



North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project Summary of Lowest Scoring Items and Indicators for the SACERS-U

This document provides a summary of the lowest scoring items and indicators for the SACERS-U, as used for the assessment portion of the NC Star Rated License. The items are listed in order by overall average score. To prepare this document we analyzed data collected by our staff who conducted 867 assessments in 802 facilities across North Carolina during September 1, 2017 – August 31, 2019. We focused attention on individual items with average scores less than 5.0 on indicators which were most frequently used to determine the lowest scoring item’s average score. For the SACERS-U, many of the lower scoring items relate to language, interactions, and facilitation of activities required of staff.

We encourage programs to carefully consider all sub-scales, items, and indicators of the rating scale because there are many aspects of a high-quality environment that will be critical to children’s long-term development. When preparing for an assessment, it is important to note that this document should not be used to replace the SACERS-U or any of the NC Additional Notes that further clarify the meanings of specific indicators. This document is intended only to highlight problem areas, but does not provide a comprehensive description or explanation of the common concerns or include every situation that can affect scoring.

To read more about the common issues of the SACERS-U, ways to overcome the lower scoring items/indicators, as well as learn more about the assessment process and best practices for child care, visit the NCRLAP website: www.ncrlap.org for several resources such as videos, webcasts, and worksheets.

Common reasons why credit is not earned for the lower scoring items and indicators.

Item 14 Safety practice (average score = 3.06)

- **64%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.1**.
 The resilient surfacing is not deep enough (inadequate cushioning) or does not extend far enough beyond equipment, or equipment is not far enough apart (insufficient use zone). Open "S" hooks or older equipment with safety hazards (protrusions, splintered wood, etc.) are present, or the outdoor play area is not fenced.
- **19%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.5**
 Evacuation procedures do not occur monthly, at times when the school age children are present.

Item 25 Science/nature activities (average score = 3.22)

- **62%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.2**.
 Books are not used to provide additional information during science activities. Books are not placed with related science materials to encourage children’s research skills during free choice times and provide additional information (e.g., a shell collection and book about shells, a collection of magnets and objects to use with magnets with book about magnetism and activities for children to complete, etc.).

Item 17 Meals/snacks (average score = 3.38)

- **16%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.4**
 Substitutions provided by the program for food allergies and food restrictions are not nutritionally comparable (e.g., water served instead of soy milk for a milk allergy). Allergies and food restrictions are not posted.
- **36%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.5**.
 Tables are not first cleaned, then sanitized and left to air dry for at least 2 minutes. The same cloth and a bucket of cleaning/sanitizing solution is used for all tables. Teacher's hands are not washed, or are re-contaminated before serving food. Contamination of food/beverages occurs.
- **21%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.6**.
 Menus are not posted either in the classroom or near the entrance to the facility, so that they can easily be viewed by parents. Menus do not accurately reflect what types of food and/or beverages are served to the children.

Common reasons why credit is not earned for the lower scoring items and indicators.

Item 22 Dramatic play/theater (average score = 3.99)

- **50%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.1**.
There is not a variety of age appropriate dramatic play props in the classroom. Materials do not provide enough accessories to support more complex pretend play for older school age children. Children are not able to independently use materials for at least 30 minutes when a program operates 3 hours or more.
- **71%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.2**.
Teachers do not extend children's dramatic play by joining in the activity or through providing assistance, offering suggestions, or helping with the development of roles or themes.

Item 23 Language/reading activities (average score = 4.1)

- **39%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.1**.
Books contain images that are not appropriate for the children enrolled (e.g., violent/frightening/sexually explicit). There is an insufficient number of language games for each age group. Children are not able to independently use materials daily for at least 30 minutes when program operates 3 hours or more.
- **71%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.3**.
Children are not encouraged to use reading/writing skills in daily, practical situations (e.g., reading directions for games, making signs, lists, etc.).

Item 8 Furnishings for gross motor activities (average score = 4.35)

- **49%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.1**.
Stationary gross motor equipment used across the week does not provide at least five different types of play opportunities, or children are not able to use some stationary gross motor equipment daily, weather permitting. For example, outdoor play does not occur when ground/equipment is wet but there is not active precipitation. Staff's personal perception of too hot or too cold is the basis for a decision not to go outside.
- **31%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.2**.
Stationary equipment does not support development of at least five different age appropriate gross motor skills or does not provide an appropriate level of challenge for all children enrolled.
- **39%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.3**.
A variety of portable gross motor materials that stimulates development of at least five different skills is not provided each day, indoors or outdoors.

Item 29 Staff-child communications (average score = 4.63)

- **72%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.4**.
Staff do not ask open-ended questions to encourage children to give more detailed or extended answers.

Item 36 Schedule (average score = 4.65)

- **23%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.3**.
A daily fine motor or language activity is not provided.

Item 12 Health practices (average score = 4.8)

- **22%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.4**.
The teacher reports any abuse and neglect suspicions to the center director, but is not involved in making the phone call to report the incident/concern to the proper authorities.

Item 24 Math/reasoning activities (average score = 4.81)

- **62%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.2**.
Math concepts are not incorporated into daily, practical events such as keeping score for games, getting materials for correct number of children, etc.

Reference: Harms, T., Jacobs, E., & White, D. (1996). *School-age Care Environment Rating Scale*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.