

**Introduction to the Early
Childhood Environment
Rating Scale (ECERS)**

What is ECERS?

- Baseline scores
- Program improvement
- Professional development
- Technical assistance

What is ECERS?

- Not high stakes test
- Not used to compare programs
- Not used to determine funding
- Not a competition

Three Basic Needs

In order to provide quality of life, care and education, we must provide for the three basic needs of all children.

- Protecting their health and safety
 - Providing opportunities for stimulation and learning from experience
 - Building relationships with children, parents, extended family and community
- All three of these areas are equally important*

Protecting

- Health
 - Nutrition
 - Sanitation
 - Personal hygiene, self help
 - Measures to reduce infectious diseases in group settings
- Safety
 - Precautions to avoid injury from mishaps (e.g., resilient ground cover)
 - Supervision
 - Prevention of abuse and neglect

Providing Opportunities

- Variety of hands-on activities
- Appropriate for group and individual needs
- Many open-ended materials
- Schedule that handles routines gracefully and leaves ample time for activities
- Language related to activities
- Concepts brought out in play

Building Relationships

- With Children
 - Separation from parents
 - Continuity of care; primary caregiver
 - Positive approaches to guidance and discipline
 - Development of social skills
- With Parents
 - Opportunities for communication – formal and informal
 - Building trust over time
 - Parent support and education
 - Anti-bias approach, cultural sensitivity
 - Tuned-in to child's community

Using ECERS

- Environment Rating Scales may be used in a variety of ways for different purposes.
- All of these will be helpful in improving the quality of your program.

Uses of the Scales

Self-assessment – providers may use them to assess their classrooms using the correct scale for type of provider and ages of children.

Uses of the Scales

- Technical Assistance – consultants use the scales with programs to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement.

Uses of the Scales

- Quality Rating Assessment – conducted by assessors who have participated in extensive training and achieved “inter-rater reliability.”

How Do You Measure Quality?

- Structural Indicators
 - Staff-child ratio
 - Group size
 - Practitioner education
 - Practitioner wages
 - Price of Care

These provide the basis for quality, but do not assure that there is quality care going on in the program setting.

They are not considered when you are scoring the ECERS as they are not a part of the environment that affects the child.

How Do You Measure Quality?

- Process quality assessment
 - Interactions among people (staff-child, child-child)
 - Materials
 - Arrangement of space
 - Schedule of the day
 - How children interact with space and materials

Process quality assessment is based on the observation of the ongoing daily program.

It is a better indicator of the level of future success for children in the elementary school grades.

Environment Rating Scales are:

- Observation-based instruments
- Comprehensive coverage (global)
 - Health and safety
 - Relationships
 - Opportunities for learning
- Reliable and valid

ECERS is A Valid Instrument

- To be considered valid, the tool must answer the question, "Does it measure what's important?" In other words, we want proof that the scale scores are valid and measuring quality care and education for children.
- ECERS is validated by research.
- Valid means that if you measure reliably you can predict an outcome of interest.
 - Validity of ECERS measures the impact on the children (i.e. higher scores equal children with stronger social skills)

ECERS is A Reliable Instrument

- A ruler is an accurate, reliable measurement tool. No matter what type of ruler you use, the measurements will always be the same.
- Scales are reliable, but must be used reliably by trained scorers or assessors.

What is Inter-Rater Reliability?

- Refers to the consistency of the assessors in scoring the items of the scales.
- A high level of inter-rater reliability means that if 2 assessors observe the same program, the likelihood of having the same score is high.
- Assessors who have been trained to a high level of inter-rater reliability are able to use the scales accurately and consistently, ensuring that no matter where the provider is located and which assessor is doing the observation, the results are consistent.

What do the Scales Predict?

- Children in higher quality settings are found to have better school success in the following areas:
 - Language ability
 - Pre-Academic skills (math and reading readiness)
 - Attitudes towards teachers and perceptions of their own competence
 - Relationships with caregivers
 - Social skills

Definitions

- **Accessible**-children can reach and are allowed to use age appropriate toys, materials, furnishings and/or equipment.
- **Much of the Day**- If children are prevented from using materials for long periods by lengthy routines, being kept in groups, or being kept in areas where access is not possible, credit cannot be given for “much of the day.”

Definitions

- **Substantial Portion of the Day** – 50 minutes in half day program
- **Some and many** are used throughout the scales to denote frequency, especially in items that evaluate language and interactions. Specific guidelines are included in the notes for clarification.
- **Weather Permitting** – Almost every day unless there is active precipitation (temperature between 25 and 90 degrees, taking into consideration wind chill)

Hand Washing

- Everyone needs to wash their hands with running water.
- Wet hands first and then add soap.
- Rub hands together for 15 seconds.
- Hands must be dried by individual towels that are not shared or hand dryers.

Hand Washing

Drug Facts	
Active ingredient Ethyl Alcohol 62%	Purpose Antiseptic
Uses ■ To decrease bacteria on the skin that could cause disease. ■ Not recommended for repeated use.	
Warnings For external use only-hands. Flammable. Keep away from heat and flame. When using this product ■ Keep out of eyes. In case of contact with eyes, flush thoroughly with water. ■ Do not inhale or ingest. ■ Avoid contact with broken skin. Stop use and ask a doctor if skin irritation develops. Keep out of reach of children. In case of accidental ingestion, seek professional assistance or contact a Poison Control Center immediately.	
Directions ■ Wet hands thoroughly with product and allow to dry without wiping. ■ For children under 6, use only under adult supervision. ■ Not recommended for infants.	
Other information ■ Do not store above 100°F. ■ May discolor some fabrics. ■ Harmful to wood finishes and plastics.	
Inactive ingredients Benzophenone-4, Carbomer, Fragrance, Glycerin, Hydroxyethylcellulose, Propylene Glycol, Tocopheryl Acetate, Water.	

- Using wipes or antiseptic waterless washes **CANNOT** be substituted for hand washing.
- Glove use does not preclude hand washing.

Alignments

IELS	ECERS
Language Arts	Language and Reasoning
Mathematics	Math and Number
Science	Nature and Science
Social Science	Interactions among children
	Promoting acceptance of diversity
Physical Development and Health	Space and furnishings
Fine Arts	Activities
Social and Emotional Development	Interaction

Why Use the Environment Rating Scales?



Because children deserve to be in quality environments and parents need the assurance of knowing their children are safe, healthy and learning.
