



## **Expectations for Verification & ERS Assessment**

Congratulations on taking another step on your continuous quality improvement (CQI) journey! Whether you have requested a practice assessment or Verification & Assessment, we understand there is often some stress and anxiety associated with having your program assessed. Knowing what to expect of the Verification & Assessment process will hopefully help to put you and your staff at ease. The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) are designed to capture a snapshot in time. The scales have been developed to be objective and assessors are trained to maintain objectivity. Verifiers are also trained to reliability and review the standards with an objective lens.

Please be familiar with these specific details about the verification visit & the assessment observations. If you have any further questions about the Verification & Assessment process or about the contents of this letter, please do not hesitate to call the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC) Verification & Assessment Unit at 302-831-3239.

### **60 Day Window**

The ERS assessment(s) will occur unannounced within 60 days of the assessment request date, excluding the program's pre-selected blackout dates. For multiple classrooms, all observations will be completed within three weeks when possible.

The Verification of Standards visit will be scheduled to review the program's documentation of Stars' Standards on any *one* day within 60 days of the verification & assessment request date.

### **Prepare the Staff**

Just as you prepare the classrooms for the assessment, and the documentation for verification, don't forget to prepare the staff.

Ensure that all staff have reviewed this information and any relevant F.A.Q's or guidelines. The lead staff in each observed classroom will take part in an interview after the ERS assessment. The interview is usually conducted after the children are settled for nap (or after dismissal in a part-day program). The administrator is not permitted to be present for the interview. Staff is not permitted to reference handbooks, props, or other documents other than posted information on the walls. For each room being assessed, be prepared to provide a relatively private setting as well as staff coverage for approximately 30-45 minutes. When possible, school-age assessments will begin with the interview, approximately 30 minutes prior to the children's arrival. There will be a second interview at the end of the observation as well for which the time varies depending upon the first interview.

Be aware that the interviews may take place at approximately the same time if multiple rooms are being assessed on the same day.

### The Classroom Selection Process for ERS Assessment

When you submit for Verification & Assessment, you will need to provide correct and up to date information for each classroom in your program. Delaware Stars expects this information to remain correct at the time of verification. If classroom arrangements or information changes from the time that your program submits for verification and the time that the assessment is scheduled, it is your responsibility to notify DIEEC staff of the change **prior** to the assessment. If the information is inaccurate at the time of assessment, your assessment may have to be postponed.

In order for the assessment to be considered valid, a random sampling of classrooms must be appropriately selected. Random selection will occur onsite and is done objectively. For each age group that your program serves, at least one-third of the classrooms in that age group will be selected for assessment. Age groups include infants (birth through 11 months), toddlers (between the ages of 12 and 30 months), preschoolers, and school-agers. See the chart below for specific information regarding the “one-third” rule.

Number of Classrooms per Age Group	Number of Assessments per Age Group
1-3	1
4-6	2
7-9	3
10-12	4

### The Child Files Selection Process for Verification

Based on the number of children enrolled, a random selection of the child files will be reviewed to provide evidence for certain standards. This selection is done prior to the visit, based on the children listed on the age worksheets, to ensure some children from each classroom and some children with IEPs/IFSPs/DLL are selected as appropriate.

Current Enrollment	Sample Size
30 or fewer children	10
31 to 80 children	20
More than 80 children	25% of enrollment

\*For more information on child sampling, please refer to the File and Lesson Plan Review: Children’s Files Review section of the verification manual

## **What to Expect from the Assessor**

This visit is different from any other visit you've probably had, such as TA visits or compliance visits from OCCL. The assessor will stay out of the way as much as possible and follow your class through a normal day. The assessor will be listening for interactions, and may position her or himself in order to hear those interactions and accurately observe routines. S/he is trying to capture all of the positive things that are occurring with the staff and children. Usually there is one assessor per room, but there may be up to two Stars staff in a room. This is part of our ongoing training and reliability. Delaware Stars staff try their best to make this process as comfortable as possible. Please be aware, though, that there are some required practices that the assessors will need to follow in order to complete a valid assessment.

- ✓ Assessors will arrive between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. for centers and family child care programs. If you have any questions for the assessor, it is best to ask them upon arrival. School-age assessments will begin approximately 30 minutes prior to the children's arrival and begin with the interview, when possible. There will be a shorter interview at the end of the observation as well.
- ✓ The assessor will confirm the ERS Assessment Age Worksheet with the administrator upon arrival. Once this has been confirmed, the assessor will need to be taken to the classroom and begin the assessment immediately.
- ✓ The assessor will ask the classroom staff a few short questions when he or she first arrives in the selected room.
- ✓ Once the observation begins, the assessor will not be able to interact with the staff or the children. This is done so that assessors are able to remain objective and not interfere with a typical day.
- ✓ By requesting an assessment, you are giving permission for the assessor to access any areas that children could potentially have access to (including but not limited to unlocked or open cabinets, closets, doors, drawers) and look through all items and materials very thoroughly. This is vital to accurate scoring. In particular, it is important for family child care programs to understand that any area utilized by the children will be included in the assessment, such as the kitchen and bathrooms. In addition, assessors must have access to any spaces that the children have access to (including but not limited to reported indoor gross motor space, outdoor gross motor space, children's bathrooms, other play spaces).
- ✓ Assessors may need to utilize an electrical outlet to charge the electronic scoring tablet.
- ✓ Approximately 30-45 minutes should be set aside for a staff interview after children have settled for nap (or after dismissal in a part-day program).

## **What to Expect from the Verifier**

- ✓ The verifier will take notes throughout the visit and interview staff and/or administrators as needed.
- ✓ The verifier will review the documents necessary as supporting evidence for meeting the standards.
- ✓ A tour of the facility by the administrator or designee may be requested as supporting evidence for standards that are met by observation only.

- ✓ The verifier will come to your program on one scheduled visit only so be sure all necessary documentation and files are updated and ready for review.

### **Next Steps**

The verifiers and assessors are not able to share any feedback during or after the visit. Thoughtful and meticulous review is needed to complete the scoring and reports. Thus, it is against policy for either of them to share any information with programs.

The assessment summaries for each classroom/group observed and the Standards Verification summary report will be emailed to the program's DE Stars Contact, (as listed in the DOE DE Stars database), within 15 business days of the final verification visit (including both the ERS assessment and standards visits). The program's Technical Assistant (TA) will be copied on the email and will arrange for a visit to review the results. The reports will show strengths as well as areas to focus on in your program's continuous quality improvement.