

# Site Reviewer Guide to Accreditation



NCASES



# NCASES

National Commission *for the Accreditation of* Special Education Services

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# Overview

The National Commission on Accreditation of Special Education Services (NCASES) is a subsidiary of the National Association of Private Special Education Centers (NAPSEC). The NCASES Board of Directors approves the members of the Commission, known as Commissioners. NCASES has the privilege and responsibility for applying national best practice Standards for applicant agencies in different regions, under different auspices, serving different types of individuals, and with different organizational purposes. All members of NCASES Board of Directors, Commission and Site Review Teams serve on a voluntary basis.

## Need for Accreditation

NCASES was established out of concern that programs of excellence are recognized and reinforced so that quality control may be maintained within private special education services. NAPSEC established an accreditation process available to all special education agencies. NCASES provides a process and set of Standards by which it is to be evaluated. The agency can be recognized as providing quality special education services, regardless of distinctions attributable to different states, regions, auspices and purposes, and provides a high quality of special education services appropriate to the needs of its clientele.

### Accreditation by NCASES:

- Is voluntary;
- Assures the community that the program has met current best practices;
- Assists prospective clients, families, and public agencies in choosing a service provider and;
- Assists in the development of agency improvement goals.

### Philosophy

The philosophy of NCASES is that the self-study process associated with accreditation promotes the most efficient and effective services for individuals with disabilities and their families.

### Mission Statement

To ensure that special education programs and services maintain excellence through demonstrable adherence to a set of established national Standards.

# Overview of the Accreditation Process

There are five distinct stages in NCASES accreditation process:

## Application

The senior administrator (e.g., Chief Executive Officer, Executive Director, etc.) of an agency, or his/her designee, interested in seeking accreditation may contact the NCASES office for information regarding the accreditation process, at which time the applying agency gains “correspondent status.” The agency completes the application which is found online at [ncases.org](http://ncases.org) and submits it to NCASES office as formal notification of the agency’s intention to seek accreditation. When the agency completes the NCASES application and submits the required application fee, it achieves “applicant status.” Applicant status expires one year following receipt of the above materials or at the date of accreditation expiration for reaccreditation. If needed, the NCASES office is available to assist the special education agency in moving from “correspondent status” to that of “applicant status.”

## Self-Study

The Self-Study is an integral part of the accreditation process. During the Self-Study, the agency evaluates itself against the NCASES' Standards for accreditation utilizing the NCASES Self-Study Guide. If the agency believes a Standard(s) to be not applicable, the agency seeks through the NCASES office to receive confirmation from the Commission prior to Site Review. The Self-Study must be completed at least 60 days prior to the date of the Site Review. Based on the outcome of the Self-Study, the agency can decide to continue preparations or move into the site review phase of the accreditation process by submitting the results of the Self-Study to the NCASES office. Upon finalization of the Self-Study by the agency, the Site Review Team and dates for the Site Review are selected. The NCASES office provides the site review team with a listing of applicable Standards.

## Site Review

An NCASES appointed team, which has been approved by the applicant agency, conducts a three-day On-Site Review. The purpose of the Site Review is to validate the Self-Study by confirming the applicant agency's compliance with applicable NCASES Standards. The culmination of the site review is the submission by the Site Review Team Leader of the Accreditation Report to the NCASES office. Once the Site Review is completed the Site Review Team determines the percentage of compliant Standards (the ratio of the number of compliant Standards over the number of applicable Standards rounded down to the nearest whole number). The Site Review Team Leader then writes the report which is reviewed by all members of the Site Review Team before it is submitted to the NCASES office. The NCASES office reviews the report, and then it is sent to the agency for its review. Once the agency reviews the report, it is submitted to the NCASES Commission for the accreditation decision.

## Accreditation Determination

The authority to make accreditation determinations is the responsibility of the NCASES Commission. Within 75 days of the receipt an Accreditation Report, the NCASES Commission convenes to make the accreditation determination. There are three possible determination outcomes:

- An agency must meet 100% of all applicable Standards in order to be accredited. Educational programs that have a residential component must meet the Residential Standards in addition to the other Standards. Residential Standards do not apply to day agencies.
- Deferral of an accreditation decision occurs when the applicant agency meets at least 94% of all applicable Standards.
- Denial of accreditation occurs when the applicant agency does not meet at least 94% of all applicable Standards.

## Post- Determination Actions

Depending upon the outcome of the accreditation determination, the applicant agency may:

- Receive a certificate of accreditation.
- Pursue remediation of non-compliant Standards in the event of a deferral determination.
- Appeal a denial of accreditation using the NCASES appeals procedures.
- Terminate the accreditation process.

# Structure of the Site Review Team

The Site Review Team includes special education professionals with experience or knowledge of the population the agency serves, as well as organizational expertise. All Team Members are trained in the standards for accreditation and the site review process. First-time Site Reviewers are teamed with experienced Site Reviewers.

Site Reviewers are assigned based on their areas of expertise, schedule, and geographic proximity to the agency to be visited. NCASES Commissioners are not solicited during the initial request for Site Reviewers. If the initial request does not elicit a sufficient number of Site Reviewers, Commissioners are included in the second round of solicitations. All efforts are made to find Site Reviewers from another state, but in certain circumstances, and with the approval of the applicant agency, a Site Reviewer may come from the same state. Members of the NCASES Commission do not serve as Site Reviewers for agencies of fellow Commissioners. If there is a shortage of Site Reviewers, the NCASES office consults with the Commission Chair and NAPSEC Board President to determine an appropriate course of action.

Site Review Teams are comprised of Site Review Team members and a Team Leader. The size of the Site Review Team varies depending upon the size of the program(s) and the number of sites being evaluated.

- Fewer than 50 clients: Team Leader, Two Site Review Team Members.
- More than 50 but fewer than 200 clients: Team Leader, Three Site Review Team Members.
- More than 200 but fewer than 400 clients: Team Leader, Four Site Review Team Members.
- More than 400 clients: Team Leader, Five Site Review Team Members.
- More than two sites: Team Leader and up to Five Site Review Team Members as needed.
- For integrated accreditation site reviews, the Site Review Team configuration will be determined by the NCASES Executive Director/CEO.

The names of the Site Reviewers are sent to the agency for approval by the agency. Within two weeks of receiving the names of the proposed Site Review Team, the agency has the option of rejecting the Site Reviewer(s) and requesting a different reviewer(s). All information regarding Site Review logistics (such as lodging and directions) will be sent to the NCASES office by the agency. The NCASES office will in turn communicate with the Site Review Team regarding these details.

## Site Reviewer Travel Policy

NCASES shall provide reimbursement for reasonable and necessary travel expenses for Site Reviewers who are conducting Site Reviews on behalf of NCASES. NCASES shall provide reimbursement for actual expenses and does not provide a per diem. Reasonable and necessary expenses incurred during accreditation activities are the responsibility of the agency undergoing review.

Travel expenses are reasonable and necessary expenditures that a Site Reviewer incurs while traveling on official NCASES business which can include transportation, lodging, gratuity/tips, meals, and other incidental expenses directly related to the travel event.

Personal expenses are the responsibility of the individual. Personal expenses are non-business expenses for items not required for a Site Visit. Personal expenses are not reimbursable. Examples of personal expenses that are not reimbursable include alcoholic beverages, personal or vacation travel, entertainment, dry cleaning, seat upgrades, insurance deductibles, and tickets or fees for any moving violation.

NCASES shall not reimburse travel expenses for individuals not directly involved in the conduct of the Site Review (e.g. spouses, family members, assistants, or other individuals who are not assigned to a team as a site reviewer). NCASES staff reserve the right to disallow all or part of requested travel expenses if, in its opinion, the expenses are not reasonable or necessary, are not submitted within 30 days, or are not submitted according to NCASES Travel Procedures.

Site Reviewers shall make arrangements for the most cost-effective and reasonable lodging, meals, and transportation. Site Reviewers shall exercise care to avoid impropriety or the appearance of impropriety. Site Reviewers shall follow established procedures for reimbursement as outlined in NCASES Travel Procedures.

The primary concern of NCASES is the safety and welfare of all Site Reviewers. NCASES shall exercise due diligence to ensure the safety, health, and welfare of Site Reviewers traveling to conduct Site Reviews. NCASES Site Reviews may involve travel to international locations and/or to areas that may be subject to travel safety warnings or weather advisories. In such cases, NCASES shall follow established procedures to assess the risk of travel to locations where there is a security or safety concern. NCASES reserves the right to delay accreditation activities if conducting them presents considerable risk. Site Reviewers shall not engage in activities that jeopardize the safety, health, or welfare of themselves or others.

Direct financial transactions between applicant agencies and Site Reviewers are prohibited. Under no circumstances are expenses to be reported directly to the agency, nor should Site Reviewers accept any form of direct reimbursement from the agency.

NCASES staff will develop procedures as are necessary to ensure the consistent implementation of policies. See Site Reviewer Travel Procedures Appx. 3

## Responsibilities of the Site Review Team

### Role of the Site Review Team

The primary responsibility of the site review team is to determine compliance with applicable Standards. Compliance is determined by the existence of policies and procedures which are demonstrated through documentation, interviews and observations. The Site Review Team serves as objective observers and, as such, collects information about the agency and reports it objectively. No Site Reviewer may be with student(s) or client(s) without a second Site Reviewer or Agency Representative present.

Tact and care must be exercised by the Site Review Team in everything a member says and does. The Site Review Team must keep in mind, that as invited guests of the agency, the Site Review Team is on-site to render a professional service. All information received is confidential; the Site Review Team members must never discuss information about the agency outside of the Site Review Team's discussions. If requests are made to meet with the press, they must be firmly declined.

Since the Site Review Team does not make accreditation determination, the Site Review Team should not speculate on the outcome of the accreditation, even if directly asked. The Site Review Team should clearly explain the process moving forward including the writing of the Accreditation Report, the agency's opportunity to correct any factual errors in the Accreditation Report and the NCASES Commission's determination of accreditation.

The Site Review Team must always keep in mind that their responsibilities do not include agency consultation. The nature of the Site Review is not consultative. Site Review Teams are involved in a review and survey process, using NCASES Standards as the basis for determining compliance. Additionally, the Site Review Team should keep in mind that while the NCASES Commission determines and sets quality standards, which agencies are encouraged to attain, the Standards should not be construed as regulatory code. The Site Review Team should refrain from taking the stance of a policing or enforcement agency. The Site Review Team's sole function is to verify compliance with the Standards.



Site Review Team members' responsibilities include:

- Submission of a signed Code of Ethics agreement to the NCASES office prior to the start of the Site Review.
- A commitment to arrive at the Team's hotel by 6:00 PM on Sunday and remain at the site during the entire review of the agency which ends on Wednesday. (Note: A Site Review occurs in general from a Sunday evening to Wednesday afternoon)
- Minimizing the cost to the agency by collaborating with the NCASES office regarding travel plans, making travel arrangements shortly after being assigned to the Site Review Team, and eating meals at facilities of modest cost and good reputation.
- A commitment to work collaboratively with other Site Review Team members.
- Reviewing the agency's formal application and Self-Study in advance of the Site Review.
- Reviewing supporting documentation related to specific sections of the Standards as designated by the Team Leader.
- Conducting and documenting observations and interviews as requested by the Team Leader. Interviews may consist of agency staff, board members, students/clients, parents/guardians, referring external agencies, and other individuals deemed necessary by the Team Leader.
- Completing any document file (student/client/personnel) reviews as requested by the Team Leader.
- Active participation in Site Review Team meetings.
- Wearing NCASES identification badges whenever onsite; follow all security procedures required by the agency.
- Reporting all findings and submitting all required documentation to the Team Leader. Destroy any material not requested by the Team Leader after the Site Review is completed.
- Reaching consensus regarding whether the objective information gathered during the Site Review indicates compliance with NCASES Standards.
- Participating in entrance and exit conferences.
- Submission to the NCASES office of the completed Site Review Evaluation form and Expense Report within two weeks of the Site Review.
- Upon completion of the review, have no further communication with the agency regarding the review or the matter of accreditation, unless otherwise directed by the Commission (e.g., for focused Site Review following a Deferral of Accreditation).

## Student/Client Interaction Policy

NCASES Site Reviewers and other NCASES personnel may not be alone with a student or other service recipient at any time. When conducting student interviews or otherwise interacting with students, Site Reviewers must always be accompanied by an employee of the applicant agency or other NCASES personnel. Also, Site Reviewers may not exchange personal contact information and may not initiate contact with any student or other service recipient outside of the Site Review (whether during or after), and any attempt by a student or other service recipient to contact a Site Reviewer outside of the Site Review must be reported immediately to the NCASES office.

## Ethics, Confidentiality, and Conflict of Interest

The Site Review Team members must remember that at all times they are representatives of NCASES and must conduct themselves in an ethical, moral, and professional manner. Except for working lunch meetings of the entire Site Review Team with key agency staff, invitations to meals or social functions must be firmly declined.

It is essential that Site Review Team members treat their review of the agency with confidentiality. The information learned during the Site Review is the property of the agency undergoing accreditation. This information is to be shared only with NCASES and no one else. During the site visit, information learned while reviewing one department of the agency should not be shared with another. In most cases, the staff being interviewed will respect and understand the need for confidentiality and not be offended by your refusal to discuss matters pertaining to the review under way. The senior administrator of the agency should have access to all information which the Site Review Team considers factual and which does not reflect personal judgments, opinions, or conclusions.

A conflict of interest on the part of a Site Review Team member exists if a Site Review Team member: a) was a former employee or consultant to the agency undergoing review, b) had a relationship with the agency board, administration, or staff that might influence, or give the appearance of influencing any rating or issue of compliance. If there is any doubt about whether or not a conflict exists, a Site Review Team member must notify the Team Leader. If the Team Leader believes that a conflict of interest is possible, then the NCASES Executive Director/CEO must be notified to address the potential conflict.

# The Team Leader

The Team Leader is responsible for coordinating all on-site aspects of the Site Review. Responsibilities fall into three broad categories: Pre-Site Review, Site Review, and Post-Site Review.

## Prior to the Site Review

The Team Leader plans for on-site review with the agency's contact person. The planning covers ensuring that the appropriate materials are available at the Site Review Team's hotel, establishing the schedule of Site Review activities, and determining how on-site meals will be provided. The NCASES office coordinates the information with the agency for the Site Review Team's travel/lodging.

## During the Site Review

The Team Leader serves as the primary liaison between the agency and the Site Review Team, conducting the entrance and exit meetings, leading Site Review Team meetings, and assigning duties and responsibilities to ensure the efficient completion of the Site Review.

At the end of each day, the Team Leader meets with the head or designee of the agency to update him/her on the progress and to request any missing documentation that may be needed to complete the review process.

The Team Leader offers the head of the agency and/or designated contact a meeting prior to the Exit Conference at which the Team Leader shares information that will appear in the written report.

## Post-Site Review

The Team Leader, with input from the Site Review Team, writes the Accreditation Report using the approved template. Once the Accreditation Report is completed the Team Leader submits it to the NCASES office. The Team Leader has no additional communication with the agency regarding the review or accreditation once the Accreditation Report has been submitted. The Team Leader may need to be available to the Commissioners when the agency's accreditation status is being considered.

## Functions of the Site Review Team Members

The Site Review Team reviews the agency's formal application and Self-Study in advance and accepts responsibility to review areas related to specific sections of the applicable Standards as designated by the Team Leader and provides required reports to the Team Leader as to results. The Site Review Team members commit to remaining at the site during the entire review of the agency. Site Review Team members engage in meetings and interview local and external individuals at the direction of the Team Leader (referral sources, public agency officials, accountability groups, etc.). Upon completion of the review, Site Review Team members have no further communication with the agency regarding the review or the matter of accreditation, unless otherwise directed by the Commission (e.g., for a focused Site Review following a Deferral of Accreditation). An annual feedback and support session is offered to Site Reviewers and separately to Site Review Team Leaders.



# The Review

## Preparation for the Site Review

Sound preparation on the part of each Site Review Team member is critical. Some tested principles of thorough preparation which will benefit Site Review Teams include:

- Review the Self-Study and related materials about the agency in advance of the site visit. These materials will be provided by the NCASES office, as will a list of the applicable Standards. This will give each Site Review Team member an initial estimate of areas of compliance or non-compliance with the Standards.
- List all questions you have about the material and make notes of any additional information or documentation that needs to be obtained while visiting the agency. Record any questions that come to mind while reviewing the material so that they can be raised at the appropriate time.
- The Team Leader prepares the Site Review schedule in advance and shares it with the agency and members of the Site Review Team. The agenda should provide adequate time to complete all necessary interviews, observations and file reviews, as well as allow time to raise questions and fill in gaps. It should also include time for an Exit Conference with the senior administrator and selected staff at the conclusion of the visit.

It is expected that the specifics and details which are part of the site visit preparation will be as individual and as different as the members who compose the Site Review Team. Regardless of the varieties of style which exist, a disciplined, workable approach is essential at each point in preparation, conducting the site visit, and in reporting to the Commission.

At the Site Review Team's first business meeting (Sunday evening), the Team Leader will plan with the Site Review Team a detailed timetable and the group will agree upon individual responsibilities: who is responsible for which Standards, what activities are assigned to which Site Review Team member, etc.

The substance and form of interviews are matters of Site Review Team choice, determined by the questions and concerns identified in preparing for the site visit. One of the strengths of the entire evaluation process is the variety of approaches, backgrounds, and experience brought to it by Site Review Team members. The Commission expects, however, that Site Review Team members will conduct their inquiries in the spirit of professional peers seeking to ascertain how well the Standards are realized in the agency.

The Site Review Team should leave time in its schedule to follow leads, collect impressions widely, check information adequately, and compare perceptions from and with all concerned. Team members should make an earnest effort to circulate about the agency as fully as time permits, meeting people and gathering information.

The Site Review Team keeps careful notes, building on, or modifying, those made during the first analysis of the Self-Study Report.

## Conducting the Site Review

The Site Review should be a time of learning and exploration for both the agency and the Site Review Team members. Growth and agency self-realization regarding strengths and weaknesses are important by-products which should result whether the agency is ultimately accredited or not. In order for this to take place, the process needs to be open and participatory. The following guidelines about the visit emphasize the importance of engaging with a number of persons. It further stresses the importance of "drawing-out" the agency administration and having them define the ways in which they feel the agency is meeting the Standards.

The following steps should be taken in conducting the site visit and should be included as items in the agenda for the Sunday night meeting of the Team.

- Good rapport must be established at the outset if the visit is to be successful. A cardinal rule is to be on time for appointments or to telephone ahead if there is to be an unavoidable delay.
- The Site Review Team should establish a plan for conducting the site visit prior to entering the agency. However, upon arrival at the agency, the first person they should see is the senior administrator and/or the designated contact person.
- After the preliminary introduction, it is recommended that the Site Review Team begin the Entrance Conference by introducing themselves, briefly reviewing the purpose of the accreditation process and answering any questions this may elicit.
- Time must be arranged for a tour of the agency; for reviewing the resource documents requested; for interviewing department heads or other personnel. The Site Review Team should expect to be accompanied on the tour through the agency by the senior administrator and/or designee(s).
- The Site Review Team members should check with each other frequently during the site visit to review the progress and the pace of the visit, potential problem areas, etc. Site Review Team members must evaluate the program based on the NCASES Standards and not the Site Review Team's personal expectations or any regulations that govern their own programs.
- NCASES Site Reviewers and any other NCASES personnel may not be alone with a student or other service recipient at any time. When conducting student interviews or otherwise interacting with students, Site Reviewers must always be accompanied by an employee of the applicant agency or other NCASES personnel. Also, Site Reviewers may not exchange personal contact information and may not initiate contact with any student or other service recipient outside of the Site Review (whether during or after), and any attempt by a student or other service recipient to contact a Site Reviewer outside of the Site Review must be reported immediately to the NCASES office.
- The Site Review Team should interview the senior administrator and/or a key designated individual who has been instrumental in leading preparation efforts for the site visit. Interviews should be scheduled at times that are convenient to staff members if possible. The interviewing approach should reflect a conversational tone rather than one of interrogation.
- The Team Leader should meet with designated agency leaders daily to discuss progress of the Site Review and identify materials needed or outstanding.
- Prior to the Exit Conference, the Site Review Team should reach a consensus on compliance with Standards.

## The Exit Conference

On Tuesday night, and/or Wednesday morning, the Site Review Team plans for the Exit Conference. This planning meeting provides a final opportunity to clarify the Site Review Team's determinations of Standards compliance and program considerations. Each Site Review Team member identifies points to contribute to the Exit Conference. The Team Leader reviews the Site Review Team's major findings and suggestions, in order to be sure that these are accurately and clearly stated.

Prior to the Exit Conference the Site Review Team may meet with the agency's senior administrator, at the discretion of the agency. The Team Leader presents the Site Review Team's general findings. This affords a final opportunity to clarify any errors or misperceptions. It allows the senior administrator insight into any potential concerns the Site Review Team may have. These concerns are only to be shared with the senior administrator or designee. Site Review Team members may assist the Team Leader by commenting on the areas they reviewed, but this session must not become a debate between the Site Review Team and agency representatives or among Site Review Team members. At no time during the pre-exit meeting does any Site Review Team member communicate the specific Standards ratings that the Site Review Team plans to make to the Commission. The general importance of the Site Review Team's finding is inevitably implied in these discussions, but the actual ratings must not be communicated.

The Exit Conference is a time to share the Site Review Team's general findings, note areas of strength, and mention points the agency may want to consider as it moves forward. Most importantly it is a time to thank the agency for its commitment to excellence that participating in the accreditation process demonstrates. It is also an opportunity to personally thank members of the agency who were particularly helpful to the Site Review Team. Concerns or significant areas of non-compliance are not addressed during the actual Exit Conference.

# Determining Compliance

As previously stated, the key responsibility of the Site Review Team is to verify that the agency is in compliance with applicable NCASES Standards. The determination of compliance is done on a Standard-by-Standard basis. The majority of NCASES Standards are written so that compliance can be objectively determined by either physical document (policy, IEP, etc.) or by verification that a process is in place. For these Standards, determination of compliance is straight forward. The documentation is there, or it is not. The practice is confirmed through observation or interviews, or it is not.

Some NCASES Standards are interpretive in nature. These Standards require an analysis of the documentation or process, followed by a judgment. It is essential that the Site Review Team reach consensus when making a compliance determination based on judgment. It is the responsibility of each Site Review Team member to make a judgment based on the evidence collected, by their own knowledge and experience. The decision is either compliance or non-compliance. Site Review Team members share their impressions during a Site Review Team meeting that may occur during the time at the site or during meetings after or before the actual time on the site. The Team Leader facilitates the conversation so that consensus is reached.

## If a Problem Occurs

If during the course of the Site Review a problem or a Standard's applicability issue arises that may negatively impact the outcome of the accreditation process or a situation exists which the Site Review Team believes to be beyond its capacity to independently address, the Team Leader should immediately contact the NCASES Executive Director/CEO. The NCASES office number is 202-434-8225. The Executive Director/CEO will immediately contact the NCASES Chair to discuss and resolve the issue. The information will then be shared with the Team Leader to resolve the issue. Emails may replace phone calls when the parties are unavailable by phone. The Executive Director/CEO can also contact another Commission member if the Chair is not available to ensure that the issue is resolved as quickly as possible.

## Integrated Accreditation with Council on Accreditation (COA)

### Overview

Through NCASES collaboration with the Council on Accreditation (COA), an integrated accreditation process is offered for those programs that are currently or want to be COA accredited. A program has the choice to either have the Site Review Teams (NCASES and COA) visit their program together or they can come on separate visits. The process allows, through the combination of NCASES and COA standards, to have the program be accredited by both programs once the Standards are complete. (Agencies pursuing dual accreditation will receive a 15% discount on COA accreditation fees. Please note that agencies that are members of one of COA's 10 Sponsoring Organizations, and as a result receive a 25% discount on their (re)accreditation fee, will not qualify for an additional 15% discount.)

## Process Steps

1. COA and NCASES will offer agencies the option to undergo an integrated COA-NCASES survey leading to dual accreditation. Agencies will notify NCASES by selecting COA-NCASES accreditation on the NCASES Application. The Agency will contact COA separately with its intent to pursue the integrated accreditation process.
2. Agencies pursuing dual accreditation will provide NCASES with their COA accreditation plan listing the dates for the site visit
3. In those instances where an organization has elected to seek dual accreditation, COA and NCASES will make reasonable efforts to schedule the integrated survey for the same date. When this is impossible or at the agency's request, sequential surveys will be offered. Under this arrangement the integrated accreditation process will be available so long as the COA survey and NCASES survey occur within 90 calendar days of each other.
4. Agencies completing the integrated site visit will share the COA's peer notification letter with the NCASES Site Review Team.
5. The Team Leaders for NCASES and COA will be responsible for making contact in advance of the Site Review Team visit to discuss the site visit logistics. This may include a joint entrance and exit meeting, sharing a meeting space to review on-site materials, and scheduling any joint on-site interviews.
6. In an integrated accreditation survey process, COA will survey all of its Standards, and NCASES will survey only those organizational Standards not covered by COA (to be listed separately) and special education-specific Standards.
7. NCASES will accept the COA findings with regard to those Standards that are addressed through the COA assessment.
8. If the agency is not accredited by COA, the agency must provide a copy of the COA report to NCASES to review the areas of noncompliance before NCASES accreditation approval can be provided.
9. Upon successful completion of integrated survey, the agency will receive separate accreditations from COA and NCASES. Agencies will provide NCASES with their notification of (re)accreditation from COA and COA with the NCASES (re)accreditation notification.

## Withdrawal

An agency may decide to formally withdraw from the accreditation process after the application and self study have been submitted. In order to initiate this process, the agency must submit a written notification of withdrawal to the NCASES Executive Director. If the Site Review has already begun, upon written notification of withdrawal by the agency, the Site Review Team will cease all review operations. The Site Review Team will not conduct an exit interview and will not produce a Site Review Report. As indicated in the Accreditation Evaluation Agreement, the withdrawing agency remains responsible for the full cost of the Site Review Team's travel expenses.

If an agency withdraws from the accreditation process after a Site Review has begun, they may not re-apply for NCASES accreditation for a period of one year from the date of withdrawal.

The decision to withdraw from the accreditation process during the Site Review phase is made solely by the applicant agency. The Site Review Team should never recommend that an agency withdraw. If the Site Review Team is asked, they should remain neutral at all times during the Site Review. The Site Review Team Leader or the agency may discuss this process with the NCASES Executive Director.

# Appendix 1

## Sample Site Review Schedule

The following sample Site Review schedule is indicative of the interviews and observations that take place during a Site Review. File and document review by the Site Review Team is an ongoing activity.

Actual site review schedules are developed collaboratively between the Site Review Team Leader and the Applicant Agency's designated liaison prior to the team's arrival.

The Site Review Team Leader and agency liaison should review expectations for document preparation and presentation prior to the Site Review Team's arrival.

### Sunday

<b>Afternoon</b>	Site Review Team arrives at the hotel
<b>Evening</b>	<p>Site Review Team meets. This meeting should include establishment of team member responsibilities and an initial review of agency materials available at the hotel.</p> <p>The Team Leader should clarify to the designated agency liaison the files and materials that should be made available for review at the hotel. Please note that confidential student and personnel files should never be included in the files sent to the hotel.</p>

### Monday

8:00	Site Review Team arrives at the hotel
8:30 – 9:00	Welcome Meeting with Management Team
9:00 – 10:30	Tour of Facilities
10:30 – 10:45	Meeting with Person(s) Responsible for Document Preparation
10:45 – 11:45	Instructional Observations
11:45 – 12:30	Working Lunch
12:30 – 1:00	Interview Education Director
1:00 – 1:30	Interview Nursing Staff
1:30 – 2:00	Interview Facility Manager
2:00 – 2:30	Interview Supervisors (group)
12:30 – 1:00	Interview Related Service Staff (physical, speech, occupational therapy, social work)
1:00 – 1:30	Interview Behavior Support Staff (group)
1:30 – 2:00	Interview and Progress Meeting with President/CEO
2:00 – 2:30	Team Members Depart for Evening

# Appendix 1

## Sample Site Review Schedule (cont.)

### Tuesday

8:00	Site Review Team Arrives
9:00	Observe Student Arrival
9:00 – 9:30	Interview Chief Financial Officer
9:30 – 11:00	Instructional Observations
11:00 – 11:30	Interview Director of Human Resources
11:30 – 12:30	Working Lunch
12:30 – 1:30	Parent Interviews
1:30 – 2:30	Student Interviews (group)
2:30	Observe Student Dismissal
2:30 – 3:00	Interview Referral Sources
3:00 – 3:30	Interview Admissions Coordinator
4:00 – 4:30	Interview Members of the Board of Directors
4:30 – 5:00	Progress Meeting with President/CEO
5:00	Team Members Depart for Evening

### Wednesday

8:00	Site Review Team Arrives
8:00 – 9:30	Remaining Interviews, Observations and File Reviews
9:30 – 10:30	Site Review Team Meeting
10:45 – 11:15	Pre-Exit Meeting with President/CEO
11:30 – 12:30	Exit Meeting with Management Team
12:30	Team Members Depart

Appendix 2A  
**Parent/Guardian Interview Form**

**Program:**

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Student Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Student age/grade:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Interviewee:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Relationship to student:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
How long has the student/client been enrolled in the program?

Describe your involvement in the development of the student/client's Individual (Educational/Service) Plan?

Does the students/client's current program meet the needs of the individual (please describe)?

In the reports, updates and communication you have received, has the student/client made adequate progress?  
(please describe the nature of the information and the progress described.)

Describe your interactions with staff that work with the student/client. Describe the facilities in which your student/client receives services.

Describe how the program responds to your questions, concerns and/or thoughts.

Is there anything about the program you would like to see changed.

Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

# Referral Source Interview Form

**Program:**

**Date:**

---

---

**Name of Interviewee:**

**Representative of (Check one):**

---

**LEA**

**State Agency**

How many students are enrolled in the program?

How many years have you been involved with the program?

Please describe the facilities that you have visited. Do the facilities meet the needs of the clients/students?

Please describe interactions with staff during your visits to the program.

Has the program been responsive to you and to your input? Please sight an example.

Do you have any additional feedback you would like to note?

## Appendix 2C

# Staff Interview Form

**Program:**

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Subject/Grade/Area:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name of interviewee:**

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe the position you hold in the program.

Are you clear on your role in the program at large and the description of the job you perform on a daily basis?

Describe your relationship with your supervisor. Do you have confidence in the leadership of the organization?

Do you receive adequate support and training to do your job? Describe opportunities for professional growth.

What is the process for performance reviews?

Do you have access to sufficient materials and supplies?

Does the program implement technology? Are you trained in how to use the technology?

Do you have access to curriculum and curriculum materials?

How is information disseminated to staff?

Describe how staff and leadership collaborate.

Are operational and human resource policies and procedures accessible?

## Appendix 2C

# Staff Interview Form (cont.)

Does the program have training and policy on safety and emergency preparedness?

Do you feel you are respected and appreciated?

Describe the morale within the program.

Do you have suggestions for improvement?

Are there any additional items you wish to share?

Do you feel you are respected and appreciated?

Describe the morale within the program.

Do you have suggestions for improvement?

Are there any additional items you wish to share?

## Appendix 2D

# Student Interview Form

**Program:**

**Date:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Student Name:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Age:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Name of Interviewee:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Accompanied by:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Title:**

Are you getting the help you need in this program?

What do you like best about your program?

If you could make some changes in your program, what would they be?

What are your favorite things about the program?

What are your least favorite things about the program?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your work or this program?

# Appendix 2E

## Human Resources Records Review

Refers to Personnel Standards

**Reviewer's Name:**

**Applicant Agency:**

---

Employee Initials					
Copy of P&P Receipt					
Criminal Background Check					
Annual Evaluation					
Application/ Terms of Employment					
Job Description					
Verification of Education					
Emergency Contact					
Certification/ Licensure					
Training Documentation*					
Health Certificate (if required)					
Reference Check					
Salary history					

*\* When applicable, topics will cover data collection, use of restraint/seclusion, emergency procedures, orientation*

**Notes:**

# Appendix 2F

## Student Record Review

**Reviewer's Name:**

**Applicant Agency:**

<b>Students Initials</b>																				
<b>Record Access (sign)</b>																				
<b>Intake/Admission Records</b>																				
<b>IEP required components*</b>																				
<b>Current/Past Assessment/ Reevaluation</b>																				
<b>Treatment and Progress Reports</b>																				
<b>Release/Consent Forms</b>																				
<b>Behavioral Plan (if appropriate)</b>																				
<b>Restraint Record (if appropriate)</b>																				
<b>Progress Notes from Related Services</b>																				
<b>Discharge Plan, (if appropriate)</b>																				
<b>Demographic Data</b>																				
<b>Transition Plan</b>																				
<b>Correspondence</b>																				

Appendix 3  
**Site Review Report Template**

# N<sup>★</sup>CASES

National Commission *for the Accreditation of Special Education Services*

## Site Review Report

Name of Program

Dates of Review

**Standards Edition (Year)**

### **Site Review Team**

List Names, Indicate Team Leader

## Executive Summary

The site evaluation team conducted a comprehensive accreditation review of AGENCY NAME on DATES. The primary purpose of the review was to validate the Self-Study conducted by AGENCY NAME staff. AGENCY NAME has requested an accreditation for the following programs (insert PROGRAMS being reviewed here) in the following area:

- Special Education – EDITION (YEAR) Standards of Accreditation (DELETE IF APPROPRIATE, AND/OR ADD “INTEGRATED ACCREDITATION WITH THE COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION” IF APPROPRIATE)
- Special Education in Residential Settings – YEAR Standards for Accreditation (DELETE IF APPROPRIATE, AND/OR ADD “INTEGRATED ACCREDITATION WITH THE COUNCIL ON ACCREDITATION” IF APPROPRIATE)

Number of Standards Evaluated:

Number of Standards Required for Accreditation Eligibility:

Number of Standards Found in Compliance:

Number of Standards Found Not in Compliance:

Number of Standards Deemed Non-Applicable by NCASES Commission: (INSERT DATE OF COMMISSION VOTE OR DELETE IF APPROPRIATE)

Number of Standards Deferred for Review by the Council on Accreditation: (DELETE IF APPROPRIATE)

## Agency Overview

(AS PROVIDED BY APPLICANT AGENCY – TO BE COPIED FROM INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE AGENCY WITH THEIR APPLICATION)

## Documentation Reviewed

(DELETE ANY NOT REVIEWED)

Licenses	Mission Statement	Curriculum Materials
Staff Certifications	Auditor Reports	Orientation Materials
Bylaws	NCASES Self-Study	Policies and Procedures
Board Minutes	Staff Committee Minutes	Organizational Charts
Student Files	Job Descriptions	Personnel Manuals
Health and Safety Documents	Financial Statements	Staff List
Marketing/Public Relations Materials	Program Descriptions	Current and Past Budgets
Staff Performance Evaluations	Governance Materials	Operating Procedure
Application for Accreditation	Personnel Records	Incident/Accident Reports
Insurance Contracts	Confidentiality Procedures	Program Evaluation Materials

## Completed Site Review Activities

Orientation Meeting	(##) Facilities Tour(s)	Student & Personnel File Review
(##) Staff Interviews	(##) Student Interviews	Exit Conference
(##) Board Interviews	(##) Referral Source Interviews	
(##) Parent/Guardian Interviews	(##) Program Observations	

## Standards in Compliance

After reviewing relevant documentation, conducting interviews, and completing observations, the Site Review Team determined that AGENCY NAME demonstrated compliance with standards in the areas of:

- Organization and Administration
- Finance (DELETE IF INTEGRATED ACCREDITATION WITH COA)
- Planning and Evaluation
- Administration
- Facilities
- Admission and Exit Procedures
- Confidentiality
- Student/Client Record
- Individualized Education Program
- Related Services
- Curriculum
- Classroom Management
- Behavioral and Affective Practices
- Medication Administration
- Research (DELETE IF INTEGRATED ACCREDITATION WITH COA)
- Community
- Vocational Education and Job Placement Services
- Residential (DELETE IF APPROPRIATE)

## Noncompliant Standards (DELETE IF APPROPRIATE)

After reviewing relevant documentation, conducting interviews and completing observations, the Site Review Team determined that PROGRAM NAME was not in compliance with the following standards:

### Standard

#### Component(s)

(INCLUDE EXPLANATION INDICATING WHY AGENCY WAS FOUND TO BE NONCOMPLIANT FOR EACH NONCOMPLIANT STANDARD/COMPONENT)

## Council on Accreditation Integrated Accreditation (DELETE IF APPROPRIATE)

The following Standards were not subject to review by the NCASES Site Review Team but were reviewed in by the Council on Accreditation review team (DELETE IF APPROPRIATE):

Standard 6

Standard 7

Standard 8

Standard 9

Standard 12

Standard 13

Standard 14

Standard 17

Standard 42

Standard 43

## AGENCY HIGHLIGHTS

As the result of an extensive site review, the Site Review Team noted the following list of highlights:

(HIGHLIGHTS SHOULD BE PRESENTED IN BULLET FORM, REFLECT EXIT CONFERENCE COMMENTS AND REMAIN PROFESSIONAL, POSITIVE AND AS OBJECTIVE AS POSSIBLE).

## AGENCY CONSIDERATIONS

The following recommendations are not based upon non-compliance with standards but are noted observations for AGENCY NAME to consider. (CONSIDERATIONS SHOULD BE PRESENTED IN BULLET FORM AND ARE INTENDED TO BE RECOMMENDATIONS THAT THE AGENCY MAY WANT TO CONSIDER IMPLEMENTING. THEY ARE NOT REQUIREMENTS AND SHOULD READ AS RECOMMENDATIONS RATHER THAN CRITICISM.)

*Applicant agencies have the ability to review this report for accuracy. The agency may provide clarification or supplementary information to the NCASES office. The NCASES office will submit the final report to the NCASES Commission for action. The Commission will then review the report and make an Accreditation Determination. Final authority to award, extend, defer, or revoke accreditation rests with the NCASES Commission. The NCASES office will notify the agency of this decision in writing.*

# NCASES

National Commission *for the Accreditation of* Special Education Services