

FCCERS-R FAQs

1. Why are we changing the scale used at family and group homes in Tennessee?

The standards of child care have evolved since the original family and group home Environment Rating Scale, the Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDCRS), was published by Teachers College Press in 1989. Many early care and education professionals felt the scale was out of date because it no longer reflected the current standards of care for children.

To address concerns about the scale, Thelma Harms and Richard Clifford, the authors of the FDCRS, along with Debby Cryer, wrote the new scale—the FCCERS-R—in 2007. When the new scale was published, most quality improvement programs, like the Tennessee Report Card and Star-Quality Program, switched to the new scale. However, Tennessee chose to continue to use the FDCRS for another three years to give everyone ample time to learn the FCCERS-R before switching to it in 2010.

2. When will the assessors start using the FCCERS-R, the new family and group home rating scale?

DHS Assessment Program Evaluators, or “assessors” as they are frequently called, will start using the FCCERS-R in August 2010 at family and group homes, beginning with providers who have licenses that expire in October 2010.

3. How does the FCCERS-R differ from the FDCRS?

Many things about the scales are the same, but there are some things that are different in the FCCERS-R. There is no difference in the way the two scales are scored. On both scales, the items are scored from 1 to 7. A score of 1 is considered to be inadequate quality, and a score of 7 is considered to be excellent quality .

The FCCERS-R includes updated items that reflect current standards in best practice and specific items for math/number learning and nature/science. Each item on the new scale includes all children, regardless of age or ability, unlike the FDCRS which consists of items relating to specific age groups. The authors incorporated new concepts into the scale, such as “much of the day” and forced participation in group activities. For further information on the FCCERS-R and these concepts, please refer to the information and additional notes on www.tnstarquality.org.

4. Will there be new additional notes for the new scale?

Yes, there will be new additional notes to clarify the items and indicators on the FCCERS-R. The anchors, with the help of their advisory group and suggestions from other Tennessee partners including family and group home providers, have developed new notes for the scale. They will be available on the www.tnstarquality.org website beginning in late February 2010.

5. How can family and group home providers learn more about the new scale?

Three groups are being trained thoroughly on the FCCERS-R: Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R), the Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA), and TOPSTAR providers. Once these three groups have completed the training, they will share information about the new scale with child care providers.

The CCR&R sites will start providing technical assistance and TN-CCPT training on the FCCERS-R in early March. At about that same time they will integrate the details about the new scale in their PSAM work with family and group homes. The TN-CCPT training schedules will be included in the CCR&R newsletters, and for the foreseeable future, training will be offered every three months when providers are available. In addition, TECTA will start including information about the new scale in their activities.

6. When will the other Tennessee partners be trained on the FCCERS-R?

Training on the new scale is already well underway. The anchors and the UT SWORPS assessment staff have been trained and are now reliable on the FCCERS-R. They began training CCR&R and TECTA staff in the fall of 2009 and will continue through the winter. In mid-January 2010, a group of TOPSTAR providers received in-depth training on the FCCERS-R, and the DHS Licensing team received a training overview on it. The DHS Assessment Program training will start in April 2010.

7. How do practice observations (PO's) support the change in scales?

Practice observations are a critical part of learning the new scale. Everyone will learn more about the revised scale, including how it is similar to and differs from the FDCRS, by participating in practice observations. After they are completed, the anchors and other trainers can more effectively identify the content that should be included and the information to emphasize the most in the new training. The anchors also use the experiences from practice observations to develop the Tennessee additional notes to clarify the intent of items and indicators.

8. How can someone sign up for a FCCERS-R practice observation?

To schedule a practice observation at your facility, please visit the www.tnstarquality.org website and complete the simple form. Someone will contact you to set up an appointment. Most of the practice observations will take place in the spring and summer of 2010.

9. Will I still have to have at least 50% of the children enrolled in my program present on the day of the assessment?

DHS expects that the children who are normally present on any given day will be in attendance on the day of the assessment. If there are not enough children present, the assessor will schedule another time to visit. At no time should a provider prevent any child from attending on the day of their program assessment.

10. Will a FCCERS-R assessment be just like a FDCRS assessment?

A FCCERS-R assessment will be scheduled and conducted in the same way the FDCRS assessment is conducted and scheduled. The assessor will still observe the program for 3–5 hours including allowing time for provider questions at the end of the observation. The requirements for observing a program on a “typical day,” in which the program operates in a manner similar to any other day, remain the same.

11. Will child care providers be able to ask for a review of their FCCERS-R results? Will the review process be the same?

Yes, family and group home providers who disagree with their FCCERS-R scores can request a review of the information in their Assessor Notes report that they receive along with their licensing packet. The review process has not changed; after assessments using the new scale beginning in August 2010, family and group home providers will be able to request a review of their scores, just as they do now.

12. How will DHS Licensing PE’s be able to answer questions about the new scale?

In January 2010, DHS Licensing Program Evaluators participated in a training that provided an overview of the new scale. DHS licensing staff have other important responsibilities, so they don’t use the scales in the way the assessors use them; therefore, they did not receive the same kind of detailed training on the scale that the assessors will. While licensing staff may be able to answer general questions about the FCCERS-R, they will direct providers to those who are being more extensively trained on the scale for answers to more detailed questions.

13. How was the Star-Quality Advisory Council been involved in the decision to change the scale?

The Star-Quality Advisory Council is appointed by the Governor. This council fills an important role in making recommendations regarding the Star-Quality Report Card rules as a whole. The Council will continue to make recommendations on the component criteria for the Report Card(s) as they have done in the past.

14. Will providers be given a copy of the new scale? If so, how and when will the books be given out?

DHS bought one new FCCERS-R scale for every licensed family and group home provider. The new scales will be distributed by the DHS assessors between August 2009 and July 2010. Assessors will give family and group home providers the new scale on the day of the home's last assessment with the old scale. Providers who became newly licensed during this same time frame but did not get assessed will be able to obtain a new scale from their local CCR&R office. Providers licensed after July 2010 and others can buy additional copies of the scale from Teachers College Press and other book or school supply stores.

15. What tips do the anchors have for providers on getting ready for the change in scales?

They suggest that you as a provider do the following: visit the www.tnstarquality.org website and print the information on the new scale. Read the information and the new scale carefully, making notes about anything you don't understand. Also, find out what free training is available in your community and attend a TN-CCPT training on the scale. If you are in PSAM or TOPSTAR, get together with the CCR&R specialist or with a TOPSTAR mentor to review what you've learned and get answers to any remaining questions you have. In addition, consider signing up to participate in a practice observation at your facility. It's a great way to learn more about the new scale.

16. What type of funding is available for providers to make any necessary changes to continue to be as successful on the FCCERS-R as they were on the FDCRS?

Fortunately, it is not anticipated that additional funding beyond typical operating costs will be needed for providers to meet the FCCERS-R criteria successfully. Similar to the FDCRS, there are many ways to meet the scale requirements that are of little to no cost to the provider. Child Care Resource and Referral staff will continue to provide technical assistance to providers and explore cost-effective methods to provide quality care.

As for funding in general that is available to providers, PSAM purchasing grants continue to be available to providers who meet eligibility requirements. In addition, from August 2009 through July 2010, at the conclusion of the annual assessment, all DHS licensed family and group home providers will be given a copy of the FCCERS-R.

17. Are there still going to be one or two people coming to assess me?

Yes, during the time that staff are learning the scale, two to four people will conduct abbreviated assessments at provider sites that have signed up to participate in practice observations. Once assessors start using the scale (beginning August 2010), an assessment specialist will accompany them on occasion and will score independently to ensure that the assessment tool is being used properly and as trained. This process will be no different with the FCCERS-R than with the FDCRS.