



NORTH CAROLINA RATED LICENSE ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Research & Recommendations

Ratios and Group Sizes Are Linked to ITERS-R Scores

Recent findings from the North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project (NCRLAP) provide compelling evidence for the importance of low ratios and group sizes for infants and toddlers in center-based care.

The investigation examined data from ITERS-R assessments conducted as part of the state QRIS between 2007 and 2013. The ITERS-R is an assessment tool that measures classroom quality using a rating scale from 1 to 7, with a score of 5 indicating “good” quality. Three classroom types were examined, including 607 infant classrooms (ages birth through 12 months), 708 young toddler classrooms (ages 12 through 24 months), and 2,333 mixed-aged classrooms (classrooms with both infants and toddlers). The investigation considered ITERS-R scores in relation to group size (i.e., number of children present during the observation) and teacher-child ratios. Interestingly, the average group size in this investigation tended to be lower than those required for state licensing (e.g., 10 infants/2 teachers).

Findings for Infant Classrooms (under 12 months):

- In infant classrooms, a **group size of 6 or less** was required to achieve an average ITERS-R score of 4.94 (nearly achieving the “good” level of quality). Group sizes for these classrooms ranged from 1 to 10 children with an average of 5 children present. 79% of classrooms had a group size of 6 or smaller.
- Teacher-child **ratios of one teacher for every 2.5 children (2 teachers for every 5 children)** or better were needed to achieve an ITERS-R score of 5 or above. When the **ratio was 1:4 or better**, the mean ITERS-R score was 4.73. However, the average score dropped to 4.30 when the ratio was higher than 1:4. Approximately, 57% of the infant classrooms had ratios of 1:2.5 or lower, while 38% had ratios between 1:1.25 and 1:4.



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Findings for Young Toddler Classrooms (12 to 24 months of age):

- In young toddler classrooms, a group size of 10 or less was required to reach an average ITERS-R score of 4.87 (nearly a “good” level of quality). Group sizes for these classrooms ranged from 2 to 12 children with an average of 6 children present. 95% of classrooms had 10 children or fewer present during the assessment.
- Teacher-child **ratios of one teacher for every 5 children (or better) were needed for the average classroom score on the ITERS-R** to approach “good” quality (4.78). Only when ratios were **1:3 or better was a score of “5” achieved**. For this age group, when teacher to child **ratios were higher than 1:5**, the mean ITERS-R score dropped to 4.07. Approximately 48% of young toddler classrooms had a ratio of 1:3 or lower, and about 49% had a ratio between 1:3 and 1:5.

Findings for Mixed-Age Classrooms:

- The mixed-age classrooms included groups with infants and young toddlers, as well as those with young and older toddlers (majority 30 months and younger).
- The average ITERS-R score for mixed-age classrooms (4.70) was lower than both infant classrooms (4.90) and young toddler classrooms (4.87).
- In mixed-aged classrooms, a group size of 10 or less was required to reach an average ITERS-R score of 4.71. Group sizes for these classrooms ranged from 2 to 12 children and averaged approximately 6 children present. 92% of classrooms had 10 or fewer children present during the assessment.
- Teacher-child ratios of better than 1:2 were needed for an average classroom score of 5 on the ITERS-R, which is the “good” quality level. When the ratios were 1:5 or higher the average score dropped to 4.43. In this study about 6% of these classrooms had a ratio of below 1:2 and about 88% had a ratio of 1:5 or better.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- For young infants to experience higher levels of quality, a group size of fewer than 6 children and teacher to child ratios of 1:4 or better should be required. To achieve “good” quality levels (as indicated by the ITERS-R) ratios should be 1:2.5 or better.
- For young toddlers (12-24 months of age) to experience higher levels of quality a group size of 10 children or fewer and teacher to child ratios of 1:5 or better should be required. To achieve “good” quality levels ratios should be 1:3 or less.
- For very young children in mixed age groups to experience higher levels of quality a group size of no more than 10 children and teacher to child ratios of 1:5 or better should be required. To achieve “good” quality levels ratios for mixed age groups should be 1:2 or less.

