



## NC ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR THE FCCERS-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:

- NCRLAP began using the FCCERS-R on May 1, 2008 for all assessments completed in North Carolina. For assessment purposes this version replaced the FDCRS.
- The NC Additional Notes are updated (approximately) every 6 months, when 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](http://ncrlap.org).
- As of October 1, 2008 unless otherwise specified NCRLAP assessors use the NC Additional Notes for the FCCERS-R and also the FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification created by the authors found on the Environment Rating Scales Institute website ([www.ersi.info/](http://www.ersi.info/)). For NC ECERS-R assessments, items 38-43 are not included in the overall score. However, these items are included in the interview process.
- For NC FCCERS-R assessments, items 35-38 are not included in the overall score.

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

<i>11/2024: Item 10</i>	11/2013: Item 8, 23	03/2010: Item 9
10/2023: General Notes, item 18	04/2013: Items 8, 15, 18, 25	10/2009: Items 5, 25
10/2020: Item 24	11/2012: General notes, Items 4, 11	03/2009: Items 7, 9
03/2017: General notes, Item 25	10/2012: General notes, Items 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12	10/2008: Items 2, 7, 12, 19, 26
10/2015 : Items 15, 32, 34	04/2012: General notes, Items 10, 16, 17, 24, 26	
04/2014: Item 18	11/2010: Items 24, 31	

## GENERAL NOTES FOR THE FCCERS-R

**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.** Do not apply ERSI General Notes allowing the use of hand sanitizer to replace handwashing in the classroom in some circumstances. NCRLAP requires washing with soap and water whenever handwashing is needed indoors.

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. NCRLAP relies on the original handwashing expectations that are described on page 29 of the FCCERS-R when scoring item 11.

**Poor repair:** 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:** Although for licensure, a Family Child Care Home is not required to meet the sanitation requirements contained in 15A NCAC 18A Section .2800 of the Sanitation of Child Care Center Requirements, operators should be aware that NCRLAP assessors use the following information for all assessments related to sanitizing solutions and disinfectants when conducting a FCCERS-R assessment:

- 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, 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).

**Much of the day:** In North Carolina, for programs that operate both first and second shift, score much of the day based on activities reported until night-time routines such as dinner begin, unless the program has a policy that a child may only attend during the hours specific to one shift. When one-third or more of the day is spent outdoors, there must be at least half of the materials required indoors to at the minimal level to earn credit for indicators with requirements related to access for “much of the day.” At the good level of quality various materials that are typically provided indoors are also required in the outdoor environment to earn credit for indicators requiring access for “much of the day.”

**Toddlers, Preschoolers:** “Toddlers” are children who are between the ages of 12 and 30 months. “Preschoolers” are children 31 months of age through 5 years (not yet old enough to attend Kindergarten for the current school year).

**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), and ASTM 2373 Standard Consumer Safety Specifications for Public Use Play Equipment for Children 6 Months through 23 months. Links to these resources are found on our website [ncrlap.org](http://ncrlap.org), and providers are encouraged to access these; however, all information contained in these resources may not be applied during an assessment.

**ITEM 1:**

**Indicators 5.2, 7.1:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators (available at [www.ersi.info/](http://www.ersi.info/)).

**ITEM 2:**

**Indicators 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 7.3:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**Indicators 5.1 and 7.1:** If fewer than four children are observed, do not apply the 75% requirement mentioned in the Notes for Clarification on p. 17 for this indicator. Instead, consider whether furniture is the appropriate size for most of the children to give credit for this indicator. For example, if furniture is the appropriate size for two out of three children, then credit would be earned. If only one or two children are observed, then furniture must be appropriate for each child to earn credit.

**ITEM 3:**

**Indicators 3.1, 3.2, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 7.1, 7.3:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**ITEM 4:**

**Indicators 1.1, 1.3, 3.3:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**ITEM 5:**

**Indicators 3.3, 5.3, 7.2:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators. Do not apply portion of ERSI note for this item referring to labels on shelves and center labels.

**Indicator 5.3.** When calculating the number of pieces of children’s work required, do not count children who do not attend on a regular basis such as “drop-in” children, children who attend only for evening/overnight care, or children who attend less than one hour a day. Do not include school-age children who attend only during summer vacation or teacher work day/holidays during the school year unless the assessment occurs during the summer.

**ITEM 6:**

**Indicators 1.1, 3.2, 5.1:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**ITEM 7:**

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1, 3.3, 3.4:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**Indicator 3.1:** If fewer than four children are observed upon arrival, do not apply the 75% requirement mentioned in the Notes for Clarification on page 19 for this indicator, instead consider whether most of the children were greeted to score this indicator. For example, if two of three children were greeted, credit would be earned for indicator 3.1, but not 5.1. If only one or two children are observed, then each must be greeted to earn credit.

**Indicator 3.3:** Parents must always bring infant/toddler age children into the care giving space. If the parent is responsible for transporting preschool or school age children to the program, then they must accompany them to the door, but do not have to actually come into the program themselves. When preschool and school-age children are transported by the program, rather than the parent, credit is still earned for this indicator.

**ITEM 8:**

**Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for indicators 1.2, 3.2. Do not apply portion of note that addresses spacing of crib/mats/cots.**

NCRLAP relies on the updated information found in the on-line version of Caring For Our Children standard 3.1.4.1 to define safe sleep practices. This means that no items other than the child and his/her pacifier should be in a crib that is in use. This includes bedding such as flat sheets, blankets, etc. Refer to <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/3.1.4.1> for more information.

**Indicator 1.1, 3.2:** 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.

Children should not sleep directly on a bare surface. A clean sheet, blanket, or equivalent that covers the entire sleeping surface must be provided for each child.

**ITEM 9:**

**Indicators 1.1, 1.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 5.3:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators. Do not apply portion of ERSI note related to use of hand sanitizer

**Indicator 1.2, 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 the 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 1.3, 3.3, 5.3:**

Sanitary eating surfaces must be cleaned with a soapy water solution, wiped dry, and then sprayed with the sanitizing solution before and after eating. 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 as long as the sanitizing procedure was carried out correctly.

If a table itself cannot be sanitized, then a place-mat (e.g. vinyl) that is cleaned and sanitized may be used or a clean disposable place-mat may be used.

**Indicator 3.3:** Sanitary practices must be evident and maintained at least 50% of the time to receive credit.

**Indicator 5.4** If substitutions are made for any items on the menu parents must be informed.

**ITEM 10:**

**Indicator 1.1, 3.1, 5.1, 7.1:** 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 <sup>(ERSI, 2024)</sup>.

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1, 5.1, 7.1. Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators. Do not apply portion of ERSI note related to use of hand sanitizer**

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>

**ITEM 11:**

**Indicator 5.4: Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for this indicator. Do not apply portion of ERSI note related to use of hand sanitizer.**

**Indicator 1.3:** This indicator requires that provisions must be made for sick children to be separated from the well children and community activity areas; however, the sick child may be in the same room for this indicator to be met.

**Indicator 3.4:** This indicator refers to the use of both over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription medications. However, the note for clarification on page 29 refers to prescription medication only. Though it would be ideal for a physician to be involved in the decision to administer any types of medication, OTC medications may be given with signed permission from parents as is consistent with licensing rules. Therefore, OTC medication must be in original container and administered according to label instructions, including dosage recommendations based on age or weight of child. Parents requesting deviations from printed instructions must provide written confirmation that they are based on physician's recommendation, including name of physician and date of consultation. Blanket authorization is permissible for certain medications such as diaper cream or sunscreen. Score this indicator NA only if there are no children in the program currently being given any type of medication.

**ITEM 12:**

**Indicators 7.1, 7.2, and general note: Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Note for these items.**

**Indicator 3.1:** There can be no more than 5 minor hazards to earn credit.

**Indicator 5.1:** To earn credit, there can be no major safety hazards and no more than 1 minor hazard.

**Indicator 5.3:** Ask the caregiver what is done for fire safety. It must be reported that the fire extinguisher is charged, the smoke alarm is working, and monthly fire drills are completed, to meet the requirements of this indicator.

**ITEM 13:**

**Indicators 3.1, 5.1, 5.4, 7.1:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**ITEM 14:**

**Indicator 3.1:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for this indicator.

**ITEM 15:**

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1, 3.4, 5.1:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**Indicators 3.1, 5.1:** In order for a collection to be considered appropriate, the content and level of challenge must be appropriate for all ages enrolled.

Violent (i.e., involving aggressive physical force), frightening (e.g., dreadful, shocking, terrifying), or sexually provocative content is considered inappropriate for infants, toddlers, preschool, and 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 for this age group only if the teacher is observed reading inappropriate content to children or if a child capable of reading is observed reading the inappropriate text.

Because most school age children can read, NO distinction is made between inappropriate images and inappropriate text.

Occasionally, there are books that are important to the teacher and/or parent (e.g., some therapeutic books, some books that teach morality or lesson) that are of use even though they would not be appropriate to leave out for children's independent use. When using these books, teachers 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.

Do not evaluate homework activities (books or computers). Homework is "school" work and outside of the program's control. There is no need to look through a large set of encyclopedias or other materials in a reference section. If a single encyclopedia volume or individual reference book is accessible for general use in the book area it should be evaluated for inappropriate content. Inappropriate images intended as art materials (e.g., stacks of magazines) can be counted as inappropriate language materials if use is observed, but there is no need to assess content if they are not used during the assessment.

**Indicator 7.4:** Books must be added/changed monthly to earn credit.

**ITEM 16:**

**Indicator 3.1, 5.1:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for this indicator.

**Indicator 3.2:** In spaces other than the primary play space, at least 4 materials, representing 2 categories, must be accessible.

**ITEM 17:**

**Indicators 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, and 5.1:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1, and 5.1:** Do not apply the portion of the ERSI Additional Notes for Clarification regarding scented art materials.

**Indicator 5.2:** At least one art material must be accessible in all spaces used for shorter periods of time than the primary space.

**ITEM 18:**

**Indicators 1.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 5.2, 7.2:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**Indicator 1.1, 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.

**Indicator 5.4** To earn credit, music should not be used as background sound for long periods of time (e.g., 20 minutes), even if originally put on for a specific activity such as dancing etc.

**ITEM 19:**

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 5.1, 5.3, 7.1:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**Indicators 1.2, 3.1, 5.1, 7.1:** Smaller blocks, such as table blocks, count for these indicators for infants/toddlers. For preschool and school age children only larger blocks meet the requirements.

**ITEM 20:**

**Indicators 5.1, 5.2, 7.1, 7.2:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**ITEM 21:**

**Indicator 5.2:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for this indicator.

**ITEM 22:**

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1, 3.2, 5.1:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**ITEM 23:**

**Indicator 3.2:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for this indicator.

**Indicator 3.2:** If staff supervision of sand/water play is proactive (staff are nearby and aware of children's behaviors) and staff quickly redirect age appropriate behaviors such as tasting water or sand, then credit can be earned for this indicator.

**ITEM 24:**

**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

**Indicators 5.1 and 5.2: Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.**

**Indicator 5.1:** Do not apply the portion of the ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Note for Clarification related to photographs of children in the group and their families when assessing diversity in display for this indicator.

**ITEM 25:**

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 such as PSP, Nintendo DS, Play Station, X Box, Wii, Game Boy, etc.
- 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 or as a communication device for a child with a disability.

**Indicators 1.4, 3.3:** Due to research on screen time usage with very young children and in keeping with the recommendations from Caring for our Children, NC assessors should change the age in these indicators from 12 months to 24 months. For a child who is old enough to have screen time, this should be limited to no more than 30 minutes daily per child. For NC assessors, this replaces the time limits mentioned in the Note for Clarification on page 53.

**ITEM 26:**

**Indicators 1.1, 1.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3: Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.**

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](http://ncrlap.org)

**Indicators 3.2 and 5.4** 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 27 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 12 Safety practices, but not in this item.



**Indicator 3.2:** Spaces used for gross motor play should be surrounded by a fence and free of major hazards, such as inadequate cushioning or fall zones.

**Indicator 5.4:** To earn credit, there can be no major safety hazards and no more than two minor hazards found in any space used for active play.

**ITEM 29:**

**Indicator 3.3:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for this indicator.

**ITEM 30:**

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**ITEM 31:**

**Indicator 5.1:** When school-age children are required to do homework without having a choice of an alternative activity, the requirement for having a flexible schedule is not met.

**Indicator 5.3:** Modify the first sentence of the Note for Clarification for this indicator on page 60 of the FCCERS-R as follows: Add the words “more than” in front of the number three.

**ITEM 32:**

**Indicator 3.2:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for this indicator.

**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 33:**

**Indicators 1.1, 1.4, 3.3, 5.3:** Refer to ERSI FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification for these indicators.

**ITEM 34:**

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, the provider should seek basic information about the child’s identified disability, medical condition, or other special need. The provider should have that information within 30 days. In circumstances where the provider reports that a parent is reluctant to share this information, they 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 the provider has actual copies of any assessments or developmental plans. The information may be provided by parents/guardians, or specialists, who have specific knowledge regarding the child’s needs.

**Indicator 3.3:** Both parents and the provider must contribute to developing 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, the provider 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 provider has received specific instruction from a specialist on necessary intervention techniques.

References:

FCCERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification created by the authors found on the Environment Rating Scales Institute website ([www.ersi.info/](http://www.ersi.info/))

Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale. Revised Edition by Harms, T.; Clifford, R.; & Cryer, D. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2007).