



National Certification – General Information

1) What is Primary Project National Certification?

Primary Project National Certification is a multi-step process by which a Primary Project program can be recognized for implementing the program with fidelity. The process is:

- User friendly and supported with technical assistance
- Standards based
- Open, transparent, and includes due process
- Nationally reviewed by experts in Primary Project implementation

2) What are the benefits of National Certification?

- National Certification ensures that the program is being implemented with fidelity to the evidenced-based model, whereby young children are identified early for school adjustment difficulties. Many funders will only fund evidenced-based programs that are adhering to the program standards.
- Certification adds credibility to reports to parents, administrators, school boards etc.
- Receiving National Certification gives recognition to the school.
- Feedback from the Primary Project endorser can help identify program strengths and areas for continuous program improvement.

3) What are the categories of Certification?

There are three categories of certification: Full, provisional, withheld.

- **Full Certification:** A school that receives full certification meets the National Standards for Primary Project. Children's Institute awards full certification for three years.
- **Provisional Certification:** A school may receive provisional certification when the program does not meet the criteria for full certification and the staff is able and willing to take corrective actions to meet the criteria for certification within one year. A school must show evidence of improvement in recommended categories during the subsequent site visit, one year later.
- **Certification Withheld:** Certification is withheld when a school does not meet a substantial number of the National Standards for Primary Project. The school may reapply at its own discretion after one full year from the initial visit to allow ample time for corrective actions to be made.

4) What does the certification process entail?

- The school requests a Certification Packet, including the Best Practices Rubric, a readiness inventory. These materials offer an opportunity to understand what core areas the endorser will be assessing during a certification visit.

- If a school determines that it is ready to attain certification, application materials are submitted to Children’s Institute. These initial application materials include:
 - Completed Application for Certification
 - Letter from the principal supporting the request for certification
 - Program evaluation from the most recent program year
 - Completed Primary Project Best Practices Rubric
- Once the certification packet is complete, the certification coordinator contacts the school with the name of the endorser who in turn sets up a date for the visit and an agenda.
- A site visit is conducted, report written, and submitted to Certification Coordinator.
- The report (with identifying information deleted) is reviewed by up to three reviewers.
- Blind national review of the endorser’s recommendations
- Final recommendation by Children’s Institute

5) Who has final authority for determining certification status?

The Executive Director of Children’s Institute has the ultimate authority to determine the certification status.

6) What is the due process procedure for sites in the certification process?

Applicants are notified by mail of the certification decision. In the event that certification is not granted, the applicant receives recommendations to be met in order to satisfy the standards. Questions or concerns specific to endorser recommendations after a site visit or the actual decision of the review team should be brought to the certification coordinator. If the certification coordinator cannot address them to the satisfaction of the site, the certification coordinator will bring the questions or concerns to the Co-Directors of Primary Project and/or the Executive Director. The final decision will be sent in writing to the site.

7) How can I use the Primary Project Standards and Best Practices Rubric to assess my program?

The first step is to become familiar with the Primary Project Standards and the Best Practices Rubric. The Standards outline in detail the key components of Primary Project. After a program reviews the Standards and Rubric, staff decides whether to focus on targeted improvements or begin the process that could lead to a certification application.

- If a school identifies areas that are not aligned with the Standards or has experienced program drift, an Application for Certification should not be submitted. After improvements are made to meet the Standards, a program may be ready to apply for National Certification.
- The goal is to provide programs with the necessary tools and support to implement the Primary Project program based on the Standards and best practices.

8) Who developed the Primary Project Standards and Best Practices Rubric?

The Standards were developed by a national team, including administrators, supervisors, child associates, and others with experience in Primary Project. These Standards describe the best practices and research in Primary Project programs from decades of experience and implementation across different states. The Rubric was developed as a way for schools to understand what the endorser will be looking for during interviews and observations.

9) What happens when there are multiple sites?

Each school must go through the application process and apply for certification individually. Two schools may request a joint visit.

10) When are application materials due?

If you would like to have a certification visit during a particular school year, you should have the application materials to Children's Institute by January 31st.

11) Who provides support or technical assistance during the certification process? Are there mentors who can help throughout the process?

Children's Institute staff is available to answer questions on the certification application process. If schools have questions or concerns about the certification process or results, they can address those concerns through the certification coordinator, Arlene Bobin.