

Temporary Assessment Process: Rationale and Development



This document is an extension of another document titled "At a Glance: NC's Temporary Assessment Process." Readers are encouraged to first read the At a Glance document before reading this document. As the title suggests, this document explains how and why the process was developed.

The Temporary Assessment Process has two components: The Modified Assessment and the Reflective Self-Study. The process will continue until further guidance is received from DCDEE and pandemic conditions end, and it is safe for programs to have visitors present for more lengthy observations again.

Additional details about the Modified Assessment:

- **How were items selected for the modified assessment?**

The selection of items followed these broad steps:

- First, we identified how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the typical ERS assessment process. For example, being unable to complete typical observations in programs and the continued need to limit observation time was a key constraint. We also considered activities that were not recommended or were prohibited for children, teachers, and/or programs according to DHHS and other sources.
- Second, we explored alternative strategies to complete ERS items even with the constraints. At this point, we received permission from the DCDEE to explore new options to address ERS items it is not possible to score without lengthy observations and also to take photographs as a method of data collection for items that can be scored based on the physical environment, without observations of children and teachers.
- Third, we identified items that could be scored during a Modified Assessment, and we omitted items that could not be scored, based on identified constraints. The scoring criteria for the selected items has not changed, although in some cases additional questions are asked during the interview to address specific indicators that would typically be observation-based. The average score is calculated using only the selected items. For a list of items in the Modified Assessment, please see the NC Additional Notes for the Temporary Assessment Process.

- **How did we test the validity?**

NCRLAP State Anchors and Reliability Checkers analyzed the face validity of selected items, and these were tested in a pilot study that included conducting assessments in a small number of child care centers and family child care homes. Using historical data and data from the pilot study, statistical analysis was performed to compare the selected items against the full set of ERS. The results were found to support the use of the selected items.

- **What are the limitations of the Modified Assessment?**

The Modified Assessment is not equivalent to the full ERS assessment and, importantly, it is not intended to replace the typical ERS assessment for long-term regulatory use. The items that can be scored primarily use evidence from the physical environment and/or teacher interview (e.g., space and furnishings, activities and materials for learning and play), but not other important aspects of high quality practices captured in other subscales. The use of new interview questions for specific indicators that would typically be scored based on observation means that scores on these items may vary from past or future scores, based on typical assessment procedures and observations.

- **How does the observation differ during the Modified Assessment?**

To complete the modified assessment, an assessor visits a classroom for 30-45 minutes to take photographs of the materials and environment, and complete other documentation. Preferably the visit will occur while children are not present (e.g., outside); however, if they need to come back to the classroom, no photographs will be taken of the children and the assessor will try to avoid coming into close contact while finishing their work as quickly as possible. A teacher interview is also necessary although this does not have to occur in-person and can be scheduled to occur with a phone call or Zoom meeting for later that day or the next. The outdoor space used by children will also be visited. Since the time in each classroom is short, it is possible that the same assessor will complete multiple observations in one site visit.

Additional details about the Reflective Self-Study:

- **How were items selected for the self-study Thinking More About worksheets?**

Acknowledging the limits of the Modified Assessment, the Reflective Self-Study was designed to emphasize and promote consideration of aspects of quality (such as, Language and Interaction, Personal Care Routines, and Program Structure) not assessed by the Modified Assessment. This process also provides a way for programs to be actively engaged in becoming more familiar with the ERS.

The worksheets serve not only to offer guidance and reminders about these important aspects of quality, but also help teachers, providers, and administrators reflect on the important work that is done each day to nurture and educate children, and plan for continuous quality improvement.

- **How did we test the validity?**

NCRLAP State Anchors and Reliability Checkers analyzed the face validity of selected items, and these were tested in a pilot study with administrators, teachers, and FCCH providers. The respondents' information was examined, and changes were made based on their feedback. Overall, the results of the pilot study found that the self-study worked as expected and showed clear benefits for use in the Temporary Assessment Process.

- **What are the limitations of the Reflective Self-Study?**

- The self-study worksheets and responses are not intended to be scored for regulatory purposes.
- The scope of the self-study is limited to aspects of quality not assessed by the Modified Assessment; in other words, this is not a comprehensive self-study.
- The length of the self-study process (e.g., one month prior to the Modified Assessment scheduling window) is brief. To allow for more relaxed pacing and additional reflection and collaboration programs are encouraged to begin the process earlier.
- A mindset of reflection and goal setting is key to the successful completion of the self-study. Without personal reflection, thought, and consideration, the self-study may not achieve its' desired outcome nor is it likely to lead to improved quality.

- **Additional considerations:**

Using a structured and reflective self-study process to guide change in the classroom focuses efforts to improve quality in an informed and data-driven manner. It provides a framework for the continuous development of classroom practices toward high quality outcomes.

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