Positive Environment Checklist

The Positive Environment Checklist (PEC) is designed for use in evaluating whether the settings in which persons with severe disabilities live, work, and go to school are structured in a manner that promotes and maintains positive, adaptive behaviors. The PEC looks at whether settings provide the conditions that support positive behaviors and do not present conditions that make negative behaviors more likely. It also addresses several concerns related to the ways in which program staff support and interact with the people with disabilities in the setting.

The checklist should be used as part of a proactive, preventive approach to addressing problem behaviors. Positive environments will help to minimize the occurrence of problem behaviors. The checklist can be used as a general tool to provide an overall assessment of a setting. Also, when a particular individual is targeted, it can be used as part of a comprehensive analysis of an existing problem behavior(s) to determine whether environmental conditions are contributing to the problem.

The Positive Environment Checklist focuses on the physical, social, and programmatic structure of the environment. Checklist questions are divided into 5 sections: (1) Physical Setting, (2) Social Setting, (3) Activities and Instruction, (4) Scheduling and Predictability, and (5) Communication. Responses to questions in each area should be based on direct observation of the environment, on review of written program documents and records, or on responses obtained from questioning individuals involved in supporting the focus person. Three response options are provided for each question: YES, NO, and UNCLEAR. The term “support provider” applies to family members, educators, and others who provide support and services in the setting. The term “people” refers to the people with disabilities who live, work, or attend school on the setting.

Scoring the completed Positive Environment Checklist is simply a matter of determining which questions received a YES response and which received NO or UNCLEAR responses. NO responses indicate areas or issues that should be addressed to create a more positive environment. UNCLEAR responses indicate the need for further analysis, perhaps by extended observation or by questioning a larger number of support providers.

SECTION 1: Physical Setting

1. Is the physical setting clean, well lighted, and odor free? YES NO UNCLEAR
2. Is temperature regulation in the setting adequate? YES NO UNCLEAR
3. Is the physical setting visually pleasant and appealing? YES NO UNCLEAR
4. Does the arrangement of the setting promote easy access for all individuals within the setting? YES NO UNCLEAR
5. Is the setting arranged in a manner that facilitates needed support and supervision? YES NO UNCLEAR
6. Does the setting contain or provide interesting, age-appropriate items and materials for people to use? YES NO UNCLEAR
7. Is the setting located and structured in a manner that promotes and facilitates physical integration into the “regular” community? YES NO UNCLEAR

SECTION 2: Social Setting

1. Is the number of people in this setting appropriate for its physical size and purpose? YES NO UNCLEAR
2. Are the people who share this setting compatible in terms of age, gender, and support needs? YES NO UNCLEAR
3. Do the people who share this setting get along with each other? YES NO UNCLEAR
4. Is the support provider ratio in this setting adequate to meet the support needs of all of the people here at all times? YES NO UNCLEAR
5. Do support providers actively work to develop and maintain a positive rapport and relationship with the people here? YES NO UNCLEAR
6. Do support providers promote and facilitate opportunities for social integration with people who are not paid to provide service? YES NO UNCLEAR
SECTION 3: Activities and Instruction

1. Do people in this setting regularly participate (whether independent, supported, or partial participation) in activities and tasks that are useful and meaningful to their daily lives?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

2. Do people participate in a variety of different activities?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

3. Do people participate in a variety of different activities that occur in regular community settings outside of the home, school, workplace?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

4. Do people in this setting receive instruction on activities and skills that are useful and meaningful to their daily lives?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

5. Is the instruction that people receive individualized to meet specific learner needs?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

6. Are people’s personal preferences taken into account when determining the activities and tasks in which they participate and receive training?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

SECTION 4: Scheduling and Predictability

1. Is there a system or strategy used to identify what people in this setting should be doing and when?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

2. Is there a means to determine whether things that should be occurring actually do occur?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

3. Do people in this setting have a way of knowing or predicting what they will be doing and when?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

4. Do support providers prepare people in this setting in advance for changes in typical schedules or routines?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

5. Do people in this setting have opportunities to exercise choice in terms of what they will do, when, with whom, and what rewards they will receive?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR
SECTION 5: Communication

1. Do people in this setting have acceptable means to communicate basic messages (e.g., requests, comments, rejections) to support providers or others in the setting?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

2. Do support providers promote and reward communication?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

3. Are effective, efficient communication strategies being used by or taught to the people in this setting?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

4. Are support providers familiar with the receptive language levels and skills of the people in this setting?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR

5. Do support providers have acceptable means to communicate basic messages to the people in this setting?  
   YES  NO  UNCLEAR