

How Quality Is Assessed

Highly trained assessors seek to determine the quality of children's care and education using items found in one of the following four rating scales:

- Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (revised)—birth through 30 months.
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (revised)—31 months through 5 years.
- Family Day Care Rating Scale—multi-age care in a home environment.
- School-Age Environment Rating Scale—5 through 12 years.

To conduct a valid assessment, we attempt to schedule the assessment on a "typical day" (e.g., usual routine, no special activities or guests). Also, each classroom or family child care home must have more than half of the children enrolled in attendance on the day of the assessment. Finally, each home or classroom being assessed should expect two assessors for the observation, although it is possible that only one assessor will conduct the observation.

In multi-classroom centers, a minimum of one-third of the total classrooms will be assessed. This will include at least one classroom from each age group requiring a specific rating scale (i.e., one infant/toddler classroom, one school-age classroom, etc.).

Special types of programs: When scheduling the assessment, please notify our offices if your program has a specialized focus or serves special populations (for example, children with moderate to severe disabilities, non-English speaking teachers and/or children, etc.).

Visit www.ncrlap.org for additional information about the rating scales and assessment process

THE NORTH CAROLINA RATED LICENSE

ASSESSMENT PROJECT is a collaboration between the North Carolina Division of Child Development (DCD) and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. NCRLAP's purpose is to conduct voluntary assessments for child care centers and family child care homes attempting to earn a higher star rating in the North Carolina Star Rated License system.

The NC Star Rated License is transitioning from a three-component system to a two-component system. Child care programs operating prior to January 2006 can use the three-component system, while new programs (and all programs by 2008) must use the new two-component system. In the new system, the NC Star Rated License is determined by points earned in two areas:

1. Program Standards
2. Staff Education Standards

Program Standards points are awarded as programs meet basic licensing, enhanced standards, and ratio requirements. It is in this area that Environment Rating Scale assessments are used. Child care programs with higher rating scale scores can earn more Program Standards points. For additional information regarding the NC Star Rated System and how points are earned in both components, you may visit the DCD Web site: <http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us>.



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A Quick Reference to the Rated License Assessment Process



How quality is assessed

How to prepare for the visit

What to expect the day of the assessment and after the assessment

WHAT TO EXPECT

The Day of the Assessment

Upon Arrival of the Assessor

The assessor will typically greet the administrator or provider, give a brief overview of the day, and may tour the facility. In child care centers, classrooms to be assessed are chosen randomly on the morning of each scheduled assessment.

The Observation

The observation will take approximately three to five hours. During that period, the assessor will observe a wide variety of interactions, activities, and materials as required by the rating scale. For example, the assessor may observe indoor and outdoor space, materials used by the children, room arrangement, health practices, staff/child interactions, and so on. Our assessors will remain as unobtrusive as possible while conducting the observation.



Interview with Staff

The Environment Rating Scales require a 30- to 45-minute interview with a the lead classroom teacher or provider. The interview may take place during naptime, or while a substitute teacher replaces the classroom teacher. For after school assessments, assessors typically conduct an interview before children arrive as well as a post-assessment interview.

Improving the quality of child care across North Carolina one facility at a time.

HOW TO PREPARE

for the Visit

Common Ways to Prepare:

1. Read and study the Environment Rating Scales. It is **extremely** helpful to spend time reading the rating scales carefully, including any definitions in the front of the books and the notes for clarification.

It is also **strongly recommended** that you examine these materials accessed at our Web site (www.ncrlap.org) and your local Child Care Resource & Referral agency.

- NC Additional Notes for each rating scale
- NCRLAP's Requirements for Gross Motor Space and Equipment
- Meal Guidelines: Ages 1–12 and/or Infant Meal Guidelines: Ages 0–11 Months

2. Participate in a “self-assessment” before the scheduled assessment.
3. Talk with a DCD Child Care Licensing Consultant about the assessment and/or receive assistance from an outside agency (such as your local Smart Start partnership or Child Care Resource & Referral Network). Also consider networking with providers who have experienced the assessment process.

4. Prepare your facility to maximize the assessment process through quality enhancements. Any changes should reflect the best practices for young children and should improve the quality of the program on an ongoing basis.
5. Prior to the assessment, inform the children that they will have a visitor in the classroom.
6. After the assessment is scheduled, a packet of information and forms will be sent to you. Please have the necessary paperwork completed and available to give to the assessors before the observation. These include:
 - Classroom Information Form
 - Teacher Information Form
 - Classroom Daily Schedules

Rescheduling or Canceling Your Assessment Visit

If you need to reschedule or cancel the assessment date, please immediately contact your DCD Licensing Consultant and the NCRLAP office to confirm the change. This is important because delaying the assessment date could potentially impact your operating license depending upon the renewal date.



After the Assessment

For each observation, the assessor will complete a detailed report that identifies strengths and areas needing improvement as determined by the Environment Rating Scale assessment. The completed report is forwarded to the facility's DCD Child Care Licensing Consultant, who is responsible for communicating the information to the child care facility.

The facility summary report is designed to provide specific feedback so that child care staff may enhance their program's quality through goal setting and other quality enhancement efforts.

If you have additional questions about the assessment process, please contact the NCRLAP main office toll-free at 866-3NCRLAP.