

Top Ten Questions about the Environment Rating Scale Assessment

1. Why doesn't the assessor interact with the adults and children during an observation?

The assessor is there to objectively observe a typical day. In order to get the most accurate picture of what the children experience on a day to day basis, it is important that the assessor interact with the teachers/providers and the children as little as possible. If the assessor becomes involved in talking with you and the children, it detracts from the observation and changes the environment of the classroom.

2. How long is the observation?

The assessor typically spends 3-4 hours observing one classroom or family/group home. The day usually begins between 8:00 and 9:00 am. In after- school programs the assessment typically occurs in the afternoon. Observations may vary in length depending on the operating hours of the program and flow of daily activities.

3. Why does the assessor need to talk to a classroom teacher or the family provider at the end of the assessment?

The assessor will only get a "snapshot" of the classroom on the day of the assessment. Follow-up questions are asked after the observation to get information on activities and materials that were not observed and about program policies and procedures. This Q and A session usually takes 15- 30 minutes.

4. Why does the assessor look in the closets and cabinets?

Many of the items in the ERS require that you have certain materials accessible to the children and other materials available to provide variety. The assessor will also need to check closets, cabinets, drawers, etc. for anything that might be harmful to children.

5. Why does the assessor watch routines such as hand washing and toileting?

The scales assess whether certain routines, such as toileting and diapering, are conducted in a sanitary manner. The assessor watches these routines carefully to see what procedures are in place.

6. Why can't the assessor give any information or feedback immediately after an observation?

In most situations, the assessor uses the observation time to gather the information needed to score the ERS. The final score is not determined until the assessor has the opportunity to review the notes and the answers to questions. In some situations, the assessor may also consult with other assessors and specialists before determining a score on a particular item.

7. Why might there be two assessors observing the same classroom/group of children?

Assessors participate in on-going reliability visits where two or more assessors participate in the same observation. The purpose of these regularly scheduled reliability visits is to assure that all of the assessors use the same criteria and rationale for scoring items. These on-going visits support the objectivity of assessments and assure that all of the assessors across the state score items the same way.

8. How long does it take to get the results?

You will receive you facility and summary report(s) within 2-4 weeks. Results may be delivered by mail or through personal contact from your regional key or PKC specialist.

9. Why is there more information on the summary report about the lower scores than the higher scores?

A summary report will point out areas of strength and areas of potential growth. It is important that you have as much information as possible about areas where you might want to focus your quality improvement efforts. The “rationales” on the summary report can give you details to aid in forming improvement plans.

10. What happens if a program doesn't understand why they received a certain score or there are specific questions about their ERS summary report(s)?

It is important to remember that it is the total average score that is related to positive child development. The assessment is a “point in time” observation. Conditions that may not exist when you get your report may have existed when the assessment was conducted. For example, your report might state that an uncovered electrical outlet was observed, but you generally keep outlets covered. It could be that on the day of the observation, the outlet was used for some purpose and inadvertently left uncovered. Contact your STARS or Pre-K Counts specialist with any question or concerns you may have about your summary report.