

ExceleRate Illinois Quality Recognition and Improvement System

Preparing for On-Site Assessment- January 2024

This document is meant to help directors, teachers and family child care providers prepare for their ExceleRate Illinois on-site assessment. Please review this document, as well as applicable Scale tip sheets and other guides available at <https://www.excelebrateillinoisproviders.com/resources/preparing-for-assessments> so that your program is well prepared for successful on-site assessment.

As you prepare for the assessment visit, all program staff should read the ExceleRate Standards and Evidence Requirements very carefully:

- Quality Standards Overview for Child Care Centers:
<https://www.excelebrateillinoisproviders.com/docman/resources/13-overview-of-charts/file>
- Quality Standards Overview for Licensed Family Child Care:
<https://www.excelebrateillinoisproviders.com/docman/resources/52-fcc-overview-chart/file>

1. Will I be given a specific date/time that assessment will occur?

Once your program has met the preliminary criteria, INCCRRA will inform National Louis University (NLU) that the program is ready for on-site assessment. The NLU Scheduling coordinator will contact the program with a three-week assessment window within two weeks of receiving application from INCCRRA. The assessment visits will be unannounced; however, the program will be asked for three blackout dates for any atypical days such as field trips, picture day, or vision/hearing screening etc.

2. During the three-week assessment window, will all assessments occur on the same day?

Every effort will be made to have all assessments completed on one day; however, depending on size of the program and assessor availability, the assessment may occur on more than one day within the three-week window.

3. What time will assessor(s) arrive to the program?

The NLU scheduler will ask you what time your program opens and when most of the children arrive. The assessor(s) will arrive between 8:00 and 8:30 AM, unless the program has indicated an earlier or later start time when most children have arrived. In addition, programs may have indicated a later start time for the PAS and a later start time for the SACERS-U.

For family child care providers, the assessor(s) will arrive between 8:00 and 8:30 or as scheduled by the NLU scheduler and provider.

4. What will happen when the assessor(s) arrive at the program?

The assessor(s) will check in at the office upon arrival and will follow all program-required sign-in and identification procedures. The lead assessor will introduce the team; however, *please keep in mind that the assessors will not engage in casual conversation with the program staff.* When there are PAS and SACERS-U assessments scheduled, these assessors will check in at the office on arrival.

For family child care, the assessor(s) will arrive at the start time provided by the program. If only one assessor is present, they will conduct the FCCERS-R first, and then proceed with the BAS assessment. For a Gold program only receiving a BAS assessment, the NLU scheduler will ask the provider for the best time to conduct the assessment to make sure they are free to answer questions and find documentation as needed. Just like in centers, *the assessor(s) will not engage in casual conversation with the provider, any assistants or the children.*

All environment rating scales are reliable and valid assessment instruments. Scale policies require that assessors do not interfere with program activities or interact with program staff, teachers, or children, but remain neutral observers.

5. How many assessors will come to the program?

The number of assessors will depend on the number of classrooms in your program. For instance, for one toddler classroom, one preschool classroom, and an after-school program, four assessors will observe in your program, including one ITERS-R, one ECERS-3, one SACERS-U, and one PAS assessor. Assessors will arrive to your program at the same time, unless the program has requested a later start time for the PAS and/or if there is an afternoon SACERS-U assessment.

For family child care, there may be one or two assessors that come; however, they will arrive at the same time on the same day at the program start time, and will not interfere with daily activities.

6. How are classrooms picked for assessment? Will the program know in advance?

After the assessors arrive at the center, the classrooms will be randomly drawn in the presence of the program director (or assigned supervisory program staff). 1/3 of classrooms for each environment rating scale (ie. age group) will be selected. For 1-3 classrooms in an age group, one classroom is randomly selected. For 4-6 classrooms in an age group, two classrooms are randomly selected. For 7-9 classrooms in an age group, three classrooms are randomly selected. The assessor(s) will then immediately proceed to the chosen room(s) for assessment.

7. Is there a minimum number of children that must be present (for assessment to occur)?

For family child care, at least 3 children must be present for a minimum of 3 consecutive hours. In addition, at least 2 children that are not the provider's own must be present during that timeframe.

If you will not meet this requirement (and are in your 3 week assessment window), please notify the NLU scheduler immediately.

8. How long will classroom assessment be?

All environment rating scale assessments are three hours in duration each. School-age programs will be observed for up to three hours of the duration of operation or for the time the program is open.

9. Where will assessor(s) work while in the classroom/provider's home?

During the three-hour classroom observation, assessors will do their best to avoid traffic areas and do their work without interrupting the flow of activities. They will not interact with children and will work quietly without making conversation with teachers/provider.

Assessors will observe any areas of the home that children use (i.e., spaces where they have access), along with any area used by the provider for management (i.e., office or work space used for the program).

10. Are any adjustments or compensations being given for COVID-19?

No. All requirements are in place for the environment rating scales, and no compensation will be given for changes due to COVID-19. It is expected that programs will follow the requirements as stated in the environment rating scales, as well as the ExceleRate Illinois Standards.

11. Will classroom teachers and family child care providers be interviewed?

It depends on each scale as noted below:

- ITERS-R Teacher interview after observation, 20-30 minutes
- ECERS-3 No interview
- SACERS-U Teacher interview before or after observation, 30-45 minutes
- FCCERS-R Provider interview after observation, 20-30 minutes

12. How long is a typical PAS and BAS assessment?

The PAS and BAS assessments require approximately five hours for Silver and between six and seven hours for Gold to review documentation. For programs well-prepared with available documentation organized, this time may be shorter.

13. What occurs with the PAS/BAS assessment?

Both PAS and BAS assessment involve administrator interview:

- PAS Facility tour and director interview before documentation review, 1-2 hours
- BAS Provider interview before documentation review, 20-30 minutes

The expectation is that the program has all documentation available for review in an organized portfolio. During documentation review, the director or family child care provider may be given up to 30 minutes to provide information not found in the documentation portfolio. The director or provider will be asked to sign the Documentation Verification Form indicating whether documentation for each standard was provided. No documentation is accepted after the assessment is complete.

It would be helpful for the administrator/family child care provider to review: "How to Organize PAS and BAS documentation" prior to assessment and to help organize materials.

14. What happens after all classroom and PAS/BAS assessments are complete?

Once all assessments are complete, reports are reviewed thoroughly by a trained report and certification specialist. All justification notes are checked to substantiate scores and all documentation and feedback notes are reviewed for accuracy. Once the reports are finalized, they are sent to INCCRRA. The program should receive results of the assessment visit and a final ExceleRate Illinois eligibility letter from INCCRRA within 90 business days after the date of the final assessment visit.



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ExceleRate® Illinois is administered through INCCRRA under the joint direction of the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, the Illinois Department of Human Services Bureau of Child Care and Development, and the Illinois State Board of Education.

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