



*Meeting Licensing Rules and Environment Rating Scales Indicators Infant/Toddler Environment
Rating Scale – Third Edition (ITERS-3)*

March 2025

The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) provide an overall picture of the environment that has been created within an early childhood setting. The ERS tools should be used in connection with Wisconsin Licensing Rules. This document provides clarifications for ERS items as they pertain to Wisconsin Licensing Rules. Information in bold print is from DCF 251 Licensing Rules for Group Child Care Centers with Commentary. Information following the Licensing Rules are guidelines for scoring indicators for that specific item.

Item 1. Indoor space – temperature control

251.06(1)(d) The inside temperature may not be less than 67°F.

251.06(1)(e) If the inside temperature exceeds 80°F., the licensee shall provide for air circulation with fans, with air conditioning, or by other means.

Licensing regulations for inside temperature will be followed when scoring indicator 1.2 and 3.2

Item 5. Meals/Snacks

251.09(4)(a)11(b) Each self-contained classroom or area serving infants or toddlers who are diapered shall have a sink with hot and cold running water which is not used for food preparation or dishwashing within the room or area.

251.09(4)(a)11(c) There shall be a solid barrier between the diapering area and any food preparation area.

Licensing regulations will be followed when scoring indicators 1.3, 3.3, 5.3, and 7.3. To score 1.3 “No” and 3.3, 5.3, and 7.3 “Yes,” separate sinks must be observed for food preparation/dishwashing and handwashing in rooms serving infants or toddlers. Filling a cup or bowl with warm water for warming a bottle will be considered food preparation, and water from the handwashing sink may not be used for this purpose.

Items 5. Meals/snacks, 6. Diapering/toileting, and 7. Health practices - hand hygiene

251.07(6)(i) 7. Disinfecting hand sanitizers may not replace the use of soap and water when washing hands

Licensing regulations will be followed when scoring any indicator related to handwashing, disinfecting hand sanitizers are not allowed.

Item 7. Health practices – spacing of cots/cribs

251.07(4)(c) Each child under one year of age who naps or sleeps shall be provided with a safe, washable crib or playpen that meets the applicable safety standards in 16 CFR Part 1219 or 1220 and shall be placed at least 2 feet from the nearest sleeping child. Cribs or playpens may be placed end-to-end if a solid partition separates the crib or playpen and an aisle not less than 2 feet in width is maintained between sleeping surfaces.

251.07(4)(cm) Each child one year of age and older who has a nap or rest period shall be provided with a sleeping surface that is clean, safe, washable, and placed at least 2 feet from the next sleeping child. Sleeping surfaces may be placed end-to-end if a solid partition separates children and an aisle not less than 2 feet in width is maintained between sleeping surfaces. The sleeping surface shall be any of the following:

- 1. A bed**
- 2. A cot**
- 3. A padded mat**
- 4. A sleeping bag**
- 5. A crib or playpen**

Licensing regulations will be followed when scoring indicator 3.3. To score 3.3 Yes, cribs or cots must be 2 feet apart and/or separated by a solid partition.

Item 8. Safety practices – safety of gross motor space

NOTE: From December 1 to March 31, if children do not use outdoor equipment with platforms over 18 inches tall, insufficient cushioning will not be cited as a safety hazard when scoring this indicator. ERS Observers will not cite insufficient cushioning as a safety hazard if they have observed the program at times when children are not present because they would be unable to know if the children use the equipment with platforms over 18 inches tall.

Rationale: Accumulated snow does not provide adequate cushioning to protect against head injuries. Additionally, surface types such as loose-fill cushioning (wood mulch and rubber mulch), sand, pea gravel, and poured-in-place cushioning can freeze and lose their shock absorbency in winter/cold weather. Children can be permitted to use other equipment that does not require a cushioned fall surface. Other safety hazards in the gross motor space may still be cited as a safety hazard when scoring this indicator.

Note: For programs with fenced gross motor areas. When snow is cleared/moved and piled next to the fence, it can reduce the effective height of the fence. Licensing requires that fences are 48 inches high. Fence height should be considered when deciding where cleared snow will

be placed, so that the required fence height can be maintained. Reduced fence height will be cited as a safety hazard.

This information will be used when scoring indicators 1.2 and 3.2. Item 24. Gross motor - weather permitting

251.03(14r) "Inclement weather" means stormy or severe weather such as any of the following:

- a) Heavy rain
- b) Temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit
- c) Wind chills of 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below for children age 2 and above
- d) Wind chills of 20 degrees Fahrenheit or below for children under age 2

Licensing regulations for inclement weather will be followed when the scale references weather permitting for indicators 3.2 and 5.2.

Resources

- Caring for Our Children, 4th Edition: <https://nrckids.org/files/CFOC4%20pdf-%20FINAL.pdf>
- DCF 251: Licensing Rules For Group Child Care Centers: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/205.pdf>
- Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale®, Third Edition (ITERS-3™) - Thelma Harms, Debby Cryer, Richard M. Clifford, and Noreen Yazejian: <https://www.ersi.info/iters3.html>
- ERSI Website: <https://www.ersi.info/index.html>
- Playground Information to Use with the Environment Rating Scales: <https://www.ersi.info//PDF/playground%20revised%207-31-18.pdf>
- Public Playground Safety Handbook: <https://cpsc.gov/s3fs-public/325.pdf>
- YoungStar Connect: <https://www.youngstarconnect.com/>
- YoungStar Website: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar>

**** Final determination of any Wisconsin modified scoring must continue to meet all Wisconsin licensing and certification health and safety standards.**