



What to Expect During an ERS® Observation

What can I expect before the day of the observation?

- The Assessor will call to confirm 48 hours before your scheduled observation. If no one is available to answer the phone, a message will be left. An email will also be sent to the email address listed under the contact information on your Growing Futures organization profile.

What can I expect on the day of the observation?

- You can expect the Assessor to arrive at the program around 8:15 am.
- If your program has multiple classrooms or groups, a random drawing will be completed to select which classroom or group will have the observation that day.
- At this time, the Assessor will need to gather the following information:
 - names of the Lead Teachers or Lead Caregivers present during the observation,
 - the number of children enrolled in the classroom or group
 - if there are any children enrolled with special needs, and
 - the birthdates of the oldest and youngest child enrolled in the classroom or group selected.
 - If infants and toddlers are enrolled, a breakdown of ages will be needed: number of children 0-5 months, 6-11 months, 12-17 months, 18-23 months, and 24+ months for the classroom or group selected.
- Programs are encouraged to hold all regular indoor and outdoor activities. If something unexpected happens (i.e., a thunderstorm), follow the standard plan for that type of day.

What can I expect during the observation?

- You can expect the observation to last 3 hours, running approximately between 8:30 am and 11:30 am. These times are subject to change due to program hours and when a majority of the children attend the program. The Assessor will let you know when they are starting and when they have finished their observation. The Assessor is trained to fade into the background (as much as possible). Assessors limit their interaction with children and adults during the observation.
- The Assessor may stay for a longer period beyond the 3-hour observation to observe several very specific areas of the environment. In the unusual case where routines related to Diapering/toileting or Meals/snacks were not observed during the 3 hours, the Assessor must remain until these can be observed. The interactions that occur during the extra time cannot be counted, but information about sanitary procedures for both Items and nutritional adequacy of meals/snacks must be obtained.
- The Assessor will spend a good deal of time writing on their tablet computer. This is a good sign – they are recording what they see and hear – they want to give you credit for all the great things you do! They will access all areas of your space that children may utilize (both indoors and outdoors).
- The Assessor will try to blend into the background as much as possible. They will move around the environment and try not to interfere in any activities. If the Assessor is documenting items in an area of the program and a child wants to play in that area, the Assessor will move from that area (if possible). Please do not make accommodations for the Assessor; they will work around the providers and the children. The children will be curious. The Assessor understands that a typical day can have many twists and turns, especially when there is a new adult present! Assessors tell the children, "I'm here to watch you play" and encourage them to go back to their play.

- The Assessor will have their cell phone on them in case they need to call technical support. This is the only time they will access their phones.
- The Assessor will maintain confidentiality and uphold the code of ethical conduct (for more details, please visit www.naeyc.org).

What happens after the observation?

- The Assessor will let you know when they have completed the observation.
- A CQI Summary Report will be created with the data collected from the observation. The CQI report will be emailed to the program within 3 weeks of your observation date and will be uploaded to your RBPD events tab in your Growing Futures organization profile.

Child Enrollment Requirements

To ensure the highest quality observation is as close to the typical day as possible, the following requirements regarding child enrollment and attendance must be met:

- At minimum, at least 50% of the enrolled children must be present on the day of the observation.
- All children do not have to be present to start the observation, but at least half of the children enrolled must be present for 2 of the 3 hours of the observation.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does an observation support continuous quality improvement?

Observations help you collect data and useful information needed to complete the CQI (continuous quality improvement) process. A CQI environment is one in which data is collected and used to make positive changes, even when things are going well. The process is meant to be ongoing and generally follows a cycle. Through the process of continuous quality improvement, early care and education programs are able to:

- Identify needs or barriers
- Develop strategies of change
- Implement those strategies
- Make decisions about ongoing and long-lasting improvements

It's the most accurate way to demonstrate and show others what you do each day. Our team is trained specifically to be respectful and to understand how much work you've done to get to this point. Remember, we're all here for the same reason – to prepare children to be successful in school and life.

How are the classrooms or groups selected for an observation?

When the Assessor arrives for your observation, classrooms and groups will be randomly selected. A chosen representative from your program will randomly draw a classroom name out of a jar on the morning of your observation. There must be at least one witness present to verify that the classroom was randomly selected.

Is the ERS® inclusive of all early childhood settings?

All children need the same things regardless of where they spend their day. Each setting is unique. That's why we use three different versions of the Environment Rating Scale®, each designed for a different segment of the early childhood field.

Some of the things in the Environment Rating Scale® seem unrealistic. I'm not sure I can do all of this. Help me!

Perfection is not required. They were purposely designed to be flexible. Sometimes, there may be areas you can't or don't want to change- and that is okay. The ERS® are based on a scoring system of 1-7. Every item won't score a "7". Debby Cryer, one of the authors of the ERS®, is fond of saying, "You should be willing to take your ones." The intent is for you to choose which areas are of value to you and focus your energy on being excellent in those areas. Avoid the tendency to feel like you are supposed to achieve perfection in all areas. Instead, reflect on the components that are of most value to you.