



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 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.

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 Wisconsin Registry at the time of this visit
- Indicator: Program Self-Assessment and Indicator: Quality Improvement Plan must be complete and verified as being met in full.
- Element C: Indicator: Budgeting/Record-Keeping/Payment Agreement must be complete and verified as being met in full
- Element D: Indicator: Healthy Nutrition and Physical Activity must be complete and verified as being met in full

The following items will be verified by the Formal Rater:

- That your program meets the 4 or 5 star minimum requirements in the Business Practices section
- That your program meets the 4 or 5 star minimum requirements in the Learning Environment section

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).

Business Practices

It is important to understand that your program **MUST** meet certain requirements in Element C: Business and Professional Practices, *in addition* to doing well on the formal observation(s), in order to move beyond a 3 star rating.

Please complete the attached **policy checklist** to ensure that your program has all the required 4 Star business practices necessary to meet Element C: Business and Professional Practices. Keep in mind that many of the items within Element C should be in writing, and will need to be shown to the formal rater on the day of the rating. Refer to your evaluation criteria to determine if your program meets the 5 Star business practices for Element C. Consider using your consulting time to work with your TC on any missing items.

Learning Environment/Environment Rating Scales

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

There are four different Environment Rating Scales (ERS) including:

- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-3) for classrooms with the majority of children ages 2.5-5 years
- Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS-3) for classrooms with the majority of children ages 0-2.5 years
- Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS-3) for family child care programs
- School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS-U) for classrooms with the majority of children ages 5-12 years.

Formal raters also use a variety of resources to aid in their scoring like:

- Wisconsin Interpretations: 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: 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” books: These books go in depth about each item in the environment rating scale. They provide great examples, pictures, and clarifications.
- The “Caring for Our Children” book: This book provided much of the foundation for why certain items were included in the environment rating scales.