standard; in this case, the program is required to allow the State access for inspection purposes. The interpretative guidance, such as information about the purpose of the standard ("intent") and how to determine if the standard has been met (the "threshold of compliance"), is shown in blue and italics. The intent of requiring access for inspections is to help the State be sure that programs are following its standards. In this case, the threshold of compliance is straightforward: the State must be allowed access during operating hours or the program has not met the standard.

### Example 2

**(e) Unscheduled visits by a custodial parent or guardian of a child shall be permitted at any time the child care center is in operation.**

**Intent:**

*To ensure parents/guardians of enrolled children are free to visit the Center unannounced at any time the center is in operation. This is the most effective tool available to parents to monitor the care their child is receiving.*

**Assessment Method:**

*Ask the director about procedures to ensure parents/guardians access to the Center to observe their children at any time the center is in operation.*

**Threshold of Compliance:**

*Noncompliance with this rule would normally result from failure for this to be included in the program's written policies or it may be revealed through a complaint.*

In this example we see the standard clearly stated in bold with the intent of ensuring that parents/guardians can freely visit the facility shown in blue and italics. The method of determining compliance is requesting information on policy procedures from the director. The threshold with this standard would be absence of policy and procedures and/or a substantiated complaint.

## PREPARING FOR THE VISIT

As you prepare for the monitoring visit, you should review the file of the provider:

- ◆ Check the ages and number of the children who should be in care.
- ◆ Check the list of current staff members.
- ◆ If this is not the provider's first monitoring visit,
  - Check the report of the last visit.
  - Check the time of the last visit to be sure to see a different part of the daily activities during this visit.
  - Identify any non-compliance issues or complaint investigations on which you need to follow up on.

It will be helpful to review your standards and the check list that aligns with the standards to be used in the monitoring visit. You also will want to select and prepare helpful resources to share with the provider during the visit. To the extent possible, you will want to tailor your resource materials to the specific provider, building on what you know about the ages and developmental needs of the children in care, and the areas where the provider may have struggled during a previous inspection. Resources that you share might include:

- ◆ Learning activities.
- ◆ Nutrition information.
- ◆ Information on incorporating native culture into the child care program.
- ◆ Safety items like outlet covers and choke prevention test tubes.

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- ◆ Information on upcoming training and grant opportunities.
- ◆ Materials for providers to share with parents, such as suggestions for good nutrition and activities to do at home to reinforce the learning in the center.

## WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PROVIDER

As a monitor, you wear many hats.



You check the centers to make sure they meet the standards your Tribe has established



You teach and assist the providers to meet and stay in compliance with the standards



You help the providers make the children feel loved and nurtured so they can grow and develop.

In addition, you may also be a neighbor or relative of some providers, or know them in some other way in the community, which can make your job more challenging.

To monitor effectively, you will have to learn how to wear all of your hats comfortably, often at the same time. This section of the guide is designed to help you strike the right balance between your helping hat—teaching, reinforcing, advising about safe, healthy care—and your enforcement hat—monitoring for compliance with the standards and taking whatever action is necessary to be sure that children are not harmed.

## Perceptions

Because you have the authority of the Tribe behind you, even providers who know you well may be fearful, anxious, or resistant when you say you are coming to inspect their child care center. It is important to make the provider feel comfortable having you in their center. To do this, you need to think about what providers/staff think of someone from the Tribe coming to inspect their centers to make sure they are providing safe, healthy care of children:

- ◆ Do they consider you a friend, a helpful resource, a monitor, or a “policeman?”
- ◆ Do they think you will be mean, unfriendly, or nitpicky?
- ◆ Will they be afraid or anxious because they do not know what to expect when you come to monitor?
- ◆ Do they think of you as interfering in their business?
- ◆ Do they resist child development information and training because, after all, they have been, or are, parents?

In a small community, how they feel about you may depend on who you are and how you present yourself. At the same time, you need to think about how you feel about providers:

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- ◆ Do you think of them as quality providers or doing this just for the money?
- ◆ Do you think they let the children just run wild or watch TV all day?
- ◆ Do you think they have knowledge of child development?
- ◆ Do you feel that either you or the provider is superior to the other?
- ◆ Are you assuming the worst about someone or afraid to hurt their feelings?

What providers think of you and what you think of them—how you each perceive the other—are important things to keep in mind since they can affect how the monitoring visit will go. It is okay for both of you to have any of these feelings; we all may have some anxiety, but you will need to be sensitive to both their feelings and yours as you get ready to start monitoring. You need to be able to deal with these feelings and perceptions before your visit and when you get to the facility.

## Inspection Anxiety

Remember that what providers think of you is probably due, at least in part, to their fear of the monitoring process. They do not know what to expect and do not know if they want someone coming to their center to judge them. Think of this before the visit and be prepared to handle this fear before starting to review the program.

Both you and the provider may have feelings of anxiety going into a visit, whether it is your first visit or your tenth. You may have a tight knot in the pit of your stomach as you drive to the visit and the provider may have the same feeling as she/he waits for you to come. You both may not be sure what to expect of the other. You both may wonder whether you even want to be doing this visit!

Feeling this way is perfectly normal, for you and for the provider. If you are new to the job, feel free to let the provider know that you too are feeling a bit nervous; knowing that you have similar anxieties may set the provider at ease. But make sure that you are aware enough of your own emotions that they do not overwhelm you. Having a good working relationship with your local State licensor may also help build your expertise and confidence.

### From the Monitor's Notebook...

*I did my first monitoring visit today at a State licensed center. I was SO nervous! I sat in the car thinking about the fact that I was following in the footsteps of the State licensor and was trying to get rid of the butterflies in my stomach. I thought about all of the things I was supposed to do—like observe the provider and staff working with the children; check the center for compliance with OUR Tribal standards; review written records; and give the provider technical assistance on some cultural activities they might use with our Tribal children. It was so overwhelming to think about, I wasn't sure if I could do a good job!*

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Feeling this way on your first few visits is perfectly normal. Remember that the provider is probably feeling just as anxious, or more, than you are. Being prepared, professional, and respectful will go a long way to setting the right tone for the visit and putting both you and the provider at ease.

### Setting the Right Tone

After you have examined your own perceptions and feelings about monitoring a center for the first time, you need to prepare yourself mentally to set a positive, professional tone with the provider before, during, and after your visit. First and foremost, you want to treat providers as you would like to be treated: as responsible, caring people, who have good intentions. Treat them with respect and be considerate.

To help you set the right tone and get along with the provider, here are some important tips about how to handle yourself as a respectful and professional child care monitor:

- ◆ Be honest and trusting. This should help the provider/staff be honest and trusting with you. You have to earn the provider's trust by trusting her/him. If you keep treating the provider/staff with trust, then they should return that trust in time.
- ◆ Providers/staff are doing important work; be sure to make them feel that way.
- ◆ Make sure the provider/staff knows that you share the same concern for the children.
- ◆ Remember to give the provider more than one way to show compliance, especially if you go to a child care center at a time when there is confusion. Perhaps the babies are particularly cranky and needing more attention than usual or there is a staff shortage that day that is causing the violation.
- ◆ Unless the violation is one that puts children in danger, give yourself time to assess and the provider time to show that compliance.
- ◆ The visits you make to providers are confidential. Therefore, you should only talk to your supervisor or co-worker(s) about a provider/center; never share information about one provider with another provider.
- ◆ Use the authority that you carry as a representative of the Tribe in a balanced way, especially when you are going into a Tribally operated center. You do have a lot of authority as a monitor, but you do not have to wave that in the provider's face. Do not, as the saying goes, "carry a big stick." You can be laid back and relaxed and use your authority with dignity and restraint; this will help the provider/staff to feel relaxed and accept your presence in the center.
- ◆ If this is a State licensed center located off of Tribal land, you may feel that you have little or no authority. However that center has signed an agreement/contract with your Tribe to meet the Tribal child care standards in order to receive payment for Tribal children. You DO have the responsibility and authority to monitor for compliance in these programs.
- ◆ Remember, as you monitor, that you are working with providers and are not "out to get them."
- ◆ If the provider is visibly angry, do not react in the same way. Use the least amount of authority that you need to correct or settle a problem. Do not adopt an "I gotcha" way of thinking and set out to find worse problems than are there.
  - If you get visibly angry, then your attitude becomes the issue, not the provider's non-compliance. You and your supervisor can deal with the provider's anger and the non-compliance issues in the correct way later.
- ◆ At times, a provider may threaten to go to the Tribal leadership if you continue to enforce the standards. If the provider gets out of control, you can say politely that you are leaving and will get back to the provider after talking with your supervisor. You then can immediately talk through your frustration and/or the issue (if that is the issue) with your supervisor to get back on track.
- ◆ Always keep your "cool," no matter how the provider acts. The monitor's mantra should always be: **"Keep calm and inspect on."**

### Teacher of Standards

An important part of your role, as we mentioned earlier, is that of teacher of the standards. Teaching is a strong piece in monitoring child care facilities because we are helping providers know what the standards mean and how to meet them. This one-on-one work that we do with providers is commonly referred to as “technical assistance.”

To teach the standards, you have to know the standards. That means you have to know what each standard means and why it is important for protecting the health and well-being of children. As that teacher of standards, you must use your knowledge of the standards to help the provider understand what she/he must do to be in compliance with each one.

**PRO TIP:**

Never go into a center empty-handed. You should always give the provider materials that are helpful in showing things to make the facility safer and activities that are relevant to the children in care.

Technical assistance should be provided to all of your child care programs. You may, in time, develop some written technical assistance materials to use as handouts during your visits. Documenting the questions you get from providers about the standards can help you determine what technical assistance materials would be most helpful to find or create. You may want to work together with other agencies to develop your technical assistance materials; your local child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agency, Head Start program, state licensing office, Indian Head Start or Health Services and other agencies that conduct health and fire safety inspections are all potential partners in your work.

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**Remember:** If the provider understands what a standard means and how to put it in place, then she/he is more likely to meet the standard and to stay in compliance with it, even when you are not there to observe.

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There is often a fine line between your role as a teacher of standards and your role as a monitor. It is important to remember that “you” did not sign the provider application, the provider did. And the provider is the one responsible for getting into, and staying in, compliance with the Tribe’s child care standards. You are only assisting the director in that process.

### Being a Role Model

As monitors, we are a strong influence on providers. When we are respectful, they feel important and valued. When they are acknowledged for doing important work, they can better understand what we are trying to do and what they must do to provide good care for children. Being a role model in a humble way, which is supportive of the provider and not critical of her/him, is an effective way to support providers while improving their caregiving practices.

During your visit, focus on the center’s work with the children in care; this gives the staff the feeling that the care of the children is the center’s priority. The goal should be to help the staff balance the time needed to make sure that the center paperwork is done correctly and the time spent making sure that the children receive the attention they need to thrive. The nurturing of children should always come first, as long as they are protected from the risk of harm.

We can model positive behavior in the way we talk with staff and the children. We want to show a genuine interest in and respect for what the staff are saying and how they work with the children.

We also want to be sure that when we share helpful and relevant information that we do not appear as a “know-it-all.” By being honest when we do not remember the details of a certain standard, and looking it up in the provider’s presence, we demonstrate that learning is an ongoing, lifelong process for everyone, including monitors. If we say we are going to be at the upcoming training on behavior and guidance, we are modeling our commitment and interest in ongoing professional development.

### Consistency

It is important for providers to have opportunities to network with, and learn from, each other. But sometimes when providers talk to each other, they hear things that make them feel that they are not being treated fairly by their monitoring agency or funding agency. For a monitoring program to have credibility—where the community respects and believes in the program—all providers should be treated the same.

Having check lists that match the standards and clear policies and procedures that guide you in the process, will help you to be consistent in your monitoring and enforcement of the standards. It also helps new staff understand how to do their job.

### Role Clarity

As we have discussed, you wear many hats as a child care monitor—teacher of standards, enforcer of standards, role model, and colleague. In each of your different monitoring roles, you want to find a balance between being a good, friendly colleague and being a monitoring professional. As mentioned earlier, if as a monitor you use your authority in a positive, constructive way, center/staff will want to put in place the standards you have taught them. Overplaying your authority makes you less effective and can interfere with a good working relationship with the staff.

## IMPORTANT MONITORING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

### Effective Monitoring Skills

As we have said, being a monitor requires you to play many different roles at the same time. To be able to fill those different roles and carry out your responsibilities as a monitor, you need a variety of skills, including the following:

- ◆ **Communicating**—The ability to communicate effectively with providers and staff both verbally and in writing, is crucial to your effectiveness as a monitor. We will talk more about communication skills in the next section.
- ◆ **Interviewing**—You need to be able to ask the right questions, in the right tone, to ensure that the provider understands and is meeting the standards. Asking what the center staff will do to correct any violations you find, rather than dictating how to resolve the problems, helps the individual take ownership of the solution.
  - Interviewing is not interrogation. You can learn more by letting the center staff tell her/his story in her/his own way than by asking too many questions or by asking your questions too aggressively.
- ◆ **Observation**—This means watching how the staff works with the children and looking around the center to see if it meets the health and safety standards.
- ◆ **Providing Technical Assistance**—You need to be able to explain to center staff what the standards mean, how to meet them, and how to improve the quality of child care. You also need to be able to respond to provider questions and gather resources to help.

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- ◆ **Documenting**—As a monitor, you will be responsible for completing the check list during an inspection, including writing down any violations and needed corrections, and recording the decision. You will also need to keep the facility file up to date.
- ◆ **Program Knowledge**—You need to thoroughly understand your CCDF program’s standards, policies, and procedures, as well as information on the population you are monitoring (age of children, appropriate activities, nutrition, etc.).
- ◆ **Organization**—You will need to manage your time carefully to balance your monitoring caseload and your other job duties.
- ◆ **Cultural Sensitivity**—You will need to have a working knowledge of the culture(s) of the Tribal community you are serving and the cultures of any center staff you monitor. You may need to be able to adapt your communication style to better communicate with staff from different cultures.

In addition to having these skills, you also need to think about how you handle yourself in different situations. Are you honest? Can you be patient with staff? Do you have a pleasant disposition and, when appropriate, use a little humor? Do you have good judgment?

## Communication Skills

Communication is the key to relationships with people. Program staff are people too, just like monitoring staff. Being able to talk effectively with providers, to help them understand what they need to do to be in compliance, is critical to success as a monitor. You, as the monitor, set the tone for the relationship with a center staff.

There are a number of important ideas to keep in mind for effective communication:

- ◆ **Active Listening**—This means paying close attention to the words the speaker is using, how the person is saying it, and various nonverbal cues to understand what a person is really trying to communicate. Please refer to **Appendix A and B** for additional information on the principles of active listening and ways to assess your own active listening skills.
- ◆ **Respecting Differences**—Each person involved brings her/his own experiences, beliefs, culture, and values to communication and relationships. Respecting and appreciating those differences will help you communicate more effectively.
  - You need to understand your own culture, values, and experiences and how they shape what you think, believe, and feel.
  - Different cultures have different ways of using nonverbal communication, such as eye contact, body language, and personal space (the distance they like to keep between you and them), in conversations. For example, in some Tribes, avoiding direct eye contact with an authority figure is considered a sign of respect. In your role as monitor, you may be considered an authority figure because you are a representative of the Tribal government.
  - Consider the culture of individual staff members before thinking a person is being disrespectful or resisting what you are saying about her/his level of compliance.
- ◆ **Maintaining Confidentiality**—As a monitor, you are responsible for ensuring that you do not share any personal information which is protected by law, Tribal policy, and common courtesy from being shared with others.
  - This may include children’s medical information, family contact information, and information about a child’s behavior in the home.

## Monitoring Child Care Centers

- It is important that you do not talk to center staff about other center staff you monitor or about the child care provider you use for your children. To share this information would show that you are unprofessional and cannot be trusted to keep information confidential.

### From the Monitor's Notebook...

*I got SO frustrated on my visit today. The immunization records in the children's files were old. This director seems to have a lot of problems keeping her paperwork updated! It was all I could do not to snap at her and say, "Why don't you have your immunization records up to date?" Thankfully, I realized that I was getting too angry, so instead of yelling, I took a deep breath and asked, "Can you help me find your current immunization records? I can't seem to find them."*

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When you find yourself becoming frustrated or angry with a provider, make every effort not to show this emotion. Instead, keep calm and professional. Do not assume the worst. Remember that most providers are trying to do the right thing in a challenging job. Think about your words and your tone carefully. Sometimes asking questions in a polite tone helps you redirect your focus away from your feelings and back on to the standards.

The art of communication is often just as much about what is not being said, than what is being said. Use your judgment to know when to step back and let the provider/staff absorb a new idea or a difficult piece of feedback. Particularly if you are new as a monitor, or the provider/staff is new to child care, it is often better to say too little than too much. You do not have to comment on everything in the center/room(s) in which you are monitoring.

## Body Language and Interpersonal Behaviors

When people are in a new situation, or any potentially complicated/difficult situation, they can experience a variety of feelings like anger, fear, surprise, happiness, annoyance, and irritation. Correctly reading how the staff is feeling can help you set a good tone for the visit. How can you tell how the staff feels? Body language, including facial expressions, can convey a great deal.

The first time you have the responsibility to monitor a center/room, you may notice certain body language and interpersonal behaviors that can make you understand that the provider is worried or anxious. For example:

- ◆ The director/staff says "the only time any monitor comes to our center is when everything is going wrong."
- ◆ The director is on the phone and ignores you.
- ◆ All the children are asleep and the director/staff does not want anyone in to wake them.
- ◆ The director/staff is wringing her/his hands and does not appear to be listening to you.
- ◆ The director/staff keeps looking at her/his watch, saying "I have staff members who should be here but are late."

As you do your monitoring and respond to the director/staff you want to show an interest in what the person is saying and the feelings she/he is conveying through body language. Being aware of your own body language and nonverbal cues as you work with providers will help you to show interest and be respectful of the director/staff. Your words, tone, and body language all affect how the person will receive what you are saying. Think about your posture (how you stand and carry yourself) and your facial expressions while speaking with the director/staff. They give the person clues about your thoughts and feelings. For example:

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- ◆ Rolling your eyes, shaking your head, or sighing when the provider is giving you a reason for why the center is not meeting a standard, may be interpreted that you do not believe what the person is saying.
- ◆ Showing anger, frustration, or disappointment at something you see during the inspection, may make the director/ staff less likely to listen to you or talk with you.

Try to maintain a positive, caring attitude. Smile and be pleasant; show the director/staff that you care about what she/he is saying and doing. It is important to acknowledge that you understand how difficult it may be for the center at the time of your visit. You can say something like “We understand that you have a very difficult job and it becomes harder when you have an unannounced monitoring visit.” You also want to be aware of how you frame your response to a finding of non-compliance, being careful to be constructive and positive, rather than negative.

### From the Monitor’s Notebook...

*Today’s monitoring visits in the center were a mixed bag. When I got to Rose’s preschool room, she met me at the door with a big smile. I could just tell that the monitoring was going to go well, and it did. Myrtle’s infant room was a different story, though. “The kids are sleeping right now. I don’t want you to wake them up.” She scowled at me while I quietly looked around the room and noticed several areas of non-compliance. (I noticed a can of coke and a baby bottle with formula on the changing table and a soiled diaper on the floor.)*

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Remember that not all staff at the same center will be as welcoming, but do not respond in a negative way. Instead, be professional and do not mirror their actions. Try to engage them in conversation about the care they are providing.

### PRO TIP:

During your visit to the center you see an exit being blocked by the cots. Rather than say “I told you before you can’t store your cots in front of the exit!” you can say, “Blocking the exit with the cots is a fire hazard. I will wait while you move them. That way I will be able to note you corrected the non-compliance

In summary, professional communication is crucial to being effective as a monitor. If you can keep in mind and use the principles we discussed with directors/staff, they are more likely to understand and use them with you, their parents, and others. These principles are important for effective communication. Remember: If you think communication is all about talking... then you were not listening!!

## Ethics in Practice

In your communication with directors/staff and others, it is always important to think about how you handle yourself as a monitor and as a person. Ethics means values or beliefs that guide you in how you behave, that help you to make decisions on doing what is right in any situation.

Being ethical in monitoring is very important. Sometimes it is difficult to review a situation and determine the right decision. You need to be consistent and fair to the director/staff but, at the same time, expect her/him to be in compliance with the standards. In carrying out your role representing the Tribe, you must be responsible, wise, and fair, while also being sensitive to the dignity and feelings of providers. Often, you must balance your concerns for the safety of the children, the director/staff’s rights, the needs and expectations of the Tribal community, and what is best for all concerned. You have a hard job.

It is easy to understand that in monitoring you should not show favoritism to a director/staff because you have a relationship outside of work, but it is not always as easy to put that understanding into practice. Your ethics as a professional must guide you in these cases. That means that you cannot ignore or overlook violations based on your relationship. You must be just as thorough in investigating a complaint against your sister as you would be if the complaint was made against a stranger.

Remember that, in trying to spare a director/staff's feelings about a rule violation, you want to be sure not to neglect your ethical responsibilities as a monitor to both protect children in care and to be fair and honest with the provider. Always keep in mind that the foundation of ethics is that all people shall be respected. Sometimes that respect is demonstrated by telling hard truths and taking difficult actions in a fair and respectful way.

## READY TO START MONITORING

It is now time to put it all together—all that you have learned in this training—and actually conduct a monitoring visit. You have the standards and the policies and procedures for how you approve/license a center, you have studied the standards and practiced how you will inspect them, you have polished up your communication skills, you have the check list(s) and other forms that you will use, and you have set up a file for each center you will be visiting.

We have talked about being aware of the emotions and anxiety of the director/staff, as well as your own, and have thought of how to handle the monitoring. Thinking of all of this, let's play out what will happen during the monitoring visit.

Monitoring a state licensed center which your Tribe makes payment to, your visit may go like this:

*"I'm Gayla with the Tribal CCDF program and will be monitoring your center today. I know that the State inspects your center, but because we also have a contract with you for the care of Tribal children, we need to monitor for the Tribal standards that you have agreed to meet. This is the monitoring form that I'll be using today."*

You then want to have a brief conversation to set the director at ease. For example:

*"How are things going? I see that you have some new equipment on the playground!" I am anxious to hear and see how our Tribal children are doing at your center."*

Before you start to monitor, using the check list, it is good to take a few minutes to observe how the staff works with the children, noticing how the staff interacts with the children and guides them in their activities. We are always looking for that warm nurturing interaction between adults and children. Then it is time to get started.

As you do your inspection of the center, be sure to look through everything in your standards and on the check list, confirming that the director/staff are meeting the standards that the Tribe has set out, including ratio of children to staff and group size. Using your check list as a guide, go through each room/area in the center. The list of items we suggest you check may not be inclusive of all of the Tribal standards you have. Following are examples of items you might look for in each room.

You may want to start in the office area, checking for the following items:

- ◆ Records on each child, including complete and up-to-date immunizations, contact information.
- ◆ Policy and procedures that might be required.
- ◆ Items required to be posted such as menus, emergency plans, etc. – Some of these may be located elsewhere in the center.
- ◆ Your Tribal CCDF attendance records on staff and children.

## Monitoring Child Care Centers

- ◆ Staff records to include those related to criminal background checks, medical statements and training.
- ◆ Medication authorization records for children receiving medication.

In the infant/toddler room, you might want to look for the following:

- ◆ Cribs that meet Federal requirements, and are sturdy and in good repair.
- ◆ Firm, well-fitting mattresses and no soft bedding.
- ◆ Appropriate equipment/furniture.
- ◆ Age-appropriate toys that are cleaned/sanitized after each use – verify this with staff.
- ◆ Diaper bags out of reach of children.
- ◆ Diaper changing area – with a clean, nonporous table and diaper changing procedures posted.
- ◆ Proper storing of breast milk and formula.
- ◆ Bottles not propped.
- ◆ Daily schedule and evacuation plans.

When you go into the bathroom, you might want to include the following:

- ◆ First it needs to be clean and does not smell.
- ◆ Clean toilets and wash basins, in good repair (flush well) and child sized or step stools are available.
- ◆ Single service towels and toilet paper within reach of children.
- ◆ Soap and hand sanitizer can be reached by children.
- ◆ Toothpaste and labeled toothbrushes, clean and properly stored.
- ◆ A hand-washing poster where staff can see it.
- ◆ Trash receptacle for paper towels is not overflowing.
- ◆ Tepid running water.

In the preschool room(s), you may look for items such as:

- ◆ No hazardous materials, such as cleaning solutions.
- ◆ Purses out of reach of children.
- ◆ Exits are unblocked and marked.
- ◆ Floors are clean.
- ◆ Tables and chairs are in good repair.
- ◆ Fire extinguisher has tag for recent service.
- ◆ Trash cans are properly cared for and not overflowing.
- ◆ No peeling paint.
- ◆ Approved, working smoke detectors.

## Monitoring Child Care Centers

- ◆ Adequate lighting and ventilation.
- ◆ Room temperature meets code.
- ◆ Window blinds are clean, with cords out of reach of children.
- ◆ Safety outlet covers.
- ◆ First aid kit(s) have required contents.
- ◆ Medicines are stored out of the reach of children and are administered in compliance with standards.
- ◆ Cots and sheets are stored with labels and kept clean.
- ◆ Diaper changing table has a nonporous surface with items out of the reach of children.
- ◆ Diaper changing process is in compliance with standards and standards are posted.
- ◆ Play equipment is age appropriate, well-maintained, clean, sufficient amount and well- stored/organized.
- ◆ Daily schedule and evacuation plans are posted.
- ◆ Daily activity for children is age and developmentally appropriate.
- ◆ Drinking water is accessible both indoors and outdoors.
- ◆ Any animals in the center are properly cared for and children are protected.

As you go into the kitchen, you may check for:

- ◆ Food preparation area is clean and well-maintained.
- ◆ Food is stored properly.
- ◆ Refrigerator – temperature is in compliance with standards and food is covered.
- ◆ Trash cans are covered.
- ◆ Hand-washing sink with posted hand-washing instructions.

In the outdoor play area, which hopefully you can inspect while children are using it, you may look for the following:

- ◆ Play area is free of hazards and clean.
- ◆ Fence and gates are in good repair, keeping children in and animals out.
- ◆ Outdoor equipment is in good repair – check nuts and bolts and look for sharp edges.
- ◆ Fall-use zone(s) are adequate, with safe and proper spacing of equipment.
- ◆ Impact absorbing material is adequate.
- ◆ Check for head entrapment and pinch hazards.
- ◆ Look for and discuss water hazards.

If the center provides transportation, you might check for:

- ◆ Clean and well-maintained vehicles – walk around them to check for problems.

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- ◆ Seat belts are in good repair, sufficient for occupancy and always used – if seat belts are required, ask staff how children are seated and belted in the vehicle(s).
- ◆ Developmentally appropriate child passenger restraint seats for each child in care.
- ◆ Discuss staff supervision while vehicle in motion.
- ◆ Proper insurance, in compliance with standards and vehicle inspections are up-to-date.
- ◆ Driver license(s) are current.
- ◆ Adequate procedures to ensure that no children are left on the vehicle when used.

At the end of the monitoring visit, it is time to complete the monitoring check list and to discuss the findings, positive and negative, with the provider.

- ◆ Again, it is always good to find something positive in the program to share with the provider.
- ◆ Carefully go over any violations found and discuss the needed corrections, even if they were discussed as you inspected the center.
- ◆ Ask the director how the center will correct the problems. Provide technical assistance to help with the plan of corrections.

### PRO TIP:

Make sure that you leave some helpful and relevant technical assistance materials for the provider. Ask the director if there is some other information that she/he/staff need or would find of value to help with the children or program. Remember to thank the director for the services she/he and the staff provides; For example, you might say, “We really appreciate the services you provide every day to children in your care and to the community.”

When the check list is completed, including a plan of corrections as needed, you and the provider will both sign it and you can either leave a copy with the provider or promptly send a copy after you get back to the office. This completes your monitoring visit.

If there are issues that you need to discuss with your supervisor, other experts or resources, such as enforcement needed, then you will need to get back to the director to discuss these and to share the enforcement decision.

## Monitoring a Tribally Operated Center

Tribal Lead Agencies are responsible for developing and implementing their own monitoring plans. The plan may include periodic inspections from other entities such as: State licensing, Indian Health Services, Environmental Health, Head Start, Fire Departments, or USDA. In some cases, the Tribe may decide to have the center staff do their own monitoring. Regardless of who the monitoring entities are, the Tribal Lead Agency must ensure that the Tribal CCDF health and safety standards are monitored or incorporated in the other inspections.

- ◆ Have a thorough knowledge of the Tribe’s CCDF Health and Safety standards.
- ◆ Use a check list that matches those standards.
- ◆ Be aware and understand your Tribe’s CCDF policies and procedures related to staff monitoring their Tribally operated center.
- ◆ Be sensitive to the emotions or anxiety of the staff you will be monitoring.
- ◆ Be aware of your own emotions and how you handle yourself.

## Monitoring Child Care Centers

When monitoring, use a check list which aligns with your Tribe's standards and walk through each area of the room checking for compliance of every item on the list. Using the check list is important, since you may work in that room every day and it is easy to overlook things. When you find an area of non-compliance, be honest, write it down, and correct it. Think about how you can maintain compliance. There are a number of standards and it is not realistic to think you will meet every standard, 100% of the time, without daily effort. Your goal is to be in continuous compliance.

If you are monitoring your co-worker's room, be respectful and non-intrusive as you walk through her/his room. Again, use the check list that aligns with your Tribe's standards and the guidance provided on page 15.

At the end of each inspection, it is time to go over the monitoring check list with your director, noting the items that need follow up. It is good to also note your suggestions on correcting or improving those areas. Then you and the director/staff will discuss your monitoring report and make sure the strategies are put in place to make the necessary corrections.

To help you maintain continuous compliance with health and safety standards, there are a variety of check lists that you can use in your child care center on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. The following are examples of ongoing, periodic, self-monitoring check lists.

### ◆ Daily

- Health and safety check of the center before the children arrive.
- Playground check to be sure that it is free of hazards, fence is in good repair, and equipment is well-maintained.
- Bathroom check for cleanliness, emptied trash containers, and sufficient supplies.
- Kitchen check to be sure that the food preparation area is clean and the food is properly stored.
- Check of classrooms for cleanliness, safety of equipment.
- Exits are clearly marked and unobstructed.

### ◆ Weekly

- Check first aid kits for adequate supplies.
- Required postings are current and visible.

### ◆ Monthly

- Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide monitors are in good working order.
- Flashlight batteries are working.

To assist you, the following resources are available: These are only samples, please remember to review carefully to make sure the check lists are in line with your current Tribal CCDF standards.

Center Appendix C: Tribal Child Care Sample Provider Monitoring Form

Center Appendix D: Tribal Child Care Sample Kitchen Inspection Form

[Child Care Health and Safety Daily Checklist](#)

[Daily Classroom Cleaning Checklist](#)

[Daily and Monthly Playground Maintenance Form](#)

## Monitoring Child Care Centers

[Healthy and Safety Facility Checklist for Child Care Centers](#)

[Minnesota Department of Human Services Monthly Crib Safety Inspection Form for Child Care Centers](#)

[Playground Inspection Checklist](#)

[Weekly Child Care Cleaning Schedule](#)

[Washington State Department of Early Learning Child Care Center Checklist](#)

[Washington State Department of Early Learning Child Care Center Abbreviated Checklist](#)

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education: [Environmental Health in Early Care and Education Compliance/Comparison Checklist](#)

Your child care center may also receive periodic inspections from the Indian Health Services and Tribal fire and environmental health departments. If you are the director, you will be responsible for following up on any recommendations from other inspecting bodies.

## CONCLUSION

Hopefully this guide has provided you with the guidance you need to monitor child care centers in and around your Tribal community. We hope that you will find the guide, the resources, and additional information in the Appendices as well as the three supplemental videos, helpful as you work to protect the health and safety of children in care in facilities approved by the Tribal government and/or licensed by the State. As you go about your work monitoring child care centers, remember to make this your mantra: **“Keep calm and inspect on.”**

# GLOSSARY

**Certified or Approved** – The permission granted to child care programs that meet the Tribe's standards to receive CCDF subsidy payments if they have a valid license or are determined to be license-exempt. A program is often referred to as being "certified" or "approved."

**Child Care License** – The State, local and sometimes Tribal government's permission, provided by law, for an individual or organization to care for children, after demonstrating compliance with licensing standards.

**Complaints** – Information received from a parent or someone else in the community that children are at risk in a child care program or that something has happened that is a violation of the licensing standards.

**Compliance Threshold** – This term refers to what is required for someone to demonstrate compliance with or meet a standard.

**Continuous Compliance** – With a license or approval, the expectation is for compliance with all standards at all times, throughout the terms of the license or approval, not just once or twice a year.

**Comprehensive Background Check** – This refers to the background screening of a person who applies for a license/approval or to be a caregiver in a child care programs, as required in the State and/or Tribe's standards. The comprehensive background screening should include the following:

- a. A search of the State criminal and sex offender registry or repository in the State where the child care staff member resides, and each State where such staff member resided during the preceding 5 years;
- b. A search of State-based child abuse and neglect registries and databases in the State where the child care staff member resides, and each State where such staff member resided during the preceding 5 years; and
- c. A Federal Bureau of Investigation fingerprint check using Next Generation Identification.

**Due Process** – Whenever an enforcement action is taken against a provider who is licensed or approved, the person/organization has the right to be heard. This means that the person has an opportunity to have the Tribe/State explain why the license/approval is being taken away and the provider has a chance to say why she/he should be able to keep that license or approval to continue to receive federal child care subsidy.

**Enforcement** – This term refers to all actions you take, both positive and negative, to help providers come into and remain in compliance with the CCDF and tribal standards. The policies and procedures outline the tools that are used to advise providers that corrections are needed for them to stay in compliance.

**Inspection** – A licensing/approval inspection is a thorough examination of the applicant or licensed/approved provider to determine compliance with the CCDF/State/tribal standards. This can be referred to as monitoring.

**Interpretive Guidelines** – Formal notes that help to explain to providers what each standard means, how a provider can meet the standard, and how the monitor will determine compliance.

**License-Exempt** – Child care programs that are not required, by law, to be licensed in certain tribal jurisdictions.

**Monitoring** – This term refers to the inspection of child care centers and family child care homes to determine if they are meeting the tribal child care licensing or approval standards.

**Procedures** – This term refers to the details of each licensing/approval step for the policy that has been developed. Procedures tell the licenser/monitor what to do in each step of the licensing/approval and monitoring process.

## Monitoring Child Care Centers

**Revocation** – This term refers to the action taken by the Tribe as the licensing/approval agency to take the license/approval certificate away, which happens when the home/center has such serious non-compliance that children in care are, or could be, severely harmed.

**Self-Assessment** – This term refers to the process the provider can use between the formal monitoring visits to make sure they remain in continuous compliance (all the time) with the CCDF and tribal child care standards.

**Standards** – This term is defined as the health and safety requirements that Tribal child care providers must meet.

**Technical Assistance** – This term refers to the assistance given to applicants and licensed/approved providers to help them come into compliance with the child care standards and to remain in compliance. Technical assistance is offered during each monitoring visit.

**Violation** – This term is used when a provider is not meeting a particular child care standard or the law. It is often referred to as non-compliance.

## CCDF Commonly Used Terms

### Categories of Care (i.e., Child Care Settings)

**Center-based child care provider** – Provider licensed or otherwise authorized to provide child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child in a non-residential setting, unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parent(s)' work.<sup>1</sup>

**Family child care provider** – One or more individual(s) who provides child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child, in a private residence other than the child's residence, unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parent(s)' work.<sup>1</sup>

**In-home child care provider** – An individual who provides child care services in the child's own home.<sup>1</sup>

**Tribally operated centers** – Tribal grantees who use CCDF funds to operate a center-based child care business are said to have a Tribally Operated Center (TOC). The Tribe oversees all operations of the program: paying facility costs (e.g. rent and utilities), hiring and managing staff, purchasing equipment and supplies, and screening families for eligibility.<sup>2</sup>

**Relative Provider** – Providers who are certain relatives of the children they care for (grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings who are over 18 and living in a separate residence).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Child Care and Development Block Grant; Final Rule, 45 C.F.R § 98.2 (1992).

<sup>2</sup> National Center on Child Care Data and Technology. (2012). Tribal Annual Report, ACF-700.

*This Guide was originally published under Contract Number HHSP23320110017YC. The current version was updated March 2017 by The National Center on Tribal Early Childhood Development (under Contract #HHSP233201600353G) for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission.*

*The National Center on Tribal Early Childhood Development is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.*

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