



National Certification

2024-2025

This document outlines the National Certification process for the 2024-2025 school year. We look forward to learning more about your program implementation and student success. You can jump to any section by clicking on the table of contents below:

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Section 1

Understanding the National Certification Process

What is National Certification?

Primary Project National Certification is a multi-step process in which a Primary Project program can be recognized for implementing a program with fidelity. The process is transparent and standards-based using the [Primary Project Best Practices Rubric](#). A Nationally Certified program must receive a 3 or higher on the rubric in all 18 *Critical Indicators* and a 3 or higher in 80% of the *Essential Indicators*.

Note that the Primary Project Rubric has been updated for the 2024-2025 school year, and can be found [here](#).

Why become certified?

National Certification ensures that a program is being implemented with fidelity to Primary Project's evidenced-based model and provides recognition for outstanding Primary Project implementation. Certification also adds credibility to your work when advocating for its continuation in your district or seeking funding. Feedback from the Primary Project endorser identifies program strengths and areas for continuous improvement so that your students can be supported using best practices for years to come.

Eligibility

Schools that have been implementing Primary Project for at least 3 years may apply for National Certification and are eligible for re-certification every 3 years. New York State Education Department (NYSED) funded schools are required to apply in year 3, their final year of funding.

Costs

NYSED Funded Schools	NYSED covers the \$800 cost + travel expenses. The district is not responsible for any fees.
Other New York State Schools	NYSED covers \$400 of the \$800 cost. The district is responsible for covering the balance of \$400 + travel expenses incurred by the endorser.
National Schools	The applicant is responsible for the \$800 fee + travel expenses incurred by the endorser.

National Certification Process Timeline

2024-2025



Express intent to apply no later than Friday, October 18, 2024. If eligible, your school will be contacted to apply for certification during the 2024-2025 school year. If you would like to apply for certification for the first time, contact your program consultant.



Complete the National Certification Application no later than January 31st, 2025. A unique link to the application will be sent to you by the end of October. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis.



Schedule a school visit no later than Friday, April 18th, 2025. Once your application is submitted, you will be assigned an endorser who will review your materials and schedule an agreed upon date for the school visit. During this visit, the endorser will interview the Primary Project team, principal, teachers and parents.



The endorser will use the rubric along with evidence provided by the program to determine National Certification status. The endorser's de-identified recommendations will be shared with a team of reviewers who will have an opportunity to provide feedback. Reviewers are chosen based on their experience with the program and solid understanding of Primary Project best practices. Final decision about national certification status is made by the Primary Project Co-Directors.



Children's Institute will notify your school about its National Certification status. All schools, regardless of certification status, will be provided with written feedback highlighting program strengths and recommendations for continuous improvement. Your consultant remains available to support recommendations.

Section 2

Preparing & Submitting Your Application

Online Application System

Children’s Institute utilizes an application system called *Qualtrics* for schools to submit materials on a secure platform. The program’s mental health supervisor will be provided with a unique, secure link to complete your application materials. Mental health supervisors are the sole individual with access to this link and should use the same browser ***each time*** the link is opened. This will allow the system to automatically save your materials. You can return to your application at any time and work at your own pace. For a sample application, [click here](#).

Application Sections

Section	Description
Section 1: Demographic Information	Basic demographic information about your district and school will help paint a picture of the school community.
Section 2: Primary Project Program Information	Information specific to the Primary Project team and student participants will help our team better understand the history of your program.
Section 3: Rubric Ratings	Your team will self-assess the Primary Project program based on the Primary Project Rubric by downloading a copy of the rubric and assessing each indicator with a rating of 1-4 in a drop-down menu. You will then save a copy to your computer and upload the completed rubric to the application system for review.
Section 4: Rubric Evidence	This is the most time intensive section of the application process. Your team will be asked to provide evidence for each Core Component in the rubric. For some indicators, you will provide evidence by describing your process. For others, you will upload data or information. A full list of indicators that require uploads to the system is indicated in the “Materials Checklist” below.

**Some evidence will be confirmed during the in-person school visit. This information is noted throughout the application as well as in the section below titled “Preparing for your school visit.”*

Materials Checklist

The checklist below includes eight documents to upload directly to the application. Some evidence will be provided by typing information directly into the application. Other evidence will be collected during your school visit. *Please note that all confidential student data must be de-identified by covering student name, date of birth, and any other identifiable information before uploading to the system.*

Application Materials

- Principal Letter of Support for National Certification
- Completed Rubric (you can download here or directly from the application system)
- The current school year's COMET Screening Assessment Grid for students served OR other screening data (if not using COMET)
- Current Child Associate Weekly Schedule
- Child Associate Job Description
- Teacher-Child Rating Scale (T-CRS) pre/post group data (if using COMET)
- Associate-Child Rating Scale (A-CRS) pre/post group data (if using COMET)
- Professional Summary Report (PSR) (if using COMET)
- Child Log (CLOG) (if using COMET)

Information about downloading data from COMET can be found on the COMET landing page.

Submission

All application materials are due no later than January 31, 2025. Prior to submitting materials, review each section to ensure necessary documentation has been completed. This includes confirming that student data has been de-identified. Once the application is signed and submitted, a copy can be downloaded for your records. Children's Institute will confirm receipt of submission, review materials, and introduce the endorser who will be doing the visit so that the scheduling process can begin.

Please contact Lindsay Dryden at ldryden@childrensinstitute.net with issues or questions about the Qualtrics application.

Section 3

Preparing for your school visit

Purpose

At this point in the process, the endorser has reviewed your school's application. A mutually agreeable date and time to visit your school will be scheduled. During the visit the endorser will become better acquainted with your team to more fully understand your Primary Project program. You and your team will be asked specific questions related to the application and asked to provide further evidence of program fidelity.

Scheduling

A 3.5 to 4 hour visit will be identified no later than Friday, April 18, 2025. The endorser will send a calendar invite once a date and time is chosen.

Materials

During the application process, several items were submitted as evidence to demonstrate the rating scores provided on the rubric. During the visit, further evidence will be reviewed.

School Visit Materials

- Evidence of your organization system (binder, files, digital records, etc.)
- Play session notes
- Documentation of initial (The Basics) and subsequent training for the child associate
- 2-3 student files available for review
- Supervision log and notes
- End of cycle conference forms
- NON-COMET USERS ONLY: provide data collection documentation for program evaluation
- Examples of Primary Project integration into the school community (i.e. PowerPoints, pictures from events, posters/bulletin boards, flyers, newsletters, etc.)
- Examples of parent communications (i.e. consent form, notes home, communication log, pictures from events, newsletters, etc.)

Agenda

An agenda will be created that meets the unique needs of your school and program. Activities may occur in any order that is conducive with your schedule, except for the opening and closing meeting. Be prepared to share your agenda with the endorser at least one week in advance of the visit.

Opening meeting	The endorser will meet with the principal, mental health supervisor and child associate to learn more about the school and discuss the agenda for the visit.
School Tour	A brief tour of the school will occur to better understand the larger school community.
Playroom Visit	A visit to the playroom will occur to help assess the space. If possible, interviews can take place in the playroom. If this is not possible, a specific time to visit the space should be scheduled.
Supervisor Interview	A discussion with the supervisor will include program strengths and challenges.
Child Associate Interview	The endorser will use this time to understand the day-to-day implementation in your school (i.e. schedule, notes, data collection, playroom, child-centered skills, etc.)
Caregiver Interviews	Schedule 2-3 caregiver interviews of Primary Project students to meet with the endorser in person, over the phone, or via Zoom. It is recommended to call the parent to invite them to interview and then send home this letter with more information.
Teacher Interviews	The endorser will meet with 2-3 teachers who have students that participated in Primary Project within the last year. In preparation for the visit, teachers should review the Teacher Interview Overview to understand expectations for this portion of the visit.
Principal Interview	The endorser will meet with the principal to better understand program implementation and integration into the larger school community.
Closing Meeting	The endorser will meet with the principal, mental health supervisor and child associate to discuss strengths, recommendations, and next steps.

Interviews

During your team interviews, the endorser will ask specific questions related to that individual's Primary Project role. Clarifying questions may be asked based on the materials submitted in the application process. Time will be spent with your team to gain an understanding of the following rubric indicators:

- ❖ **7A:** Team understands philosophy of child-led expressive play and one-on-one relationship focused intervention.
- ❖ **7B:** Non-directive play intervention. We encourage you to review the [Child-centered Skills page here](#).

Playroom Visit

Time in the playroom will assess the following rubric indicators, which were not assessed during the application process:

- ❖ **8A:** Playroom is developmentally appropriate for the age level of children.
- ❖ **8B:** Expressive items are utilized. No electronic or battery-operated items such as computers, television, video games, etc.
- ❖ **8C:** Playroom materials reflect diversity of students and their families in the school community.
- ❖ **8D:** Child accessible playroom
- ❖ **8E:** Playroom space ensures privacy
- ❖ **8F:** Sufficient space for play
- ❖ **8G:** Sufficient space for program materials, files, and personal belongings of the child associate.

Section 4

Certification Status

Certification Report

Once the visit is complete, your Primary Project program will be rated using the rubric. A brief report highlighting strengths and recommendations for continuous improvement of your program will be developed. The endorser's completed de-identified rubric and report will be read by a team of reviewers, with final approval by the Co-Directors of the program.

Award

Your program must receive a three or higher on the rubric in all 18 *Critical Indicators* and a three or higher in 14 out of 17 of the *Essential Indicators* to receive National Certification status. If awarded, your Primary Project program will receive a National Certification Certificate, be highlighted on our website, and receive special recognition via social media. In the event your program does not meet certification status, your endorser will provide a recommended plan for improvement to work toward meeting the required best practices to attain certification in the future.

Recommendations

A key benefit of completing the National Certification process is to obtain detailed recommendations to further improve your program. Whether your program is awarded national certification or not, your consultant remains available for discussing recommendations. A copy of this report will also be sent via email.

Ongoing Support

National Certification materials, report, and recommendations will be reviewed by your program consultant and is available for support. Teams are encouraged to directly connect with their program consultant regularly, attend Children's Institute trainings when able, and remain current on the latest Primary Project research included in the newsletter, [*From the Playroom*](#).