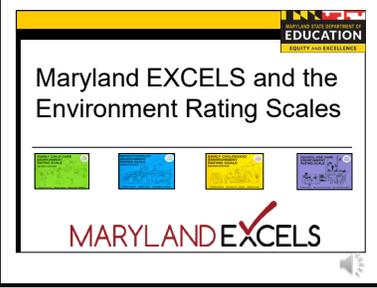
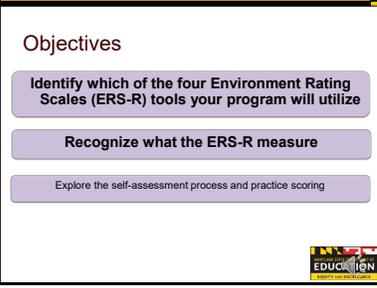
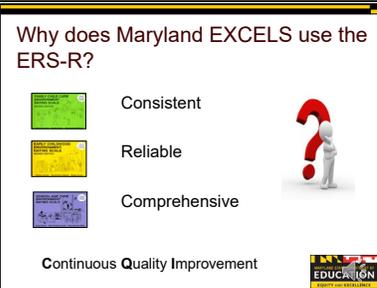


Introduction to the Maryland EXCELS and the Environment Rating Scales

<p>Slide 1</p>		<p>Hello and Welcome to “Maryland EXCELS and the Environment Rating Scales.” This is the first in a series of presentations intended to help you through the self-assessment process. One of the goals of Maryland EXCELS is to encourage providers to increase the level of quality in their programs. Self-assessment is an essential part of any quality improvement process.</p> <p>Having at least one of the Environment Rating Scales accessible while you view this presentation is strongly recommended. Otherwise, the content could be very confusing. Much of the information being presented can also be found in the Instructions section, at the front of each of the Scales books.</p>
<p>Slide 2</p>		<p>By the end of this presentation, you will be able to complete the first two objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify which scales to use with your program and• Recognize what the Environment Rating Scales actually measure. <p>You will also have some key phrases to keep in mind as you work toward providing higher quality care and education.</p>
<p>Slide 3</p>		<p>Why does Maryland EXCELS use the Environment Rating Scales?</p> <p>The ERS provides a consistent, reliable, and comprehensive measure of classroom environment, program practices, and teacher/child interactions. They provide the groundwork for continuous quality improvement through the use of program improvement plans. For Maryland EXCELS, it is “not all about the Score” but about what you do with the information you will gather by conducting self-assessments.</p>

Slide 4

Where do I get ERS-R books?

Environment Rating Scales Institute
www.ersi.info

Kaplan, Amazon,
Barnes & Noble, etc.




You can purchase the Scales through the Environment Rating Scales Institute, Kaplan, Barnes & Noble, or on Amazon and other retailers. **However**, before you do any shopping or on-line searches, check with your Maryland EXCELS Quality Assurance Specialist to find out how to receive a **free** copy of the ERS-R books you might need.

Slide 5

What are the Four Scales?

- Family Child Care ERS (FCCERS-R)**
 - Infants through 12 years
- Infant Toddler ERS (ITERS-R)**
 - Infants and **more than half** of the toddlers/twos are under 30 months (2.5 years)
- Early Childhood ERS (ECERS-R)**
 - 2.5 to 5 years and **more than half** are over 30 months
- School Age Care ERS (SACERS-u)**
 - 5 to 12 years

Updated with additional notes and expanded score sheet



Make sure you have the correct Scale for the ages of the children in each classroom, and the Revised version of that Scale. Maryland EXCELS continues to use the Revised editions that have the white star in the upper right corner that says, “Updated with additional notes and expanded score sheet.”

Check the birthdates for all of the children enrolled in a toddler or two’s classroom, to determine if more than half of the children currently enrolled are over, or under, 2 ½ years old. That will help you determine which scale to use, the ITERS-R or the ECERS-R. The purple School Age ERS, or SACERS-u, is used in the classroom or area that is used by elementary school age children, outside of regular school hours, with staff assigned specifically to that group of children.

Slide 6

Why do a Self Assessment?

Continuous Quality Improvement

- 1) Self Assess
- 2) Develop PIP
- 3) Utilize PIP



Maryland EXCELS is guided by the vision of intentionally improving services to increase positive outcomes for children and families. This **continuous quality improvement** is accomplished through a process of assessment, improvement, and communication. A self-assessment, using the Environment Rating Scales, will help you recognize your program’s existing strengths and identify areas where there is room for improvement. One of the first steps on your path of continuous quality improvement is to **intentionally** tackle the areas identified as opportunities for growth, with online support and hands-on technical assistance. Those areas will be included in your Program Improvement Plan or PIP.

Slide 7

When should I use the ERS-R?
Maryland EXCELS Level 3

Centers:
One assessment from each age group as defined by the Environment Rating Scales (ERS-R)

- Infant or Toddler
- Pre-school
- School Age (in a separate room with staff)

Family Child Care Homes:
• Family Child Care ERS (FCERS-R)

School Age Only programs:
• School Age Care ERS (SACERS-u)



Part of the path to achieving a quality rating in Maryland EXCELS at Level 3 involves conducting self-assessments. This is your program’s opportunity to reflect on current practices, choose what issues to address and then act to make improvements.

Slide 8

Taking a Look at the Books

7 Subscales
38-47 Items
8-15 Indicators

Overview of the Subscales and Items of the FCERS-R

Subscale	Page
Space and Furnishings	page 14
Interaction	page 15
Program Structure	page 16
Staff	page 17
Materials	page 18
Health and Safety	page 19



If you look at the Overview of the Subscales and Items page, near the front of each Scales book, you will see that every Scale has **7 subscales**. Each subscale is then divided into **Items**. There are about 40 Items in each Scale. Each Item is divided into 4 columns of **Indicators**, ranked from Inadequate to Excellent. There are anywhere from 8 to 15 indicators per Item.

Slide 9

What Do the ERS measure?

Weighted for:

- **Protection** of children’s HEALTH and SAFETY
- **Stimulation** through learning opportunities that meet a wide range of developmental needs
- **Interaction** as children build positive relationships with other children, and with the adults who care for and educate them

(Process Quality)



These 3 main concepts: Protection, Stimulation and Interaction are found throughout all Items, Subscales and Scales. These are 3 of the basic ingredients for providing a higher quality early care and education program.

- No one component is more or less important than the others, nor can one substitute for another.
- It takes all three to create quality care.
- Each of the three basic components of quality manifests itself in tangible forms in the program’s environment, curriculum, schedule, supervision and interactions **and** can be observed.
- These are key aspects of **process quality** included in **ALL** of the Environment Ratings Scales.

Process Quality is determined by observation of the various interactions that go on in a classroom: between adults and children, between parents and staff, between the children themselves, and the

children with the materials and activities. Space, schedule and materials supporting those interactions are also part of Process Quality.

Structural Quality comprises professional development, business policies and procedures, and elements covered by the other Maryland EXCELS Standards and the Maryland Child Care Licensing Regulations.

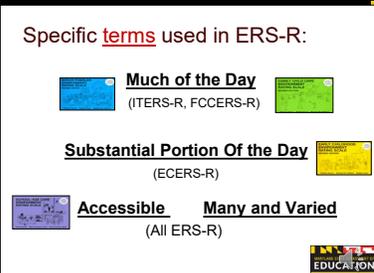
Slide 10

Specific **terms** used in ERS-R:

Much of the Day
(ITERS-R, FCCERS-R)

Substantial Portion Of the Day
(ECERS-R)

Accessible Many and Varied
(All ERS-R)



These terms appear in several Items throughout the Scales. When scoring those particular indicators, they require special consideration. I will now explain each one of these terms in much more detail.

Slide 11

 **Much of the day**

Refers to the time materials are accessible to the children. It means most of the time that any child is **awake and able to play**.

If any child is prevented from using materials for long periods because of lengthy routines, group times, or being kept where access is not possible then credit cannot be given for "much of the day."



The official ERSI definition for Much of the day is the time materials are accessible to the children. It means most of the time that any child is **awake and able to play**. You will encounter this phrase in 9 items in the ITERS-R and in 12 items in the FCCERS-R.

Slide 12

Credit can not be given for **much of the day**, in several Items, if any child who is "awake and able to play" spends a **combined total of 20 minutes or more**, during a 3 hour observation, with no access to materials.

(for example: when restricted to a table, a bouncer, a group activity, etc.)



Much of the day is not calculated when a child is involved in routine care, unless that situation involves more than 3 minutes of waiting with nothing to do. Also, a young infant might need close physical contact to be soothed, and therefore may not be "awake and able to play" with materials. However, if the teacher, furniture, or classroom set up says, "Don't Touch", that Item is not accessible for Much of the Day. Having high quality teacher-child ratios helps reduce concerns about children being restricted for more than just a few minutes.

Slide 13

Substantial portion of the day

- 1/3 of operating hours are PLAY activities
- Whole group, small group or individual
- Indoors or outdoors
- Child actively involved with choice of activities and materials
- Spread throughout the day
- NOT time spent in routine care, transitions, or teacher-directed activities.

Substantial portion of the day is a concept that appears in 11 Items in the ECERS-R. It helps you determine the amount of time children should actually have access to the materials in the classroom.

Slide 14

Substantial portion of the day

The program operates at least **one-third of the time**.

- For example: 1 hour total during a 3 hour program, or 3 hours 40 minutes total during an 11 hour program.

When calculating which materials or activities are accessible for a "substantial portion of the day" be sure to ask the teacher questions that give you a reasonable estimate of what happens during times not observed.

Use the last page of the score sheet for calculations.

Substantial Portion of the Day is primarily considered in the Activities and Program Schedule subscales. You can start to calculate Substantial Portion of the Day based upon the observation and the typical daily schedule. However, it is best to ask the teacher to confirm any scheduled access to materials that was not actually observed.

Slide 15

Substantial portion of the day

Calculating "substantial portion of the day"

Number of hours of operation	Substantial portion (1/3) of these hours
4	1 hour, 20 minutes
4.5	1 hour, 30 minutes
5	1 hour, 40 minutes
5.5	1 hour, 50 minutes
6	2 hours
6.5	2 hours, 10 minutes
7	2 hours, 20 minutes
7.5	2 hours, 30 minutes
8	2 hours, 40 minutes
8.5	2 hours, 50 minutes
9	3 hours
9.5	3 hours, 10 minutes
10	3 hours, 20 minutes
10.5	3 hours, 30 minutes
11	3 hours, 40 minutes
11.5	3 hours, 50 minutes
12	4 hours

This chart can be found at the back of the ECERS-R book and on the last page of the Extended Score sheet. Using this chart, take a moment to figure out the Substantial Portion of the Day for your program. Feel free to pause the video while you do that.

Slide 16

Accessible

Children can easily reach and readily use materials, furnishings, equipment, etc.

The actual amount of time required to receive credit for "accessible" varies by Item and Scale.

Anything the children can reach and touch should be safe and appropriate for them to do so! In this picture, which materials are actually "easily accessible by the children?" Does the furniture or teacher say "Off Limits"? If so, it is not accessible. It also makes clean-up time a lot easier if the materials are stored so they are easily accessible by the children.

Slide 17

Many and Varied

"Some" usually requires 2-3 materials accessible from each sub-category.

"Many and Varied" requires at least 3-5 different materials accessible from each sub-category.



Do the children have a “buffet” of materials to choose from? After-all, variety is the spice of life! You will find explanations about the types of materials that are included for each Activity Item and sub-categories within the Scales themselves, and in the All About ERS books, and through the Maryland EXCELS website.

By the way, as an EXCELS participant you can get discounts from several educational materials companies. They are posted on the Maryland EXCELS website in the Resources section.

Slide 18

Additional Themes (All ERS-Rs)

- Choice
- Play
- TLC (Tender Loving Care)
- Adults With Children
- Weather Permitting



If you want to make improvements to your program and overall ERS scores, you could also focus on these themes which are sprinkled throughout each of the Scales. They are also the main ingredients for **any** high quality child care environment.

Slide 19

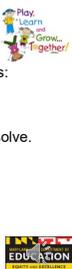
Choice and Play

When children are allowed to make choices:

- They stay engaged longer.
- They feel empowered.
- They learn to prioritize and problem solve.

Play is children's work; it is how they learn.

FREE Play includes choices of:
What, When, Where, Who, Why, How



Choices help children stay engaged in activities. Giving children many and varied choices does not have to cost a lot of money.

Can you give children a choice of where to sit?
Can you give children a choice of where to play?
Can you give children a choice of how to create with art materials or how to move down the hallway?
Can you give children healthy choices during snacks or meals?

Play equals children’s work. It is how they learn to make choices, interact with others, use their imaginations, solve problems, and develop skills. Free Play is not the same as chaos! You know it is free play when children have a choice of what to play

with, when and how long to play, where to play, and how to play (within safety guidelines), and with whom to play. Of course, this play takes place WITH staff participation or supervision nearby.

Slide 20

TLC and With



- You can't get **it** from a catalogue.
- You can't learn **it** during a workshop.
- You have to bring **it** to the classroom everyday.

- Play **with** the children
- Talk **with** the children
- Be **with** the children



Tender Loving Care is hopefully something that every early care and education professional brings with them to work every day. Playing with the children in centers and small groups is when “teachable moments” occur. Talking with the children sounds different than talking at them. Asking open-ended questions helps to deepen and extend formal and informal conversations. Being with the children is especially important when supervising the gross motor spaces and routine care activities.

Slide 21

Weather Permitting



Almost everyday unless:

- **Public Health Advisory**
 - www.weather.gov
 - Heat Index
 - Wind Chill Factor
- **Active precipitation**



Remember the phrase: “There is no bad weather, only bad clothing. “The children and you need fresh air every day. If you are not sure whether it is appropriate to go outside, the authors of the Environment Rating Scales recommend that you refer to the National Weather Service website. You could also download the free weather.gov app to receive weather related alerts specifically for your area.

Slide 22

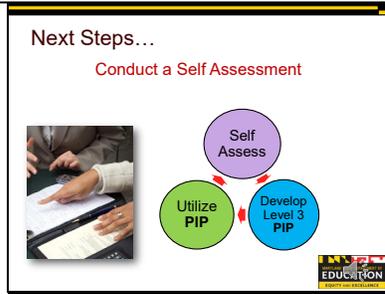
Supplemental Materials

- Expanded Score sheet (12 pages)
- Playground Guidelines (2 pages)
- USDA Meal Guidelines (1 page)
- Substantial portion of the day chart (1 page)
- Diapering and Handwashing Procedure (1 page)
- Table Washing Procedure (1 page)
- *Caring for Our Children 3rd Edition*
- *All About ITERS/ECERS* (from Kaplan, Barnes & Noble, Amazon etc.)



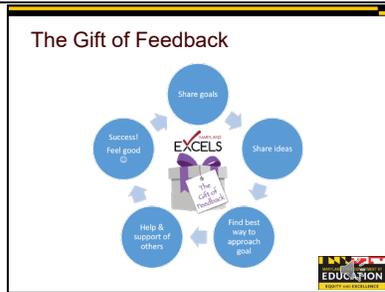
To help you when scoring, and for teacher training purposes, these additional resources are very useful. The ERS health and safety information is based on Caring for Our Children, sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics. The All About books cost about \$50 each. They provide more detailed explanations of each indicator, along with photographs and other resources.

Slide 23



Maryland EXCELS promotes continuous quality improvement through the standards as you aim to move up to higher levels of quality. The next step is to conduct your self-assessments. There is more information about how to do that in another presentation on the Maryland EXCELS website. Maryland EXCELS Quality Assurance Specialists and the Child Care Resource and Referral centers can provide support and technical assistance during this entire process.

Slide 24



The feedback you provide your staff after the ERS self-assessments, and the Program Improvement Plan you develop together, will be very useful toward moving up the EXCELS levels. It will also be helpful when aiming to achieve any Accreditation. Many of the items and indicators in the ERS are also considered by many of the accrediting bodies.

Slide 25

For More Information...

- Quality Assurance Specialist
- Program Coordinator
- Child Care Resource and Referral Center
- www.ersi.info
- admin@marylandexcels.org

The Maryland EXCELS logo is in the bottom right corner.

For additional information about Maryland EXCELS and the ERS

- Contact your Maryland EXCELS Quality Assurance Specialist, Program Coordinator or your local Child Care Resource and Referral center.
- Look at the ERSI website
- Send an email directly to **Maryland Excels**

Slide 26



Thank you for watching this presentation, and for your continued participation in Maryland EXCELS. Good luck on your program improvement journey!