

Information for Families About Rated License Assessments in Child Care Centers



Your child care program will soon take part in the Environment Rating Scale assessment process for their Star Rated License. This involves a review by a state-certified assessor who spends time in the classroom with the teacher(s) and students on an unannounced date. The information is designed to assist families in understanding the assessment process and address any questions you and your child(ren) may have.

In child care centers, depending on the ages of children and number of classrooms, the assessor will use one or more of the Environment Rating Scales, designed for infant/toddler, preschool, and school-age classrooms, or the School-Age Program Quality Assessment. Classrooms to be assessed are chosen at random. The observation tools include different areas to measure the overall quality of classroom environments and have been used in the U.S. and throughout the world. Please note that the assessment process is just one aspect of determining a program's overall Star Rated License. Other areas include the education levels of staff, how much space is available for use by the children, staff/child ratios, family and community engagement, and continuous quality improvement plans. If you'd like to learn more about the assessment process and the scales used, visit ncrlap.org. To learn about North Carolina's Pathways to the Stars and the Star Rated License, visit ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov.

NCRLAP

Assessments are completed by assessors from the North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project (NCRLAP) and focus on important child care practices. Assessors are highly trained early childhood professionals and must often demonstrate their ability to correctly rate the scale items in the same way, in different classrooms across this state.



What to expect on the day of the observation

One or two assessors may be present in a classroom for approximately 3 hours for full-day programs. For after-school classrooms, the assessor(s) will be present for 2–3 hours. During the observation they will use a pen and paper for notetaking, a tape measure, an instrument to test the size of small items for safety, and a gauge to measure playground surfacing depth. Assessors follow specific observation guidelines and all current health guidance, including washing their hands upon arrival and throughout the observation as needed.

Assessors observe, but do not participate in children's activities, and try to be as unobtrusive as possible. They are there to evaluate the environment experienced by the children (e.g., physical environment, language and interactions, program structure, health, and safety). Your child's behavior and responses to a child care provider do not impact the assessment scores. Assessors collect information about enrollment overall but do not need to know children's names and will not take their picture. The children are not asked any questions. Assessors are trained to be aware of and act appropriately with children who may have stranger anxiety. NCRLAP wants children to feel comfortable, and we find they often forget the assessor is in the room.

What happens after the assessment?

The assessment process is designed to help your child's program identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement, according to the scales. Assessors do not provide feedback right after the observation. Instead, a report is sent to the program's DCDEE Child Care Consultant. The consultant will then share the report with the program. These reports can encourage and motivate staff to maintain quality care for the children they serve by continuing best practices and setting goals for areas to improve. Consider checking in with a program administrator or your child's teachers afterwards to see if there were helpful findings or any new ideas based on the results.