

## ECERS-3 roll-out in ExceleRate Illinois- February 2017

*This information applies to licensed child care centers new to ExceleRate Illinois, specifically those who have applied for Silver or Gold via the Licensed Child Care Center Assessment Path. Information also applies to child care centers at the Licensed and Bronze Circles of Quality should your center choose to apply to higher ExceleRate Circles of Quality in the future via the assessment path.*

*If some of your classrooms are funded by Preschool for All through the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), expect information from ISBE regarding timeline and protocols for their monitoring of these classrooms with ECERS-3, as required by your contract.*

The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) are designed to assess classroom quality within early childhood programs. In Illinois, ERS are used for classroom self-assessment as well as verification by an independent assessor looking at various classroom aspects such as space & furnishings, activities, interactions, etc. The 3 ERS tools currently recognized in ExceleRate Illinois for centers are:

- Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R)
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)
- School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale- Updated (SACERS-U)

Illinois will be introducing an additional tool into ExceleRate Illinois – **ECERS-3**- in assessing classrooms caring for children ages 3 to 5 years old. ECERS-3 is similar to the other ERS tools in format and method of scoring, however, the Scale authors have made some important enhancements, including:

- More emphasis on matching teacher interactions with each child’s abilities and interests
- Increased focus on how learning materials are used in teaching activities
- Greater emphasis on interactions and the teacher’s role
- Additional emphasis on pre-academics (language, literacy and math)
- Adult supervision incorporated throughout activities

**Beginning July 1, 2017, self-assessment and verification will be conducted using ECERS-3 in classrooms with children ages 3 to 5 years old.** ITERS-R will be used in classrooms caring for children ages birth through 35 months. SACERS-U will be used in classrooms caring for children age 5 years and older.

***#1- My program does not currently have a Silver or Gold Circle of Quality, but we are preparing to apply through the licensed child care center/assessment path. Will our center be assessed using ECERS-R or ECERS-3?***

Licensed child care centers new to ExceleRate are welcome to apply at any time. Centers wishing to apply for a Silver or Gold Circle can submit a complete application postmarked by **April 28, 2017** in order for preschool classrooms to be assessed using ECERS-R. Programs submitting applications postmarked after that time will be assessed using ECERS-3.

Centers that have recently applied and have a pending Silver or Gold application with INCCRRA must submit all pending information by the timeframe you have already been given by INCCRRA, but no later than **April 28, 2017** in order for preschool classrooms to be assessed using ECERS-R. If not postmarked by that date, your preschool classrooms will be assessed using ECERS-3.

Centers new to ExceleRate in the cue that have already been given their three week verification window are not affected. Your preschool classrooms will be assessed using ECERS-R.

## **#2- What is a “complete” application?**

A complete application is one that includes all necessary paperwork for the Circle your program is applying for, including:

- Signed licensed child care center application
- Signed applicable supplemental application
- Copy of DCFS license
- DCFS licensing in good standing (This is the provider’s responsibility to clear all violations with DCFS prior to application. Violations must be cleared on the Sunshine website or documentation provided from DCFS that violations are cleared)
- Self-assessment/CQIP (as necessary)
- Applicable trainings completed by program administrator & teaching staff
- Staff application for required Credentials
- All applicable documentation/required paperwork, policies, etc.

Please use the resources available on the website to assist you in preparing:

[www.excelerateillinoisproviders.com](http://www.excelerateillinoisproviders.com). For those applying for Silver, there is a detailed checklist available on the website to help you.

## **#3- What happens if I am missing any piece of documentation or a signature on my application (anything listed in #2)?**

If you are missing any of the required pieces of the application, it would not be considered a “complete” application and you will not have met the requirements per the April 28<sup>th</sup> deadline. *Please review your application and packet of information carefully before submitting to INCCRRA.*

You will still be allowed to submit missing documentation in order for INCCRRA to process the application. However, if your program serves preschool age children, and information is not postmarked by April 28<sup>th</sup> your program will be assessed using **ECERS-3**.

## **#4- Is INCCRRA stopping the application process for ExceleRate?**

No, INCCRRA is not stopping intake of ExceleRate applications. Applications for Bronze, Silver or Gold can be submitted at any time. However, new Silver or Gold applications postmarked on or after **April 29, 2017** will be inclusive of ECERS-3 assessment.

## **#5- Why is Illinois setting the April 28, 2017 application date?**

Many states, including Illinois, are in the process of transitioning from using ECERS-R to ECERS-3 in their Quality Rating & Improvement System. Illinois will be conducting preschool classroom assessments using ECERS-3 starting July 1, 2017. It is a large financial investment for Illinois to maintain high reliability of assessors on all of the assessment Scales used in ExceleRate Illinois. We do not have capacity to maintain reliability on two ERS specific to preschool age classrooms.

The McCormick Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University (Illinois’ assessment entity) continues to schedule on-going assessments for Silver and Gold as programs are processed through INCCRRA. The April 28<sup>th</sup> cut-off point was established in order for Illinois to meet the July 1, 2017 deadline of only using ECERS-3 for preschool assessments.

**#6- What is the wait time from when I apply to when on-site assessment may occur?**

It is important for programs to submit all pieces of the application in a timely manner. INCCRRA cannot fully process the application until all required documentation is received and reviewed. Then program information can be distributed to the local CCR&R and/or McCormick Center for Silver and Gold verification to be scheduled.

As the application process is on-going, there is no definite timeframe that can be provided for how many weeks out your program's assessment window will be. As a general rule of thumb, once INCCRRA has determined a program is ready for verification, the program should anticipate that the assessment window will be scheduled to occur approximately 6-8 weeks from that point (sometimes less, sometimes more). This depends on several factors, including number of programs already in the cue for assessment, number of classrooms within each program, etc.

**#7- When will ECERS-3 training be available?**

The current Introduction to ERS training will be revised to include information on ECERS-3. We anticipate it will be available in April/May 2017. We are also investigating the possibility of a stand-alone ECERS-3 training (hopefully on-line) for those who have already taken Intro to ERS previously and have experience implementing the ERS in their program. Information will be posted on the ExceleRate website and on the Gateways online training calendar when finalized.

**#8- When can my local CCR&R Specialists start providing technical assistance on ECERS-3?**

CCR&R specialists received training on ECERS-3, and will receive additional on-going training in spring 2017. Once your program has completed ECERS-3 training, specialists will be available to assist you in implementing ECERS-3 in your program, and helping your program to prepare to apply to ExceleRate. Specialists will not be doing one-on-one ECERS-3 training to individual programs. Administrators and classroom teachers should attend training to learn about the Scale, complete ECERS-3 self-assessment of their preschool classrooms and then schedule time with a Specialist.

**#9- I'm still confused on whether I will be assessed using ECERS-R or ECERS-3.....?**

Here are a few scenarios to assist you in figuring out where your program may fit:

Scenario 1: Megan's Day Care plans to submit their application in the next few months for ExceleRate Gold. Megan's is a brand new program applying to ExceleRate. INCCRRA receives the application packet (Licensed Child Care Center application, signed Gold supplement, all documentation included, staff has applied for credentials, etc) on April 12, 2017. Megan realized she forgot to sign her application. Once she realized it, she submitted it to INCCRRA right away on April 14<sup>th</sup>.

Decision: Although Megan's application packet initially wasn't *complete*, she realized the error and submitted her signed application by the *April 28<sup>th</sup>* due date. Megan's Day Care will be assessed using **ECERS-R**.

*NOTE: It is the program's responsibility to double & triple check paperwork and make sure all requirements are met prior to submitting paperwork to INCCRRA. As always, INCCRRA will process applications in the order received. In this scenario, Megan was checking her paperwork and noticed her error prior to the April due date.*

Scenario 2: Annie's Child Care Center has been licensed for about 15 months and has been preparing to apply to ExceleRate soon. Annie had some teacher vacancies and her plans are a bit delayed. She hopes to apply for Silver by the end of June 2017.

Decision: Annie's Child Care is a new program to ExceleRate and will be assessed using **ECERS-3**, as her application would not have been postmarked by April 28<sup>th</sup> and her verification window would be well past July 1, 2017. *(See #6 above for timeframe reminder).*

Scenario 3: Carrie's Kids is a new program that applied for Silver in November 2016. They are currently pending for missing documentation, licensing violations and staff missing required training. Their final deadline to submit paperwork to INCCRRA is 4/26/17. Violations are cleared up with DCFS and other documentation is submitted to INCCRRA on 4/21/17. INCCRRA finalizes initial approval of their application on 4/28/17. Their part one silver verification is scheduled for 5/17/17. Their part two window with National Louis University is 7/3/17-7/21/17.

Decision: Carrie's program will be assessed using **ECERS-R**. Although the part two verification window is just after July 1, 2017, the program was in the cue and got their documentation into INCCRRA within their required timeframe (their required deadline was 4/26/17).

*NOTE: In this scenario, Carrie delayed the process greatly by not submitting a complete application and not getting missing documentation turned in sooner. Submitting all required documentation allows INCCRRA to process applications quicker.*

**#10- In scenario 3, the verification window is scheduled to occur after July 1, 2017, yet the preschool classrooms are being assessed using ECERS-R. Why?**

As stated throughout this communication, Illinois is making every effort to have verifications, conducted after July 1, 2017, include ECERS-3 assessment of preschool classrooms. However, depending on the number of complete applications postmarked by April 28<sup>th</sup>, verification windows using ECERS-R may run slightly beyond July 2017. All complete applications postmarked by April 28, 2017 will be inclusive of ECERS-R assessment.

**#11- Who should I call if I still have questions?**

If you have questions related to your program's ExceleRate application or ExceleRate in general, you should contact INCCRRA at 866-697-8278 to speak with an ExceleRate counselor.