



Tips for preparing for a YoungStar formal rating

Congratulations on your interest in pursuing a formal rating with YoungStar!

Programs that are eligible for a formal rating can receive free, onsite observation(s) using one or more of the environment rating scales. After the observation(s), programs receive a report outlining their strengths and areas for improvement. This is a great tool to use to improve your program's quality, regardless of the star rating your program receives. If you are interested in receiving a formal rating, your Quality Coach will verify that you meet all the eligibility requirements.

Ratings in 3 Star programs – New in 2021/2022!

Programs that meet all 3 Star requirements are now eligible to request a formal rating! This includes 3 Star programs that might not meet the requirements for 4 Stars but are interested in receiving feedback about their environment. This is a low-stakes way for programs to try out the ERS observation process and receive detailed feedback, free of charge! Programs that do earn high-quality practices will have these displayed on the DCF public website.

The ERS Scales & other rating materials

The ERS Observer will be using the environment rating scales to complete the observation(s) at your program. Your Quality Coach can help you prepare for this! The environment rating scale books can be purchased through a variety of online venues and may be available for loan from <http://ccic.wi.gov/>.

There are four different environment rating scales used in the 2021/2022 criteria:

Scale	Where is it used?
FCCERS-3 (Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition)	Family child care programs
ITERS-3 (Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition)	Classrooms with the majority of children aged birth through 2 years (35 months)
ECERS-3 (Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Third Edition)	Classrooms with the majority of children aged 3-5 years
SACERS-U (School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale)	Classrooms with the majority of children aged 5-12 years



ERS Observers also use a variety of other resources to aid in their scoring:

- **Meeting Licensing Rules and ERS:** These are WI specific rules that change the way the environment rating scales are used in WI programs. [Familiarize yourself with them here.](#)
- **Notes for Clarification:** These are updates from the authors of the environment rating scales that provide further clarification for scoring. [Familiarize yourself with them here.](#)
- **The “All About the ECERS-3”:** This book goes in-depth about each item in the ECERS-3 environment rating scale and includes great examples, pictures, and clarifications. The “All About the ITERS-3” is expected to be available late 2021/early 2022.
- **“Caring for Our Children”:** This book and the information in it provided much of the foundation for why certain items were included in the environment rating scales related to health/safety standards. [Download a free PDF copy of the book here.](#)

What to expect during a Formal Rating

STEP 1: Notification

After submitting a formal rating request, an ERS Observer from Supporting Families Together Association will contact you to set up a four-week timeframe window in which the observation(s) will be completed. The number of observations required and scales that will be used will be determined at this time. Observations are “unannounced” during the four-week timeframe, but a program can choose up to 5 blackout dates on which an observation will not take place.

Group and School-age programs: How many observations will I need?

Number of classrooms eligible for the same scale	Number of observations needed of those classrooms
1-4	1
5-7	2
8-10	3
11-13	4

STEP 2: Day of the Observation

A random drawing will determine the classroom selected for the observation. The YoungStar Lead Teacher and at least 50% of the children enrolled for the day must be in attendance to complete the observation. The ERS Observer will complete a 3-hour observation using the appropriate environment rating scale during the most active part of the day when most children would be expected to be in attendance. A follow-up interview is required only for the SACERS-U scale.



STEP 3: The Results and Feedback Meeting

The ERS Observer will call the program to share the observation score(s) and will e-mail the program a report for each observation that was completed. The ERS Observer and Quality Coach will set up a time to meet with the program to discuss the ERS reports, answer questions, and discuss steps for program quality improvement efforts.

Additional notes & considerations

- To be eligible for a formal rating, programs must provide a minimum of two consecutive hours of child care. Observations will be shortened, and times will be pro-rated accordingly for those programs only.
- If a program is found to be out of ratio at the time of an ERS Observation, the ERS Observer will not complete the observation. The program loses eligibility to complete the formal rating and must use the results from their Evaluation Criteria Verification to establish their Technical Rating outcome. The ERS Observer will notify the Regional Licensing Office about the program being out of compliance with ratio requirements. [Review ratio policy here.](#)
- It is the responsibility of the Director/Site Supervisor or Primary Family Provider to ensure their Program Profiles are accurate and up to date all year long. Information entered in your Registry Program Profile is automatically used to update your program's Star rating. This means that you need to update the Program Profile with any changes to your program and/or staffing as soon as they happen. [How to maintain your Registry Program Profile.](#)

For further information about formal ratings, visit:

- [SFTA YoungStar formal rating webpage](#)
- [DCF YoungStar formal rating webpage](#)