

Refuting a Portfolio or ERS Report Score - Guidelines

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) requires Quality Rated Assessors to be objective and impartial in scoring the portfolio and conducting Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observations. The department works diligently to ensure that assessors undergo a rigorous and on-going reliability process with the instruments they use, including comprehensive report writing reliability, and that they apply the scoring requirements correctly and consistently from provider to provider.

A provider has the right to disagree with and seek further review of a portfolio or ERS score that may potentially alter their overall star rating and may do so without fear of retaliation or negative consequence. Sometimes, scores are changed following review, and sometimes they are not. While a provider may fundamentally disagree with a score, many times the disagreement is actually with the intent of an ERS or portfolio indicator and not with how the assessor applied the scoring requirements. Refutations are designed and used solely for the purpose of scoring disagreements that affect the program's overall star rating.

3-Step Refutation Process:

1. Prior to submitting a refutation form, programs are encouraged to contact their local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) TA for assistance in understanding their scores.
2. After consulting the CCR&R TA, if a program believes that they received an inaccurate portfolio and/or ERS score ***that adversely affected their overall Quality Rated star rating and they have evidence from the original portfolio submission and/or the day and time of observation to support their claim***, programs can call or email the Quality Rated Help Desk to request a refutation form at QualityRated@decals.ga.gov or 1.855.800.7747.
3. Completed refutation forms and the corresponding evidence can be submitted via email to QRRefutation@decals.ga.gov within 10 business days of receiving a rating, provided the program has not already ordered a bonus package. If a bonus package is ordered before a refutation is filed or during the refutation process, the refutation will be nullified and will not be processed. Ordering a bonus package signifies the acceptance of a program's star rating.

Steps for completing a refutation form:

1. Complete the Refutation Form (either the ERS Summary Report Refutation Form or the Portfolio Refutation Form), which serves as a statement of disagreement/refutation.
2. All sections of the form(s) must be fully completed to include:
 - a. Facility/Visit Information
 - b. Contact Information
 - c. Exact ERS Indicator or Portfolio Indicator being refuted along with the ERS or Portfolio assessor's scoring comments or justification rationale.
 - d. Detailed information regarding the ERS Indicator or Portfolio Standard being refuted. Please include information on how you feel the indicator or standard was met.
 - e. Indicate the resources used in your research to determine that your refutation is valid.
 - f. Please complete one refutation form per ERS Item or Portfolio Standard being disputed. Multiple forms can be submitted together if disputing more than one item or standard.
3. Compile and label all supporting evidence that corresponds with each refutation form. Only supporting evidence from the day and time of observation and/or that was originally submitted with the portfolio will be considered.
4. E-mail the completed refutation forms and supporting evidence to: QRRefutation@decals.ga.gov **within 10 business days of receiving the Quality Rating**. Make sure you save the refutation forms in WORD format

docx. **DO NOT** save the document as a PDF as that prevents the refutation decision from being added to the form. If submitted in any format other than a WORD document, the form will be returned for re-submission in WORD, thus increasing the amount of time until completion.

Once the required documentation is received, the provider can expect the following steps to occur.

5. The provider's completed refutation form(s) and supporting evidence will be sent to the ERS Refutation Review Team, or the Portfolio Coordinator in the case of a portfolio refutation. Providers will receive a confirmation e-mail to notify receipt of the refutation.
6. A Quality Rated Manager, Standardization and Evaluation Anchor, or Portfolio Coordinator may contact the provider for additional information, if necessary, before determining if the score will stand or be changed. The review will be conducted within 45 days of receipt.
7. Following a review of all the information compiled from the statement of disagreement and supporting evidence, review of observation or portfolio assessor notes, and discussions with the provider and assessor as needed, the provider will be emailed the determination of whether the score will be changed or will stand as issued.

Please NOTE: The following actions will result in an unsuccessful refutation.

- Only refutations that could potentially alter the overall Quality Rated star rating of a program will be processed.
- If a refutation is not received within the required timelines, the refutation is subject to not being accepted.
- Ordering bonus package materials prior to a refutation being completed will result in a forfeiture of the refutation process.
- The refutation process is for scoring disputes only, and all scoring disputes are evaluated based on current instrument and QR guidelines. Philosophical disagreements with scoring or QR guidelines will not result in score changes.
- ERS Refutations without any sources of evidence from the day and times of observation will not result in score changes. Sources of evidence must be from the day and time periods of the observation because only what is observed and/or shared during the teacher interview, if applicable, during the ERS Observation visit is used for scoring. Program policies, room arrangements, materials, schedules, etc., that are changed after an observation will not be considered. Similarly, evidence submitted that was created after the observation occurred will not be considered.
- Portfolio Refutations citing sources of evidence not originally submitted with the portfolio will not result in score changes. Portfolios are scored based only on the evidence originally submitted with the portfolio.
- Due to the high level of training and reliability of Quality Rated Assessors, refutations submitted simply stating the provider disagrees and providing no evidence are insufficient to result in a score change.