

What is the self-study process?

The self-study process is a required part of **Pathway 1: Program Assessment** for North Carolina's Star Rated License process. It provides an opportunity to reflect on current practices, identify strengths and areas for growth, and make intentional improvements that benefit children, families, and educators.

What are the required steps of self-study?

Self-study includes four key steps: self-assessment, reflection, planning, and action.

Why is self-study important?

Self-study helps providers intentionally examine daily practices and identify ways to strengthen program quality.

The process can help providers:

- Reflect on what is working well
- Identify meaningful areas for improvement
- Better understand Environment Rating Scale expectations
- Create goals that support children's experiences
- Strengthen teaching practices, environments, and interactions
- Prepare for rated license assessments

Self-study is an opportunity for reflection, growth, and continuous improvement.

Who is required to complete self-study?

Programs participating in Pathway 1: Program Assessment are required to complete a self-study process. Each lead teacher or provider is required to complete one of the self-assessment documents. Ideally, this will be completed in collaboration with any other staff who work with the same group of children.

How long does the self-study process take?

The self-study process must take place over **at least three consecutive months** prior to the program's DCDEE child care consultant requesting assessments for Pathway 1. Based on the program's priorities, the process may continue for longer than three months but cannot be less.

Which Environment Rating Scale (ERS) should I use?

Programs should use the scale that matches the ages and setting of the children served. For lead teachers who work with infants, toddlers, and twos, use the ITERS-3. Lead teachers who work with children 3-5 should use the ECERS-3 and Family Child Care Home providers, including CLIAR, should use the FCCERS-3. School-age teachers will use the SACERS-U.

Providers are encouraged to have access to the scale throughout the self-study process to guide reflection and planning.

Do teachers or providers complete all the "Thinking More" worksheets for this process?

No. Lead teachers and providers are required to complete one self-assessment option for their classroom or group during the self-study cycle.

This may include:

- One “Thinking More” worksheet related to either Language or Activities **OR**
- The Outreach Assessment self-assessment option

Participants may choose the option that best supports their goals.

What happens if new staff are hired during the active 3-month self-study time frame?

If new staff are hired during the active three-month self-study period, first programs should talk with their DCDEE Child Care Consultant to discuss the specific situation. In most cases, the self-study process does not need to restart. Instead, new staff should be introduced to the program's current self-study goals and included in the remaining reflection, planning, and action activities, as appropriate.

Including new staff in the self-study process is also a great way to familiarize them with the Environment Rating Scales (ERS), program expectations, and the program's commitment to continuous quality improvement.

Can an Outreach Assessment be completed during the self-study process, or is it only beforehand?

Ideally, an Outreach Assessment should be completed before beginning the self-study process so there will be time to reflect on the assessment results prior to the official assessment and to have the option of using it as the required self-assessment. Outreach Assessments intended to support ongoing program improvement, rather than fulfill the self-assessment requirement, may be requested at any time.

What if an Outreach Assessment has already been completed?

If an Outreach Assessment has already been completed, the Self-Assessment Using an Outreach Assessment Report form to meet the self-assessment requirement may be used.

This option helps providers reflect on previous feedback and determine meaningful next steps.

What should administrators do during the self-study process?

For child care centers, administrators play an important role in supporting staff including introducing the process, providing support and resources, checking in with staff to discuss plans or progress, and completing the verification form once the self-study process is completed.

What documentation is required?

Documentation related to the self-assessment step is required to be available to the program's DCDEE child care consultant as well as the verification form.

Is the self-study process different from the CQI plan?

Yes, while the self-study process is different than the process and documentation required for CQI, it can be used to support, generate, and inform goals and areas of interest to be included in both the individual and program level CQI plans.

If the program is choosing Pathway 2, but has an NC Pre-K classroom that must have an ECERS-3 assessment, does the self-study need to be completed?

Self-study is not required for Pathway 2, but if it is helpful, you may decide to do this as part of the preparation process or to help with developing a CQI plan.

Who reviews the self-study?

The DCDEE Licensing Consultant will review the self-study prior to submitting the request for official Rated License assessments.

Need Additional Support?

Providers looking for additional guidance can access NCRLAP self-study resources, forms, videos, and support materials online or contact NCRLAP directly for assistance. QR code or link to webpage?

Connect with Us

Email: ncrlap@uncg.edu

Phone: (866) 362-7527

Visit our website: ncrlap.org

Helpful Reminder

Self-study is not about perfection and there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. Instead, it should focus on reflection, growth, and making intentional changes that positively impact children, families, and program quality over time.