



## Georgia Additional Notes for the FCCERS-3

The GA Additional Notes provide supplementary information for the Environment Rating Scales to further define or explain requirements of certain items and indicators to assist in correctly interpreting and scoring items found within the scale.

Participants in Quality Rated should be aware of the following:

- Georgia Additional Notes are not exhaustive. Unless otherwise specified, Quality Rated assessors use the GA Additional Notes for the FCCERS-3 and the FCCERS-3 Additional Notes for Clarification created by the Environment Rating Scales Institute (ERSI) (available at <http://www.ersi.info/index.html>).
- The GA Additional Notes are updated (approximately) annually and QR assessors conduct assessments using the most current notes. Child care professionals are encouraged to download and use the most current version of the notes from the Quality Rated website.

In April 2012, with permission from Debby Cryer and Thelma Harms, the Additional Notes for Clarification for the ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCRS-R, and SACERS were retrieved from the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) website (<http://www.ersi.info/index.html>) and used for the basis for the GA Additional notes. Since that time, ongoing content of GA Additional Notes has been developed by Quality Rated for intended use in Georgia.

### **ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCALE, Item 4, page 9.**

To calculate whether required amounts of time were provided for children, it is best to wear a digital watch or use the digital clock on your tablet. Even though required times are a minimum, because of possible timing error, we allow a 2-minute exception for group times and gross motor times because it is so difficult to track time to the second for these longer periods of time. However, no more than 2 minutes can be found to be lacking or exceeded to meet time requirements.

### **Age Ranges for Children in the Family Child Care Home, page 13.**

When scoring indicators with a specific age range requirement, consider only the age ranges of children who are present. If only one child is present during the observation, for indicators requiring multiple examples of interactions, observe the stated number of examples with that one child. If the indicator specifically asks multiple examples with multiple children, observe the total number of examples needed with the one child who is present. When indicators or ERSI Notes for Clarification specify “older children,” this terminology applies to all children 3 years and older.

### **GENERAL GA NOTES FOR THE FCCERS-3**

**Accessible:** During the observation, children can see, reach, and use the required toy, furnishing, material, or equipment. **Consider access only for the children present.** FCCERS-3 has varied guidelines for determining access for nonmobile children and mobile children found on pages 12-13 of the scale

book. An additional GA resource, entitled *FCCERS-3 Access Summary*, has been developed to further clarify FCCERS-3 access guidelines and can be found on the Quality Rated website at [www.qualityrated.ga.gov](http://www.qualityrated.ga.gov) in the ERS Resources section.

**Appropriate/Developmentally Appropriate:** As stated on page xi in the All About ITERS-3, this term means “that the focus of the interest matches the child(ren)’s age and ability, is challenging but not frustrating, is safe for the child(ren), and carries no negative social message. The term is usually associated with furnishings, equipment, activities, and materials. Any of these used by or with the children to meet a requirement in the FCCERS-3 must be considered appropriate. Otherwise, it is not considered when determining whether the material, equipment, and so on is sufficient or present.”

**Engaged:** Children are observed to be interested and paying attention. Although children may be well behaved, look closely to determine whether they are actually engaged in what is going on. Scoring decisions are made based on the children’s level of engagement and whether staff can positively re-engage children if they do lose interest.

**Forced Participation:** “Forced to participate” means children are strongly encouraged or made to participate in group play activities. If children are not engaged or enjoying an activity, are often reminded to participate, and there is no alternative of leaving and doing something else that is interesting to children, then children are being forced to participate. In most items, at least two alternatives must be provided that are interesting to the children.

**Conversation:** Multiple back and forth verbal or nonverbal exchanges of communication that are meaningful to the child, typically occur between a teacher and child or between children.

**Hand sanitizer use:** The 2019 edition of *Caring for Our Children* (page 118) states that hand sanitizers can be used in place of handwashing unless hands are visibly soiled, but handwashing is preferred. However, GA licensing does not allow the use of hand sanitizers in lieu of handwashing; therefore, QR assessors are required to only count handwashing as acceptable when scoring, unless running water is inaccessible, such as on the playground. If hand sanitizer is used during an observation when running water is not accessible, the product used and how it is used must be considered in scoring. The product must contain 60-95% alcohol, and the manufacturer’s instructions must be followed exactly. Very close supervision of children is provided to ensure proper use and to avoid ingestion or contact with eyes and mucous membranes. If the manufacturer’s directions for use are not followed exactly, do not give credit for any time when not followed. If children are not closely supervised when using sanitizer, consider in supervision–related indicators for the item specifically, in the Safety item, and in Supervision related items that may apply. Handwashing or use of a hand sanitizer is required for all ERS observers upon entering the classroom.

**Some/sometimes/occasionally:** Denotes a presence in the environment, and at least 1 example usually must be observed unless the guidelines for specific indicators require more examples.

**Moderate:** Denotes that something can be sporadic but should not be unusual to observe throughout the observation.

**Most:** Means more than 50% unless the guidelines for specific indicators require more.

**Usually/generally/frequently/often/much:** Denotes a regular or prevalent practice, meaning that things occur for 75% of the time during the 3-hour observation period, unless the guidelines for specific indicators require more.

**Throughout the Observation:** As defined in the All About ITERS-3 on page xi, this phrase “is related to the amount of time children have access to materials, space, equipment, and other concrete aspects of their environment. It means that children should have access to the materials when awake and ready to play, except for during routines that are not overly long, during quick transitions, or when needing comfort from an adult. A few short lapses are permitted at the 5 (good) level of quality, and no lapses are permitted at the 7 (excellent) level of quality.

*Throughout the observation* is also used as relating to the frequency of language and interactions experienced by the children. It means that the language or interactions required should happen at different times, with examples seen during both care routines and play activities, indoors and/or outdoors, and not just during one portion of the observation. Such language or interactions should be part of the regularly observed practice, not an isolated or unusual event.”

**Undue distress:** “Undue distress” means that children show a lasting, very emotional response to what they perceive to be hurtful to them, such as when they maintain anger, unhappiness, apathy, or obvious frustration for an extended period of time.

## **SPACE AND FURNISHINGS**

### **ITEM 1: Indoor Space**

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1, 5.1, 7.1:** Base scoring on the indoor space available to accommodate the maximum number of children allowed.

**Indicator 3.2:** Adequate ventilation must be present to ensure the space does not have lingering odors or stuffy air; ventilation control is not required until Indicator 5.2. If dark shades or blinds are closed and most natural light is blocked, score No. If frosted glass, light colored paper, or closed light colored shades or blinds are used and enough natural light is coming in that the room appears light even while the blinds/shades are closed, score Yes.

**Indicators 3.2 and 5.2:** For natural lighting to be considered direct natural light, it must be from a window, door, or skylight within the spaces being used by children. Natural light from hallways or neighboring rooms, even if only a half wall separates the two, does not count.

**Indicator 3.3:** There can be a few minor issues, but the children should not be endangered. When determining if a repair issue is major or minor, consider the likelihood that the issue will cause a major injury.

**Indicator 5.2:** The majority of natural light in all spaces used by children must be controllable.

### **ITEM 2: Furnishings for routine care, play, and learning**

**General note:** Consider indoor furniture for all routine care, play, and learning, except gross motor equipment located indoors.

**Indicator 3.1, 3.2:** Enough furniture is required for the number of children present.

**Indicator 3.4:** At least one example of furniture that supports self-help in routines and one example that supports self-help in play is required for each age group present during the observation. It is possible that one example may meet the needs of more than one age group.

**Indicator 5.1:** All furniture needs are based on the maximum number of children allowed to enroll. Consider individual storage needs required throughout the year.

**Indicator 5.4:** “Several” means in at least two play areas, and the soft furnishings must be appropriate for all ages present.

**Indicator 7.2:** All routine care furniture used should encourage personalized care of children, and no issues can be observed due to lack of personalization.

### **ITEM 3: Arrangement of indoor space for child care**

**Indicator 1.3:** Score Yes, when this is observed to be the regular practice for any child. The sentence in the Note for Clarification on page 20 that starts with “Since *Caring for our Children*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, ....” is the explanation of why this is important, not the time requirement to consider in scoring.

**Indicator 3.3:** The two play areas can be two different types of any kind; it does not have to be quiet and active play.

**Indicator 7.1:** Spaces should be conveniently set up with little sacrifice to children’s play and supervision.

### **ITEM 4: Display for children**

**General note:** Rugs, wall mirrors, mats, and other furnishings do not count as display. Center signs are not considered for credit in this item, unless they also provide meaningful display information to children, such as large photos of children or commercial posters showing children playing in the centers. To count as display, items must be displayed from the beginning of the observation; items added during the observation will not be considered. Crib mobiles and crib photos are not credited for display in this item, unless they face towards the classroom, because they are not easily visible for all children to see.

**Indicator 5.1:** Displays should be present in most child care areas that children use frequently. “Some” means that about half of the displays should be within easy reach of mobile children.

**Indicator 7.1:** Two or more photos of currently enrolled children, their families, pets, or other current familiar faces are required. Photos of previous provider assistants or children do not count.

## **PERSONAL CARE ROUTINES**

### **ITEM 5: Meals/snacks**

**General note:** When a meal or snack is not observed during the 3-hour observation, you do not need to stay to observe the meal/snack. If no meal/snack related sanitary practices are observed before you leave, score indicators 1.3, 3.2, 5.3, and 7.2 based on the other sanitary practices observed during the observation. Score 1.1 and 1.2 as ‘Yes,’ and all remaining indicators ‘No’ since the schedule, interactions, and language did not take place during the 3-hour observation.

**Indicators 1.2, 3.1, and 5.2:** USDA guidelines will be credited only by evidence observed during the observation. Items that are required by the food program to have nutrition labels to determine the adequacy of guidelines met will not be credited. As such, breaded meats, including chicken nuggets and fish sticks, will only be credited for proteins since adequacy of the breading to count towards grain requirements cannot be determined by observation. If a planned snack is observed in addition to a meal, then nutritional component requirements must be met for both. If an extra, unplanned snack is offered to children, nutritional components are not required to be met. Unplanned snacks do not occur daily, and they are typically snacks

provided to tie one or more children over until lunch can be served or as part of an occasional learning activity. Food served for celebratory occasions, such as birthday parties or holiday celebrations, is not required to meet the USDA guidelines for meals or snacks.

**Indicator 1.2:** More than 50% of the food served to most children does not meet USDA requirements; this can include missing components, inappropriate substitutions, and/or unsafe foods, such as choking hazards or foods that are served too hot. 50% is calculated based on what the USDA requirements are for the snack/meal observed, as some meals require more components than others.

**Indicators 3.1 and 5.2:** For snacks, to help prevent choking, water or another healthy beverage must be offered if two food options are chosen.

**Indicator 3.1:** “Usually” means most children are served most components for meals, most children are served all components for snacks.

**Indicator 3.2:** Any attempt in any category can receive credit.

**Indicator 5.3:** Much attention in all categories must be observed to receive credit.

### **ITEM 6: Diapering/toileting**

**General Note:** Diapering procedures are based on best practices outlined in *Caring for Our Children*, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, and a list of the procedures can be found on the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) website (<http://www.ersi.info/index.html>). When using these procedures, please note that use of a paper liner is optional in Georgia. It is permissible to use a non-porous changing surface that is cleaned and sanitized between each use. When cleaning the diapering surface, spray the entire surface with a soapy water solution prior to wiping it with a paper towel or use a soapy water solution directly on the paper towel and then rinse. Either cleaning procedure must then be followed with a bleach-water solution allowed to sit for at least 2 minutes or a disinfectant applied according to label directions. Observed instances of parents/family members who change diapers or assist with toileting should be considered in the samples taken to score these indicators.

**Indicator 1.4:** “Impersonal” means that it is observed to be the normal practice that there is little to no talking with most children.

**Indicator 3.2:** All infants, toddlers, and preschoolers must have diapers visually checked or changed or are encouraged to use the toilet within the 3-hour observation and no obvious problems are observed.

**Indicator 5.2:** All infants, toddlers, and preschoolers must have diapers visually checked or changed or are encouraged to use the toilet at least every 2 hours and no obvious problems are observed.

### **ITEM 7: Health**

**General Note:** Observed instances of parents/family members who assist with handwashing should be considered in the samples taken to score these indicators.

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1, 5.1, 7.1:** Visibly dirty toys should be considered here with the other efforts observed for these indicators.

**Indicators 3.3 and 5.3:** To score Yes, must observe set up to ensure spacing required in the indicator. To score No, must see evidence of a major issue in storage or set up of cots/cribs. If there is not enough evidence to know, such as when you observe only storage of nap linens, score NA.

**Indicators 3.4 and 5.4:** Scored based on schedule evidence observed. NA option is not permitted.

### **ITEM 8: Safety**

**General Note:** When scoring this item, consider all indoor and outdoor spaces used. When weighing hazards, consider: 1) likelihood of injury, 2) supervision, 3) way space is used, and 4) seriousness of possible injury. Extreme hazards pose an immediate high risk of serious injury, such as not having a fence. Extreme hazards also include any equipment listed on the ERSI playground handout as never being appropriate for any age group. Major

hazards have a high risk of causing serious injury likely to need medical care, and they are located in popular areas where children frequently encounter them. Minor hazards have a low risk of causing serious injury.

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1, 5.1, and 7.1:** Raised edges on diapering tables measuring less than 6 inches from the top of the diapering surface are considered indoor safety hazards. When a child is laid down to sleep on their stomach in a crib and they are unable to roll over on their own, count it as one major indoor hazard for each child it occurs with (no matter how many times it occurs for that child). If a child is laid down to sleep on their stomach in a crib and they are observed to be able to roll over on their own, count it as one minor indoor hazard for each child it occurs with (no matter how many times it occurs for that child).

**Indicator 7.1:** “Few” minor hazards = no more than 4.

## **LANGUAGE AND BOOKS**

### **Item 9: Talking with children**

Indicator 3.3: “Some” means it’s a regular practice observed, but doesn’t have to be frequent.

Indicator 5.2: “Most” means at least 75% of the talking.

Indicator 7.1: “Most” means almost all interactions with children.

### **Item 10: Encouraging vocabulary development**

**Indicator 5.3:** Do not over-prioritize the word “introduce” here. This indicator relates more to how teachers use words related to what children are doing.

### **Item 12: Encouraging children to communicate**

**Indicator 5.5:** If only one child is present, the provider must help the child communicate with herself or other staff on two separate occasions.

**Indicators 7.3 and 7.4:** At least two examples from two different interactions must be observed.

### **Item 13: Provider use of books with children**

**General note:** Do not consider instances of children reading to each other in this item, even if it is an older child who is proficient in reading.

**Indicator 5.4:** Multiple books are not required but extended interest must be observed at least once. If multiple books are read/used, much interest and enjoyment must be observed in all instances.

**Indicator 7.2:** Observe at least two different times.

### **Item 14: Encouraging children’s use of books**

**General note:** Consider only appropriate books when scoring all indicators, except 1.2 which asks specifically about inappropriate books.

**Indicator 3.2:** Must observe two fiction books and two factual books appropriate for each age group present.

**Indicator 5.2:** There is no access time requirement for this indicator. The term “accessible” in this indicator refers to whether children can see, reach, and use the books. “Most” = almost all. If the requirements for quantity of books is not met in 5.1, this indicator is unmet also. If 5.1 is unmet due to access time requirements, credit can still be earned here if books are easily accessible to children.

**Indicator 7.3:** Two or more books must have been obviously changed or added recently.

## ACTIVITIES

### Item 15: Fine motor

**Indicator 5.2:** Must be a frequent practice observed when children use fine motor materials. There is no requirement for how often children choose to use the materials.

### Item 17: Music and movement

**General note:** Consider all music and movement activities observed indoors and outdoors. Movement activities must include recorded music or singing to be considered in this item. Large-muscle movements (such as stretching or yoga poses) not accompanied by music or singing are not counted in this item but can be counted in the Gross Motor item.

**Indicator 3.1:** At least 3 total music materials, toys or instruments are required, with at least one per age group.

**Indicator 3.5:** “Generally” means most children are engaged for most of activity and no child experiences undue distress.

### Item 18: Blocks

**Indicator 7.2:** There is no time requirement for access for this indicator.

**Indicator 7.3:** NA is only permitted if no children ages 2 or older are enrolled. The special interest block center must also include enough materials for children ages 2 or older to engage in meaningful play.

### Item 19: Dramatic play

**Indicator 3.3:** Provider must show positive or neutral interest, no negative.

**Indicator 5.2:** If 5.1 is unmet because the “many and varied” requirements are not met, 5.2 is scored No as well. If 5.1 is only unmet due to access time requirements, credit can still be earned for 5.2 if the many and varied materials are organized by type.

### Item 20: Nature/science

**Indicators 3.2 and 5.3:** If a low window is present that makes it easy for children to view nature outside, this is enough to credit 3.2. However, at 5.3, the provider must interact with the child about the nature seen outside of the window to earn credit.

**Indicator 5.1:** Sand or water with toys must be available for twos and preschoolers at some point during the observation but does not have to meet access time requirements like the other materials listed in this indicator.

### Item 22: Appropriate use of screen time

**General Note:** “Screen time” includes any device used that has a screen with moving images, pictures, or print, including toys that are designed to imitate electronic devices.

**Indicator 1.1:** If any inappropriate content is observed, score Yes.

**Indicators 3.2 and 5.1:** Interesting alternative activities must be accessible regardless of whether children are engaged in the screen time or not.

**Indicator 3.3:** The second half of the indicator after the *and/or* applies only to children under 24 months.

**Item 23: Promoting acceptance of diversity**

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1, 5.1, 5.2:** Materials presenting images of people, such as dolls, toy people, pictures, and books, must represent humans; mermaids or other half-human representations do not count.

**Indicators 5.1 and 5.3:** When crediting non-traditional gender role materials, a contrast with a traditional gender role material is not required.

**Indicator 5.3:** Cultural music played during the observation counts as one example as long as 2 cultures are represented to establish a contrast.

**Indicator 7.1:** If 5.1 is unmet because the required materials are not met, 7.1 is unmet as well. If 5.1 is scored unmet only due to access time requirements, credit can still be earned for 7.1 if diversity is observed in a learning activity or routine.

**Item 24: Gross motor**

**Indicators 1.2, 1.4, 3.3, 3.4, 5.3, 5.4, 7.2, 7.3:** When children do not go outside, score based on gross motor space/equipment used during observation and space/equipment typically used. For 7.2, give more weight to the space observed being used. All other indicators in this item are scored based on what is observed during the observation.

**Indicator 5.1:** Mark out the portion of the indicator that states, “or if only infants are observed.” Use the NA option to score if only infants are observed.

**Indicator 5.4:** If no problems with the elements are observed, credit can be given.

**Indicators 5.5 and 7.4:** “Accessible” means accessible during observed gross motor play.

**Indicator 7.1:** The note for clarification in the scale on page 62 for 3.1, 5.1, 5.2, and 7.2 also applies to 7.1.

**Item 25: Supervision of gross motor play**

**Indicator 7.1:** Must be observed to occur at least once for each age group present.

**Item 26: Supervision of play and learning (non-gross motor)**

**Indicator 3.2:** Provider must stop all major problems.

**Indicator 5.3:** Must be the usual practice for the provider to take a lot of time to play with children and/or interact with children about their play.

**Indicator 5.5:** Score No if none or very little free play occurs during the observation.

**Item 27: Provider-child interaction**

**Indicator 7.2:** The ERSI additional note listed for Indicators 3.3 and 7.2 only applies to 3.3. For 7.2, refer to the note for clarification in the scale on page 68.

**Item 28: Providing physical warmth/touch**

**Indicator 5.3:** This must be the consistent practice when roughness is observed. Guidance needs to be positive and intentional, and the provider must model the gentle touches for younger children under 3. If the provider ever models negative physical touch or responds negatively to a child’s touch, score No. If roughness doesn’t occur during the observation, the provider must be observed modeling gentle touches as an act of affection, or in some other positive method, to purposefully teach children more about using gentle touches. If only one child is present, the provider must encourage gentle touches among herself and the child, even if no roughness is observed.



**Item 29: Guiding children's behavior**

**Indicators 3.1 and 5.1:** Telling a child “No” is not an automatic discount. Only when “no” is said excessively and controllingly would it be considered a negative verbal response. Consider tone, context, yelling, criticizing, sarcasm, etc. to determine what is a negative response.

**Indicator 3.3:** “Usually” means that the provider maintains the control required to keep children from hurting themselves, one another or being destructive most of the time, with only a few exceptions during the observation.

**Indicator 5.2:** Positive methods of guiding behavior must always be used, with satisfying results for the children. If there are no issues observed requiring behavior guidance for children, score Yes.

**Item 30: Interactions among children**

**Indicators 3.3 and 5.3:** Focus more on whether interference occurs than group size. Additionally, at 5.3 for there to be “many opportunities,” children should have regular access to free play.

**Indicator 7.3:** Must observe more than once. Do not count “clean up” as an example of meeting this requirement.

**Item 31: Schedule and transitions**

**General note:** If a group activity occurs during a transition, such as singing, consider it as a transitional activity in this item but do not consider it as a whole group activity in Item 33.

**Indicator 1.5:** “Children” = almost all children

**Indicators 1.1, 3.1, and 5.1:** Consider both play and routines in the observed schedule.

**Indicator 5.2:** To score Yes there can be no long delays observed, due to teachers being unprepared, that cause children to wait for long periods.

**Indicator 7.3:** Waiting times with nothing engaging to do never exceed 3 minutes for any child.

**Item 32: Free play**

**Indicator 3.1:** Free play is expected to occur for every child.

**Indicator 3.4:** The intent of this indicator is that the play materials are picked up and reorganized as needed, so that the space is reasonably uncluttered and children can engage in productive play.

**Indicator 5.2:** Ample and varied play materials must be accessible for all ages of children who are present. The materials must provide a wealth of variation, but that variation does not specifically require that all required materials listed in activities items are accessible.

**Indicator 5.4:** Children should not be required to play together, and children should be observed to be able to play alone or with selected friends with little interference from other children.

**Item 33: Group time**

**General note:** Whole-group activities provide the basics to support engagement by considering: 1) the comfort of the child, 2) access to information provided, 3) how teachers present information to the children, and 4) length of group time. If you observe more than one group time, consider them all but give more weight in scoring to the longer group times.

**Indicators 1.1 and 5.1:** For nonmobile children, look to see if they are interested in the group activity as evidenced by their facial expressions, where their attention seems to be, and body language. If nonmobiles are not interested and are not moved to an alternate activity they are interested in, they are being forced to participate.

**Indicator 3.1:** If most children tend to be engaged throughout most group times observed and many (but not necessarily all) of the basics to support engagement are observed, score this indicator Yes. If many of the basics to support engagement are not provided, score this indicator No, even if children are somewhat engaged. If a group time was initially set up with the basics but the group time began to fall apart, credit can be earned as long as providers responded appropriately and did not force the group to continue when children did not re-engage quickly.

**Indicator 5.3:** If children show disinterest, at least two alternate activities that children are interested in must be available for the duration of the group time, and their availability should be obvious to children.

**Indicator 7.3:** Individual needs must be met so that observed group times go well for all children participating in them.