



GA Additional Notes for the SACERS-U

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, when scoring the scale, Quality Rated assessors use the GA Additional Notes for the SACERS-U and the SACERS-U Additional Notes for Clarification created by the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) (available at <http://www.ersi.info/index.html>).
- The GA Additional Notes are updated (approximately) every 6-12 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.

In April 2012, with permission from Debby Cryer and Thelma Harms, the Additional Notes for Clarification for the ECERS-R, ITES-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.

GENERAL GA NOTES FOR THE SACERS-U:

Refer to ERSI SACERS-U for “Terms Used Throughout the Scale” on pages 5-6 for frequently used definitions throughout the scale.

Accessible: All children in the group can reach and use the required materials and activities independently, with appropriate modifications made based on developmental or chronological age differences as needed. To determine whether or not materials are accessible several factors must be considered:

- *Location of the materials and the type of storage provision: Materials are placed in spaces used by children daily rather than outside of children’s regular play areas (i.e. outside of the classroom or areas within the classroom used for teacher storage, routine care, or an area used only for group times, etc.).*
- *Materials within the play areas are easy to reach for children in the group. The lids on containers and drawers/doors on cabinets are easy to open for the children in the group.*

- *Children’s ages and knowledge that the materials are intended for their use: How do children know what is stored where? Consider whether the children are observed using the materials. Look for other evidence that indicates the materials are used by the children.*
- *The overall structure of the program determines how much child choice is possible. How much independence do children have during play times? Do they select the areas that they play in? If not, how does the classroom system provide access to the specific materials for the required amounts of time? Within centers, are children free to use any of the materials? If unsure of whether or not children have access to a space that is not used during the observation, staff may be asked questions about the space, how frequently it is used, and how materials are made accessible.*
- *Access time requirements vary by item. For more information, see pages 5-6 in the SACERS-U scale book and what is stated in each individual item. At the 5 (Good) and 7 (Excellent) levels, when the term “accessible” appears in an indicator, children must be able to reach and use the required materials for at least 30 minutes daily in a 3-hour program. In a full day program, materials would need to be within reach and used for at least 1 hour daily.*

Appropriate: Used in various items to mean safe and suitable for the age and developmental needs of 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.

Poor repair of materials and books: Materials and books that are in poor repair, are not usable as intended, and they are excluded when determining whether the required numbers or examples for various categories have been provided.

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 inaccessible, the product used and how it is used must be considered in scoring. The product must contain 60-95% alcohol, and 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, and in Safety and Supervision. Handwashing or use of a hand sanitizer is required for all ERS observers upon entering the classroom.

Sanitation: Prior to and after meals/snacks, tables must first be cleaned with a soapy water solution and then sanitized using a bleach/water solution. For a complete description of table washing procedures required, see the ERSI Table Washing handout: [Table Washing Procedures \(ersi.info\)](https://www.ersi.info/Handouts/Handouts%20-%20Table%20Washing%20Procedures.pdf). For chlorine bleach and water solution to be effective, it must be allowed to dry for a minimum of 2 minutes before being wiped, and complete air drying

is ideal. Other EPA registered industrial cleaners, sanitizers, disinfectants, or germicides may be used if these products are non-toxic, and instructions for use are followed.

In order to clarify the different but related functions of cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting to remove germs, "Caring for Our Children" states the following:

- *Cleaning physically removes dirt and contamination using soap, water and applying friction, thus exposing any remaining germs on the dry, clean surface.*
- *Sanitizing reduces germs on an inanimate surface or object to a safe level.*
- *Disinfecting destroys germs on an inanimate surface or object.*

A sanitizer should be used on food contact surfaces or any object that is mouthed. A disinfectant should be used only on diaper changing tables, toilets, counter tops, door and cabinet handles.

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.

General references: Materials that are frequently used to assist in decision making are *Caring for Our Children (2019), 4th edition* (used for health, sanitation, and safety), *Playground Information to Use with ERS*, and the *Handbook for Public Playground Safety*, CPSC Publication No. 325 (for gross motor play). Links to these resources can be found in ERS Resources on the Quality Rated website: <https://qualityrated.decal.ga.gov/> and providers are encouraged to access these.

ITEM 1: Indoor Space

Indicator 3.1: Refers to the space used by the children for most of the day.

ITEM 2: Space for Gross motor Activities

General Note: If there is no outdoor space ever used on any day by the program, then score 1.2 No, 3.2 Yes, and 5.1, 5.2, 7.1 and 7.3 No. Score indicators 1.1, 3.1 and 7.2 based on the space used for gross motor activities, if they have one.

Indicator 3.1: The term “some” means at least 1 space required for this indicator must be provided daily, either indoors or outdoors.

Indicator 3.2: The term “some” means 1 or more.

Indicator 5.1: The ample outdoor space required for this indicator must be provided daily outdoors, weather permitting. The outdoor space should be large enough to allow for sufficient movement and running or engagement in large group games and sports that older children enjoy. Provisions must also be made indoors for those days when children cannot play outdoors.

Indicator 5.2: The soft and hard surface must both be large enough for meaningful play.

ITEM 3: Space for Privacy

5.2: Must observe at least one child creating their own private space. Children moving furniture to create the space for privacy is not required.

5.3: Refers to any observed spaces for privacy.

ITEM 4: Room Arrangement

Indicators 1.4, 3.4: Can be scored N/A if observation occurs during summer and/or other school holidays, or if doing homework is never a part of the school-age program.

Indicator 3.3: Take children’s ages and abilities into account. Younger or more impulsive children are likely to require more supervision.

Indicator 5.4: Need to see a separate space for quiet play, study, etc. with suitable furnishings.

Indicator 7.4: Must be available to the children daily.

ITEM 5: Furnishings for Routine Care

Indicator 3.1: Allow for minor touching of possessions such as book bags; however, if touching of personal items such as jackets, clothing, or blankets etc., is significant, credit cannot be given. Jackets can be placed inside book bags and then bags hung on hooks side by side.

ITEM 6: Furnishings for Learning and Recreational Activities

Indicator 5.2: At least 1 space. Credit can be given for a moveable display.

ITEM 7: Furnishings for Relaxation and Comfort

Indicator 3.1: Wall to wall carpet in more than two areas of the room can count.

Indicator 7.2: Cozy area can be verbally protected by the staff. Must see it unprotected to score “no.”

ITEM 8: Furnishings for Gross Motor Activities

Indicator 3.1: Children must have access to one or more pieces of stationary gross motor equipment daily.

Indicator 3.2: Two or more portable equipment required daily.

Indicator 5.1: “Variety” means there must be different types of stationary gross motor equipment present that stimulate **at least 3** different gross motor skills (e.g. climber, basketball hoop, soccer goal, balance beam, swing, slide, hanging bars, etc.). Each component of a larger composite piece of equipment (i.e. slide, parallel bars, climbing wall etc.) is considered individually. Equipment must be age appropriate for 75% of children enrolled in the class.

Indicator 5.2: “Many skills” means there must be stationary equipment that stimulates at least three (3) or more different gross motor skills at the appropriate developmental level for 75% of the children enrolled in the class. This indicator is scored independently of 5.1 unless the stationary equipment is almost never used. In this case, score indicator 5.2 “No.”

Indicator 5.3: “Variety” means there must be different types of portable gross motor equipment accessible (e.g. balls or various types, hula hoops, jump ropes, bicycles, bean bags, parachutes, racquets and balls, scooters, etc.). Sufficient quantities of portable equipment must be accessible for simultaneous activities if the portable equipment is used to make stationary equipment functional for indicator 5.1. There should be enough portable equipment accessible daily, indoors or outdoors, to stimulate at least five (5) different gross motor skills.

Indicator 7.1: Must occur at least monthly.

ITEM 9: Access to Host Facilities

Indicator 1.1, 3.1, 5.1: Requires 1 or more dedicated space. “Dedicated space” is space used primarily for the school-age program needs, such as activities, storage, and/or administration, and any use that occurs at other times does not impact the group’s use of the space.

Indicator 3.2: Requires 1 or more play space.

Indicator 5.2: “Primary user of some shared play space” means that the school-age program is the primary intended user of the space. They set it up and decorated it for the school-age program needs, although other groups may be allowed to use it.

Indicator 7.1: “Shared facilities” are those areas, indoors or outdoors, used by both the school-age program and other children or adults, either at separate times or at the same time in addition to the primary indoor space used. Examples include gym, playground, computer lab, library, etc.

“Exclusive use of shared facilities” means that no one else uses the space while it is being used by the school-age program.

Indicator 7.2: The school-age program must have its own classroom and be the sole user of that classroom.

ITEMS 10 – 13:

Not scored for QR purposes.

ITEM 14: Safety Practice

Indicator 3.1: No major and no more than 5 minor safety hazards.

Indicator 3.2: Must be in the room to use or can be a cell phone.

ITEMS 15 – 16:

Not scored for QR purposes.

ITEM 17: Meals and 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. *If bleach is used for sanitizing tables and food surfaces, it must remain on the surface for at least two minutes before being wiped off, unless the product label specifies a different contact time.*

Indicator 3.2: Credit can be given for nutritionally adequate meals or snacks if the children can serve themselves, but not if the food components are verbally offered, and not within reach of every child.

Indicator 3.4: Allergy list must be posted. It cannot be in a binder or clipboard.

Indicator 3.5: A napkin, paper towel, or plate are required only when needed to prevent food from touching the table surface. If food is not observed to touch the table surface, a discount is not warranted for lack of napkin, paper towel, or plate.

ITEM 18: Personal Hygiene

Indicator 1.2 and 3.2: Tissues for blowing noses should be accessible to the children everywhere they go, both indoors and outdoors.

Indicator 7.2: Personal hygiene taught must be observed to be done correctly.

ITEM 19: Arts and Crafts

Indicator 1.1: Must be daily.

Indicator 3.1 and 5.1: A sufficient number of materials must be accessible to accommodate the number of interested children without undue competition and there are no long wait times to use the materials.

Indicator 5.1: "Tools" are supplemental materials and are not considered a separate category towards the 3 required categories here.

ITEM 20: Music and Movement

Indicators 1.1 and 1.2: Must be weekly.

Indicator 3.1: "Some provisions" means 2 or more accessible.

ITEM 21: Blocks and Construction

Indicator 1.1: Must be weekly.

Indicator 3.1, 5.1, and 7.1: A sufficient number of materials must be accessible to accommodate the number of interested children without undue competition and there are no long wait times to use the materials.

Indicator 5.3: Different “types” of accessories include animals, people, vehicles, and other accessories to enhance block play, such as road signs, fences, trees, small buildings, etc. Zoo animals, farm animals, dinosaurs, etc. are considered varied examples of one type. Accessories must be age-appropriate for school-age children.

Indicator 7.2: Carpentry tools can include clamps, nails, and woodworking tools.

ITEM 22: Dramatic Play

Indicators 1.1 and 3.1: Accessible daily.

Indicator 3.1: “Some” means 2 or more materials that allow children to have meaningful play.

Indicator 5.1: The variety of dramatic play materials must be found in materials that are age appropriate in both size and content for all the children in the group.

Indicator 5.2: Must be observed.

ITEM 23: Language/reading activities

Indicators 1.1 and 3.1: Accessible daily.

Indicator 3.2: In addition to playing age-appropriate language games with the children, credit can be given if the teacher is observed assisting a child with an educational language-related computer program or playing a language focused homework game, such as a spelling, sight word, or reading comprehension game.

ITEM 24: Math/reasoning activities

Indicator 1.1: Accessible daily.

Indicator 3.1: “Some” means 2 or more materials.

Indicator 5.2: Must be appropriate for the age of the child.

ITEM 25: Science/nature activities

General Note: There is a difference between science/nature materials and equipment. Materials are things that allow children to experience science and nature, such as books, posters, animals, plants, toy animals (insects, sea creatures, reptiles, etc.), file folder games, puzzles, board games, computer games, videos, etc. Equipment allows children to engage in scientific or nature experiments and exploration, such as microscopes and slides,

magnifying glasses with items to explore such as rocks or shells, measuring tools and things to measure, cooking activities, test tubes, everyday objects to experiment with such as gadgets to take apart, etc.

Indicator 1.1: Accessible weekly.

Indicator 3.1: “Some” means 2 or more pieces of equipment and 2 or more materials.

Indicator 3.2: Books can be homemade, and collections of charts/posters/cards used together to extend children’s information like a book, can also be credited. For credit to be earned, an obvious pairing of nature/science books with related nature/science materials to intentionally extend children’s learning must be observed, or we need to observe a teacher using a book with children to help answer their nature/science questions.

Indicator 5.1: A variety means that there are at least 3 types represented in the accessible materials and/or equipment.

ITEM 26: Cultural awareness

Indicator 1.1, 3.1, and 5.2: When crediting non-traditional gender role materials, a contrast with a traditional gender role material is not required.

ITEM 27: Greeting/departing

Indicator 7.1: Help should be consistently provided when needed, based on ages and observed needs of children.

Indicator 7.2: Does not have to be every child, but it should be observed to be a consistent program practice.

ITEM 29: Staff-child communication

Indicator 3.1: “Some” means 2 or more conversations.

ITEM 30: Staff supervision of children

Indicators 5.1: Supervision should not result in children being put at major risk.

ITEM 31: Discipline

Indicator 5.2: If the program is not set up to avoid conflict, score no, even if no conflict is observed.

Indicator 7.1: Consultant should have specialized training or technical expertise.

ITEMS 33 - 35:

Not scored for QR purposes.

ITEM 36: Schedule

Indicator 3.3: To give credit for this indicator, either a fine motor or a language activity must be set up by staff and accessible to children during the observation. The activity does not need to be posted in a written schedule or lesson plan. The activity should have either a language focus (books, language board games, recorded stories) or involve using materials specially designed to promote fine motor skills/eye-hand coordination, such as small building sets (Lego, tinker toys, etc.), arts and crafts, and puzzles. The activity should provide an appropriate challenge for the ages and abilities of the children in the group. Simply having the children do homework would not count to meet this requirement.

Indicator 5.3: Disregard the example given, this indicator emphasizes the time gross motor activities are available, not the types of activities.

ITEM 37: Free choice

Indicator 3.1: At least one opportunity to choose from two or more activities.

ITEMS 38 - 41:

Not scored for QR purposes.

ITEM 42: Provisions for exceptional children

General Note: Item 42 is scored when there is a child who is enrolled in the group and present on the day of the observation, with a diagnosed disability or medical condition. If the identification/evaluation process is not complete, this item is N/A. If intervention or therapy services occur, this indicates that a child has a diagnosed disability or medical condition warranting them. It is not necessary for a child to have an IFSP or IEP to score this item, nor is it necessary to know the identity of a child with a disability. Assume that parents want their privacy protected and simply ask the questions needed to score. Requirements in this item apply to each child with a diagnosed disability or medical condition.

ITEMS 43-47:

Not scored for QR purposes.