



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

This document provides a summary of the lowest scoring items and indicators for the ECERS-R, 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 2,253 assessments in 1,808 facilities across North Carolina from June 19, 2015 – June 19, 2017. We focused attention on individual items with average scores less than 5.0 and on indicators which, according to the scoring rules, were most frequently used to determine the lowest scoring item’s average score. Similar to our previous reports, the lowest scoring items primarily relate to health and safety such as issues with outdoor safety practices, sanitary conditions for toileting and diapering, meals and snacks, and nap/rest.

While we recognize that the health and safety issues are very important, we do not want to underemphasize the importance of other aspects of high quality environments that may, in the long run, be critical to children’s long-term development. We encourage programs to carefully consider all sub-scales, items, and indicators of the rating scale. When preparing for an assessment, it is important to note that this document should not be used to replace the ECERS-R 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 ECERS-R, 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.
<p>14. Safety practices (average score = 3.24)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 73% do not earn credit for indicator 3.1. Outdoors: The mulch/sand/wood chips are not deep enough (inadequate cushioning), spacing of equipment is too close (inadequate fall zones), open S-hooks on swings, or materials/equipment present with broken or sharp edges, or no fence. Indoors: Uncovered electrical outlets present, choking hazards in classrooms with children under 3 years (e.g., certain art materials, small toys), children under 4 years served foods that pose a choking hazard, and sanitizer or disinfectant sprayed while children are nearby.
<p>7. Space for gross motor play (average score = 3.86)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51% do not earn credit for 3.2. The mulch/sand/wood chips are not deep enough (inadequate cushioning), spacing of equipment is too close (inadequate fall zones), there is no fence or ASTM 1292 documentation is not provided for manufactured surfacing.
<p>17. Using language to develop reasoning skills (average score = 3.96)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27% do not earn credit for indicator 5.1. Staff do not talk about logical relationships with children during hands-on experiences with materials. • 86% do not earn credit for indicator 5.2. Staff do not encourage the children to explain their thought processes related to problems they have solved. This occurs when questions or statements are used to elicit information from the child about his/her reasoning as it relates to learning concepts specified in the Note for Clarification on page 37.
<p>10. Meals/snacks (average score = 4.01)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32% do not earn credit for indicator 3.3. Children or staff may contaminate hands after washing before meals by touching toys, walls, floors, trash can lid, etc., or handwashing does not occur for children or staff before and after a meal or snack. Tables are not first cleaned, then sanitized, and left to air dry for at least 2 minutes.

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22. Blocks (average score = 4.42)

- **61%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.1**.
There is not enough space or blocks to build three sizeable, age-appropriate structures.
- **26%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.3**.
Materials other than blocks and accessories are stored/used in the block area such as music instruments, gross motor toys, large interlocking blocks, or dramatic play props (beyond basic block accessories). Block area is not out of traffic.
- **74%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.4**.
The schedule experienced by children does not allow for use of a special block area for at least 1/3 of the time that the child care center is open. When indicators 5.1, 5.2 or 5.3 do not earn credit, this indicator does not earn credit.

13. Health practices (average score = 4.45)

- **33%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.1**.
Child and/or adult handwashing does not occur as needed (e.g., arrivals, re-entry, sand/water play, messy play, after wiping noses, after contamination).

12. Toileting/diapering (average score = 4.59)

- **29%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.1**.
Sinks used for diapering/toileting related handwashing are not disinfected between dual uses or are not disinfected at the right times (e.g., after toileting handwashing and before other types of handwashing). The disinfecting solution sprayed on sink basins and faucets is wiped immediately. If completed, the diapering procedure does not follow all the steps required.

11. Nap/rest (average score = 4.63)

- **29%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.2**.
Spacing of mats/cots is less than 18 inches or a solid barrier is not used between cots/mats, or a barrier is used that does not extend for the entire length of sleeping surfaces. Mats/cots are stored with bedding touching. Children nap with soft toys or pillows from a classroom play area.

2. Furniture for routine care, play, and learning (average score = 4.79)

- **72%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.1**.
Chairs and/or tables used for meals or snacks in a classroom or cafeteria are too high for the children (e.g., feet do not touch or barely touch the floor; tables are chest height or higher).

37. Provisions for children with disabilities (average score = 4.94)

- **23%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.3**.
Staff do not communicate, either verbally or in writing, with parents of children with special needs daily or almost daily. Meetings with parents are not scheduled twice annually to discuss the child's goals, progress, and/or ongoing needs.

27. Use of TV, video, and/or computers (average score = 4.98)

- **24%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.4**.
Beyond providing basic assistance to get started, resume a program, etc., staff do not engage with children as they watch TV/video or use a computer program.

Reference

Harms, T., Clifford, R., & Cryer, D. (2005). *Early childhood environment rating scale*. (Revised edition). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.