GA Additional Notes for the ITERS-R

The GA Additional Notes provide supplementary information for the Environment Rating Scales so that participants in the assessment portion of Georgia’s Quality Rated (Voluntary Improvement System) may correctly interpret and score items found within the scale. A primary aim for the notes is to further define or explain requirements of certain items to improve inter-rater reliability or consistency among assessors working with Quality Rated (QR).

Participants in Quality Rated should be aware of the following:

- Unless otherwise specified Quality Rated assessors use both the GA Additional Notes for the ITERS-R and the ITERS-R Additional Notes for Clarification created by the authors (available at http://www.ersi.info/index.html).

- GA Additional Notes provide further clarification to assist in the interpretation of the scale and the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) Additional Notes for Clarification.

- The GA Additional Notes are updated (approximately) every 6 months 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.

The GA Additional Notes were compiled and further developed by members of the QR management team, especially by our State Anchors and Anchor Advisors. 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 then, Quality Rated has made modifications and additions to the notes as described below.

**GENERAL GA NOTES FOR THE ITERS-R**

Refer to Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) website ITERS-R General Additional Notes for Clarification for definitions of terms used in the scale.
Accessible: Children can reach and are allowed to use toys, materials, furnishings, and/or equipment. Toys on open shelves must be within easy reach of the children. No barriers can be present to prevent children from using them. If materials are stored out of reach, they must be placed within reach to be counted as accessible. For example, if they are stored out of a non-mobile infant’s reach, the baby must be moved to reach them, or the materials must be placed close to the non-mobile infant.

Appropriate: Used in various items to mean age- and developmentally-suited for the children in the group being observed. In determining whether the requirements for “appropriate” are being met within the context of a particular indicator, consideration is given to whether the children’s needs for protection, stimulation, and positive relationships are being met in ways that are supportive and meaningful.

Handwashing and hand sanitizer use: The 2011 edition of Caring for Our Children (page 113) states that hand sanitizers can be used in place of handwashing unless hands are visibly soiled. Use can be by adults and children 2 years of age and older. 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 these indicators. If hand sanitizer is used after handwashing or when running water is not accessible (such as on the playground), the product must contain 60-95% alcohol, manufacturer’s instructions are followed, and very close supervision of children is provided to ensure proper use and to avoid ingestion or contact with eyes and mucous membranes. Be sure to check that the manufacturer’s directions for use are followed exactly, because if not, do not give credit for any time when not followed. You should ask to see the original container with directions for use, if it is not observable. If children are not closely supervised when using the sanitizer, consider supervision-related indicators for the item specifically, and also in Safety and Supervision. To get credit for correct handwashing the time for rubbing soapy hands together (out of the flow of water), before rinsing is 20 seconds. Antibacterial soaps should not be used. Handwashing or use of a hand sanitizer is required for all ERS observers upon entering the program.

Infants/Toddlers: Infants are defined as children birth to 11 months of age. Toddlers are children between the ages 12 and 30 months. In all items or indicators where a particular age cut-off is given (e.g. “Score NA when all children are younger than 12 months of age”), some flexibility is allowed. If there is only one child in the group who exceeds the age cut-off, and that child is less than one month older than the age requirement, then the item/indicator can still be marked NA. If the child is more than one month older than the age cut-off, or if there are two or more children who meet the age requirement, than the item/indicator must be scored. An exception to this rule is if a child with disability is enrolled. In this case, the necessity for a requirement will depend on the child’s abilities and disabilities.

Much of the day: In most items, “much of the day” is associated with the children’s access to materials typically used indoors (e.g., books, art materials, fine motor or dramatic play toys). It means most of the time that any child maybe awake, ready, and able to play. If children are prevented from using materials for long periods by overly long routines when the children have to wait with nothing to do, being kept in groups that they are not engaged in, or being kept in areas where access is not possible, then credit cannot be given for “much of the day.” Appropriate group activities in which children are engaged and interested for short periods that match their abilities are permissible as long as they do not significantly affect access to materials throughout the rest of the day. If children (or any child) who are ready to play are prevented from
reaching and using materials for a total of 20 minutes during a 3-hour observation, then “much of the day” cannot be given credit. The 20 minutes can be calculated as one 20-minute time period, or may be calculated as a combination of smaller time periods that equal 20 minutes. “Much of the day” should be considered separately for each item where the requirement appears. In some cases credit might be given on one item for much of the day, while not given for another item. If children are kept outdoors for extremely long periods (1/3 of the day or more), thus limiting access to materials typically used indoors, then to give credit for “much of the day”, such materials must be provided outdoors as well. Special attention should be paid to individual children who may not have the same access to materials as do the other children. For example, non-mobile children or children who are confined in a playpen may not have the same access to play materials as the other children in a group. For non-mobile infants, all required toys or materials do not have to be accessible at the same time during the whole observation because of problems with clutter. However, there must be clear indications that the required variety and numbers of materials are accessible at various times during the day. A cranky baby who needs close physical contact to be soothed may not be “ready to play” and thus not require access to materials during the “cranky” times. When children are taken for stroller rides, do not count the time spent riding as part of the 20 minutes when children do not have access to materials for “much of the day” as long as children are generally engaged (one child may be less engaged than others for some part of the ride, but most children should show interest, and no child should show distress), and the actual stroller ride is no longer than 20 minutes. Some children may fall asleep in the stroller, but in this case they are not awake and ready to play, so falling asleep should not count in the timing for much of the day. Sometimes there are delays in putting children into strollers, and after the walk, removing them. If children have to wait for long periods (over 3 minutes with no access to play materials) while waiting in the strollers, then the time waiting should be counted towards the 20 minute limit that will disallow crediting “much of the day.” If the stroller ride is more than 20 minutes, do not give credit for “much of the day” in the Active Physical Play item, indicator 3.1, since children are not able to freely move around when confined in a stroller.

**Some**: Denotes presence in the environment, and at least 1 example must be observed, unless the guidelines require more examples.

**Many**: Usually means more than one example, with specific numbers listed for different items and generally includes a variety of materials. Children should have access without long periods of waiting or undue competition.

**Staff**: Generally refers to the adults who are directly involved with the children. Adults who are in the classroom for short periods of the day, or are not a regular daily part of the classroom, do not count in the evaluating whether the requirements of the item are met unless they have a substantial negative impact on the operation of the class or group, or on one or more specific children.

**Usually**: Used to indicate the common or prevalent practice observed that is carried out with only a few lapses.

**Weather permitting**: Children participate in outdoor activities **almost every day**, unless there is active precipitation or public announcements that advise people to remain indoors due to weather conditions such as high levels of pollution and extreme cold or heat that might cause health problems.
ITEM 1: Indoor Space
Indicator 3.2: Watch children’s response to lighting, temperature and sound to determine “comfortable”
Indicator 3.3: Score “no” if any issue causes a major hazard to the children (e.g., peeling paint, mold).
Indicators 3.5 & 5.3 Also consider security system (keypad access). Door bell and key pad access should be no more than 48 inches high.
Indicator 7.1: Consider if light can be controlled for all windows and large glass panels in doors.

ITEM 2: Furniture for routine care and play
Indicator 3.3: A rug is considered furniture in this indicator.
Indicator 3.4: “Yes” if children are not at safety risk & the furniture supports enough so that children can sit well. To give credit, bucket seats must have a foot rest to be considered comfortable.
Indicator 5.1: The diaper table must be long enough to accommodate each child comfortably (must extend from the child’s head to his/her feet) in order to receive credit. (Moved from 3.1)
Indicator 7.3: Consider the space organized unless the space is EXTREMELY unorganized (e.g., items are falling off shelves, etc.) What may look unorganized at first glance may work well for the staff. Convenient and organized storage must be in the classroom.
Indicator 7.4: Must observe adults using comfortable seating to give credit.

ITEM 3: Provision for relaxation and comfort
Indicator 5.1: A special cozy area is not required for non-mobile children for much of the day. A soft surface is required under the soft furnishings if the furnishing is not of substantial size to allow children to escape the typical harshness of the room.
Indicator 5.3: Determine amount based on number of children enrolled.

ITEM 5: Display for children
Indicator 3.1: Can count children’s art as part of the “3 colorful pictures” required
Indicator 5.1: Children’s art is not counted in the requirement for “many” items. If 5.1 is scored no, then 5.3 must be scored no as well.
Indicator 7.2: Children’s artwork does NOT have to be protected.

ITEM 6: Greeting/departure
Indicator 3.3: If families do not enter the room upon arrival, determine if the families have free access to the caregiving space.
ITEM 7: Meals/snacks
**General Note:** 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.

**Indicator 3.2:** Generally, all food components required for a meal or snack should be served at the same time. Waiting until children are finished with their food before serving the milk or juice component will result in a discount.

**Indicator 3.3:** When warming bottles, if crock pots and/or bottle warmers are not permitted due to corporate policies, sanitary methods should be observed. Ensure that individual bottles are warmed in such a way that they do not become cross-contaminated such as by placing them in the same sink that is used for all types of hand washing.

**Indicator 3.5:** List of allergies must be posted in the classroom.

**Indicator 5.4:** Meals and snacks are not rushed.

ITEM 8: Nap
**Indicator 3.2:** If crib is not occupied (but child regularly attends on that day) the 36” still applies. Solid ends are no longer acceptable to allow for closer spacing. Crib must be 36” apart regardless whether they have solid ends or not. Thirty-six inches of spacing cannot be achieved by moving cribs during the observation. Stacked mats must be sanitized daily on both sides or a barrier provided between each mat. Cots can be stacked with sheets on as long as personal blankets are not touching. Mattresses must be at least 20 inches from the top rail of crib sides for safety purposes.

ITEM 9: Diapering/toileting
Include parents/families who change diapers or assist with toileting in determining scores for each indicator.

ITEM 10: Health practices
Include parents/families who assist with handwashing in determining scores for each indicator.

**Indicator 3.1:** Consider flip lids on trashcans here as well as masks or helmets with faceplates that children share (e.g., Ironman, Halloween masks, football helmets)
ITEM 11: Safety Practices
Generally follow the Playground Information Sheet to use with the Environment Rating Scales, adapted from the CPSC Public Playground Safety Handbook.

ITEM 13: Helping children use language
Indicator 1.1, 3.1, & 5.1: To count as a positive response it must satisfy the child. Consider how staff respond to children’s attempts to communicate and how staff encourage children to communicate.
Indicator 5.3: Must occur during routines and play.

ITEM 14: Using books
Indicator 5.2: The 4 categories that have to have representation are books showing people of various races, ages, or abilities; animals; familiar objects; and familiar routines. There must be more than one example from each category.
Indicator 7.2: At least 3 times must be observed.

ITEM 15: Fine motor
Indicator 7.2: The different levels of difficulty do not have to be found within the same type of material/toy.

ITEM 16: Active physical play
Indicator 7.1: Surfaces can be found on different play areas, as long as each are accessible daily to the children.
Indicator 7.3: Equipment like balls can only have 2 skills attached to them unless you see another piece of equipment to enhance the skill such as a goal or basketball hoop.

ITEM 17: Art
Displayed art containing items that present a choking hazard such as pom poms, cotton balls, feathers, etc, that are displayed on a child’s eye level are considered unsafe materials and would be discounted in safety.
Indicator 1.2 and 3.2: When observing displayed art with the above types of materials the provider must be asked how the art activity was conducted.
ITEM 18: Music and movement
Indicator 5.4: If no recorded music is used during the observation this indicator can be scored yes.

ITEM 19: Blocks
Indicator 3.2: Accessories must add to, and not interfere with block play. Large vehicles cannot count as accessories unless large blocks accompany them.

ITEM 21: Sand & water play
Indicator 5.2: To give credit there must be enough to choose from and have meaningful play.
Indicator 7.1: If the only access to sand and/or water is outdoors, ask how this is handled when weather does not permit outdoor play.

ITEM 22: Nature/science
Indicator 3.1: To give credit for pictures, they must be easily seen by children.

ITEM 23: Use of TV, video, and/or computer
Electronic media evaluated in this item includes any device used that has a screen with moving images, pictures, or print, including toys that are designed to emulate electronic devices.

ITEM 24: Promoting acceptance of diversity
Indicator 7.2: Routine or special activity must occur at least 1x per week and be in addition to the materials required in 5.1 and 5.2.

ITEM 26: Peer interaction
Indicator 5.1: Staff facilitating positive peer interaction among all children must be observed at least 2x during the observation and no negative facilitation that causes undue distress (i.e. forced sharing, requiring children to play together when they do not want to)
ITEM 27: Staff-child interaction
Consider adult’s response as perceived by the child, not as perceived by the teacher. A response must satisfy the child’s needs to give credit.
Indicator 3.1: 2-3 negative interactions are allowed, but are not common.
Indicator 3.2: No severe negative responses or only a few minor negative responses.

ITEM 28: Discipline
Indicator 5.4: Staff react consistently to children’s behavior with a “good” message.

ITEM 29: Schedule
Indicator 3.1: All children have all routine care needs met. If there is no play time, then score “No”
Indicator 3.2: Staff provide play activities as part of the daily schedule indoors or outdoors “throughout the day”, it is not an automatic discount if “much of the day” has not been met during previous Items.

ITEM 31: Group play activities
When children are engaged in group time, count against much of the day once the group time is longer than 20 minutes, so minute one of much of the day discount would be the 21st minute. Any play activity that is staff-initiated with an expectation of all children participating can be group time.
Indicator 1.3: Staff behaving in a neutral manner is permitted for this indicator.

ITEM 32: Provisions for children with disabilities
Indicator 7.2: Participate as fully as possible based on the child’s needs and adaptations of the environment.