



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. To prepare this document we analyzed data collected by our staff who conducted 497 assessments in facilities across North Carolina during July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015. We focused attention on individual items with average scores less than 5.0 on indicators which, according to the scoring rules, 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 of 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 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 common concerns.

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 programs do not earn credit for the lower scoring items and indicators.

Item 14 Safety practice (average score = 2.51)

- **78 %** do not earn credit for indicator **1.2**. (a score of yes at the 1 level results in an item score of 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.

Item 25 Science/nature activities (average score = 3.16)

- **64%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.2**.
Books are not used to provide additional information during science activities. Books are not stored with science materials to provide additional information for children during independent play (shell collection and book about shells, collection of magnets and objects to use with magnets and book about magnetism with activities for children to complete, etc.).

Item 17 Meals/snacks (average score = 3.30)

- **38%** 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 are used for all tables. Teacher's hands are not washed, or are re-contaminated before serving food. Contamination of food/beverages occurs.
- **24%** 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.

Item 22 Dramatic play/theater (average score = 4.10)

- **36%** 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 not able to independently use materials for at least 30 minutes when program operates 3 hours or more.
- **75%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.2**.
Teachers do not extend dramatic play by participating in children's pretend play or suggesting/offering different materials or ideas.

Common reasons why programs do not earn credit for the lower scoring items and indicators.

Item 23 Language/reading activities (average score = 4.24)

- **28%** 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 are no age appropriate language games, or an insufficient number of games for each age group. Children not able to independently use materials daily for at least 30 minutes when program operates 3 hours or more.
- **69%** 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 game, making signs, lists, etc.).

Item 8 Furnishings for gross motor activities (average score = 4.44)

- **47%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.1**.
Stationary gross motor equipment does not provide at least 5 different types of play opportunities, or children are not able to use stationary gross motor equipment frequently enough. Children do not use outdoor equipment daily when weather conditions permit, or equipment is not used indoors when children do not go outside.
- **30%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.2**.
Stationary equipment does not support development of at least 5 different age appropriate gross motor skills. Stationary equipment does not provide appropriate level of challenge for all children enrolled.
- **30%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.3**.
A variety of portable materials that stimulates development of at least 5 different skills is not provided during the observation, or indoors on days when children do not go outside.

Item 29 Staff-child communications (average score = 4.49)

- **77%** 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 = 4.49)

- **27%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.3**.
A daily fine motor, art, or language activity is not provided.

Item 18 Personal hygiene (average score = 4.65)

- **23%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.2**.
No tissues in the classroom where children can see and reach them.

Item 5 Furnishing for routine care (average score = 4.68)

- **70%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.1**.
Chairs and/or tables used for snacks or meals are too small; the children's knees do not fit comfortably under the table. Chairs and/or tables are too large; the children cannot or barely touch the floor with their feet, or have to reach up when eating because the tables are higher than lower chest level.

Item 6 Furnishing for learning and recreational activities (average score = 4.74)

- **67%** do not earn credit for indicator **5.1**.
Chairs/and or tables used for homework and group or play activities are too small; the children's knees do not fit comfortably under the table. Chairs and/or tables are too large; the children cannot or barely touch the floor with their feet, or have to reach up when eating because the tables are higher than lower chest level.

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

- **61%** 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.

Item 12 Health practices (average score = 4.94)

- **26%** do not earn credit for indicator **3.4**.
The teacher reports any abuse and neglect suspicions to the center director and is not involved in making the phone call to report the incident/concern.

Reference

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