



Quick Reference: Rated License Assessment Process

- How is child care quality assessed?
- How do I prepare for an assessment?
- What should I expect on the day of the assessment?
- What happens after the assessment?



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Scheduling

After your DCDEE Child Care Consultant submits a request to NCRLAP, a scheduler from NCRLAP will call to walk you through the process, answer questions, and set a 4-week window when assessment(s) will occur. You will receive a confirmation call the week before your window starts.



Rescheduling and Date Changes

If you need to request changes to your scheduling window or block out dates, please immediately call your scheduler and Child Care Consultant. This is important because delaying assessments could potentially impact your operating license, depending upon the renewal date.



Special Types of Programs

Please notify us if your program has a specialized focus or serves special populations (e.g., children with moderate to severe disabilities, non-English speaking teachers and/or children, uses a specialized teaching approach, etc.).

How Quality Is Assessed

Highly trained assessors will assess the quality of children's care and education using these scales:

- Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale Third Edition (ITERS-3) - birth through 35 months.
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Third Edition (ECERS-3) - 36 months through 5 years.
- Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale Third Edition (FCCERS-3) - multi-age care in a home environment.
- School-Age Environment Rating Scale Updated (SACERS-U) - 5 through 12 years.
- School-Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA)
 - school-age only programs 5 through 12 years.

We attempt to complete the assessment on a "typical day" (i.e., usual routine, no special activities or guests). Over half of the children enrolled need to be present for most of the observation. In multi-classroom centers, a minimum of 1/3 of the total classrooms will be assessed, including at least one classroom from each age group requiring a specific rating scale. For each assessment, expect one or two assessors.

How to Prepare for Assessments

1

Study these materials:

1. Scales relevant to your age group(s) or settings
2. NC Additional Notes for each scale
3. NCRLAP's Requirements for Gross Motor Space and Equipment
4. Meal Guidelines: Ages 1–12 and/or Infant Meal Guidelines: Ages 0–11 Months



2

Talk with your DCDEE Child Care Consultant about the assessment and/or request assistance from an agency:

- Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) Child Care Consultants
- Local Smart Start Partnership specialists (contact the Smart Start agency in your county or call the NC Partnership for Children: Smart Start)
- Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) specialists (contact DCDEE for the CCR&R serving your area)
- Child Care Health Consultants (visit healthychildcare.unc.edu)
- NCRLAP offers various resources and webinars about the rating scales, self-study, and the assessment process (visit us at ncrlap.org).



3

Complete the 3-month self-study process

Include all teaching staff in discussions and share materials, ideas, and resources. Review reports from previous assessments. Encourage staff working with the same group to collaborate, problem solve and offer input for goal setting.



4

Prepare space, equipment, daily practices, schedules, and environment(s) through quality enhancements.

Changes should reflect best practices for young children and improve the quality of the program on an ongoing basis. Network with providers who have experienced assessments before.



5

Prior to the assessment, inform the children and families that a visitor will be in the classroom.



Complete your paperwork.

After the assessment is scheduled, a packet of information and forms will be sent to you. Please have the necessary paperwork completed and ready to hand to the assessors when they arrive. These include:

- Classroom Information Form
- Teacher Information Form
- Copies of your classroom daily schedules
- Birthdate List (if applicable)
- Special Characteristics Form (if applicable)



What to Expect On the **Day of the Assessment**

When the Assessor Arrives

After greeting the administrator or provider and receiving the completed paperwork, the assessor will give a brief overview of the day. In child care centers, classrooms to be assessed are chosen randomly on the morning of each scheduled assessment.

The Observation

For approximately 3 hours in the morning or 2-3 hours for afterschool observations, the assessor will observe a wide variety of interactions, activities, and materials as required by the rating scale. For example, the assessor may observe indoor and outdoor space, materials used by the children, health practices, and more. Assessments need to occur on a typical day with regular classroom staff and the usual daily schedule and activities.

Interview with School-Age Classroom Staff (SACERS-U)

For school age programs using the SACERS-U, there will be a 30–45-minute interview with the lead classroom teacher. The interview is typically conducted partially before children arrive and is then completed after the observation is finished.

After the Assessment

For each assessment, the assessor will complete a detailed report that identifies strengths and areas needing improvement, based on the assessment results. The completed report is forwarded within 10 days to the facility's Child Care Consultant, who is responsible for communicating the information to the child care facility.

The facility summary report is designed to provide specific feedback so that child care staff may enhance their program's quality through goal setting and other quality enhancement efforts.

If you have additional questions about the assessment process, please contact the NCRLAP main office toll-free at 866.362.7527.

About **NCRLAP**

The North Carolina Rated License Assessment Project is a collaboration between the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) and UNC Greensboro. NCRLAP's purpose is to conduct voluntary assessments for child care centers and family child care homes attempting to earn a higher star rating in the North Carolina Star Rated License system.

Pathways to the Stars offers three pathways to licensed programs. Pathway 1: Program Assessment includes self-study practices and assessments completed by NCRLAP using research-based quality assessment tools. There are also requirements for staff education, family and community engagement, and continuous quality improvement. At higher star levels there are additional requirements for higher scores, education standards, enhanced ratios, and curriculum implementation for 4-year-olds. NC Pre-K classrooms participating in Pathway 2 also complete ECERS-3 assessments for the NC Pre-K program requirements. For more information, visit DCDEE's website at ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov.



Ready to learn more? Go to ncrlap.org to

- Plan for the assessment process
- View and download important documents such as the additional notes and packet materials
- Engage with online training resources such as videos, webinars, documents, and worksheets
- Register for NCRLAP training events and online webinars