



Use of ERS and Other Program Assessment Tools in QRIS

About QRIS

A quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, QRIS award quality ratings to early and school-age care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. By participating in their State's QRIS, early and school-age care and education providers embark on a path of continuous quality improvement. Even providers that have met the standards of the lowest QRIS levels have achieved levels of quality that are beyond the minimum requirements to operate. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has a High Priority Performance Goal to increase the number of States and Territories with strong quality rating and improvement systems.

QRIS are composed of five common elements: (1) program standards; (2) supports for programs and practitioners; (3) financial incentives; (4) quality assurance and monitoring; and (5) consumer education.

Program Assessment Tools and QRIS

Program assessment tools are commonly used to measure early and school-age care program quality, efficacy, and sustainability. Program assessments can be used to inform decision making on all or part of a program's services. For example, program assessments can be used as a comprehensive measure of program quality based on a variety of program components.

Most of the States with a QRIS that require a classroom assessment to evaluate program quality currently use the environment rating scales (ERS) developed by the FPG Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill¹:

- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)
- Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R)
- Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale- Revised (FCCERS-R)

¹ Additional information about the ERS is available on the FPG Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Web site at <http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>.

- School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS)

Recently, States have begun to use other programs assessment tools to measure and rate program quality. The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)² is being used more often to measure teacher-child interactions, which is believed to be related to the overall quality of an early care and education program. Other tools used in QRIS include:

- Child and Caregiver Interaction Scale
- Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale
- Program Quality Assessment® (PQA)
- Early Learning and Literacy Classroom Observation (ELLCO)
- Youth Program Quality Assessment
- Program Administration Scale (PAS)/Business Administration Scale (BAS)

At the end of this document are some publications with additional information about program assessment tools and their use for measuring program quality in early childhood settings.

The way ERS and other program assessments and scores are used within QRIS varies among the States that require assessments. For example,

- Scores are used to determine rating levels;
- Programs can earn points for assessment scores, which contribute to the overall rating; or
- Programs are assessed, but do not tie particular scores to the ratings.

The following table shows the program assessment tools used by 36 States that are implementing a statewide QRIS model, and describes how program assessments are factored into quality ratings.

² Additional information about the CLASS is available on The Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning, University of Virginia Web site at <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/centers/cast/class>.

State, QRIS Name, and Web Site	Program Assessment Tools Used in QRIS	Description of Program Assessments and Ratings
<p>Arizona Quality First http://qualityfirstaz.com/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R ■ CLASS ■ Quality First Points Scale 	<p>Assessment scores are used to determine rating levels.</p> <p>ERS is used to assess components of a program’s learning environment.</p> <p>CLASS examines the quality of the interaction between teachers and children.</p> <p>The Quality First Points Scale is a tool designed by First Things First to assess three additional evidence-based components of quality: staff qualifications, administrative practices, and curriculum and child assessment.</p>
<p>Arkansas Better Beginnings http://www.arbetterbeginnings.com/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R ■ SACERS ■ Youth Program Quality Assessment ■ PAS ■ BAS 	<p>To achieve Level 1, providers conduct a self-evaluation using an approved rating tool for each age group served. Specific scores on these tools are required to achieve Levels 2 and 3.</p> <p>To achieve Level 1 standards in “Administration”, the administer must attend PAS or BAS Basics training. To achieve Level 2, a program review must be completed by a certified PAS or BAS assessor. To achieve Level 3, a specific score is required on the PAS or BAS.</p>
<p>Colorado* Qualistar Rating System http://www.qualistar.org/home.html</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R 	<p>Programs earn 0–10 points based on average classroom ERS scores.</p>

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Delaware Stars for Early Success http://www.delawarestars.udel.edu/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R ■ SACERS 	Although ratings are based on a point system, minimum ERS scores are required for Star Levels 3, 4, and 5.
District of Columbia Going for the Gold www.learnDC.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R ■ SACERS ■ CLASS 	ERS scores are used to determine rating levels. A minimum score is required to achieve each level of Going for the Gold.
Georgia Quality Rated https://qualityrated.decal.ga.gov/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R ■ SACERS 	Points are awarded based on ERS scores. These points constitute the Process Quality portion of the assessment and determine the rating. To achieve the highest rating, the center's or family provider's average ERS score must exceed 5.0 with no individual classroom score rated below a 3.0.
Idaho IdahoSTARS Quality Rating & Improvement System http://idahostars.org/?q=gris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R ■ SACERS 	Points for the Environment area are awarded based on ERS scores.

State, QRIS Name, and Web Site	Program Assessment Tools Used in QRIS	Description of Program Assessments and Ratings
<p>Illinois* Quality Counts http://www.ilqualitycounts.com/quality-rating-system/overview ExceleRate Illinois http://exceleRateillinois.com</p>	<p>For Quality Counts QRS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ FCCERS-R ■ BAS <p>For ExceleRate Illinois:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ CLASS ■ PAS 	<p>For licensed family homes in Quality Counts QRS:</p> <p>Environment rating scale scores are required for the “Learning Environment” standards to achieve one and two stars. For three stars, licensed homes can be nationally accredited or have a specific rating score. For four stars a child care home must meet a specific rating score and be nationally accredited.</p> <p>Business Administration Scale scores for family child care homes are required to achieve the “Program Administration” standards to achieve three stars when the option of an ERS specific rating score is chosen, and is required for four stars.</p> <p>ExceleRate Illinois for licensed child care centers requires use of the ERS or CLASS and the PAS at the Silver and Gold Circles if a program is not accredited by a state approved national accreditation entity.</p>
<p>Indiana Paths to QUALITY http://www.in.gov/fssa/2554.htm</p>	<p>ERS or other assessments are not used in the QRIS.</p>	

State, QRIS Name, and Web Site	Program Assessment Tools Used in QRIS	Description of Program Assessments and Ratings
Iowa Iowa Quality Rating System http://www.dhs.state.ia.us/iqrs/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS ■ FCCERS-R 	Points are earned to achieve Levels 3–5 if the director attends ERS training and then completes an ERS self-assessment, or develops a quality improvement plan after completing the training. Up to 3 points are also earned for average facility ERS scores.
Kansas Kansas Quality Rating Improvement System http://www.ks.childcareaware.org/provider_kqris.html Operating only in some areas of the State.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R 	ERS are required to score points in the Learning Environment area. Between 0 and 10 points are awarded based on averaged ERS scores.
Kentucky STARS for KIDS NOW Child Care Quality Rating System http://chfs.ky.gov/dcb/dcc/stars/default.htm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS ■ FCCERS-R 	ERS are required. For Level 1, programs must read information about ERS, and agree to complete an environment assessment within 12 months. For Levels 2, 3, and 4, programs must have an average minimum score to attain each level.
Louisiana Quality Start http://www.qrsloisiana.org/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R 	ERS are required. A total of 1–5 points are earned based on average and minimum scores on the social-emotional subscale of the ERS and the overall assessment.
Maine Quality for ME http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/ec/occhs/qualityfor me.htm	Tools not specified.	Maine does not require ERS assessments in its QRIS. However, centers and school-age child care may use an age-appropriate ERS to complete the self-assessment required in some of the levels.

State, QRIS Name, and Web Site	Program Assessment Tools Used in QRIS	Description of Program Assessments and Ratings
<p>Maryland Maryland EXCELS—<i>Excellence Counts in Early Learning and School-Age Care</i> http://www.marylandexcels.org/</p> <p>Implementation of this revised QRIS system began in July 2013.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS ■ FCCERS-R ■ CLASS 	<p>The ERS or CLASS is required for Check Levels 3, 4, and 5. The self-assessment (Level 3) or outside assessment (Levels 4 and 5) is conducted and a program improvement plan is created for any subscale score below 4.0 (Level 3), or any subscale score below 4.5 (Level 4), or any subscale score below 5 (Level 5). The assessment process is designed to be one component of the program’s efforts towards continuous quality improvement</p>
<p>Massachusetts Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/gris/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R ■ SACERS ■ CLASS ■ Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale ■ PAS ■ BAS ■ APT-O/APT-Q ■ Strengthening Families Protective Factors Self-Assessment 	<p>ERS scores are self-assessed at Level 2. A Program Quality Specialist provides individualized technical assistance for Level 3 programs and providers. A reliable rater determines a program’s/provider’s scores after classroom observations for Level 3 and Level 4 programs. (NOTE: The EEC Board will be voting on a policy change in January, 2014 to move the reliable rater visits to Level 4 only.) In addition, Levels 2, 3, and 4 require assessments with the CLASS or Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale to measure teacher-child relationships, and the PAS for administration. Assessment with the BAS is required for family child care providers</p>
<p>Michigan Great Start to Quality http://www.greatstarttoquality.org/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ PQA® 	<p>Programs complete a Self-assessment Survey. If that self-assessment indicates quality at a 4 or 5 star level, the program then has an on-site validation and a PQA®.</p>

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<p>Minnesota Parent Aware http://www.parentawareratings.org/</p> <p>Operating only in some areas of the State; statewide expansion is underway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CLASS 	<p>For non-accredited child care centers only: For the 3 star and 4 star levels, CLASS ratings in the Instructional Support categories are used to determine rating. In addition, one way to gain points towards a 3 star and 4 star level is through CLASS scores in all CLASS domains.</p>
<p>Mississippi Quality Stars http://earlychildhood.msstate.edu/programs/qualitystars/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R 	<p>ERS scores are required to achieve Steps 2–5..</p>
<p>Montana* Best Beginnings STARS to Quality http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/bestbeginnings/bestbeginningsstarstoquality.shtml</p> <p>A field test is currently underway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R ■ PAS ■ BAS 	<p>Programs applying for STAR 3, STAR 4, STAR 5 must have the appropriate ERS assessment as well as either the Business Administration Scale (family and group programs) or Program Administration Scale (centers) assessment. Certain scores must be achieved at each level in order to be awarded that STAR level.</p>
<p>Nevada Silver State Stars QRIS http://www.nvsilverstatestars.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R 	<p>A center’s star rating will be based on a combination of meeting the required criteria which includes the ERS scores and the number of quality indicators met. Centers must have a minimum average ERS score to achieve a star ranking of 3 Star, 4 Star, and 5 Star.</p>
<p>New Hampshire New Hampshire’s Quality Rating and Improvement System http://www.dhhs.state.nh.us/dcyf/licensedplus/index.htm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS ■ FCCERS-R 	<p>New Hampshire does not require providers to be assessed with ERS, but does allow providers to perform a self-assessment using one of the ERS tools to meet one of the five optional standards that programs must meet.</p>

State, QRIS Name, and Web Site	Program Assessment Tools Used in QRIS	Description of Program Assessments and Ratings
<p>New Mexico* AIM HIGH https://www.newmexicokids.org/content/caregivers_and_educators/aim_high/ FOCUS https://www.newmexicokids.org/content/caregivers_and_educators/focus/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS ■ FCCERS-R ■ CLASS ■ PAS ■ BAS 	<p>To achieve 3 stars and above in AIM HIGH, the provider must achieve an average core of 4.0 on an ERS. In FOCUS, the ERS will be used as a program self-assessment tool.</p>
<p>New York QUALITYstarsNY http://qualitystarsny.org/ Operating only in some areas of the State.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS ■ FCCERS-R 	<p>In this points-based system, ERS observations account for up to 50 of the 360 possible points.</p>

State, QRIS Name, and Web Site	Program Assessment Tools Used in QRIS	Description of Program Assessments and Ratings
<p>North Carolina North Carolina Star Rated License System http://ncchildcare.nc.gov/providers/pv_sn2_ov_sr.asp</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS ■ FCCERS-R 	<p>Points are earned based on the average ERS score in each classroom.</p>
<p>Ohio Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) http://www.earlychildhoodohio.org/index.php</p> <p>Implementation of this revised QRIS system began in October 2013. QRIS for Type B (small) FCC homes will be available in January 2014.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Any self-assessment tool(s) that address the quality of the classroom environment and staff/child interaction that is developmentally appropriate for each age group served ■ Ohio Classroom Observation Tool 	<p>In Step Up to Quality, programs conduct an annual classroom self-assessment for each group of children to achieve a two-star rating. The tool must be developmentally appropriate for the age group(s) served. Ratings are not tied to the scores.</p> <p>Ohio developed an Ohio Classroom Observation Tool to measure the quality of classroom environments and staff/child interactions in programs seeking three- to five-star ratings.</p>
<p>Oklahoma Reaching for the Stars http://www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/cc/stars</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS ■ FCCERS-R ■ Child and Caregiver Interaction Scale ■ Arnett Caregiver Interaction Scale ■ Early Learning and Literacy Classroom Observation tool ■ Program Administration Scale ■ CLASS 	<p>Oklahoma requires programs to be assessed with ERS, but does not tie particular scores to the ratings. Assessments are not required for programs accredited by an approved national accrediting body.</p>

State, QRIS Name, and Web Site	Program Assessment Tools Used in QRIS	Description of Program Assessments and Ratings
<p>Pennsylvania Keystone STARS http://www.pakeys.org/pages/get.aspx?page=Programs_STARS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS ■ FCCERS-R ■ PAS (Voluntary for continuous improvement) ■ CLASS (Voluntary for continuous improvement) 	<p>Keystone STARS includes a required ERS assessment. At the STAR 1 level, providers complete a learning environment checklist. At the STAR 2 level, providers complete an ERS self-assessment and develop a plan to improve any scores below 3.0. Specific ERS subscale scores are required at the STAR 3 and 4 levels.</p>
<p>Rhode Island BrightStars http://www.brightstars.org/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R 	<p>An environment rating scale score is an alternative to accreditation to achieve the “Child’s Daily Experience” and “Teaching and Learning” standards for Levels Three, Four, and Five.</p> <p>CLASS scores are collected from a random sample of 33 percent of preschool classrooms. The State did not use scores in the rating process during the first year of implementation.</p>
<p>South Carolina ABC Child Care Program www.schildcare.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS 	<p>To achieve a Level A rating, programs must have an average score of 4.5 on an ERS assessment, with an Interaction subscale score of at least 4.</p>

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<p>Tennessee Star-Quality Child Care Program http://www.tennessee.gov/humanserv/adfam/ccrcsq.html</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS ■ FCCERS-R 	<p>ERS are used for the Program Assessment standards. Rating is based on average scores.</p>
<p>Texas Texas Rising Star Provider Certification http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/childcare/provcert.html</p> <p>Only licensed or registered providers that have an agreement with a local Workforce Development Board to serve Texas Workforce Commission subsidized children participate in Texas Rising Star Certification.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ State developed tool adapted from NAEYC Standards 	<p>The state-developed tool is used first in a self-assessment and then in the State's formal assessment. The tool is used to determine the quality rating of the program.</p>
<p>Vermont STep Ahead Recognition System for Child Care Programs (STARS) http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/stars/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R ■ SACERS ■ CLASS ■ YPQA 	<p>The ERS is used in the Program Practices Arena. Specific scores are required to achieve 3 or 4 points. A mentoring visit and approved plan is required for 2 points, a self assessment and approved plan is required for 1 point. Accredited programs achieve 5 points in this arena. CLASS is another approved tool to be used at the 3 or 4 point level. Afterschool programs may choose the YPQA (Youth Program Quality Assessment.)</p>

State, QRIS Name, and Web Site	Program Assessment Tools Used in QRIS	Description of Program Assessments and Ratings
<p>Virginia Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI) http://www.smartbeginnings.org/qrisc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ CLASS ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R 	<p>In classroom-based programs (i.e. centers, public preschools), Pre-K and Toddler CLASS scores are used to determine star ratings in the Interactions standard, while ECERS-R or ITERS-R scores are used to determine star ratings in the Environment and Instruction standard.</p> <p>In family child care homes, FCCERS-R scores are used to determine star ratings in the Environment and Interactions standards. No star levels are assigned as part of the family child care home rating.</p>
<p>Washington Early Achievers http://www.del.wa.gov/care/qrisc/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ FCCERS-R ■ CLASS 	<p>For levels 3-5, in addition to earning cumulative points, there are minimum thresholds or base scores that facilities must achieve on the ERS and CLASS assessments.</p>
<p>Wisconsin YoungStar http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ECERS-R ■ ITERS-R ■ SACERS ■ FCCERS-R 	<p>To achieve the 4 Star level, programs must have an ERS average score of 4. To achieve the 5 Star level, programs must have an average score of 5.</p>

***State Notes:**

Colorado: A redesign of QRIS for Colorado is underway, led by the Department of Human Services, Division of Early Care and Learning. Additional information is available at <http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/CDHS-ChildYouthFam/CBON/1251583639294>.

Illinois: As of July 1, 2013, Illinois began transitioning to a new QRIS for center-based programs— ExceleRate Illinois. Applications for ExceleRate Illinois will be available after January 1, 2014. Additional information is available at <http://exceletrateillinois.com/>.

Montana: A field test of a new QRIS system—Best Beginnings STARS to Quality—in underway in Montana. In March 2013, 30 programs were selected by application process into Phase II of the field test. Additional information is available at <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/bestbeginnings/bestbeginningsstarstoquality.shtml>.

New Mexico: A pilot of a new QRIS system—FOCUS—is underway in New Mexico. An evaluation of the pilot began in February 2013. Additional information is available at https://www.newmexicokids.org/content/caregivers_and_educators/focus/.

Resources

The following publications provide information about the use of program quality assessment tools:

- *Best Practices for Conducting Program Observations as Part of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems* (2011), by Bridget Hamre and Kelly Maxwell, highlights issues and recommendations for conducting program observations as part of a QRIS. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/program_observation.pdf
- *Quality in Early Childhood Care and Education Settings: A Compendium of Measures* (2010), by Tamara Halle, Jessica Vick Whittaker, and Rachel Anderson, from Child Trends, provides profiles of several tools that can be used to assess the quality of child care. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/opre/complete_compendium_full.pdf
- *Measuring Youth Program Quality: A Guide to Assessment Tools, 2nd Edition* (2009), by Nicole Yohalem and Alicia Wilson-Ahlstrom, Forum for Youth Investment, provides an overview of tools developed to measure quality in youth programs. <http://www.forumfyi.org/content/measuring-youth-program-quality-guide-assessment-tools-2nd-edition>

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