

Tennessee Additional Notes to SACERS-Updated™

Overview

The purpose of the Tennessee additional notes is to improve the interrater agreement among scale users and to provide further interpretation of items and indicators to assist with scoring decisions. In order to fulfill the requirements of Tennessee state law, the Tennessee Anchors wrote these additional notes as the first reference for scale clarification and scoring. These notes have been adopted for use in Tennessee assessments. Some of the information used in the additional notes was adapted from the School-age Care Environment Rating Scale®. The notes follow the intent of scale application as defined by Thelma Harms, Ellen Vineberg Jacobs and Donna Romano White, authors of the scale. This resource can be checked out from a CCR&R office, a TECTA office or it can be purchased online.

Be sure to replace older notes with newer notes. The most recent TN updates are:

3/23/18 Updated notes for SACERS-Updated

8/1/18 Additional Notes in Effect

General Notes for SACERS

Levels of quality

Levels of quality build expectations from inadequate to minimal to good to excellent. In order to meet the intent of indicators in the higher levels of quality, all levels of quality below must be met. Consider not only the requirements of the indicator, but the level of quality documented as general practice throughout the observation.

Accessibility

For **all** levels of quality, another determining factor when deciding accessibility as opposed to availability is who initiates getting the materials. If the educator initiates putting the materials out, they are accessible for the period of time they are out. If children initiate by asking for materials, then they are not considered accessible but are available.

When determining whether enough materials are present consider the largest group size that could be present during any given day.

Accessibility at the minimal level of quality

At the three level, materials are considered accessible only if it is observed that children freely access and are permitted to use most of the materials daily. Ex. Some centers may not be opened during the observation. If the schedule indicates an additional time for access to materials, base the score on educator questions and how materials were used.

Accessibility at the good levels of quality

The requirement for materials to be accessible for 1/3 of the day at the good level pertains to the following items and indicators: Items 3, Space for privacy-indicator 5.1; 7, Furnishings for relaxation and comfort-indicator 5.2 and 7.1; 19, Arts and crafts-indicator 5.1; 20, Music and movement-indicator 5.2; 21, Blocks and construction-indicator 5.1 and 5.3; 22, Drama/theatre-indicator 5.1; 23, Language/reading activities-indicator 5.1; 24, Math/reasoning activities-indicator 5.1; 25, Science/nature activities-indicator 5.1 and 5.2; 26, Cultural awareness-indicators 5.1 and 5.2; 37, Free choice-indicator 5.1.

Research verifies that children learn through prolonged periods of play that give them opportunities to make choices, discover and explore. To support learning and development, schedules should include meaningful time periods when a variety of materials are accessible to children. A significant portion of this time should occur when most children are present so they benefit from experiences with these materials.

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Accessibility and Transitions

When calculating time for play activities (i.e. gross motor time, free play, access to materials), only the times children are actively engaged can be considered. For example, set up times, clean up times, and transition times without access to materials will not count towards meeting accessibility or time requirements.

One Third of the Day

To meet the requirements for “one third of the day,” materials should be accessible to children for one third of the hours of operation. If groups arrive at different times, “one third of the day” will be calculated for each group.

Before School Care

If programs provide care before school, consider the amount of time children are present. Children should have opportunities for ample choices if time allows even if all types of materials are not accessible. Children should not be observed sitting without any activities or choices for extended periods of time.

After School Care

If programs provide after school care, the schedule should reflect at least one meaningful period when most of the children have access to materials because they have been in large group, structured activities for much of the school day. In situations where most of the children have limited access to materials due to prolonged waiting or routine times, credit for “one third of the day” may be impacted.

Full Day Program

For full day programs that operate 8 hours or more, consider the entire operational hours.

Throughout the Day: Full Day Program

At the good level, accessibility should be provided “throughout the day” for *full day programs*. In order to meet “throughout the day”, materials should be accessible for one third of the time when most (more than 50%) of the children are present. Meaningful free play with materials should take place in both the morning and in the afternoon. Throughout the day is required for all indicators that require one third of the day.

Many and varied materials should be accessible during the *majority of the “throughout the day” time frame*. If children have access to additional materials during other play periods (such as outdoors), but not necessarily many and varied, access to those additional materials can count towards “throughout the day” as long as those choices allow for a meaningful play experience.

Ten Minute Allowance

For any program, credit for “one third of the day” and “throughout the day” can be given if the hours vary by ten minutes or less when calculating accessibility.

Display

Display should be meaningful for children. To meet the requirements of the display indicators as well as the requirements of other agencies, consider the quality of the display. The requirements may be met with fewer thoughtfully chosen pieces that incorporate several meaningful components (ex. one poster may include diversity and current themes, etc.).

Display only counts as materials if it encourages active involvement through child manipulation.

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Equipment

DHS licensing rules state that the manufacturer's safety instructions shall be followed for the use and/or installation of all indoor and outdoor equipment and appliances (1240-04-03-.08). For example, crib, bed and futon mattresses should not be used on the floor to create soft areas.

Assessors will not consider mattresses on the floor towards meeting requirements for soft furnishings, and if seen, assessors will notify DHS licensing and the child care agency staff of the violation (effective October 17, 2016).

Gross Motor

The list of acceptable protective surfacing materials does not include mixed surfacing materials since these materials were safety tested individually.

All equipment and/or play structures present in gross motor areas will be considered when assessing playground safety unless a physical barrier (fence, cones, rope, etc.) is present providing a visual reminder to children that an area is not to be used.

In order to ensure variety, portable gross motor materials, such as balls, hula hoops, or jump ropes, may count for no more than three skills. For example; balls can count for throwing, catching and kicking.

Health

Disinfectant and/or anti-bacterial wipes do not count for sanitization purposes. Products that can meet the requirements as sanitizing solutions are: bleach and water solution; or a commercial product that states on the label or manufacturer's products sheet it kills 99.9% of germs, kills HIV virus, or is an EPA registered product. All commercial products used for sanitizing must be used according to manufacturer's instruction.

Proper hand washing requires the use of liquid soap and running water.

Rotation

When rotation of materials is required, rotation should occur monthly.

Staff

In all items involving any type of interaction, "staff" refers to those adults who are in the classroom and who work with the children daily (or almost daily), for a substantial part of the day. This can include volunteers, if they are in the classroom for the required amount of time. Adults who are in the classroom for short periods of the day, or who are not a regular daily part of the classroom, do not count in evaluating whether the requirements of the item are met. For example, if a therapist, parent, a director, or owner of a program comes into the classroom and interacts with children, for short or irregular periods, these interactions do not count in scoring the item.

When two or more educators are in the classroom and you are trying to determine overall impact of interactions, look for a balance. However, if one educator is extremely negative, a balance cannot be achieved and the intent of the indicator is not met.

Supervision

For children under the age of 10, staff must be able to hear the child at all times, must be able to see the child with a quick glance, and must be able to physically respond immediately, leaving no child unattended. For children 10 and older, the adult must know the whereabouts and activities of the children at all times and must be able to physically respond immediately.

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Violence

For all scales-the presence of weapons or characters displaying weapons is not an automatic discount. With regard to books, pictures, and materials, if the combined, overall impact is negative, plays graphic violence, and promotes aggressive behavior such as play fighting that is not stopped by the educator, then discounting is valid and should be well documented in the assessor notes.

Items to be omitted from TN scoring: #9, #10, #11, #13, #35, #39, #40, #41, #43, #44, #45, #46, and #47

Specific Notes for SACERS-Updated

1. Indoor space

5.2 This indicator requires that natural lighting should be observed in the **primary space used for care**.

5.3 This indicator considers ongoing maintenance as well as housekeeping.

7.3 The provision for ventilation control must be in the room. Opening a window or door for ventilation should not create a safety issue.

2. Space for gross motor activities

3.1 For after school programs that operate at least 3 consecutive hours, spaces used for gross motor activities (whether inside or outside) should be accessible 30 minutes daily. For full day programs that operate 8 hours or more, this space should be accessible for at least one hour daily.

5.1 Access to some indoor gross motor space is required daily. Indoor space could include areas such as a gym, an equipped gross motor center, or a large area for dancing or other whole body movement.

When weather permits, after school programs that operate for at least 3 consecutive hours should have space outside for gross motor accessible to children for at least 30 minutes. For full day programs that operate 8 hours or more, this space should be accessible for at least one hour daily.

5.2 Both surfaces should be accessible daily. Protective surfacing included within a use zone cannot be considered as either of the two required play surfaces.

7.1 Both indoor and outdoor space should be accessible daily. Varied means there is *more than one* space accessible both inside and outside. One large space may be considered if there are areas for different types of play within that space.

3. Space for privacy

7.2 This indicator requires more than just having a center limited to a specific number of children. Evidence of staff intentionally setting up special activities for one or two children should be observed. This indicator carries a higher expectation than general monthly rotation; therefore, activities should be changed more than once a month.

4. Room arrangement

1.4 and 3.4 For scoring purposes in TN a score of NA is not allowed. An area for homework *or quiet study* should be provided for those children who wish to use such an area.

3.4 One end of a large table may count as a separate area at the minimal level of quality.

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5.2 This requires *ALL* quiet and noisy centers be separated.

7.1 This indicator is looking for a variety of materials within all centers.

7.2 This requires that most areas are changed or have materials added monthly.

6. Furnishings for learning and recreational activities

5.2 Work done by children in the group *and* materials of interest to them should be displayed in the primary space used.

7. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort

1.1, 3.1, 5.1 and 7.1 If materials/equipment are used at lower indicators they may not be considered again at higher indicators.

Standard bed-sized pillows or larger are considered furnishings. Smaller pillows count as materials. To count as a furnishing, rugs/mats should be large enough to permit at least one child to stretch out and lounge comfortably.

3.2 Most soft furnishings considered at 3.1 should be clean and in good repair.

5.1 This indicator requires enough softness within the space that several children can use during free choice times. This could be met through furnishings within one large area or multiple smaller furnishings throughout the room. This indicator does not require a “cozy area.”

7.1 There must be at least one protected cozy area with a substantial amount of softness. Both furnishing(s) and materials should be gathered together in the designated space where children can completely escape hard surfaces.

8. Furnishings for gross motor activities

When an outdoor play area is used by multiple classrooms being observed, the assessors should compare structural information so that Playground Assessment Notes will be consistent.

3.1 The required gross motor equipment should be accessible daily.

3.2 This indicator requires at least two portable materials for individual games and at least two for group gross motor games are accessible daily.

5.1 Variety means at least 3 different pieces of equipment, but they can be part of 1 large, composite structure. This number may vary depending upon the number of children enrolled.

5.1, 5.3 After school programs that operate for a minimum of 3 consecutive hours require at least 30 minutes of access to gross motor equipment. For full day programs that operate at least 8 hours, this equipment should be accessible for at least one hour daily.

5.2 The stationary materials should stimulate at least 5 different skills.

5.3 Variety for this indicator requires at least 3 portable materials for individual games and at least 3 portable materials for group gross motor games. These materials should stimulate at least 5 different skills.

7.1 If flexible/imaginative equipment is observed, an additional question to determine how frequent materials are rearranged should be asked.

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7.2 Variety indicates 3 to 5 skill levels.

12. Health practices

3.3 The list of food allergies and dietary restrictions must be located in the room where children eat. This information does not have to be publicly displayed; however, directions for finding this information must be publicly displayed in the room where children eat. Medication schedules should be posted for staff use.

5.1 This requires isolating sick children in a separate room; educator(s) washing hands in between handling sick and healthy children; following universal precautions, etc. This list is not comprehensive.

14. Safety practice

For a more detailed listing of Playground Safety Hazards, refer to the Tennessee Playground Safety Sheet found at www.tnstarquality.org.

Indoor space for gross motor play and equipment is not held to the same standards as outside; however, safety as the primary focus should be insured. Consider the placement of equipment as well as the surface under equipment where children might fall. If indoor children's climbing equipment is used, mats or carpet are required to be placed under the equipment if it is over 12 inches in height. This is in reference to equipment specifically for climbing.

When an outdoor play area is used by multiple classrooms being observed, the assessors should compare structural information so that Playground Assessment Notes will be consistent. If protective surface numbers differ due to surface being displaced and not raked back throughout the course of the day, times of measurements should be noted in summary reports.

3.1 Uncovered electrical outlets are not sufficient concern to stop scoring at this indicator, but could be a complicating factor if other hazards are present.

3.1 If there are more than 5 minor hazards, requirements are not met.

3.4 An emergency exit route requires more than posting an exit sign. The route may be indicated through a drawn visual graphic or written instructions for how to safely exit. Route(s) must be displayed in all indoor spaces used by the children.

3.5 If evidence for monthly drills is not observed, questions may be asked.

5.1, 5.2 Questions may be asked unless issues are observed.

15. Attendance

3.3 The educator should contact parents/school representatives immediately upon arrival if an expected child does not attend. This is only a consideration if there is a transfer of care between the child care center and another agency.

5.2 "Frequent" means messages are checked more than once daily.

16. Departure

1.3, 3.3, 5.3 Ask if not observed. If no children are bussed home, score these indicators NA.

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17. Meals/Snacks

1.2, 3.2 The intent of this indicator is to determine whether the correct components of a meal or snack are being served to the children, regardless of whether it is provided by the program or brought from home. No analysis of the nutritional value of foods served is necessary. Use the USDA Meal Guidelines to determine whether the components are present. The guidelines also require all components to be served together. Personal dietary preferences of the assessor (e.g., whole grain vs. white breads; fresh vs. canned vegetables; high vs. low sugar or fat content, etc.) are not to be used in determining the quality of the foods served.

Regardless of source or ages served, 75% of all children must receive meals and snacks that meet USDA Meal Guidelines. Providers may supplement if they choose in order to guarantee 75% compliance. Combination foods are foods with multiple components that have been packaged together or combined during the cooking process. Combination foods can be counted to meet up to two different components. Scoring consideration of combination foods should be balanced with other items on the menu. Foods that might be served together, but do not meet the definition of combination foods can count for up to 3 components (i.e. hamburgers, sandwiches, cereal and milk with added fruit). When vegetable garnishes are served in sufficient quantities, they may be considered to meet the requirement as a vegetable. Breading on meat products may not be counted. Cooked dry beans, such as kidney or black beans which are considered to be an excellent source of protein, can count as either a protein or vegetable. However green beans, like string or lima beans which aren't considered to be good sources of protein, should only be counted as a vegetable.

1.3, 3.3 Foods that are perishable should not be left out longer than 1 hour.

1.4, 3.5 Eating surfaces must be cleaned and sanitized prior to, and following, use for food service. Follow the "2-step" process. Eating surfaces should be: 1) washed with a soap and water mixture to remove gross soil and, 2) sanitized with a bleach-water solution before and after being used for meals/snacks. To allow bleach-water solution to sanitize a surface, it should be allowed to air dry or remain on the surface for at least 10 seconds (best practice is 2 minutes) before rinsing away or wiping dry. For other acceptable sanitizing agents, refer to the general notes of the Tennessee Additional Notes. A fresh paper towel must be used for each step. One paper towel should be used to clean all surfaces and a second clean paper towel should be used to sanitize all surfaces. Cloth towels may be used in place of paper towels. If cloths are used for cleaning or sanitizing food prep surfaces, they may not be re-used for other purposes during the day and should be set aside for laundering.

If foods are served on a paper towel, they must be dry (example, crackers, cheerios, cookies, etc.); otherwise a plate, bowl, or cup should be used.

If proper sanitary measures are clearly practiced as part of the school-age program, but an occasional lapse does occur, credit can be given.

Sanitary conditions such as table cleaning and sanitizing, using clean serving and eating utensils, protecting food from table surface with a plate, paper towel or napkin, are considered in this indicator.

If the 2-step process is not observed, (for example, if children go to the lunchroom for snack) ask questions to determine whether tables have been cleaned and sanitized and not re-contaminated before food was served. Hand washing is considered in item 18, not in this item.

3.4 For food substitutions to be considered appropriate, they must meet the same nutritional value as the food they replace. The list of food allergies and dietary restrictions must be located in the room where children eat. This information does not have to be publicly displayed; however, directions for finding this information must be publicly displayed in the room where children eat.

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3.6 To meet the requirements of an accurate menu, more than just the food components should be listed. For milk, it is permissible to list “milk” without identifying the specific type of milk. An accurate menu reflecting the specific type of foods served should be posted where it can be easily seen by families.

7.2 This must be observed.

Examples of learning could be experiencing & discussing appropriate meal-time social skills, talking about why certain foods are healthy choices vs. unhealthy choices, and/or assisting in preparation. A learning experience is not limited to “academic” information.

18. Personal hygiene

For scoring purposes in TN, hand sanitizer is not considered an appropriate substitute for hand washing with liquid soap and running water. Handwashing is required after dealing with bodily fluids, before preparing food, before eating, after using the restroom and after messy activities (visibly soiled hands).

Consider the severity of impact when determining whether or not sufficient attention is given to hygiene.

3.1 Hand washing should take place at least 50% of the time for staff and 50% of the time for children.

7.1 Few exceptions allow for no more than 2-3 lapses.

19. Arts and crafts

The sculpture category includes items that allow children to create 3-D structures through shaping (carving and modeling) or assembling materials together. The finished sculpture should be a creation with a unique shape and form and should not look like the original material. If you observe staff showing children a way to make a sculpture using collage or craft items (e.g. pipe cleaners, paper strips or a bunch of cotton balls), then those items may be considered a sculpture material.

5.1 For scoring purposes in TN, a minimum of 10 materials must be accessible for one third of the day *and* all 5 categories must be represented.

7.1 Projects should occur monthly.

20. Music and movement

3.1 This indicator requires a musical experience daily.

5.1 Musical experiences should be appropriate. If any music is inappropriate, it should be considered at this indicator.

5.2 To meet requirements for various types, at least 3 different materials from all 3 categories must be accessible daily. For recorded music, one player is sufficient as long as there is a variety of recordings.

7.1 Instruction requires something more than using materials regularly accessible in the program. The instruction should expand children’s understanding and/or appreciation of music on a higher level.

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21. Blocks and construction

3.1 This indicator requires that enough materials for two children be accessible daily.

3.2 A protected, firm surface for building within the construction space is required. Some means that the space, although not necessarily large, does allow the children to successfully balance, build and create structures in their block play. The space size would allow two children to build successfully without undue interference from one another or from others.

5.1 The good level (5.1) is building upon the number of materials accessible in the minimal level (3.1). One large set of blocks or interlocking construction materials could receive credit at both indicators if it allows for an expansive building experience. However, if one set does not provide enough materials for an extensive construction project, then at least two sets should be accessible at the good level (5.1).

5.2 Sufficient construction space for at least three children should be protected from interference from other types of activities and traffic patterns. The primary purpose of the area should be to support construction and not fine motor or dramatic play.

5.3 Block accessories should be located near the blocks or interlocking construction materials so children recognize them as accessories.

22. Dramatic play/theatre

3.1 This indicator requires enough materials for at least 2 children to engage in meaningful play.

5.1 Enough materials should be accessible to support at least two roles or situations. These roles extend beyond the traditional “home-living” materials seen for younger children.

Opportunities for both boys and girls to fully participate in dress-up should be encouraged; although gender specific clothing is not the only type of dress-up that meets the requirement of this indicator. Examples might include fantasy costumes, community helper uniforms and unisex clothing. Dress-up provides opportunities for both boys and girls to experiment with roles, act out common scenarios and process emotions.

5.2 At least one instance must be observed. If the adult becomes actively engaged in dramatic play with children, the intent for this indicator is met.

7.1 While stories and “trips” are required, the use of related videos is optional. Outside trips are not required for this indicator as bringing community resources into the program for children to “visit” could accomplish the same enriched experience. These experiences should occur 3-4 times per year.

7.2 “Productions” can take place through performing for other children within the program. Examples could include having a puppet theater, performing in a talent show, having a singing competition or putting on a short play. This should occur at least monthly.

23. Language/reading activities

3.2 This should be observed at least once.

5.1 In addition to many books, daily access to 3-5 language games is required.

5.3 Homework is not considered a practical situation.

7.3 This should occur weekly.

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24. Math/reasoning activities

5.1 At least 3-5 games and 3-5 math materials are required.

25. Science/nature activities

3.1 These are required daily.

5.1 This could be met through materials *and/or* games. Variety requires representation from each type: natural objects, living things, and realistic books/pictures/games.

5.2 Living things must be accessible in the space used by the children.

7.2 Requirements can be met by bringing community resources into the program.

26. Cultural awareness

3.1 Three materials are required that show two different types of diversity.

5.1 A minimum of three different books, three different pictures, and three different types of materials (multiples of the same type of material, such as three puzzles, will count as one example) are required. Within these required items, four different types of diversity must be represented (race, abilities, age, culture, or language).

5.2 These examples should show both genders in the same role. One work role should be displayed in pictures and a different work role should be depicted in books. Example: male and female chef in display, male and female educator in books.

27. Greeting/departing

3.2 Positive acknowledgement is implied; give credit at this level if arrival and departure of 50% of children is acknowledged by the classroom staff.

31. Discipline

Discipline is defined as teaching children to exercise self-control. Discipline is ideally proactive, and reactive only when needed. The proactive steps taken to teach self-control and prevent misbehavior are part of effective classroom management. One element of classroom management is developmentally appropriate expectations for the children. This means that the expectations should be based upon the children, their ages and abilities, their experiences, and best practice about how children grow and learn. When discipline is reactive, it should be a positive teaching interaction between an adult and child. Lack of observed discipline encounters typically indicates effective classroom management strategies resulting in positive discipline.

3.1 If the program has an appropriate written discipline policy, it is not necessary for the policy to mention excluded methods of punishment.

3.3 Score no if the educator uses harsh punishment, threatens, or physically disciplines any child (including educator's child).

7.1 In most cases "consultant" means someone from outside the program who specializes in the area of concern. The staff working in the program can benefit from an outsider's perspective of a child who is experiencing difficulties. In a few cases, however, a program staff member can count as the "consultant" if the person has a specialization in the area of concern and can give an unbiased perspective.

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33. Interactions between staff and parents

3.2 This indicator requires observed evidence of welcoming parents into the program. Consider things such as parent information board/table, parent newsletter, event calendar, parent handbook, welcome letters, etc.

5.3 Take events such as picnics, parent meetings, open houses, etc. into consideration.

7.2 “Regularly scheduled” is defined as at least one time a year.

34. Staff interaction

3.1 This indicator requires that at least two instances of staff sharing information are observed.

5.2 Time for staff communication must not distract from responsibilities with children.

36. Schedule

If a schedule varies throughout the week, base your scores on what the children experience most of the time. For example, if the Friday schedule is more relaxed, while the rest of the week is more restricted due to time for homework, then base the score on the four days of the more rigid schedule.

3.2 The posted schedule should include times and reflect all hours that children are in care regardless of the caregiving areas used. The schedule should be posted in the room where the children spend the majority of their time. The schedule should accurately reflect the events of the day even if it is not followed to the minute.

3.3 As long as fine motor/language materials are accessible daily, the requirements for this indicator are met.

3.4 This activity should be included on the written schedule.

5.3 For after school programs that operate for at least 3 consecutive hours, gross motor activities should be accessible 30 minutes daily. Weather permitting, this should occur outdoors. For programs operating 8 hours or more, at least one hour of access is required.

7.2 Two to three field trips are required during the school year. More is expected during the summer.

37. Free choice

3.2 Homework is also considered an activity. Children should have the choice of whether or not to do homework.

5.1 Accessibility is required for one third of the day.

7.1 This should be observed.

7.2 General rotation of materials should occur monthly. Adding materials in response to children’s interests is required more than monthly.

38. Use of community resources

3.2 Score yes if all community resources are used on-site, rather than off-site, and no permission is needed

3.3 This indicator applies to the use of all community resources (on-site or off-site).

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5.1 To meet requirements for regular use, at least two recreational resources and two cultural resources must be used and the use must be spread throughout the year. This includes resources brought into the program.

5.2 Trips are not required. Ask questions as needed to score this indicator. Supervision may vary depending on the type of activity.

5.3 Field trips are required for the site being assessed. If children attend programs at another location during full days or for the summer program, trips at the other location are not considered since that is not the site being assessed.

42. Provisions for exceptional children

ECERS-R™ 37, ITERS-R™ 32, FCCERS-R™ 34, and SACERS-Updated™ 42 should be scored NA unless a child with a disability that has been diagnosed through a formal assessment procedure and receives (or is eligible for) early intervention services is enrolled. Across all four scales, the following aspects should be considered when scoring: modifications, parent involvement, inclusion, and use of assessment information. Look for the extent of modifications needed to the schedule or classroom to include the child in daily activities, parent and staff communication regarding the child's assessment information and ongoing therapy, and the use of assessment information into planning throughout the day. Some parents may not share all information with staff for various reasons. Consider the levels of quality when determining if staff and parents have shared enough information to meet the child's needs. Even if staff put significant effort into asking about a child's needs, if parents share no information, the child's development is compromised.

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