

## Tennessee Additional Notes to FCCERS-R

### Overview

The purpose of the Tennessee additional notes is to improve the interrater agreements of assessors, and to provide further interpretation of items and indicators to assist with scoring decisions by Tennessee Assessment Program Staff (APS). These notes have been adopted for use in Tennessee assessments. All notes clarify information to help in accurate scoring.

**Be sure to replace older notes with newer notes.**

**The most recent TN changes are:**

**4/09**

### General Notes for FCCERS

This note pertains to Item 3: Provisions for relaxation and comfort-indicators 3.1 and 3.2; Item 17: Art-indicator 3.1; Item 18: Music and Movement-indicator 3.1; Item 19: Blocks-indicators 3.1 and 3.2; Item 20: Dramatic play-indicators 3.1 and 3.2; Item 21: Math/number-indicator 3.1; Item 22: Nature/science-indicators 3.2 and 3.3; and Item 24: Promoting acceptance of diversity-indicator 3.1. For materials to be counted as accessible to children, they must be able to reach and use the materials for a period of 1 hour a day in a program of 8 hours or more. The 1 hour can be provided at one time or as a combination of several periods throughout the day. This does not mean that each child must have a full hour to use the materials. However, it is required that children have a reasonable chance to use the materials at some time if they wish. Less time is required for programs operating less than 8 hours a day, with the amount of time calculated proportionally, based on the ratio of 1 hour for programs of 8 hours or more. For example, if a program operated for 6 hours a day, this would be  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a full-day program, so the time required would be  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the 1 hour. Use this chart to determine the approximate amount of time needed in programs operating less than 8 hours.

Number of hours in operation	2 hours	3 hours	4 hours	5 hours	6 hours	7 hours
Approximate minutes required for accessibility	15	25	30	40	45	50

Materials are considered accessible only if it is observed that children freely access and are permitted to use most of the materials. Some materials may not be accessible during the

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observation. If the schedule indicates an additional time for access to materials, base score on teacher questions and how materials were used. In order to meet much of the day, there should be no significant extended periods of time where structured activities prevent access to materials. At the good level, access must be observed throughout the day.

The term “some” occurs most frequently in indicators that represent a minimal (3) level of quality, although occasionally it occurs at higher levels. In determining how much is needed to give credit for “some” in an indicator, consider the requirements in the parallel indicators at the lower and next higher level of quality. For example, if under inadequate “no” materials are required, then “some” would mean “one or more”. In cases where a plural is used with the term “some”, then “more than one” would be required to give credit. When terms such as “very few” or “very little” or “rarely” are used under inadequate, then “some” represents a mid-point between what is required for the 1 and the 5 levels.

Terms such as "many" or "variety" are used throughout the scale. We have provided numbers to guide decision making for many of these terms. However, the actual number required will depend on number of children enrolled and the ages and abilities of those children. In cases where there are small groups of children, the numbers provided are likely to be reasonable. However, in large family child care homes, with 10 or more children, more materials will be needed.

Levels of quality build expectations from minimal to good to excellent. Consider not only the requirements of the indicator, but the level of quality documented as general practice throughout the observation.

When children are required to participate in an activity or lose interest during the activity, but are not allowed to leave, participation is considered forced. Children may be encouraged to join an activity, but staff should be respectful of their cues and respond appropriately if any child loses interest.

Regarding supervision, staff must be able to hear the child at all times and must be able to physically respond immediately. Limited times when children are out of sight (2 to 4 minutes lapses) are acceptable as long as children are not engaged in high risk activities. The caregiver’s focus must be on the children, especially during high risk activities, such as eating, sand/water play, art, etc., in order to adequately protect children who are preschool age and younger.

Regarding language and interactions, it is expected that many incidences will be observed, and scoring is based on overall impact. When two or more caregivers are in the home and you are

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trying to determine overall impact of interactions, look for a balance. However, if one caregiver is extremely negative, a balance cannot be achieved and the indicator should be discounted.

Disinfectant and/or anti-bacterial wipes do not count for sanitization purposes. Products that can be given credit as sanitizing solutions are bleach and water solution or a commercial product that states on the label or manufacturer's products sheet that 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.

In all scales where special allergy needs must be considered, the list of food allergies does not have to be publicly displayed; however, directions for finding this information should be publicly displayed in the room where children eat.

Examples are for clarification only and are not intended as scoring requirements unless otherwise stated.

For scoring purposes in the state of Tennessee, a single observation will be completed regardless of the number of rooms. Fifty percent or more of the children must be present. In addition, both age groups (under 30 months and over 30 months) must be represented. Children attending Kindergarten are considered school-agers.

Items to be omitted from TN scoring: #35, #36, #37 and #38

## **Specific Notes for FCCERS**

### **1. Indoor space used for child care**

5.2 The natural lighting should enter the areas of the home where children spend much of their day.

### **2. Furniture for routine care, play, and learning**

3.2 Enough furniture for play means that the children have the developmentally appropriate seating needed to use play materials and that there are suitable ways of making materials accessible to the children on open storage shelves. Children 12 months and older who can select toys independently should have access to materials on low, open shelves. Appropriate seating on small chairs near very low tables is also needed to encourage more sustained play with toys for children 12 months and older.

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7.3 A rocking chair could be considered for supervising children at a child-sized table if placed near the table.

### **3. Provisions for relaxation and comfort**

3.1 To give credit, there must be at least one soft furnishing provided that is large enough for at least one child to lounge comfortably.

5.1 Softness provided at indicators 3.1, 5.1, and 7.1 are intended to build on the levels of quality; therefore, if credit was given for a soft provision at a lower indicator, the same provision cannot receive credit at a higher indicator.

5.3 If only school-agers are enrolled, at least 10 soft toys are required regardless of the number of children.

### **4. Arrangement of indoor space for child care**

1.2, 3.2 It is understandable that some family homes may use multiple rooms. This would be considered acceptable. Staff must be able to hear the child at all times and must be able to physically respond immediately. Limited times when children are out of sight (2 to 4 minutes lapses) are acceptable as long as children are not engaged in high-risk activities.

1.3, 3.1 When infants and toddlers are confined and prevented from moving around freely, it prevents them from learning through exploration. If children are unhappy, they should not be confined. If a child is playing happily, the confinement should not exceed 30 minutes at a time. They should spend most of the day unconfined.

3.3 When determining safety hazards, consider the ages and abilities of the children and the placement and severity of the hazard. Since item 12 already addresses safety hazards, this should only consider extreme hazards.

### **5. Display for children**

5.3 Work done by the children should be displayed in the areas where children spend much of their day.

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## **6. Space for privacy**

1.2 Children should not be isolated without interaction and/or something to do for a period longer than 10 minutes.

5.2 If credit is not given for 5.1, then credit cannot be given for 5.2.

## **7. Greeting/departing**

3.3 While all parents of infants and toddlers must enter the area where children are being cared for at the time of their arrival, it should be observed as the general practice for older children.

3.4 While information should be shared with parents of all infants and toddlers, less is required for preschool and school-agers.

5.4 Written information is required and should be documented as the routines are completed.

## **8. Nap/rest**

Score this item NA if only school-aged children are enrolled and nap/rest is not used. However, the item must be scored if a child indicates that a rest period is needed or nap/rest is observed.

1.2, 3.2 If a parent requests their child to have a special sleeping arrangement due to a health condition, a dated and signed note from a physician detailing the special condition is required. Car seats are not considered an acceptable sleeping arrangement. A physician's statement is required for placing infants on their stomachs to sleep.

1.2, 3.2 Two coverings are required for children over 12 months of age—one to cover the type of bedding used and one for the child to have access to in order to cover up with. Discount here for cross-contamination of bedding/linens. With the exception of cots, sleeping provisions should be 2 inches thick.

1.3, 3.3 Sleeping infants should be checked every 15 minutes by touch.

## **9. Meals/snacks**

1.1, 3.1 Water should be provided as needed between meals and snacks.

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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. No analysis of the nutritional value of foods served is necessary. Use the Food Guide 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. Also, consider perishable foods, which are left out longer than 1 hour. Regardless of source or ages served, 75% of all children must receive meals and snacks that meet USDA guidelines. Providers may supplement if they choose in order to guarantee 75% compliance. Programs that choose to “offer” rather than “serve” food (i.e., family style serving, school-age multiple choice snacks) carry an additional responsibility to encourage appropriate choices and model good nutritional habits. 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 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. Beans can count as either a vegetable or protein as needed.

1.3, 3.3, 5.3 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 do its job, it should be allowed to sit for at least 10 seconds (preferably longer) before wiping dry or allowing to air dry. For other acceptable sanitizing agents, refer to the general notes. If proper sanitary measures are clearly practiced as part of the child care program, but an occasional lapse does occur, credit can be given. If food is served directly on the high chair tray, the food should be dry (e.g., crackers, cheerios, etc.) for credit to be given; otherwise, a plate, bowl, or paper towel, etc., should be used.

1.3, 3.3, 5.3 Caregivers' hands must be washed before and after feeding a child a bottle. The expectation is for children's hands to be washed before and after eating (including bottle feeding) regardless of whether they feed themselves or are fed by an adult. The use of wipes on very young infants without head/neck control is appropriate. In addition, if an infant falls asleep during the bottle-feeding, it is permissible for their hands to be wiped before laying the child down, or the child's hands can be washed upon awakening. To allow staff to keep their focus on children while they are eating, a separate wipe may be used on a child's hands that

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have finished eating and may leave the table. However, all children's hands (exception children who have no head control) must be washed after all children are through eating.

1.4, 3.4 The intent for these indicators is for infants to be held for bottle feeding unless the bottle is being served with a meal.

5.4 The menu must be posted where it can be easily seen by parents.

## **10. Diapering/toileting**

1.1, 3.1, 5.1, 7.1 Basic sanitary conditions include proper diapering procedures as outlined in the TN 10-Step Diapering Process. The TN 10-Step Diapering Process would adequately minimize the spread of germs and replaces the procedure outlined in the scale. When cleaning or sanitizing surfaces, a disposable towel or fresh cloth must be used for each part of the process. If the same sink is used for all hand washing, it must be properly sanitized following toileting/diapering hand washing routines before it is used for any other purpose. Proper sanitizing includes spraying the sink bowl, rim, and faucets with an appropriate sanitizing agent. If the facility permits sinks to be designated for specific purposes, then this should be done (for example, sinks near toilets should be used for hand washing following toileting/diapering, while sinks in the food prep area are used for food-related and other purposes). The intent is to cut down on fecal-oral contamination (intestinal germs on the hands). To reference the TN 10-Step Diapering Process, go to [www.tnstarquality.org](http://www.tnstarquality.org).

1.2, 3.2 Diapers should be visually checked approximately every 2 hours.

1.3, 3.3 Since new research has shown that waterless washes are an inadequate sanitary measure, proper hand washing with soap and running water is required following diapering or toileting.

## **11. Health practices**

3.2 When combining all categories to determine 75%, priority should be given to hand washing when dealing with bodily fluids (blood and mucous). Consider the impact upon the children. Examples are required.

3.4 Over-the-counter medications may be given with written permission from parents and must be in the original container.

5.3 Sun protection should be used as needed regardless of time of day.

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7.2 Toothbrushes should be allowed to air dry, by leaving them uncovered (out of the danger of contamination) or covered in a way that allows them to breathe.

## **12. Safety practices**

1.1, 1.2, 3.1 For scoring purpose in Tennessee, we do not consider the measurements listed in the notes for clarification for raised edges on changing tables, choking hazards, for height of play equipment, and finger entrapments. In addition, fences are not required for the outdoor play area. Consider the location of the area and how it is supervised. For a more detailed listing of Playground Safety Hazards, refer to the Tennessee Playground Sheet found at [www.tnstarquality.org](http://www.tnstarquality.org).

1.1, 3.1 Bleach and water solution, used to sanitize surfaces, do not have to be locked, but must be stored out of reach of young children. Safety concerns such as glass, unsteady furniture, sanitizing agents sprayed directly in breathing areas of children, etc. are considered here. Crib slats should measure less than 2 3/8 inches. Discount if bottles or baby food are heated in the microwave and immediately fed to children without first being shaken or stirred to eliminate “hot spots”. Bean bag chairs may be used with infants under close supervision. For assessment purposes, the temperature of the water will not be measured.

1.1, 3.1 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. General home furnishings such as a couch, chair, or bed that children climb on do not require mats or carpet underneath. Temporary padding such as a pillow, cushion, or bean bag placed to protect the child from injury are acceptable in these situations.

1.3, 3.2 Sleeping infants should be checked every 15 minutes by touch.

## **15. Using books**

3.2 For scoring purposes in Tennessee, when determining if almost all of the books are in good repair consider the total number of books.

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## **17. Art**

5.2 These materials are required to be accessible throughout the day.

## **18. Music and movement**

3.1 For Tennessee scoring purposes, some means at least two materials for each age group enrolled.

5.2 Some appropriate music materials refers to the “many” music materials as defined at 5.1.

## **19. Blocks**

When determining if very small blocks should be considered under item 16 as fine motor materials or under item 19 as blocks, consider the intent and placement.

3.2 "Some" for this item is defined as at least five accessories of two different types.

7.2 There should be at least five examples of each type listed in the indicator accessible.

## **20. Dramatic play**

7.1 To meet the requirements for this indicator, there must be at least two different types of props that represent two different elements of diversity (e.g., clothing, skin tone, food, abilities, eating utensils, and dishes, etc.) accessible for use in dramatic play.

## **22. Nature/science**

3.2 If credit cannot be given for 3.1, then credit cannot be given for 3.2.

5.3 “Some” means that children have daily experience with either living plants or animals located in the room where the children play the majority of the day or in an indoor area that children visit daily. In order to receive credit, living things (plants, animals, etc.) must be easily seen by the children. If these items are stored out of the view of children (on top of a shelf, behind a cabinet, etc.) the teacher must make these accessible by bringing them down to the children’s eye level. There must be clear evidence that this occurs on a daily basis and that the intent is for children to have meaningful experiences with living things.

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### **23. Sand and water play**

5.2 If both sand and water are used, at least three types of toys should be accessible for each. Consider the number of children allowed to use the provision in determining if more toys are needed.

7.1 For children 18 months and older, both sand and water must be included as a regular part of the program, but both are not required daily.

### **24. Promoting acceptance of diversity**

5.1, 5.2 Required materials should be accessible for much of the day.

5.2 To give credit, examples representing four different elements of diversity (examples: clothing, skin tone, food, abilities, eating utensils and dishes, etc.) found in more than one type of prop must be accessible for use in dramatic play indoors or outdoors.

### **25. Use of TV, video, and/or computer**

If the assessor observes movies/videos being used that have violent or otherwise inappropriate material, discount the appropriate indicator. Otherwise, ask about the program's/provider's policy concerning use of TV and videos. No longer base your determination on what you see stored in the room. Do not reference movie/program names or ratings on summary reports. If audio-visual materials are used less than once a month while children are interested, mark this item NA.

5.1 To be considered "good for children," materials for computer and TV viewing must be appropriate and educational.

### **26. Active physical play**

1.2, 3.2 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. General home furnishings such as a couch, chair, or bed that children climb on do not require mats or carpet underneath. Temporary

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padding such as a pillow, cushion, or bean bag placed to protect the child from injury are acceptable in these situations.

1.2, 3.2 When there are more than five minor hazards or if there are two serious hazards outdoors, credit cannot be given at the one level. If there are no serious hazards and no more than five minor hazards, credit can be given in the three level. Lack of resilient surfacing, equipment spacing, etc., may be considered as major hazards depending on the measurements and whether or not serious injury could result.

5.3 Ample implies that children have choices.

5.4 If a physical barrier limiting access to equipment is not observed, then the space and equipment is considered accessible to all children.

#### **34. Provisions for children with disabilities**

ECERS 37, ITERS-R 32, FCCERS 34, and SACERS 44 should be scored NA unless a child with a disability who 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 in 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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