



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

This document provides a summary of the lowest scoring items and indicators for the ITERS-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 1,310 assessments in 1,036 facilities across North Carolina from September 1, 2017 – August 31, 2019. We focused attention on individual items with average scores less than 5.0 and on indicators which 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 will be critical to children's long-term development. We encourage programs to carefully consider all the 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 ITERS-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 ITERS-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.

Item 10 Health practices (average score = 2.35)

- **69%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.1**.
Mouthed toys are not cleaned and sanitized before being used by other children or are put away with clean toys. Trash can lid is not hands-free. Children drink water or mouth toys during group water play and the water is not changed. Runny noses are not wiped.
- **45%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.2**.
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).

Item 7 Meals/snacks (average score = 2.44)

- **36%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.1**.
Water is not served between meals to children who primarily eat solid foods. Individual needs of infants/toddlers for appropriate eating times are not met. (e.g., crying babies must wait for long periods or until the scheduled meal time for bottle, toddlers fall asleep while waiting for lunch).
- **25%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.3**.
Children or staff 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 a meal or snack. Tables are not first cleaned, then sanitized and left to air dry for at least 2 minutes. Children who hold their own bottles do not have hands washed. Hands rather than utensils are used to break up children's foods. Cups and bottles of juice or milk are left unrefrigerated for longer than 1 hour. Bottles or baby foods are refrigerated after use and then served again.
- **68%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.4**.
Staff are not close enough to children or are focused on other duties while children are eating/drinking in high chairs or at a table. Lapses in supervision often occur at the beginning and/or end of meals when all staff prepare/clean up or assist some children with handwashing or other activities while some children are still eating.

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

Item 9 Diapering/toileting (average score = 2.45)

- **45%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.1**.
Most of the time sinks are not disinfected between dual uses or are not disinfected at the right times (e.g., after diapering/toileting handwashing or before other types of handwashing) or the disinfecting solution is wiped immediately. There are often lapses in the sanitary diapering procedure such as supplies are not taken out prior to starting a change or wipes are not used at the correct time during the diapering process for adult/child hands, disinfectant does not air dry for at least 2 minutes.
- **52%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.2**.
Children's diapers/pull-ups are not visually checked or changed at least every 2 hours.
- **39%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.3**.
Staff and/or children do not wash their hands after diapering/toileting routines before handling other materials. Staff wash hands before cleaning and disinfecting the diapering table instead of after.

Item 4 Room arrangement (average score = 3.5)

- **45%** do not earn credit for this indicator **3.2**.
Children cannot be seen when playing in some part of the classroom because of room design/shape or the placement of shelves, cubbies, changing table, etc. When there is one staff present, there are many times when their back is to the classroom during diaper changes, hand washing, and food preparation.

Item 29 Schedule (average score = 3.61)

- **35%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.1**.
Schedule does not meet the needs of most of the children enrolled. For example, diapers are not visually checked or changed at least every 2 hours; children are not fed when hungry or allowed to sleep when tired.

Item 11 Safety practices (average score = 3.72)

- **21%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.1**.
Indoors: There is not a barrier on the edge of the changing table or the barrier is not at least 6 inches above the surface where children lay during changes; infants are put on stomach to sleep; when lifting or assisting children, they are pulled up by their arm(s) or hand(s); small toys are present that are choking hazards; unsafe art materials are used or accessible such as small crayons, glitter, googly eyes, or foam stickers; food choking hazards are observed such as whole grapes or hot dog rounds; sanitizer or disinfectant is sprayed where children can inhale mist; electrical outlets are not covered.
Outdoors: Resilient surfacing is not deep enough or fall zones are not adequate; there is no fence, or equipment is too large for age group or is in poor repair with broken/sharp edges; there are open S-hooks.

Item 12 Helping children understand language (average score = 3.86)

- **53%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.4**.
A teacher uses negative language to control behaviors that are age typical and not dangerous (e.g., young children put toys in their mouth or reach for one another). Children are told to stop behaviors they are engaged in, rather than re-directing them to the behavior that is expected. Derogatory statements are made to children.

Item 8 Nap/rest (average score = 3.93)

- **17%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.1**.
The nap schedule does not meet the needs of each child as demonstrated by child behaviors and/or staff comments (e.g., child rubbing eyes and crying is told "I know you are tired, but it is too early for your nap").
- **43%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.2**.
Cribs/cots are placed too close together; the entire sleep surface is not at least 36 inches apart or separated by a solid barrier. Mats/cots are stored with bedding touching.

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

Item 14 Using books (average score = 4.27)

- **31%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.2**.
More than three books, regardless of total number of books provided, are in disrepair (e.g., spine of book is tearing and/or detached, for board books there are small pieces of peeling paper that can be further pulled or torn, for any books there are peeling or ripped pages or covers that affect images or are easy to grasp and tear further, missing flaps, pages scribbled on, pages may not turn properly due to bending or separation from spine, etc.).

Item 16 Active physical play (average score = 4.48)

- **50%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.1**
Children are not taken outdoors for at least 1 hour every day, 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. There is not direct or very close/easy access to an outdoor play area.
- **28%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.5**
Resilient surfacing is not deep enough, the fall zones are not adequate, there are open S-hooks or there is no fence. Toys with broken or sharp edges are observed.

Item 25 Supervision of play and learning (average score = 4.72)

- **22%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.1**.
Repeated brief lapses in visual supervision occur. For example, a teacher turns her back to children in play areas while supervising other children in the bathroom or when changing a diaper; indoors or outdoors, children are out of view behind taller equipment or furnishings.

Item 28 Discipline (average score = 4.76)

- **20%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.1**
Situations are present that will lead to conflict and do not support positive social interactions. For example, there are not enough toys to keep children interested without competition. There are long periods of waiting without activities or areas/times of the day when crowding occurs or children's interactions are restricted. Quick facilitation to resolve these challenges does not occur
- **19%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.2**
Redirection is not used to guide children's behaviors. The same strategies or instructions are used to address behaviors, rather than trying different approaches and following up as needed. Negative statements or directions are used, rather than more positive methods.

Item 17 Art (average score = 4.77)

- **17%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.2**.
Art materials that are unsafe or otherwise inappropriate for the age group are used with infants/toddlers (e.g., small crayons, glitter, googly eyes, or foam stickers).

Item 6 Greeting/departing (average score = 4.86)

- **25%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.4**.
Sharing of child-related health and safety information between parents and staff does not occur either verbally or in writing during each arrival.

Reference

Harms, T., Clifford, R., & Cryer, D. (2006). *Infant/toddler environment rating scale*. (Revised edition). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.