Observing Environments Activity

It can be useful to spend time observing program environments and evaluating how they function. You can use this information to help staff members reflect on the appropriateness of each space. Follow these directions:

1. Choose a classroom or program space to observe.
2. Sketch the classroom or program space in the area below. Be sure to include furniture and important features of the room (carpet, cubbies, doors, toilets, etc.).
3. Observe for at least 30 minutes. Each time a challenging behavior occurs anywhere in the classroom, put a tally mark in that spot on your sketch.
4. At the end of the observation, summarize where the most behaviors occurred. Share your data with staff members and make a plan for identifying reasons for behavior in each setting. Use the checklist on pages 2 and 3 to identify potential areas for growth. Work together to make changes to the environment that will prevent challenging behavior.

Sketch the Classroom or Program Space here:
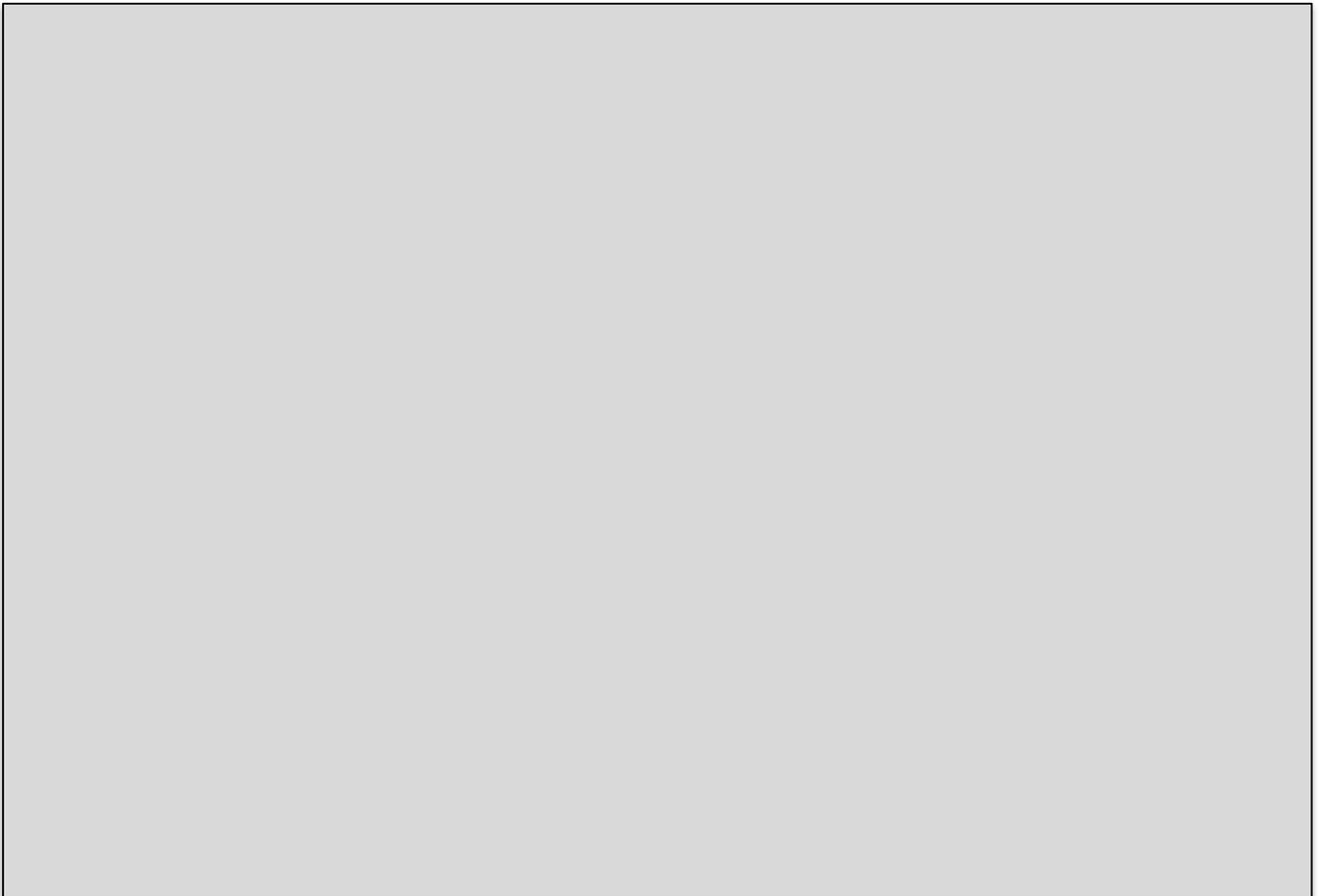
What to Look For:

❑ Arranges traffic patterns in program areas so there are no wide open spaces, except where appropriate, e.g., outdoors or in indoor motor spaces

❑ Removes obstacles that make it difficult for children with physical disabilities to move around the program

❑ Clearly defines boundaries in program areas

❑ Provides a variety of materials in all program areas

❑ Considers children's interests when deciding what to put in program areas

❑ Makes changes and additions to program areas on a regular basis

❑ Effectively selects, arranges, and utilizes materials that promote interactions (high interest, novel, culturally meaningful)

❑ Effectively selects, arranges, and implements activities that promote interactions (high interest, novel, culturally meaningful)

❑ Develops interaction opportunities within program routines (i.e., diapering, homework helper, snack set-up, etc.)

❑ Uses knowledge of the children's interests to plan large group activities when appropriate

❑ Monitors children's behavior and modifies plans when children lose interest in large group activities

❏ Plans and conducts fun small group activities

❏ Monitors children's behavior and modifies plans when children lose interest in small group activities

❏ Makes adaptations and modifications to ensure that all children can be involved in a meaningful way in any activity

❏ Uses a variety of ways to teach the expectations of specific activities so that all children understand them

☐ Structures transitions so children do not have to spend excessive time waiting with nothing to do

❏ Teaches children the expectations associated with transitions

❏ Promote independence and autonomy in transitions

❏ Individualizes directions about transitions so that all children understand them