



Expectations for an ERS Assessment

Congratulations on taking another step on your quality improvement journey! Whether you have requested an assessment for practice or for verification, we understand there is often some stress and anxiety associated with having your program assessed. Knowing what to expect of the assessment process will hopefully help to put you and your staff at ease. The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) are designed to capture a snapshot in time. The scales have been developed to be objective and assessors are trained to maintain objectivity. Please be familiar with the contents of this welcome letter for specific details about the day of assessment. If you have any further questions about the assessment process or about the contents of this letter, please do not hesitate to call the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) Assessment Unit at 302-831-2969.

60 Day Window

The ERS assessment(s) will occur within 60 days of the assessment request date, excluding the program's pre-selected blackout dates.

Prepare the Documentation

In order to receive credit in relevant areas, the following documentation must be submitted prior to requesting an ERS assessment, if applicable:

- ✓ Schedule for each classroom.
- ✓ ERS Assessment Age Worksheet for each classroom (must be e-mailed in Excel format).
- ✓ If poured or installed surfacing is used under gross motor equipment, ASTM F1292 certification is required. Documentation must come from the manufacturer showing it was certified and also show it was installed at this facility.

Note: The verification and assessment process cannot move forward until all of the appropriate documentation has been received.

Documentation to be provided onsite (do not fax):

- ✓ If any young children need different sleeping/eating arrangements due to reflux or other health issues, documentation must be shown to the assessor upon arrival.

Note: It is NOT necessary to submit documentation for food allergies.

Prepare the Staff

Just as you prepare the classrooms for the assessment, don't forget to prepare the staff. Ensure that all staff have reviewed this letter and any relevant F.A.Q's or guidelines. The lead staff in each observed classroom will take part in an interview after the assessment. The interview is usually conducted after the children are settled for nap (or after dismissal in a part-day program). The administrator is not permitted to be present for the interview. Staff is not permitted to reference handbooks, props, or other documents other than posted information on the walls. For each room being assessed, be prepared to provide a relatively private setting as well as staff coverage for approximately 30-45 minutes. When possible, school-age assessments will begin with the interview, approximately 30 minutes prior to the children's arrival. There will be a second interview at the end of the observation as well for which the time varies depending upon the first interview.

Be aware that the interviews may take place at approximately the same time if multiple rooms are being assessed on the same day.

The Classroom Selection Process

When you submit for verification, you will need to provide correct and up to date information for each classroom in your program. Delaware Stars expects this information to remain correct at the time of verification. If classroom arrangements or information changes from the time that your program submits for verification and the time that the assessment is scheduled, it is your responsibility to notify DIEEC staff of the change **prior** to the assessment. If the information is inaccurate at the time of assessment, your assessment may have to be postponed.

In order for the assessment to be considered valid, a random sampling of classrooms must be appropriately selected. Random selection will occur onsite and is done objectively. For each age group that your program serves, at least one-third of the classrooms in that age group will be selected for assessment. Age groups include infants (birth through 11 months), toddlers (between the ages of 12 and 30 months), preschoolers, and school-agers. See the chart below for specific information regarding the "one-third" rule.

| Number of Classrooms per Age Group | Number of Assessments per Age Group |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1-3 | 1 |
| 4-6 | 2 |
| 7-9 | 3 |
| 10-12 | 4 |

What to Expect from the Assessor

This visit is different from any other visit you've probably had, such as TA visits or compliance visits from OCCL. The assessor will stay out of the way as much as possible and follow your class through a normal day. The assessor will be listening for interactions, and may position her or himself in order to hear those interactions and accurately observe routines. S/he is trying to

capture all of the positive things that are occurring with the staff and children. Usually there is one assessor per room, but there may be up to two Stars staff in a room. This is part of our ongoing training and reliability. There are some practices that you may or may not expect of the assessor listed below. Delaware Stars staff try their best to make this process as comfortable as possible. Please be aware, though, that there are some required practices that the assessors will need to follow in order to complete a valid assessment.

- ✓ Assessors will arrive between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. for centers and family child care programs. If you have any questions for the assessor, it is best to ask them upon arrival. School-age assessments will begin approximately 30 minutes prior to the children's arrival and begin with the interview, when possible. There will be a shorter interview at the end of the observation as well.
- ✓ The assessor will confirm the ERS Assessment Age Worksheet with the administrator upon arrival. Once this has been confirmed, the assessor will need to be taken to the classroom and begin the assessment immediately.
- ✓ The assessor will ask the classroom staff a few short questions when he or she first arrives in the selected room.
- ✓ Once the observation begins, the assessor will not be able to interact with the staff or the children. This is done so that assessors are able to remain objective and not interfere with a typical day.
- ✓ By requesting an assessment, you are giving permission for the assessor to access any areas that children could potentially have access to (including but not limited to unlocked or open cabinets, closets, doors, drawers) and look through all items and materials very thoroughly. This is vital to accurate scoring. In particular, it is important for family child care programs to understand that any area utilized by the children will be included in the assessment, such as the kitchen and bathrooms. In addition, assessors must have access to any spaces that the children have access to (including but not limited to reported indoor gross motor space, outdoor gross motor space, children's bathrooms, other play spaces).
- ✓ Assessors may need to utilize an electrical outlet to charge the electronic scoring tablet.
- ✓ Approximately 30-45 minutes should be set aside for a staff interview after children have settled for nap (or after dismissal in a part-day program).

Next Steps

The assessor is not able to share any feedback during or after the assessment. Thoughtful and meticulous review is needed to complete the score sheet and assessment report. Thus, it is against policy for the assessor to share any information with programs.

The assessment summaries for each classroom/group observed and the Standards Verification summary report will be emailed to the program's DE Stars Contact, (as listed in the DOE DE Stars database), within 15 business days of the final verification visit (including both the ERS assessment and standards visits). The program's Technical Assistant (TA) will be copied on the email and will arrange for a visit to review the results. The reports will show strengths as well as areas to focus on in your program's continuous quality improvement.