



Statewide Assessor Management System For Early Childhood Education Classroom Observations

March 2015

This document includes policies and procedural information that apply to Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) classroom observations (ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R, SACERS-R) performed on behalf of RIAEYC or RIDE as part of the BrightStars Rating and RIDE Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) Program Approval processes.

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The Rhode Island Statewide Assessor Management System (AMS) was developed collaboratively by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) and Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children (Rhode Island AEYC), managing agency of BrightStars, the state’s Quality Rating and Improvement System. The Assessor Management System includes policies and procedures that apply to Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) classroom observations (ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R, SACCERS-R) performed on behalf of RIAEYC or RIDE as part of the BrightStars Rating and RIDE Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) Program Approval processes. ERS observations play an important role in Rhode Island’s system of early childhood education program quality improvement, and the policies and procedures included in this document ensure consistent application and interpretation of the ERS Scales.

About BrightStars: BrightStars is Rhode Island’s Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS). A TQRIS is a method used in almost all states in the U.S. to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care, education and school-age settings. Through the star rating system, BrightStars helps early learning, education and school-age programs that care for children learn about best practices and apply them to the care children receive. BrightStars recognizes program quality and gives parents information to make choices about their children’s care and education. BrightStars also helps families in Rhode Island access quality child care, early learning, and school-age programs through our referral program.

About RIDE CECE Approval: RIDE’s 2013 Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Program Standards for Approval of Preschool and Kindergarten Programs build upon a long history of legislative, state and community commitment to protecting and promoting the health, safety and welfare of Rhode Island’s children. The 2013 CECE Standards guide the policies and practices of preschool and kindergarten programs committed to providing children with the highest quality early childhood education. CECE Program Approval represents the highest bar in the state’s early learning “quality continuum” which begins at DCYF licensing, progresses through the BrightStars rating process, and culminates in RIDE CECE Approval.

Classroom Assessment Instruments

To conduct the assessment, assessors use one or more of the Environment Rating Scales to assess the quality of the classroom. The Rating Scales are internationally recognized, valid, and reliable tools for assessing child care quality. They have proven to be unbiased in a variety of studies in culturally diverse settings.

Each of the Environment Rating Scales was designed for a specific age group or type of program. The four scales are:

- Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R)—
This scale is used to assess group programs that serve children up to 2 ½ years of age.
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised (ECERS-R) –
This scale is used to assess group programs that serve children from 2 ½ to 5 years of age.
- School-age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS)—
This scale is used to assess before and after school programs that serve children from 5 to 12 years of age.
- Family Child Care Environment Rating Scales (FCCERS)—
This scale is used to assess child care programs in family and group child care homes.

I. Standards for Assessors

a. Required Qualifications and Terms of Employment

- i. Bachelor's degree required.
- ii. Minimum twelve (12) college credits in Early Childhood Education.
- iii. Experience in data collection, program assessment, and/or evaluation.
- iv. Academic and/or professional experience in the education field.
- v. Must be highly-organized, detail oriented, and able to multi-task.
- vi. Excellent oral and written communication skills.
- vii. Experience with interactive databases.
- viii. Ability to work collaboratively with assessment team, regional and state partners.
- ix. Ability to work independently without direct supervision while handling multiple tasks/concurrently to meet deadlines and project expectations.
- x. Possess personal characteristics indicative of maturity, flexibility, tactfulness, cooperation, and cheerfulness.
- xi. Ability to understand the need for and maintain confidentiality.
- xii. Possess the necessary physical requirements to complete assessments (e.g. standing or sitting on the floor for long periods of time, remove shoes without assistance – when necessary, kneel, squat, and lean.)
- xiii. Access to own vehicle.
- xiv. Proof of license and insurance annually - proof of license and insurance can be submitted to the direct supervisor on January 1 of each year.
- xv. Ability to pass an employment federal background check and criminal records (BCI) check. Results must be submitted prior to first assignment.

b. Preferred Qualifications

- i. A bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education or related field.
- ii. Bilingual English and Spanish speaker.
- iii. Education experience in a quality child care program(s).
- iv. Knowledge of family child care or youth/school age programs.
- v. Meet the immunization requirements stated in DCYF Regulations for Centers and Preschools (recommended).

c. Additional requirements

- i. BrightStars employees must achieve reliability (85% or higher) on at least one ERS tool within 90 days of hire.
- ii. Consultants must provide ERSI certificate(s) as evidence of reliability prior to first assignment.
- iii. All assessors must participate in the Rhode Island *Early Childhood Workforce Registry*.

d. Conflict of Interest

- i. All assessors conducting ERS observations have an obligation to perform duties within guidelines that prohibit actual or potential conflicts of interest.
- ii. Actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest occurs when assessors are in a position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain for the assessor, relative, or a personal contact as a result of an ERS report.
- iii. No "presumption of guilt" is created by the mere existence of relationships with outside organizations. However, assessors are involved in assigning ratings to child care programs, and it is imperative that he/she disclose as soon as possible the existence of any actual or potential conflict of interest so that safeguards can be established to protect all parties.

- iv. Assessors must disclose any conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest at the commencement of their contract/employment and as conflicts of interest arise.
- v. Conflicts of interests may include, but are not limited to:
 - 1. Previous employment with a child care program in Rhode Island.
 - 2. Previous employment with an agency or organization that provides goods or services to child care programs in Rhode Island.
 - 3. Previous or current formal association with a child care program in Rhode Island (e.g. board member or volunteer)
 - 4. Current informal association with a child care program in Rhode Island (e.g. a relative or friend is or was employed by or enrolled in the child care program)

e. Confidentiality

- i. Through consent procedures all individuals conducting ERS make a commitment to protect the privacy of child care programs, child care staff, and the children and families they serve. Maintaining this commitment becomes the responsibility of each assessor. The following guidelines delineate the responsibilities of assessors in maintaining confidentiality. These guidelines may not address all confidentiality issues that arise. When issues arise that are not covered by this policy, assessors must contact the direct supervisor, who will decide how the issue should be handled. Assessors should never make these decisions independently.
 - 1. All assessors shall sign the Confidentiality Pledge.
 - 2. All assessors shall keep confidential: (a) all information or opinions collected during document review, observations, phone calls, emails, and site visits linked to a particular program or individual and (b) any information about people learned incidentally during data collection.
 - 3. The only exception to this rule is in the instance of abuse and neglect. Rhode Island law requires any individual who suspects abuse or neglect to report his or her suspicions to the RI Department of Children, Youth & Families. Procedures regarding abuse and neglect concerns are outlined on page 14 of this document.
- ii. Implications:
 - 1. Parties for whom confidentiality must be maintained include child care programs, child care providers/staff, children, and families.
 - 2. All data, including personal notes and summaries containing personal identifiers (e.g., names, addresses, and phone numbers) shall be kept in a locked cabinet and/or room.
 - 3. Assessors shall not share raw data or summaries of data with anyone unless authorized to do so by their direct supervisor.
 - 4. Computer files that contain personal identifiers shall be kept confidential.
 - 5. When data containing personal identifiers are being used or discussed, staff will ensure that data remain confidential by working in a private location and keeping information out of public view at all times.
 - 6. Only information relevant to a specific purpose and to the particular communication should be included in written and oral reports.
 - 7. When records with identifiers are to be transmitted to another party, confidentiality must be maintained.
 - 8. Shred any documents that need to be disposed of so that any personal identifiers are no longer recognizable.

f. Reliability

- i. All assessors who will be conducting on-site observations using one or more of the ERS scales are required to undergo intensive training using the scales.
- ii. Achieving reliability on the ERS scales:
 - 1. An assessor is considered reliable when the average of their last three reliability scores is at least 85%.
 - 2. The 85% must be achieved per scale. It is not an average of 85% across any scale.

3. Reliability is categorized two ways:
 - a. Author-reliable – Achieving 85% reliability with an ERS trainer authorized by the Environmental Rating Scales Institute (ERSI).
 - b. Reliable – Achieving 85% reliability with an author-reliable trainer.
 4. Author-reliable staff and consultants are the only personnel other than ERSI who may train others to reliability.
- iii. Consultant training
1. Consultants will have a maximum of five opportunities to achieve reliability per ERS scale.
 - a. Consultants must show progress in their first three reliability observations in order to continue training through the fifth reliability check.
 - b. Progress is defined as an increased reliability percentage from the first reliability training.
 2. All consultants training on any ERS tool will not receive payment for training observations. Consultants may only bill for completed observations once reliability is achieved.

g. Maintaining Reliability

- i. Inter-rater reliability (IRR) for the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) indicates the degree of scoring agreement among assessors. IRR is essential for accuracy and accountability. IRR is established during periodic “reliability checks.” Reliability checks are a requirement for all assessors.
- ii. During a reliability check, an author-reliable assessor AND experienced (has conducted 20+ observations) conducts a joint observation with an assessor due to have his/her reliability checked.
 1. Both assessors are present during the entire observation and teacher interview.
 2. Following the observation, each assessor completes scoring independently.
 3. During a debriefing meeting following scoring, the assessors discuss their scores and reach a consensus score for each item.
 4. The assessor’s reliability score is determined based on the percentage of his/her original scores that agree with the final consensus scores.
- iii. All BrightStars staff and consultants conducting assessments using any of the Environment Rating Scales will participate in reliability checks for *each* scale that they use. ERSI-trained staff will participate in reliability checks with other ERSI-trained staff. All other assessors will participate in reliability checks with ERSI-trained staff.
- iv. The Program Assessment Manager will maintain a log of each completed assessment per staff/consultant by tool. This log will be used to determine when the reliability checks are to be scheduled.
- v. Each staff member/consultant using any of the Environment Rating Scales are encouraged to maintain a log of each of their completed assessments as well.
- vi. Minimum reliability requirements

Project standards for reliability include an average score of 85% across the last three reliability checks. This base level of reliability establishes an assessor’s ability to conduct independent assessments and ensures that assessors are using the Environment Ratings Scales accurately.
- vii. Sign-Off
 1. “Sign-off” indicates an assessor has met the reliability requirements needed to perform observations independently. ERSI-trained assessors will receive sign-off directly from an author.
 2. All other assessors must complete a minimum of three reliability checks with an ERSI-trained staff and have an average reliability score of at least 85% across their last three checks to receive sign-off to conduct independent assessments.

- viii. Frequency of Reliability Checks after sign-off: ERSI-Trained assessors
ERSI-trained staff will be checked on or before their 20th assessment following ERSI training. Reliability checks will occur on or before every 20th assessment thereafter.
- ix. Frequency of Reliability Checks after Sign-Off: Non-ERSI trained assessors
After a non-ERSI trained assessor has been signed-off, they must have a reliability check on or before their sixth independent assessment. This will occur for their first two reliability checks following sign-off.
- x. Frequency of Reliability Checks After Sign-Off and Two Checks
Each non-ERSI trained assessor's reliability will be checked on or before their 10th assessment. Reliability checks will occur on or before every 10th assessment thereafter.
- xi. Six-month Reliability Checks
If any assessor has not used an ERS scale for a period of six months or longer, at least one "refresher" reliability check is required. The check will occur on the assessor's first assessment using any rating scale the assessor is reliable on and serves to verify that correct procedures are followed and correct interpretation is used. After this check, then the assessor will be checked on the regular reliability check schedule.

II. Standards for Observations

a. Assignments and Caseloads

- i. Consultants must be able to commit to no less than three (3) observations per month.
- ii. Caseloads for full-time assessment staff will be set by the Manager of Program Assessment.

b. Notification

- i. Whenever possible, assessors will be given ample notice of their assignments. Assessors will never be given less than one week's notice.
- ii. Consultants will have one business day to confirm or deny an assignment.
 1. No response will result in assignment being considered "denied."
- iii. For all assignments, assessors must utilize appropriate online calendar to indicate windows assigned and specific dates completed. Assessors receive calendar access and instructions during training.

c. Limits

- i. No more than one observation may be conducted in one day.
- ii. A new observation cannot be conducted until a previous observation is scored, notes scribed, and report written.

d. Defining Classrooms & Lead Teachers

- i. A classroom is defined as *any* room where any child spends more than 50% of their early childhood day in that room.
- ii. Classrooms classified as "self-contained" are considered a part of the program and therefore may be selected for an ERS observation. ERS tools are developed for use in inclusive settings.
- iii. The person named as the lead teacher on the program application should be present during the observation.
 1. The lead teacher is defined as the individual with primary responsibility for a group of children who occupy an individual classroom or well-defined space. The teacher must spend the vast majority of time with one group of children who attend at the same time rather than divide time between classrooms or float between groups.
 2. To meet the "vast majority of time" requirement, the teacher must be engaged with his or her assigned group for a minimum of 50% (weekly, excepting vacations, etc.) of the time the class is in operation. Programs must appoint one teacher per distinct group of children listed on the application.
 3. The lead teacher may also be a permanent replacement teacher, or a long-term (two weeks or greater) substitute
 4. BrightStars only – the lead teacher may be any staff person that is assigned regular primary teaching duties in the selected group.
- iv. If a person not meeting the "lead teacher" definition is not present on the day of the observation, and there is no other group in this age group to assess, the ERS will not be completed. A second unannounced visit will be made within the same window.

e. Scheduling the Observation

- i. BrightStars - ERS observations are conducted in 33% of classrooms in each age group served. To identify the classrooms to be observed BrightStars uses a random number generator to indiscriminately identify which 33% of classrooms from the Classroom Summary Sheet will be observed.
 1. Classrooms are numbered on the Classroom Summary Sheet. The total number of classrooms is input into a random sequence generator (<https://www.random.org/sequences/>).
 2. The sequence output corresponds to the numbered classrooms on the Classroom Summary Sheet.

3. From the top of the random number sequence moving down the list, 33% of the total number of classrooms are selected, rounding up when necessary.
- ii. RIDE - Observations are conducted in every classroom applying for CECE approval.
- iii. When applications are reviewed and determined to be complete, staff communicate with programs requiring an ERS visit regarding their assessment site visit(s).
- iv. A 2-week site visit window will be proposed to the program. The window start date will be determined according to the availability of assessors.
- v. If the program does not confirm or suggest an alternative site visit window within two business days, the program will be sent a second email/letter stating that the program's application will expire within two weeks.
 1. Assessment site visits are unannounced. However, assessors will work with programs to ensure that site visits do not occur during planned field trips, special events, etc. Programs may identify those days as "blackout dates." An ERS will not be conducted at those times.
 2. Blackout dates: If 50% or more of the site visit window is excluded (or the excluded days prohibit the assessor from conducting the requisite number of visits) the program is offered a second site visit window. If this site visit window is still not satisfactory, the program will be offered one final window, which must begin no later than 6 weeks from the original site visit window's opening.
- vi. Split window: Alternatively, in some circumstances programs may be given a "split" window in order to accommodate for a vacation week or other circumstance where a single week of the window does not work for the program
 1. Programs that require multiple ERS may have more than one ERS completed on the same day, but not by the same assessor. Alternately, ERS observations may be conducted throughout the window. Scheduling will be determined by the availability of the assessor.
- vii. Each ERS visit, including arrival, observation and follow-up questions, will take approximately four hours.
- viii. The time of day an observation may begin is determined by the program's operating hours. Whenever possible observations should begin just prior to the start of the core program day allowing the assessor to observe children arriving.

f. Preparing for a visit

The assessor must bring the following materials to **ALL** ERS observations:

1. ID badge on lanyard (to be worn at all times on-site)
2. Clipboard
3. Minimum of two pencils sharpened with erasers
4. Child Health and Safety Hazard Forms
5. Site Visit checklist (for program contact)
6. Appropriate ERS Score sheet
7. Corresponding ERS scale
8. List of classrooms and teacher names (BrightStars: with random selection indicated)
9. Measuring tape
10. Measurement stick
11. Watch

g. Cancelling /Rescheduling a visit

Situations will arise requiring assessors to make a decision whether or not to begin or continue an ERS observation. In the following circumstances assessors should adhere to the following guidance:

- i. If program staff refuse the assessor access to the program, the assessor must complete an Access Refusal form and submit to their direct supervisor the same business day.

The observation **WILL** begin or continue when:

- a. The assessor arrives and the program asks to reschedule
- b. The director or education coordinator is not present.
- c. The TA is not present and the ERS is for BrightStars.
- d. Few children are there to begin but more than half the enrolled number arrive within the first hour.
- e. The children move as a group to another classroom for an activity in which they regularly engage, both members of the teaching team move with them, and both continue to be the primary source of instruction.
- f. Children are taking a walk they regularly take to an off-site location.
- g. A child becomes ill or serious behavioral issues or medical emergencies arise.

The observation **WILL NOT** begin in the scheduled classroom and **WILL BE** conducted in a different classroom when:

- h. The assessor arrives to do an ERS observation and the lead teacher is not present.
 - i. BrightStars - The next randomly selected group of that age group (from the random number sequence) will be observed.
 - ii. RIDE: If there are multiple applicant classrooms, the assessor will select the classroom to observe based on alphabetical order of the lead teachers' last names.

The observation **WILL NOT** continue or be stopped when:

- i. The Teacher Assistant is not present and the ECERS is for RIDE.
- j. Fewer than half the enrolled children are in attendance after one hour.
- k. Children are not in the classroom they usually use for more than half the observation.
- l. Children are on a field trip or a special event or a special visitor (not there weekly) is planned or the schedule is otherwise very different from a typical day.
- m. Concerns for personal safety arise.
- n. The assessor's clothing becomes soiled from bodily fluids.
- o. The assessor becomes ill and cannot complete the observation adequately.

h. Conducting the Interview

- i. Assessors should not refer to this part of the process as the "interview," and instead place the emphasis on "follow-up questions."
- ii. When completing the interview portion of the assessment, assessors should make sure to keep questions as open ended as possible and allow the teacher to elaborate as needed. Assessors should rephrase questions and use a tone of voice that will lessen the chance that the teacher might just answer yes or no.
- iii. Assessors should try to keep questioning very neutral in tone, especially in a situation where it is needed to ask additional questions for clarification.
- iv. When talking with the teacher/provider, assessors should try to make her/him feel comfortable. Assessor should keep interactions professional, but this part of the assessment can be extremely stressful for many teachers.
- v. Assessors should reassure the teacher/provider that there is no right or wrong answer to the question. Assessor should explain that they are asking questions to help get a picture of a typical day in the classroom and to get additional information about things that were not observed during the assessment and/or about policies and procedures.
- vi. Assessors should explain that they will be writing a lot to ensure that they remember all of the information he/she is telling you.

- vii. Often teachers will ask for feedback during or at the end of the interview. Assessors should reply that they are not able to give feedback at this point because they will need to fully review their notes to complete the scoring process.
- viii. After the observation and follow-up questions are complete, assessors should thank the teachers for their time and for inviting them into their classroom. They should make sure to let the director or a contact person know that they are done for the day and are leaving the facility.

i. Observing playgrounds

- i. The expectation is that assessors will access the playground on each observation even if the children do not go outside.
- ix. Assessors need to be prepared to assess the program's outdoor space in inclement weather. Assessors may need an umbrella or raincoat, spare shoes, snow boots, flashlight, etc. (These can always be left in a car until needed.)
- x. When conducting afternoon visits (usually a SACERS), assessors may be able to assess the playground before the children arrive; don't assume the program will go to the playground that day.
- xi. If the environment or neighborhood safety is the concern, assessors need to make decisions based on their perception of their own safety.
 - 1. There may be times when the assessor should ask a program staff person to accompany them outdoors if the environment is intimidating.
 - 2. If they refuse, score based on what can be easily/safely observed and give the program the benefit of the doubt for elements that cannot be easily observed. In the report (in the General Comments, state there was a personal risk and direct the practitioner to the PPS playground safety guidelines.) For example, you may feel safe looking at the overall space from your car in the parking lot and can see that there is no fence or significant damage to equipment, but do not feel safe walking into the playground to measure surfacing and fall zones.

j. Personal Safety

- xii. Assessors need to make decisions based on their perceptions of their own safety when in an environment or neighborhood where safety is a concern.
- xiii. When safety is a concern and the assessor feels an assessment cannot be conducted or completed due to concerns for personal safety, the assessor should not conduct or continue conducting an observation and complete an incident report to be submitted to their direct supervisor the same day.
- xiv. Circumstances in which observations may be cancelled or cut short:
 - 1. Unsecured weapons
 - 2. Unsecured pets
 - 3. Threatening staff or family members
 - 4. Spaces where illegal activities appear to be occurring
 - 5. Hostile or angry providers

k. Reporting of child abuse and neglect or questionable behavior

- i. At times, assessors may encounter environmental, situational, or other hazards that threaten children's health and safety. And, although unlikely, assessors may witness actions or situations constituting child abuse and/or neglect. All assessors conducting ERS should be knowledgeable of these policies and procedures as well as their legal responsibilities regarding abuse/neglect (described in this section on page 9).

Policy & Procedures for *Serious* Child Health and Safety Hazards

- 1. Serious physical injury is an injury that causes a child severe pain or significantly impairs a child's physical functioning, either temporarily or permanently.
 - a. Serious physical injury may include but is not limited to:

- i. Death
 - ii. Dismemberment
 - iii. Head injury
 - iv. Broken bones
 - v. Burns
 - vi. Cuts and lacerations
2. If a child appears to be in is in immediate danger of a serious physical injury, the assessor should call 911.
 3. Then, follow these procedures:
 - a. In the event of a hazard or situation that represents an actual and/or immediate threat to a child, the assessor should do what can reasonable be done to reasonably can to protect the child from harm.
 - b. Next, notify the nearest program staff member of the hazard.
 4. Then, the assessor should contact their direct supervisor immediately.

Policy & Procedures for *Potential* Child Health and Safety Hazards

5. A *potential* threat to child health and safety is an environmental, situational, or other hazard that caused or could have caused serious physical or mental injury.
 - a. Examples of potential threats to child health and safety include but are not limited to:
 - i. Child less than 12 months old put to sleep on stomach (and no physician’s order on record)
 - ii. Loose/hanging window blind cords
 - iii. Open radiators or other heat sources
 - iv. Children accessing or having easy access to outdoors without supervision
 - v. General supervision issues, including failure to meet minimum staff-child ratio
 - vi. Assessor is allowed access to the classroom without showing ID.
 - b. Record the threat on the Child Health and Safety Hazard Record (also referred to as a “Pink Slip”).
 - i. The Child Health and Safety Hazard Record has three carbon copies:
 1. Leave the “pink slip” (pink copy) with the program that day
 2. Give the yellow copy to your direct supervisor that business day
 3. File the original form in the program file when you return to the office
6. Then, the assessor should contact their direct supervisor immediately.

Policy & Procedures for Child Abuse and Neglect

7. Child Abuse and neglect is defined by Rhode Island General Law (R.I. Gen. Laws § 40-11-2):
 A child whose physical or mental health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm when his or her parent or other person responsible for his or her welfare:
 - i. Inflicts mental or physical injury including corporal punishment

- ii. Creates or allows to be created substantial risk of physical or mental injury
 - iii. Commits or allows to be committed sexual abuse
 - iv. Fails to supply adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care through able to do so
 - v. Fails to provide the child with a minimum degree of care or proper supervision
 - vi. Abandons or deserts the child
 - vii. Sexually exploits the child
 - viii. Commits or allows the commitment of any sexual offense, sexual penetration, or sexual contact
8. If you believe a child is in immediate danger, call 911.
 9. According to state law, any person who suspects that a child is abused or neglected **must** report their suspicions to the RI Department of Children, Youth & Families (1-800-RICHILD).
 - a. You should report suspected abuse or neglect within 24 hours of the time you observed the incident.
 - b. This means that you will need to contact the RIAEYC Director/RIDE designee immediately to discuss your concerns. If the RIAEYC Director/RIDE designee is not available, leave a message clearly indicating that you need to discuss an abuse/neglect concern and provide phone number(s) where you can be reached.
 - c. In all instances, suspected abuse or neglect should be reported within 24 hours.
 - d. Your report is a request for an investigation, not an accusation.
 - e. When making a report, you will be asked to provide as much of the following information as is known: name, address, age, sex of the child; name and address of child's parent or caretaker; current condition of the child; the nature, extent, and cause of child's injuries or endangered condition; account of how this child came to the reporter's attention; any explanation of the cause of the child's injury or condition; and any other information you believe might be important. You will also be asked for your name, address, and telephone number.
 - f. All information you share is confidential.
 - g. Reporting abuse/neglect is not a breach of our confidentiality agreements with providers/programs. We have promised to keep data confidential. However, we have not—and cannot—promise confidentiality about abuse and neglect information. The law to report abuse and neglect supersedes other rules regarding confidentiality and “privileged communication.”
 10. The assessor should contact their direct supervisor immediately.
 11. Then, follow the Policy and Procedures for Serious Health and Safety Hazards.

I. Witnessing “questionable” behavior that is not considered CA/N but may cause harm to a child

m. Witnessing significant licensing rule violations

There are times when an assessor may observe issues that pertain to DCYF or BEP regulations. Assessors should report any concerns to the RIAEYC/RIDE designee. Examples include:

n. Preventing potential transmission of disease/illness by assessor to children

- i. Conditions to report if an assessor has been exposed
 1. Conjunctivitis: If pink eye is suspected, visit a doctor immediately to verify the condition. Request a doctor's note about the condition. Do not return to work until 24 hours after treatment begins.
 2. Fever: If the oral temperature is 101° F or higher; especially if accompanied by other symptoms such as vomiting, sore throat, diarrhea, headache, stiff neck or undiagnosed rash, do not report to work until the fever is below 101° F and the symptoms have been resolved.
 3. Lice: If lice are suspected, visit a medical clinic immediately to verify the condition. Request a doctor's note about the condition. If lice are verified, do not return to work until 24 hours after the first treatment is applied and no live lice or nits (lice eggs) are seen.
 4. Streptococcal: If strep throat is suspected, visit a medical clinic immediately. Request a doctor's note to verify the condition. Do not report to work until at least a full 24 hour period has passed after treatment begins.
 5. Vomiting: If an assessor has vomited at some point the morning of a scheduled visit, do not report to work. If vomiting occurred the previous evening, an assessor may report to work the next morning if the condition has passed.
- ii. Assessors should report the above listed disease/illness to their direct supervisor and not conduct observations while infected to prevent the transmission of disease to child care centers.

o. Professionalism

- i. It is important to remember that an assessor is a visitor in participating programs. Finding out-of-the-way spaces to observe interactions and record materials can be tricky, especially in smaller spaces with more than one observer, so as much as possible, an assessor should avoid interfering with the program.
- ii. Conversing with other observers, the group leader, or other adults should be avoided.
- iii. Cell phones should never be used or visible when conducting an observation.

p. Attire

- i. Assessors are often sitting on floors, walking through playgrounds, and spending time with children who may be painting, eating, playing with sand, etc. Assessors should plan attire so it will be comfortable outdoors during winter months. Nearly all of the time, observers will be going outside with the children to observe their play and equipment. Proper shoes for walking, suitable clothing during colder months (hat, gloves, scarf, etc.), and protection from the sun (sunglasses, applying sunscreen prior to the visit, etc.) are all examples of preparing for the elements.

q. Travel

- i. Travel Reimbursement
 1. BrightStars Assessment Staff may log their mileage on the appropriate agency form to be reimbursed at the federal rate. No other travel expenses are reimbursable.
 2. Consultant staff are not reimbursed for any travel related expenses.

r. Other responsibilities

- i. Assessors may be asked to complete additional tasks while on-site, either immediately before or upon completing the ERS observation. Training will be

provided. Tasks may include:

- a. Observe and record Staff Child Ratio and Group Size
- b. Determine if Staff Child Ratio and Group Size are posted
- c. Review classroom files containing Child Assessment documentation
- d. Review program files containing Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDP)

III. Standards for Reports

a. Report Filing Timeline

- i. All ERS reports and all documentation associated with the ERS observation are due two business days from the date of the observation.
- ii. When ERS are complete, notify the RIAEYC/RIDE designee via email.
- iii. BrightStars:
 1. RIAEYC Staff: Save all ERS reports and supporting documentation associated with the ERS observation to the program's digital file.
 2. RIAEYC/RIDE Consultants: Scan and email documents to the RIAEYC Manager of Assessment/RIDE designee.
 3. Reports should be named using a standard naming convention provided during pre-service training.
 4. If the ERS report and documentation associated with the ERS are only available in hard copies, they must be submitted to the assessor's direct supervisor within two business days. The direct supervisor will access the digital file and save all information in the above outlined format.

b. Scoring

1. Calculating Substantial Portion of the Day

ECERS –

- a. Time consideration for Substantial Portion of the Day (SPD) begins when the first child enters the program and the last child leaves the program.
 - i. For example, if a preschool classroom operates from 8:30AM to 4:00PM (7.5 hours total), but the first child enrolled in that classroom arrives at the program at 8:00AM and the last child leaves at 5:00PM, the total time used to calculate SPD is 9.0 hours.
- b. In some classrooms, a relatively small number of children may join a separate group with separate enrollment after their own classroom has closed. If more than 20% of the enrolled children from a randomly selected group join a separate classroom, the entire day will reflect the maximum hours these children may attend the program.
- c. In classrooms where less than 20% of the children enrolled join the second group, assessors will include an addendum that briefly describes the schedule and experiences (as related to the concepts of "access," "substantial portion of the day," time for gross motor and nap) of the children who attend the longer day.

ITERS and FCCERS – Time consideration for Much of the Day (MOD) begins when the assessor arrives in the classroom and ends three hours later. MOD is strictly calculated according to a three hour sampling. Other program hours and offerings are not considered.

c. Double-scoring for full and core day

1. In some instances assessors will be asked to score an ECERS twice using two calculations for Substantial Portion of the Day. One score will be based upon the standard definition of SPD described above. Another score will be generated based upon SPD that is calculated using only the program's "core day."
2. The second report will be scored considering only a six hour preschool day. Procedures for the observation remain unchanged.
3. Assessors will be given explicit instructions when an observation is to be double scored.

IV. Training

a. Orientation

- i. All new assessors will begin mandatory orientation within the first week of hire or, in the case of consultants, selection as a potential ERS contractor. ERS orientation will include:
 1. Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children (RIAEYC)
 - a. Overview
 - b. Staffing Structure
 - c. BrightStars
 2. RI Department of Education (RIDE)
 - a. Overview
 - b. Staffing Structure
 - c. CECE
 3. Shadow Opportunity
 - a. Join an author-reliable or reliable assessor or consultant at a training site or live observation to practice scoring, no reliability check, discuss scores and what was observed, review worksheet notes taken for accuracy and detail. Offered before training for reliability begins. Consultants will not be paid to participate in shadow opportunities.
 4. Reliability Training
 - a. Training for Reliability is outlined beginning on page 3 of this document.

b. Pre-Service Training

- i. Once an assessor has achieved reliability on an ERS scale and has completed orientation, they must participate in pre-service training. Pre-service training must be completed before any ERS can be conducted individually.
 1. Training topics include:
 - a. Overview of RI ERS Assessor Policies and Procedures (this document)
 - b. Playground Safety Overview
 - i. Overview of The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)'s guidelines for public playground and home playground equipment.
 - c. Nutrition Overview
 - i. Overview of Child and Adult Care Food Program, USDA Food and Nutrition Service
 1. Ages 0-11 months
 2. Ages 1-2
 3. Ages 1-12
 - d. Department of Children and Families (DCYF) Regulations and Standards
 - i. Overview of Regulations
 - ii. Child Staff Ratio
 - iii. Group Size
 - iv. Room Measurement
 - e. ERS Report Writing
 - i. Basic writing skills, practice taking observation notes, worksheets, practice report writing, learn standardized format and structure, feedback.
 - f. *"Rhode Island Notes,"* important notes re: ERS interpretations
 - g. Online calendar
 - i. Accepting site visit windows
 - ii. Scheduling ERS observations
 - h. Child Assessment documentation and reports

- i. Valid and reliable child assessment tools
- j. Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards (RIELDS)
- k. Rhode Island's Workforce Knowledge and Competencies
 - i. Early Childhood Teachers and Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Educators
 - ii. Family Child Care Educators

c. In-Service Training

- i. Once Orientation and Pre-service Training is complete, assessors can expect to participate in regular and ongoing In-Service Training. Program Assessment Team Meetings occur twice per month. Consultants are encouraged to attend every Program Assessment Team Meeting but are only required to attend one per month. All Assessment Staff must attend. Meetings are held at the BrightStars office. Consultants may participate via conference call.
- ii. Agenda and meeting notes for every team meeting will be shared via email. It is the responsibility of the assessor to review meeting notes if they do not attend the meeting.
- iii. Training is identified as-needed for specialized topics. Topics may include but are not limited to:
 - 1. Clarifications and updates on scoring items in ERS tool, including *RI Notes*.
 - 2. Assessment Techniques
 - 3. Group settings/Site challenges
 - 4. Theories and methods in early care and education
 - 5. Time management surrounding report writing and communication activities
 - 6. Collaboration and/or team building
 - 7. Resolving conflict/Handling challenging situations
 - 8. Grammar/writing skills
 - 9. Current trends in the field of early care and education
 - 10. Child development
 - 11. Other topics as identified
- iv. Additional training may be offered during individual agency meetings, and during individual supervision.

d. Professional Development

- 1. All full-time BrightStars Assessment Staff are required to complete 20-hours of professional development each year (anniversary of hire).
- 2. All full-time assessment staff are required to log professional development hours to be submitted at the time of the annual performance evaluation.
- 3. The Manager of Program Assessment may identify some mandatory trainings.

V. Quality Assurance

a. Standard interpretations of common issues

- i. There are indicators on ERS scale that are commonly misunderstood or misinterpreted. To mitigate confusion, build consensus among assessors in the field, and ensure programs are rated equally, BrightStars maintains a document called “Rhode Island Notes” (RI Notes).
- ii. RI Notes is a log of common issues for each ERS scale.
 1. In the log, the scale and indicator causing confusion is listed once discussed by the assessment team. Through discussion at Program Assessment Team meeting, assessors reach consensus per indicator. RI Notes includes the decision and lists the date effective.
 2. From that date forward, assessors will be expected to score that indicator according to the determination of the group.
 3. It is the responsibility of each assessor to regularly participate in consensus discussion and when not present to access updates to RI Notes.
- iii. Updates to RI notes will be released to program providers quarterly.
- iv. Issues in need of being discussed for consensus are identified as they arise. All assessment staff (including consultants) can submit issues to be discussed to their direct supervisor and request the issue be added to the agenda for the next Program Assessment Team Meeting.

b. Caring for our Children

- i. ERS are scored in accordance to training, ERS tool definitions and tool notes, and by using each scale’s “All About” book.
- ii. However, whenever standards for scoring are not clear by one of these resources, assessors will defer to Caring for Our Children.
- iii. The authors of the ERS scales defer to this resource and adhere to its updates. With the intention of mirroring the authors’ intent, all assessors will defer to this resource when other tool resources are unclear.
- iv. Caring for Our Children is regularly updated and accessed through <http://cfoc.nrckids.org>.

c. Playground Safety Standards

- i. All playgrounds are scored in accordance to training, tool definitions and tool notes, and using each scales’ ‘All About.’
- ii. However, whenever standards for scoring are not clear by one of these resources, assessors will defer to the U.S. Consumer Product and Safety Commission.
- iii. The authors of the ERS scales defer to this resource and adhere to its updates. With the intention of mirroring the authors’ intent, all assessors will defer to this resource when other tool resources are unclear.
- iv. The U.S. Consumer Product and Safety Commission is regularly updated and accessed through <http://www.cpsc.gov/Safety-Education/Safety-Guides/Sports-Fitness-and-Recreation/Playground-Safety/>.

d. ERS Report Writing

- i. The ability for each assessor to be able to write quality, clear, concise, and consistent reports is an integral part of functioning successfully in the assessor role.
 1. Because assessor’s reliability check schedule is already established, ERS report writing will be reviewed on the same schedule.
 - a. The author-reliable or reliable ERS assessor checking another assessor’s ERS reliability will also confirm that:
 - i. ERS score sheets are properly scored
 - ii. Appropriate notes are logged (e.g. Classroom schedule)
 - iii. ERS Report is accurate
 - b. The author-reliable or reliable assessor performing the check must:

- i. Fill out the “Report Quality Assurance Checklist”
- ii. Debrief with the assessor being checked
- iii. Sign off on the checklist when the debrief is complete
- iv. Submit RQA Checklist to direct supervisor to be logged

e. ERS Report Consensus

- i. When more than one assessor conducts an ERS at the same site, both assessors’ reports will be checked for consensus. This ensures that the program will not receive conflicting information.
- ii. Programs with more than one assessor conducting an ERS at the same site will be flagged by the team’s direct supervisor.
- iii. When both/all ERS are complete, the team’s direct supervisor will assign an assessor who did not evaluate the site the responsibility of checking both/all ERS reports for consensus and quality in their reports.
- iv. The impartial assessor will be checking the following but is not limited to:
 1. Consistent scoring for:
 - a. American Disabilities Act
 - b. Playground Safety
 - c. Nutrition
 - d. Handwashing Procedure
 - e. Diapering/Toileting Procedure
 - f. Safety Hazards (Indoor and Outdoor)
 - g. ERS tool specific nuances
 - h. Adherence to RI Notes
 - i. Report formatting
 - j. Report language
- v. Whenever the impartial assessor is unable to identify consensus or a correct score, a debrief must occur between the impartial assessor and the assessors who conducted the ERS for the site.
- vi. The impartial must complete a Report Quality Assurance Checklist to indicate reports have been checked for consensus before marking the site as complete.

VI. Appeals Process

- a. A program may choose to appeal their ERS score for any reason. The program must detail their concerns in writing within seven (7) days of receiving their rating. These concerns are presented to an Appeals Committee, the members of which are not affiliated with a specific early learning program and are not employees or contractors of BrightStars or RIDE.
- b. Programs deciding whether to submit an appeal within the allowable timeframe or that have an appeal in process are considered not yet participating and the program's most recent rating information is not posted on the website. Currently participating programs who have submitted a star rating request, CECE application, or a renewal application continue to appear on the website as rated at their previous rating while the appeal is in process.