



NC ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR THE ECERS-R

The NC Additional Notes provide supplementary information for the Environment Rating Scales so that participants in the assessment portion of the North Carolina star rated license may correctly interpret and score items found within the scale. A primary aim for the notes is to further define or explain requirements of certain items to improve interrater reliability or consistency among assessors working with the North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project (NCRLAP).

Participants in the NC star rated license system should be aware of the following:

- The NC Additional Notes may be updated (approximately) every 6 months, as needed. NCRLAP assessors conduct assessments using the most current notes. Child care professionals are encouraged to download and use the most current version of the notes from ncrlap.org.
- NCRLAP assessors use only the NC Additional Notes for the ECERS-R and, due to modifications and additions that occur over time, the NC Additional Notes differ from notes created by the scale authors found on the Environment Rating Scales Institute website. Participants in the NC star rated license should replace older notes with the current NC Additional Notes.
- For NC ECERS-R assessments, items 38-43 are not included in the overall score.
- NCRLAP began using the Updated Edition of the ECERS-R that has a spiral binding on August 1, 2005 for all assessments completed in North Carolina. For assessment purposes, this version replaced the earlier version of the ECERS-R.

The NC Additional Notes were compiled and further developed by members of the NCRLAP's management team, especially by our state anchors and anchor advisors. On September 1, 2003, with permission from Debby Cryer and Thelma Harms, the Additional Notes for Clarification for the ECERS-R, ITERS, ITERS-R, FDCRS, and SACERS were retrieved from the Frank Porter Graham website (<http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>) and used for the basis for the NC Additional notes. Since then, NCRLAP has made modifications and additions to the notes as described below.

Recent changes (The most recent changes are italicized in this document):

<i>11/5/2024: 12</i>	10/2015: Items 4, 15, 19, 24, 26, 35	03/2008: Items 10, 26, 29, 30, 37
10/25/2023: 21	03/2015: Items 8,29, 37	10/2007: General notes
2/17/2023: Final Covid exemptions removed	05/2014: Item 29	04/2007: General notes, Items 9, 10, 20, 22, 26, 40
3/1/2022: 2, 9, 19, 24, 25	05/2013: Item 27	10/2006: Items 2, 43
10/2020: 28	10/2012: Items 10, 11	03/2006: Items 9, 11, 20
03/2017: 8, 27	05/2012: General notes, Items 7, 10, 12	09/2005: Items 9, 15, 26
10/2016: Items 8, 22	11/2010: Items 7,8	
04/2016: Item 8	10/2008: Item 40	

GENERAL NOTES FOR THE ECERS-R

Accessible: All children in the group should have access to the required materials and activities with appropriate modifications made based on developmental or chronological age differences. To determine whether materials are accessible several factors must be considered:

- Location of the materials and the type of storage provision: Materials are placed in spaces used by children daily rather than outside of children’s regular play areas (i.e. outside of the classroom or areas within the classroom used for teacher storage, routine care, or an area used only for group times, etc.).
- Materials within the play areas are easy to reach for children in the group. The lids on containers and drawers/doors on cabinets are easy to open for the children in the group.
- Children’s ages and knowledge that the materials are intended for their use: How do children know what is stored where? Consider whether the children are observed using the materials. Look for other evidence that indicates the materials are used by the children
- The overall structure of the program determines how much child choice is possible. Consider how much independence children have during play times. Do they select the areas that they play in? If not, how does the classroom system provide access to the specific materials for the required amounts of time? Within centers, are children free to use any of the materials? If unsure of whether children have access to a space that is not used during the observation ask staff questions about the space, how frequently it is used, and how materials are made accessible, etc.

If the word accessible appears in more than one indicator at the minimal (3) level, apply the one hour requirement only in the indicator that specifically mentions the time requirements of one hour or the word daily.

Gross motor equipment and safety issues: NC assessors use the gross motor safety information sheet titled: “NCRLAP’s Requirements for Gross Motor Space and Equipment.” This document is available at ncrlap.org.

Handwashing: In certain situations, when a sink with running water is not accessible for the group to use, hand sanitizing products may be used in lieu of handwashing. For example, hand sanitizer may be used while staff is supervising children outdoors if hands are washed upon returning indoors. The following requirements must be met; the waterless wash or wipe must be used according to manufacturer guidelines (i.e., labeled as safe for use by children, used only with adult supervision, allowed to dry properly), and the waterless wash must be stored out of reach of children. Please note that this substitution is only acceptable in certain circumstances and that the requirements for adequate handwashing still apply for routine care activities and general classroom use.

Operating hours: In North Carolina, for programs with wrap around care/optional extended day programs that are under one license, use the total day as a basis for time calculations. For programs that operate both 1st and 2nd shift, use the total operating hours that children may be in attendance until the time that night-time routines (such as dinner preparation, story time, etc.) begin, unless the program has a policy that a child may only attend during the hours specific to one shift.

Poor repair of materials and books: Materials and books that are in poor repair, meaning that they are not usable as intended, are excluded when determining whether the required numbers or examples for various categories have been provided. However, if there is an inappropriate image accessible to children this is always considered regardless of whether or not a material, picture, or book is in poor repair.

Sanitation: Child care providers and other professionals should be aware that compliance with NC's Sanitation of Child Care Center Requirements contained in 15A NCAC 18A Section .2800 must be maintained by licensed child care centers; therefore, if differences in wording regarding the use of various products, such as a sanitizing solution, as compared to a disinfecting solution appear in some of the rating scale items, the Sanitation Requirements must be followed. Consider the following:

- For chlorine bleach and water sanitizing solution to be effective, it must be mixed to the strength specified in 15A NCAC 18A .2801 Definitions (22) and be allowed to dry for a minimum of 2 minutes. Complete air drying is ideal. Other sanitizing solutions, as required and approved in 15A NCAC 18A .2812, Cleaning and Sanitizing Equipment and Utensils (5E) may also be used.
- For chlorine bleach and water disinfecting solution to be effective, it must be mixed to the strength specified in 15A NCAC 18A .2801 Definitions (7) and be allowed to dry for a minimum of 2 minutes. Complete air drying is ideal. Other EPA registered disinfectants or germicides may be used, based on the specifications found in the same definition (e.g., approved for equivalent setting and instructions for use are followed).

Time requirements: In some items, the indicators that include time requirements are separate from the indicators that describe the required types or quantities of materials. The time requirements apply to the materials described in the other indicator at the same quality level. Therefore the required materials must be provided in order to earn credit for indicators containing time requirements unless exceptions are allowed based on the specific notes for an item.

General references: Materials that are frequently used by NCRLAP to assist in decision making are Caring For Our Children (used for health, sanitation, and safety issues) and the Handbook for Public Playground Safety, CPSC Publication No. 325 (for gross motor play issues). Links to these resources are found on our website, ncrlap.org and providers are encouraged to access these; however, all information contained in these resources may not be applied during an assessment.

ITEM 2:

Indicator 5.1: Tables and chairs must meet requirements in each area regularly used by children, including any that are outside the classroom, such as a cafeteria.

Indicator 5.3: In this indicator, the word 'permits' means that adaptive equipment is used during the observation and allows children who need this type of equipment to participate in many activities with other children.

Indicator 7.1 To be considered convenient, cubbies must be in the classroom and independently accessible to children.

ITEM 4:

Indicator 3.2: Take children's ages and abilities into account. If the only area that presents a challenge is a space designated or created for privacy and the rest of the play area is easy to view, this indicator should not be scored negatively. Instead, to avoid considering this issue in two items, note the difficulties associated with supervision in Item 5, Indicator 3.2. If the space creates problems for supervising other spaces in the play area (e.g., due to height or placement) then these issues will be scored in this indicator and may also be considered in item 5 as necessary.

Indicator 7.3: The practices specified in this indicator should occur for most centers at least monthly.

ITEM 7:

Indicator 3.1: Use the chart on page 7 to determine the required amount of time for programs operating less than 8 hours, rather than the information found in the Note for Clarification on page 19 regarding time requirements for this indicator.

Indicator 3.2 A fall zone with protective surfacing is not required for items designed/ intended for purposes other than gross motor play (e.g., picnic table, bench, retaining wall). If such items are used for gross motor activities such as jumping or climbing, this will generally be considered in item 29 as a supervision concern if these behaviors are encouraged or prevalent during the observation. Additionally, if there are obvious safety issues, such as a fall onto another item or hard surface is likely, and use of the non-gross motor item is encouraged or prevalent this may be considered in item 14 Safety practices, but not in this item.

ITEM 8:

Indicator 3.1: Use the chart on page 7 to determine the required amount of time for programs operating less than 8 hours, rather than the information found in the Note for Clarification on page 21 regarding time requirements for this indicator.

Indicator 5.1, 5.2: The required equipment should be provided daily. For indicator 5.2, on days when outdoor gross motor play does not occur, equipment that stimulates at least 5 gross motor skills must be used indoors.

Indicator 7.1 Both types of equipment should be provided for one hour daily (pro-rated for programs operating less than 8 hours, see chart on page 7).

ITEM 9:

Indicator 1.1, 3.1: If fewer than four children are observed during arrival, use the general note for this item and do not apply the 75% requirement mentioned in the Notes for Clarification on page 23 for these indicators. For example, if two of three children are greeted upon arrival credit would be earned for indicator 3.1, but not 5.1.

ITEM 10:

Indicator 1.2 and 3.2:

- Portions of each required food component must be placed on each child's plate unless meals or parts of meals are served family style, in which case a sufficient quantity of the food served family-style must be available for all children to serve themselves required amounts. Verbally offering a food or beverage that is not within reach of a child is not sufficient.
- NCRLAP no longer evaluates the nutritional adequacy of foods or beverages brought from home; however, for meals and snacks provided by the child care program, nutrition guidelines still apply.

Indicator 3.3: Consider the following components. Each component should be calculated separately and must be met at least 75% of the time.

- Proper hand washing for adults and children: Includes use of running water and soap for approximately 15-20 seconds, followed by drying with an individual paper towel or air dryer. Hands should not be recontaminated after handwashing before eating. Consider adult and child handwashing separately.
- Sanitary eating surfaces: Must be cleaned with a soapy water solution, wiped dry and then sprayed with the sanitizing solution before and after eating. For bleach/water sanitizing solution to be effective, it must be allowed to dry for a minimum of 2 minutes and complete air drying is ideal. Manufacturer instructions for other sanitizers should be followed. Paper towels or a clean cloth, rather than sponges should be used. The same cloth cannot be used to wipe the soapy water and the sanitizing solution. The use of a clean cloth to wipe sanitizing solution from more than one table is acceptable if the sanitizing procedure was carried out correctly.
- Uncontaminated foods and beverages: Are served using sanitary utensils and containers. Food is not served directly on table tops. Contaminated foods/beverages are those that can spoil and have been non-refrigerated for more than one hour or that have been dropped on the floor, placed on an unclean surface, etc.

Indicator 3.5: Written instructions from a child's health care professional for food or beverage substitutions are acceptable. For snacks: Two of four nutritional components from the USDA Meal Guidelines must be served. A child with food or beverage allergies may be served any food that counts for a second USDA component as a substitute. For example, if the snack is milk and crackers, a child who is allergic to milk may be served juice and crackers because the child's allergies are considered, and the alternative snack still meets USDA guidelines.

ITEM 11:

Indicator 1.1: All programs operating for longer than 4 hours must have some predictable, scheduled time for preschool children to rest daily with younger children being likely to need a longer period of time for this. It is not required that children sleep, only that they are encouraged to rest or otherwise relax based on their ages and individual needs.

Indicator 3.2, 5.3: Adequate spacing between cots/mats/cribs or a solid barrier between nap provisions is acceptable for NC assessments. The solid barrier must extend the entire length of the sleep surfaces.

ITEM 12:

Related to diapering/toileting, replace any requirements related to use of a sanitizer with disinfectant as defined in the General Notes section.

For proper sanitary diaper change procedure, see the NC Health and Safety Resource Center Diapering Procedure Poster available at <https://healthychildcare.unc.edu/files/2019/03/CC-DIAPER4-DiaperChange-2019-English-and-Spanish.pdf>

Indicator 1.1 and 3.1: *According to Caring for Our Children (CFOC), to avoid the spread of disease, separate sinks should be used for food preparation/service, another should be used for toileting/diapering and one more should be used for all other purposes. However, it is unusual for early childhood program classrooms to be equipped with multiple sinks reserved for different uses.*

New information from CFOC shows that touching sink faucets after handwashing does not add to a substantial amount of contamination. Therefore, it is no longer required that faucets be turned off with a paper towel. In addition, if sinks are observed to be used for multiple purposes, and only the faucets are touched during handwashing (e.g., no food washed in sink, no touching sink surfaces occurs), it is no longer necessary to disinfect the sinks between different uses, except when soiled or during regular cleaning. Therefore, if a shared sink is used without disinfecting, consider the relative contamination that is observed, and if minimal, consider this a minor problem when scoring the handwashing/sanitation indicators (ERSI, 2024).

ITEM 15:

Indicator 5.4: A collection is not considered appropriate for preschool and kindergarten children if most of the collection is intended for school age children (e.g., chapter books, books with large amounts of text, advanced content, and/or many small pictures).

Violent (i.e., involving aggressive physical force), frightening (e.g., dreadful, shocking, terrifying), or sexually provocative content is considered inappropriate for preschool or kindergarten children who, compared to older individuals, may be unable to understand it and become confused, fearful, or engage in unsafe behaviors based on what they have seen.

Because most children in preschool and kindergarten cannot read, a distinction is made between inappropriate images and inappropriate text. Credit should not be given if ANY accessible book or language material contains inappropriate images. By contrast, printed text should be considered only if the provider is observed reading inappropriate content to children or if a child capable of reading is observed reading the inappropriate text (see also item 16, indicator 3.3).

Occasionally, there are books that are important to the provider and/or parent (e.g., some therapeutic books, some books that teach morality or lessons) that are of use even though they would not be appropriate to leave out for children's independent use. When using these books, providers should ensure that children are not exposed to inappropriate content by keeping the book out of children's reach and by rewording or not showing developmentally inappropriate content when reading to children.

Indicator 7.1: Monthly rotation is required.

ITEM 19:

Indicator 5.1: For time calculations, to count fine motor materials located in spaces other than the classroom (including outdoors), examples from at least two categories must be accessible daily.

Indicator 7.1: Monthly rotation is required.

ITEM 20:

Indicator 5.2: Art materials may be used in other curricular areas. All uses of art materials, whether or not labeled "art," should be considered.

ITEM 21:

Indicator 3.1, 5.1 Materials/activities must be developmentally appropriate to be considered. Beyond the examples included, other devices that play recorded music can be considered such as Alexa or Siri. To be considered accessible children must know how to operate the device independently. If devices with screens are used and videos are visible to children, this is considered screen time.

ITEM 22:

Indicator 5.1 For NC assessments, this note replaces the third and fourth sentences of the Note for Clarification for indicator 5.1 on page 45. There are many sizes and types of blocks available. To help clarify the most common types of blocks and required quantities, use the following as a guide:

- Unit block sets include the traditional wooden sets of different, specific sizes. Other comparably sized and/or shaped blocks made from various materials are also considered here. At least 80 are needed for one structure.
- For sets of blocks that are larger than unit blocks, at least 40 are required. This can include any type of larger block sets, made of various materials.
- The quantities above specify what is required for a single structure. Remember that the indicator requires enough blocks for three sizable structures, whether the blocks provided are of the same type or different types of blocks are provided.

A block area that provides at least 6 x 9 ft. of building space (or equivalent dimensions) is required unless it is observed that children experience difficulties when building in the space provided and then more space would be expected. There must be enough accessories for three children to use. Especially for groups with older children, more space or materials may be appropriate based on the type of blocks provided, available space, and complexity of play that occurs.

Indicator 7.3: Must occur weekly

ITEM 23:

Indicator 5.1: Opportunities for both types of play must occur weekly to earn credit for this indicator.

ITEM 24:

Indicator 7.1: Monthly rotation is required.

Indicator 7.3: These materials should be used daily, or almost daily

Indicator 7.4: Resource visits can be considered in place of field trips.

ITEM 25:

Indicator 5.2: For time calculations, to count nature/science materials located in spaces other than the classroom (including outdoors), examples from at least two categories must be accessible daily.

ITEM 26:

Indicator 5.1: Remove the word “four” from the second sentence in the Note for Clarification for this indicator on page 53. Enough materials from all five of the categories should be present.

Indicator 5.2: For time calculations, to count math materials located in spaces other than the classroom (including outdoors), examples from at least two categories must be accessible daily.

Indicator 7.2: Monthly rotation is required.

ITEM 27:

Various items that have electronic screens, in addition to TV and desktop computers, are considered when scoring this item. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Computers of any type (e.g., laptops, notebooks, tablets such as iPad)
- Gaming systems of any type, including handheld (e.g., Nintendo DS, Play Station, X Box, Wii, Game Boy)
- Smart Boards
- Handheld DVD player
- iPods or other MP3 players
- E-Readers such as Nook, Kindle, etc.
- Cell phones

Therefore, when such devices are used by children the requirements of the various indicators are considered. Exceptions include situations when an electronic device is used only to play music without video/images, by children to complete classroom tasks such as signing in or making a lunch choice, or as a communication device for a child with a disability.

Indicator 3.3 Screen time should be limited to 30 minutes daily, per child. This total amount of time applies regardless of how many different screens are used or if the time is spent in smaller increments vs. all at once.

Indicator 5.2: Score this indicator N/A only if computers are used very infrequently (less than once a month) or if the computer is currently not working. Otherwise, score this indicator based on how children are allowed to use the computer when in use. If not observed, ask questions of staff to determine whether requirements of this indicator are met.

ITEM 28:

Indicator 3.3 A prejudicial statement or action made by staff, other adults, or children should be addressed with appropriate intervention, whether or not the statement or action was intentional or done with malice. Prejudicial statements or actions considered in this indicator are those that:

- Demean, mock, devalue, or threaten others based on preconceived opinions or feelings
- Disregard family preferences
- Perpetuate myths or misinformation about a group of people
- Demonstrate an attitude of negativity or fear, either verbally or nonverbally

ITEM 29:

This item considers large muscle activities and the use of gross motor equipment that occurs during the times of day that are considered to be gross motor times, and the general supervision of indoor and outdoor gross motor spaces. If less active or sedentary activities are also provided as a part of gross motor time, the supervision of these activities is considered in Item 30.

Indicator 5.2 Consider both verbal and non-verbal interactions. When there are limited verbal interactions, credit can only be earned if staff otherwise show interest in or support children.

ITEM 30:

In addition to classroom activities, this item also considers activities such as book reading or use of fine motor toys that occur outdoors and transitions between the indoor and outdoor environments.

ITEM 34:

Indicator 5.4: Modify the first sentence of the Note for Clarification for this indicator on page 63 of the ECERS-R as follows: Add the words “more than” in front of the number three.

ITEM 35:

Indicator 7.2: The practices specified in this indicator should occur at least monthly and it must also be observed that some materials/experiences provided for free play relate to current topics of interest.

ITEM 36:

Indicator 5.1: If whole or large group activities are included, then the requirements of the indicator apply to any group time observed. If group times are not a part of the program, give credit for this indicator.

ITEM 37:

Requirements in this item apply to each child with an identified disability/special need or medical condition requiring special consideration.

Indicator 3.1: Upon enrollment or upon learning about a recent diagnosis, staff should seek basic information about the child's identified disability, medical condition or other special need. Staff should have that information within 30 days. In circumstances where staff report that a parent is reluctant to share this information, staff should be able to explain what continued follow up attempts are occurring including providing explanations about the importance of having this information. This indicator does not require that staff have actual copies of any assessments or developmental plans. The information may be provided by parents/guardians, other staff or specialists who have specific knowledge regarding the child's needs.

Indicator 3.3: Both parents and staff must work together to develop goals for the child. This may occur informally or during specific meetings. The phrase "goals" in this indicator does not refer specifically those outlined in an IFSP or IEP, but also includes more generalized developmental outcomes.

Indicator 5.1: If not observed, staff must provide examples of ways that they communicate with specialists and then implement the ideas.

Indicator 5.2: If a child spends much of his/her time away from the group, requirements of this indicator are not met.

Indicator 5.3: Verbal or written communication with parents is required daily or almost daily. Meetings for parents and teachers to discuss the topics mentioned in the indicator are also required twice yearly.

Indicator 7.1: This indicator refers to intervention services provided by specialists who are not the child's primary teachers/care providers unless the classroom staff has received specific instruction from a specialist on necessary intervention techniques.

References:

ECERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification found on the Environment Rating Scales Institute website (www.ersi.info/)

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised Edition by Thelma Harms, Richard M. Clifford, and Debby Cryer. (New York: Teachers College Press, (c) 2005 by Thelma Harms, Richard M. Clifford, and Debby Cryer).