

Congratulations on your interest in pursuing a formal rating with YoungStar! Programs that are eligible for, and receive, a formal rating have the opportunity to receive a free, onsite observation(s) using one or more of the **environment rating scales**. After the observation(s), programs receive a report outlining their strengths and areas for improvement. This is a great tool to use to improve your program's quality, regardless of the star rating your program receives. Programs must be in a physical location for one year prior to requesting a Formal Rating.

Before becoming eligible for a formal rating, your consultant will verify that you meet all the requirements for 3 Stars, and the educational requirements for 4 or 5 Stars. The items that will be verified by your consultant include:

- Staff education must meet the 4 or 5 star minimum requirements within The Registry at the time of this visit
- Indicators B.1.1 (self-assessment) and B.1.2 (QIP) must be complete and verified as being met in full.
- Indicator C.2.1 (budget, budget review, record-keeping, and tax completion) must be complete and verified as being met in full
- Indicator C.5.1-5 (family engagement) must be complete and verified as being met in full
- Indicator D.1.1 (self-assessment and goals written on QIP, meals, snacks or beverages brought from home and allergy policies) must be complete and verified as being met in full
- that your program meets the 4 or 5 star minimum requirements in the Business Practices section (indicator C.2.2 is required for 4 stars; indicators C.2.2 *and* C.2.3 are required for 5 stars)
- that you have the required number of optional points needed to move to 4 or 5 stars.

ERS Observers will verify the indicators below:

- that your program meets the 4 or 5 star minimum requirements in the Learning Environment section (indicators B.4.1 and B.4.2)

The verification of these items will be done by the ERS Observer. Therefore, we strongly urge all programs pursuing a formal rating to use some consulting time: discussing the business practices requirements for 4 and 5 stars and the environment rating scale(s); considering which optional points you will be trying to earn; and preparing any written documentation needed to support these items.

Business Practices

It is important to understand that your program **MUST** meet certain requirements in the business practices area, *in addition* to doing well on the ERS observation(s) and having enough optional points, in order to move beyond 3 stars. Receiving a formal rating, and doing well on the observation(s) portion of the rating, does NOT guarantee a 4 or 5 star rating.

Please complete the attached **policy checklist** (with your TC if preferred) to ensure that your program has all the required 4 Star business practices elements needed to meet item C.2.2. Keep in mind that many of these elements must be in writing, and will need to be shown to the Consultant. Refer to your evaluation criteria, item C.2.3, to determine if your program meets the 5 Star business practices elements (if 5 stars is your goal). Then, use some consulting time to work with your TC on these elements.

Learning Environment/Environment Rating Scales



The formal rater will be using *environment rating scales* to complete an observation(s) of your program. Your Consultant can help you prepare for this! The environment rating scale books can be purchased through a variety of online venues, and may be available for loan from <http://ccic.wi.gov/>. There are four different environment rating scales including:

- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) for classrooms with the majority of children ages 2.5-5 years
- Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-R) for classrooms with the majority of children ages 0-2.5 years
- Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS-R) for family child care programs
- School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS-U) for classrooms with the majority of children ages 5-12 years.

ERS Observers also use a variety of resources to aid in their scoring like:

- Wisconsin Interpretations: these are WI specific rules that change the way the environment rating scales are used in WI programs. Familiarize yourself with them at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/ers>
- Notes for Clarification: these are updates from the authors of the environment rating scales that may change the way the scales are scored. Familiarize yourself with the latest updates at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/ers>
- The “All About the ECERS-R” and “All About the ITERS-R” books: these books go in depth about each item in the environment rating scale. They have great examples, pictures, and clarifications.
- The “Caring for Our Children” book: this book, and the information in it, provided much of the foundation for why certain items were included in the environment rating scales. You can download a free copy of the book at <http://nrckids.org/CFOC/>

Optional Points

Programs that just complete the minimum requirements that are needed for 4 or 5 stars will not have enough points to reach these star levels. To reach 4 stars, a program must earn 23 total points, including all of the minimum requirements for 4 stars. To reach 5 stars, a program must earn 33 total points, including all the minimum requirements for 4 and 5 stars. This means a program must complete some of the other items in the evaluation criteria to move to 4 or 5 stars. It is important to prepare the documentation necessary for any optional points you would like to earn, as Consultant will need to see this documentation.

Family	Group	School age
In addition to all the minimum requirements, a program must earn at least <i>6 optional points</i> for 4 stars	In addition to all the minimum requirements, a program must earn at least <i>10 optional points</i> for 4 stars	In addition to all the minimum requirements, a program must earn at least <i>8 optional points</i> for 4 stars
In addition to all the minimum requirements, a program must earn at least <i>12 optional points</i> for 5 stars	In addition to all the minimum requirements, a program must earn at least <i>13 optional points</i> for 5 stars	In addition to all the minimum requirements, a program must earn at least <i>13 optional points</i> for 5 stars