



## Tips for Using the FAMILY CHILD CARE ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE-REVISED

- ***Be sure to provide many opportunities for all of the children to have free play.*** *Free play*, according to the FCCERS-R, means that the “child is permitted to select materials and companions, and as far as possible manage play independently.” Non-mobile children should be offered materials for their free choice and moved to different areas to facilitate access. Various activities such as art, fine motor, blocks, dramatic play, books, music, math, and nature/science should be accessible to the children for *much of the day*. The term *much of the day* means “most of the time that any child is awake and able to play.” Children should not be prevented from using materials for long periods by lengthy routines, being kept in groups, or being kept in areas where access is not possible.
- ***Be sure that toys and materials are accessible to all of the children.*** *Accessible* means that children can reach and are allowed to use toys, materials, furnishings, and/or equipment. Toys in open storage and open shelves should be easy for children to reach. Accessible means there are not verbal barriers such as a “no-touch” rule or physical barriers such as placing toys out of sight to prevent children from reaching them. For example, toys are not accessible if they are in containers with lids that the children cannot manage, unless the provider regularly makes the toys accessible by opening the containers. At a minimal level, toys and materials must be accessible to children for at least one hour daily.
- ***Don’t forget the babies!*** All non-mobile children should have a variety of toys and materials brought to them. Try to limit the amount of time that non-mobile children are restricted by being in high chairs, bouncy chairs, or play pens. The optimal situation is for the provider to be on the floor with non-mobile children engaged in conversation, reading books, and showing them a variety of toys and materials.
- ***Keep in mind that an outdoor area should be used for active physical play at least one hour daily year-round, weather permitting.*** In Illinois the term “weather permitting” means temperatures between 25 and 90 degrees, taking into consideration the wind chill. For example, if the temperature is 30 degrees, but 18 degrees with the wind chill factored in, it is not expected that children have outdoor play time.
- ***Remember to follow proper handwashing procedures.*** According to the FCCERS-R, handwashing for children and adults requires that both hands be washed with liquid soap and rinsed thoroughly under warm running water for at least ten seconds. Hands should be dried with individual paper towels that are not shared. Using gloves, wipes, or antiseptic waterless washes does not count as a substitute for handwashing. Proper handwashing procedures are to be followed upon arrival, before and after meals, after toileting, when re-entering the home after outdoor play, before shared water play, after messy sand or water play, after dealing with bodily fluids (running noses, vomit, blood), and after touching pets or contaminated objects (trashcan lids, the floor). If the same sink is used for toileting/diapering and food-related routines or other purposes, the sink and faucets must be sprayed with a bleach-water solution between uses.
- ***Don’t forget to use proper sanitizing procedures.*** Tables and high chairs should be washed with a soap/water solution, dried with a paper towel, and sanitized with a bleach-water solution before and after being used for meals and snacks. The bleach-water solution should be allowed to sit for at least ten seconds before being wiped dry. Diapering surfaces must also be washed and sanitized following the appropriate procedures.
- ***Be sure to have sleeping infants within sight of the provider.*** According to the FCCERS-R, the provider must be alert and able to visually supervise infants. Toddlers and preschoolers must be heard and visually checked periodically during nap.
- ***Be aware of potential safety hazards both indoors and outdoors.*** Common indoor hazards include: exposed electrical outlets; accessible electrical cords; and heavy objects or furniture that children can pull down. Common outdoor safety hazards include: lack of a fence or barrier that prevents children from leaving a designated play area; open access to a road or driveway; unsafe walkway or stairs; and insufficient cushioning in fall zones. Visit the Environment Rating Scales Web site (<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers>) for a link to “Playground Information to Use with the Environment Rating Scales.”