



SCHEDULING AN ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE (ERS) VISIT

General Information

The total number of classrooms the ERS team will assess in your facility is determined by the quality initiatives in which your site participates. At least one classroom of each age group you serve will be assessed.

Since multiple classrooms will be assessed, the ERS Visit process may involve more than one day, and more than one ERS Assessor assigned to your facility. The ERS Visits will be scheduled within a four week window.

Scheduling the ERS Visit

If your facility is preparing to move to a higher STAR Level:

- Upon completion of a successful Pre-Designation Visit with a Regional Key or PA Key Representative, the ERS Assessors will be notified of your facility's readiness for an ERS Visit.
- The ERS Assessor will contact you via phone call or email to review general information regarding your facility and gather additional information that will support the scheduling of an ERS Validation Visit window.
- Once the four week window is established, you must inform the assessor of any days within that period that your entire facility will not be available for an assessment (field trips, planned closures, etc.) Four "block out" days within the four week window are permitted. No specific dates for the assessments will be given. The ERS Assessor will also inform you which ERS scales will be conducted, how many classrooms will be assessed, and how many days the assessor will be at your facility within that one-month timeframe.

If your facility is preparing to renew your ERS Score results:

- It is the expectation that facilities participating in Office of Child Development and Early Learning programs maintain all quality standards for those programs at all times. Once a facility has been visited by the ERS Assessors to establish an ERS Score for STAR 3 or STAR 4, those scores are valid for a period of two years unless the following occurs:
 - Provisional Certificate of Compliance
 - Provider type (family, group, center) has changed
 - Providers director has changed
 - 50% or greater turnover in full-time staff
 - More than 1/3 of classrooms have lost a lead teacher
 - Enrollment patterns (i.e. number of classrooms/classroom types) do not reflect the original ERS sample assessed
- Prior to the end of the valid period for your current ERS Scores, an ERS Assessor will contact you via phone call or email to review general information regarding your facility and gather additional information that will support the scheduling of an appropriate ERS Validation Visit window. (See the attached ERS Visit Facility Intake Form to view the information that will be confirmed/ collected during that contact.)

Scheduling an Environment Rating Scale Visit

- Once the four week window is established, you must inform the assessor of any days within that period that your entire facility will not be available for an assessment (field trips, planned closures, etc.) Four "block out" days within the four week window are permitted. No specific dates for the assessments will be given. The ERS Assessor will also inform you which ERS scales will be conducted, how many classrooms will be assessed, and how many days the assessor will be at your facility within that one-month timeframe.

Once the window has been established and block out dates agreed upon, no date changes will be made except for emergencies.

PLEASE NOTE: Window cancellations, requests to changes to the window and or block out dates and requests to delay windows could result in financial charges to the site before assessments can be completed.

If an emergency occurs and your facility is closed on any day falling within the above timeframe, please call the PA Key at (800) 284-6031 and describe the situation and which assessor you were expecting. The message will be forwarded to the ERS Assessor/ERS Regional Supervisor.

What to expect in an ERS Visit

To prepare for your visit, please assemble a sample of all communication materials for parents and staff including parent and employee handbooks, newsletters, weekly menu, etc. before the visit. Your facility contact or designee should provide the ERS Assessor with this communication material upon the assessors' arrival on the first day.

The ERS Assessor(s) will generally arrive at the site between 8:30 and 9:00, with the exception of some school age assessments. The ERS Assessor(s) will provide photo ID for admittance to the facility. The facility contact will show the ERS Assessor(s) all areas that parents, children and teachers have access to during facility operating hours.

Picking the Classroom Sample

- Upon arrival the ERS Assessor will inform the site which scale will be used for conducting the observation that day.
- Using the Classroom Information Sheet, the ERS Assessor will enter the names of all classrooms within the age range assessed by the scale being used that day and assign each classroom a number. All numbers will be entered in the random sample for that day. The facility contact will randomly select a number and the classroom selected will be visited by the ERS Assessor(s). The top of the Classroom Information Sheet will then be filled out by the facility contact or his/her designee, including all pertinent information for the classroom/group of children being assessed and provide the completed sheet to the ERS Assessor. (Please see the attached Classroom Information Sheet to view the random selection chart and information you will be asked to provide for the classroom selected for assessment.)
- Your facility contact may be asked to draw all sample rooms that will be assessed within the four week window during the first visit. If this occurs, the individual classroom information will be entered into the form on the actual day(s) of the additional assessment(s). The assessor will decide which of the rooms drawn will be assessed on each day.

Conducting the ERS Assessments

Scheduling an Environment Rating Scale Visit

- Your facility contact will take the ERS Assessor(s) to the selected classroom(s) for that day and introduce the assessor(s) to the staff.
- The ERS Assessor(s) will spend approximately 4 hours of continuous observation.
- At the end of the observation, the ERS Assessor(s) will need to interview the classroom teacher. The preference is that the interview take place in a private area outside the classroom, but may occur in the classroom if staffing is a problem. **Note: This may require school age program staff to stay beyond closing hours during the school year.**
- If possible, the ERS Assessor(s) will have access to private space for review of the observation data and may need to return to the classroom for additional observation following the review.
- The ERS Assessor(s) will notify the facility contact and/or classroom staff once the observation is complete.
- On additional assessment days, the ERS Assessor(s) will arrive at approximately 8:30 a.m. and notify the facility contact which of the remaining classrooms in the sample will be assessed on that particular day. The additional days of assessment will be conducted within the one-month window but may not necessarily be continuous days.
- The primary or secondary contact must be available on each day of each assessment.

ERS Summary Reports

If you are a STARS facility, the Regional Key will inform you of the outcome of the assessments and next steps in the process. Programs not in STARS will receive assessment results from your PA Key Representative. The materials you will receive include the following:

1. The cover letter provides general information about the standards and information on areas that should be addressed in a quality improvement plan, if applicable.
2. The Facility Report includes the average score for the facility across all scales and the average and subscale scores for each scale.
3. The Summary Report for each assessment provides more detailed information on the scores for individual assessments including a brief description of the rationale for scoring individual items.

Once you have received your ERS Summary Reports your Regional Key or PA Key Representative will contact you to discuss the next steps you will need to take for the Keystone STARS, or PA Pre-K Counts Program.