

# Behavioral Observation Checklist



the **early childhood** direction center

**2010**

**If you are concerned about your child, contact the Mid-State ECDC for information on screening, evaluation, and assessment.**

The Mid-State Early Childhood Direction Center  
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# Getting Started

All behavior is a form of communication. You often have to be a detective to “solve” what the child is trying to tell you. This tool will help you collect and organize your thoughts. With this information, you can work with us and/or your team to create a plan in order for the child to be successful. This should be considered the first step in trying to help change a child’s challenging behavior. It is important to keep in mind that there often is not a fast solution to the challenging behavior. Every child is different and it will take time to understand each child. This form might seem tedious but it will be very useful.

If you need help looking over your observations, we at the Early Childhood Direction Center will be able to help you. We can help you with the reflection and plan making part of this behavioral checklist. Please contact us at (315) 443-4444 or [ecdc@syr.edu](mailto:ecdc@syr.edu) if you have any questions.

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**What makes an observation useful?** Useful observations are:

1. Objective: Write only what you see happen. Avoid general labels like aggressive, stubborn, uncooperative, frustrated or out of control. Use action words like kicks door, bangs head on the floor, lays down on floor, throws toys or covers ears and screams.
2. Descriptive: Write specific words that the child and you say. Give the location, time of day, people who were around and the activity that the child was doing before the behavior happened.
3. Systematic: Be consistent when you write your observations. It is only easy to see if there is a pattern when you collect enough information. Collect the data for at least two weeks or until you have 7 or more observations.

## Get an outside perspective

### Parent Information:

Keep in constant contact with the parents. See if the child has the same behaviors at home and when it happens. Find out about the child’s morning routine. Talk to the parents on a daily basis to see if they slept or ate well that day. Tell the parent to inform you of changes in the household from a new pet, a family vacation to a business trip. All of this information is important. You may also have the parent collect information with this observation log as well.

### Another set of eyes:

Have another person come observe the child. It is good to have a fresh pair of eyes observe the child’s behavior and environment. They may be able to see something that you may have missed. Have them fill out this observation log as well and you can compare notes.

*It is a good idea to have the child observed in more than one environment (home, school, playgroup, etc). Children may behave very differently depending on the environment. You can see the environment that works best for the child and why.*

## The Behavioral Observation Checklist

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Define the problem: (keep it short and sweet)

How many times have you observed this particular child?

### **OBSERVATION**

What do you see?

Where does the behavior happen?

What time of day does it happen most frequently?

✓ Is there a day of the week when it is more likely to occur? If yes, which day?

Who is around?

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What adults are present?

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What children are present?

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What do you think the child is trying to communicate?

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How many different people have observed the same child? Where did the observations occur?

Person/role	Place

**CONVERSATION**

- ✓ Have you talked with colleagues about the situation in a problem-solving manner (away from your responsibilities for children)? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- ✓ Have you asked the family to be partners in the observation process? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- ✓ Have you explained what they should observe for and how they might observe their child in the home environment? \_\_\_\_\_
  
- ✓ Have you talked with the family to compare their observations with yours? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you and the family see that is the same and what is different?

Same	Different

Why are there differences in your observations and the family's?

**MODIFICATION**

**This demands self-reflection and understanding who has the power to change**

**Interactions** - The choices you make about how you will interact with children is a powerful tool. When a child is exhibiting a “problem behavior,” ask: “Is this behavior under the child’s control?” There are times when a child’s emotional or sensory state is such that he/she is unable to stop/change without time, teaching and support. This will determine what you can appropriately ask the child to do (e.g., to calm down, to verbally problem-solve). Never underestimate the contribution of the sensory and language systems to the issue at hand. It is important to remember that discipline means to teach. When we teach children, it takes time, repetition, modeling and a relationship that is based on genuine caring.

- ✓ Have you asked others to observe you as you interact with the child? \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Do you sometimes feel like the child is “out to get” you? \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Have you used the Developmental Checklist to see where this child is developmentally? \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Are you using developmentally appropriate practice for this specific child? \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Do you have a good handle on this child’s developmental status? \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Does this child respond best to teacher directed or child directed activities? \_\_\_\_\_

What changes have you made and what have the outcomes been?

Change made	Outcome

**Environment** - (things to consider---space, furnishings, the structure of time/activities, the overall message the surroundings convey) The environment is interpreted by individual children through their own filters based on their sensory systems, their temperaments and their life experiences. The environments they are in are a factor in how they feel and behave.

- ✓ Do you know what environment best suits this child?
  - ✓ Inside
  - ✓ Outside
  - ✓ Large group
  - ✓ Small group
  - ✓ Calm
  - ✓ Busy
  - ✓ Other
 \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Does the environment in your setting support this child? \_\_\_\_\_

Think about being an interior decorator for this particular child

What do you want to achieve?	What elements will do this?

**Consultation**

What are the community resources you have available to obtain another set of "eyes"?

- ✓ Should this child be considered for a consultation rather than an evaluation? \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Have the parents been included in the consultation process? \_\_\_\_\_

What should you expect as the result of a consultation?

**Evaluation**

- ✓ Do you know what an evaluation involves? \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Do you know who can evaluate a child? \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Do you know what a family can expect during the evaluation process? \_\_\_\_\_
- ✓ Do you know what happens once the evaluation is completed? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your role in the evaluation process?

What is your role after the evaluation process is completed?

**Implementation** - A plan for a child experiencing challenging behaviors might be necessary when a child does not qualify for special services or when your team feels it will help you in supporting the child’s growth and development.

**The Plan** - A good plan will usually have three parts: Preventing, Teaching, and Reacting. The form below is a graphic representation about where you should spend the majority of your planning energies.

- **Preventing:** The things we can do to keep the targeted behavior from occurring.
- **Teaching:** The guidance tools/strategies we can use that will support the child in developing an internalized guidance system.
- **Reacting:** What to do if the behavior happens again. Ways to keep everyone safe, maintain our relationship with the child and move toward teaching appropriate decision-making.

<b>Preventing</b>	<b>Teaching</b>	<b>Reacting (Crisis Management)</b>