

Thinking More about Program Structure



FCCERS-R

Purpose: This document addresses many of the requirements for items found in the Program Structure subscale. The focus is primarily on indicators found at the 3, 5, and 7 level. It is important to review each item entirely to ensure that no indicator at the 1 or “inadequate” level applies to the program. Answering the questions and referring to the FCCERS-R will build familiarity with requirements, while offering a chance to reflect on current practices and situations.

Preparation: Refer to the FCCERS-R (spiral bound edition published in 2007) when completing the questions. To better understand the scale format and structure, review the instructions for scoring on page 8 in the FCCERS-R and the definitions of common terms on pages 9-11. It will also be helpful to refer to a copy of the most current NC Additional Notes (available at ncrlap.org). There are many questions, so completing them all will likely take several reflection/review sessions.

The items included consider many aspects related to maintaining awareness about how program structure contributes to children’s opportunities to explore, learn, and become increasingly independent. There is a focus on the ways program structure creates a predictable sequence of events that include regular routines, significant opportunities for complex play, smooth transitions, ample time for interactions with adults and peers, responsive group activities, and inclusion of children with disabilities. These aspects provide a strong foundation for fun and enriching experiences, and strong relationships.

Tips:

- If you are confused about a question in the worksheet, look at the item in the FCCERS-R and any notes to identify the specific indicator and requirement to which it refers.
- Describe the current practices that occur when answering the questions. Remember, this is not about a “right answer” but rather a way to build understanding about what occurs every day. In the reflection section at the end, it can be helpful to add ideas about future plans or changes.
- Using the worksheet on an ongoing basis can help verify that the program structure is supportive and developmentally appropriate. This process also emphasizes how specific aspects of program structure support providers in offering experiences that are positive and enriching.
- Answering the questions with someone else (an assistant, technical assistance specialists, etc.) promotes sharing of perspectives and may draw attention to different details.

Date(s) completed: _____ Age groups: _____

Worksheet completed by: _____

Item 31 Schedule (p.60)

Do children experience a similar schedule each day? **Y / N**

Consider the daily schedule. Is it flexible and does it meet the needs of each child (e.g., children play, eat, nap, and are diapered/visit the toilet based on their own needs, routine care is scheduled to occur without much crying or other issues)? **Y / N**

Does play occur for at least one hour indoors every day? **Y / N**

Does play occur for at least one hour outdoors, every day, weather permitting? **Y / N** (Hint: See Terms Used Throughout the Scale on page 11 of the FCCERS-R for a definition of “weather permitting” and/or refer to the Child Care Weather Watch Chart at ncrlap.org).

What conditions prevent outdoor play from occurring and how are decisions made about when outdoor play will occur?

Is there active gross motor play every day, including indoors when weather prevents outdoor play? **Y / N**

Each day, are there opportunities for activities the children choose independently and activities the provider plans? **Y / N**

What is done to reduce waiting or keep children engaged during transitions?

Does this prevent transitions when children must wait for more than 3 minutes at a time without activities? **Y / N** If **no**, what other strategies could be helpful?

Item 32 Free play (p.61)

Hint: Only times when children can choose both the materials they use and peers to interact with, are considered free play.

Each day does free play occur: Indoors? **Y / N** Outdoors, weather permitting? **Y / N**

Does free play occur both indoors and outdoors, for much of every day? **Y / N** Hint: Refer to the definition of “much of the day” on pg. 10.

Think about any situations when children are limited in what they can do (e.g., group times, time in infant seats/swings/exersaucers, or using a room/ area with few play materials at certain times of the day):

Are these times limited to 20 minutes or less? **Y / N**

During free play times both indoors and outdoors, consider the supervision that occurs. Does it (check all that apply):

- Protect children's health and safety?
- Facilitate children's play by helping with materials, offering other materials to support play, etc.?
- Provide educational interactions related to their play such as finding solutions and problem solving, adding information and new ideas, encouraging children to talk more about their activities?

During times children are playing, are there many types of materials and equipment for them to use? **Y / N**

Is this true both indoor and outdoors? **Y / N**

Are there materials to rotate or add for the children during free play times? **Y / N**

How often is something added or rotated? _____

Do any of the new or rotated materials relate to the current topics of interest or themes? **Y / N**

If **yes**, give some examples:

Item 33 Group time (p.62)

Hint: This item considers large and small group provider directed activities, self-selected small group play, and individual play.

If they occur, list the times and lengths of typical whole-group or circle time activities:

What happens if a child does not want to join or tries to leave during the group activities? Describe alternate activities, any instructions, etc. _____

Describe typical interactions with children during the group activities:

Does the provider adjust group activities based on children's interest? Describe:

Are group times set up to be successful? For example, do group times (check all that apply):

- Occur where there is enough space to prevent crowding?
- Include engaging, age appropriate content for all children expected to participate (e.g., not too academic for younger children, concepts are not simplistic for older children)?
- Offer children opportunities to participate, rather than only listen or respond to a few questions?
- Continue only as long as children are interested?

Are most play activities done in small groups or individually as children choose, rather than as a whole group? **Y / N**

Does the provider have educational interactions with children, small groups, and the whole group throughout the day? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe:

ITEM 34 Provisions for children with disabilities (p. 63)

Only complete the questions in this section if there is a child with a diagnosed disability and completed assessment, or if there is a child receiving services, such as speech therapy. If there are multiple children with special needs, respond to the questions keeping each child in mind.

Does the provider have information from/about each child's assessment(s)? **Y / N**

Is each child able to fully participate in the classroom experiences? **Y / N**

Describe anything special that is done to help each child participate fully:

If professionals recommend specific activities or experiences for the child, does the provider implement these? **Y / N** If **yes**, describe:

Do parents and the provider exchange information about a child's special needs? **Y / N** If **yes**, what topics are discussed?

Are parents and the provider involved in joint goal setting for the child's experiences at the program? **Y / N**

How often does communication with parents occur informally and how is this done?

Want to find out more?

Not all FCCERS-R indicators are covered in this worksheet, so review the FCCERS-R carefully and seek out resources, as needed, since relying on these questions alone to prepare for an assessment will not be sufficient. We encourage you to review other resources found on the ncrlap.org website to stay informed about any updates and continue to build your understanding of the FCCERS-R and the assessment process.

- Look for general information about the assessment process and also specific FCCERS-R resources. These resources may offer ideas about what to focus on or supplement ideas you were already considering.
- Check out the answers to Frequently Asked Questions or send a new question to ncrlap@uncg.edu.
- Register for free online training webinars. Some are live webinars; others are pre-recorded and offer training credits (contact hours). Call 1-866-362-7527 or register online at ncrlap.org.

When planning for program enhancement, always consider the unique features of the program such as ages and abilities of the children enrolled, the number of providers, and overall goals and/or philosophy. Programs may also seek advice from their DCDEE Child Care Consultant, local CCR&R and/or Smart Start Partnerships, or other child care agencies.

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References:

Harms, T., Cryer, D., & Clifford, R. (2007). Family child care environment rating scale. (Revised edition). New York, NY. Teachers College Press.

NC Additional Notes (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.ncrlap.org>.