

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—birth to 30 months.
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (revised)—30 months to 5 years.
- Family Day Care Rating Scale—multi-age care in a home environment.
- School-Age Environment Rating Scale—5 to 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 likely 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.).

* For more information about the Environment Rating Scales, visit: www.fpg.unc.edu.

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

THE NORTH CAROLINA RATED LICENSE

ASSESSMENT PROJECT is a collaborative project between the North Carolina Division of Child Development (DCD) and other institutes of higher education across the state. NCRLAP's purpose is to conduct voluntary assessments for child care centers and homes attempting to earn three or more stars within the NC Star Rated License system.

The issuance of a NC Star Rated License is determined by the scores a child care facility attains in three separate areas:

1. Program Standards
2. Staff Education Standard
3. Compliance History

Facilities can earn up to five points in each of these areas. The Environment Rating Scale assessment helps determine the points earned in the Program Standards area.



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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 assessment

HOW TO PREPARE for the Visit

Five 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.
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).
4. Prepare the classroom (or home) to maximize your scoring potential. Also, prepare the children. Let them know that we are coming. This seems to create less disruption in their typical day.
5. Talk with other child care providers about their experience with the Environment Rating Scale assessment.

It is **strongly recommended** that you examine the additional notes for clarification of the rating scales, as well as the playground and USDA meal guidelines used during the assessment process. These materials can be accessed through our Web site (www.ncrlap.org) and your local Child Care Resource & Referral agency.

Prior to the assessment, participating facilities are asked to complete several forms detailing information about teacher education, daily schedule, and other classroom information. The completed forms should be provided to the assessors before they begin their assessment.

WHAT TO EXPECT The Day of the Assessment

Upon Arrival of the Assessor

The assessor will arrive when the center or home opens in the morning or when children are arriving. Before the observation begins, the assessor will typically greet the director or provider, provide a brief overview of the day, and then tour the entire facility. In child care centers, classrooms to be assessed are chosen randomly by the assessor and director 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 staff member after the observation to ensure accurate scoring. Depending on the facility type, this may involve the family child care home provider, the lead classroom teacher, and/or the program director. The interview may take place during naptime, or while a substitute teacher replaces the classroom teacher.



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 providers and directors 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 or the NCRLAP regional office nearest you.