

Maryland EXCELS and the School-Age Environment Rating Scale

Video Transcript

[Music]

Graphic: Maryland State Department of Education

Slide 1 Title: Maryland EXCELS, School-Age Environment Rating Scale (SACERS-u)

Narrator: Welcome to Maryland EXCELS and the School-Age Environment Rating Scale. This presentation is intended to help you through the self-assessment process using the SACERS. Maryland EXCELS encourages participants to increase the level of quality in their programs. Self-assessment is an essential part of any continuous quality improvement process. Please have the school-age environment rating scales available to help you follow along while you view this presentation. Much of the information being presented can be found in the instruction section that starts on page four of the SACERS-u.

Slide 2: Objectives

Narrator: By the end of this presentation, you will be able to recognize what the SACERS actually measures and explore best practices for conducting a self-assessment. You will also discover key phrases to keep in mind as you work toward providing higher quality care and education.

Slide 3: Why does Maryland EXCELS use the SACERS-u?

Narrator: Why does Maryland EXCELS use the school-age care environment rating scale? The SACERS provides a consistent, reliable and comprehensive measure of classroom environment, program practices and teacher-child interactions. It provides the groundwork for continuous quality improvement through the use of program improvement plans. All the ERS books are useful resources for program improvement, professional development, suggestions for purchasing materials and room arrangement considerations. For Maryland EXCELS, it's not all about the score. It's about what you do with the information gathered by your self-assessment.

Slide 4: What does the SACERS-u measure?

Narrator: These three main concepts; stimulation, protection, and interaction are found throughout all of the items and subscales in all of the environment rating scales. They are three of the ingredients for providing a higher quality early care in education program. No one ingredient is more or less important than the others, nor can one substitute for another. It takes all three to create quality care.

Slide 5: What does the SACERS-u measure? (continued)

Narrator: Stimulation, protection and interaction manifest themselves in tangible forms in the programs environment, curriculum, schedule, supervision and interactions and all can be observed. These are key ingredients of process quality included in all of the environment rating

scales. Process quality is determined by observation of the various interactions that take place 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, topics covered by Maryland EXCELS standards, COMAR and other childcare licensing regulations.

Slide 6: When should you use SACERS-u?

Narrator: Self-assessment is an important step to achieving a Maryland EXCELS quality rating three. This is your program's opportunity to reflect on current practices, choose what areas to focus on, and make improvements. The most useful self-assessments take place when the majority of children are in attendance and the observations should take place when there are no special events like a holiday or party.

Slide 7: What does the SACERS-u look like?

Narrator: Turn to page 7 in your SACERS book to view the items and subscales of the SACERS updated. You will see seven subscales. Each subscale is then divided into items. There is a total of 47 items in the SACERS. There is one item per page. Each item is divided into four columns of indicators ranked from inadequate to excellent. There are 8 to 15 indicators per item.

Slide 8: Specific Terms

Narrator: There are specific terms used throughout the SACERS-u; accessible and some versus many, and varied. These terms are defined on pages 5 and 6. Special consideration is recommended when scoring those particular indicators.

Slide 9: Accessible

Graphic showing large storage unit with bottom three shelves with push toys, baskets of manipulatives and other toys. The top two shelves have décor, toys with smaller pieces and boxes for storage.

Narrator: Accessible refers to how easily children can reach and use materials, furniture and equipment in the environment. Anything children can reach should be safe and appropriate. In this picture, which materials are actually easily accessible to the children? Does the furniture or teacher say off limits? If so, it is not accessible. Clean-up time is also a lot easier if materials are stored so they are easily accessible to the children. Several items in the space and furnishings and activity subscales consider the amount of time materials are accessible. More time reflects higher quality.

Slide 10: Some vs. Many and varied

Graphic of a bookshelf with books and a storage unit with 10 individual tubs with toys.

Narrator: Do the children have a buffet of materials to choose from? More variety reflects higher quality. You will find explanations about the types of materials that are included for each

activity item in the SACERS and in the all-about ERS books. By the way, as a Maryland EXCELS participant, you can get discounts from several educational materials companies. They are posted on the Maryland EXCELS website in the resources section.

Slide 11: Additional Themes

Narrator: These themes are the main ingredients in all high-quality childcare environments. To improve your program and overall SACERS scores, focus on these themes which are sprinkled throughout all of the ERS tools. We will explore each one in more detail.

Slide 12: Choices

Graphic: a group of children and adults are engaged in art

Narrator: Choices help children stay engaged in activities. Giving children many and varied choices does not have to cost a lot of money. Do you give children a choice of where to sit or perhaps a choice of where to play? Do you give children a choice of how to create with art materials or how to move down the hallway? Play is children's work. It is how they learn to make choices, interact with others, use their imaginations, solve problems and develop skills. Now, freeplay is not the same as chaos. Free play takes place when children have a choice of what to play with, when and how long to play, where to play and with whom to play. Of course, this free play takes place within safety guidelines with active staff participation and supervision nearby.

Slide 13: Tender Loving Care and Adults with Children

Graphic: A teacher leans toward the children at a table where they are working on a math activity.

Narrator: Tender loving care is something that every high-quality education professional brings with them to work every day. Playing with the children such as in interest centers and small groups makes the most of teachable moments. Talking with the children is different than talking at them. Asking open-ended questions helps deepen and extend formal and informal conversations. Being with the children is especially important when supervising gross motor activities and routine care events.

Slide 14: Weather Permitting

Graphic: A child with a raincoat and boots splashes in a puddle.

Narrator: Remember the phrase, there is no bad weather, only bad clothing. The children and you need fresh air every day. Not sure if it's appropriate to go outside? The authors of the environment rating scales recommend that you refer to a national weather service website. You could also download the free weather.gov app to receive weather-related alerts specifically for your area.

Slide 15: Why conduct a self-assessment?

Narrator: Maryland EXCELS focuses on improving services that increase positive outcomes for children and families. This continuous quality improvement also known as CQI is accomplished through a process of assessment, improvement and communication. Any program, self-assessment or self-study tool 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 continuous quality improvement path is to intentionally tackle areas identified as opportunities for growth.

Slide 16: "Continuous Improvement is better than delayed perfection." Self-assessment scores DO NOT impact Maryland EXCELS quality ratings.

Narrator: Through self-assessment, you will be able to observe how your classrooms are actually functioning. Self-assessments help you discover those issues that cannot be changed, which practices you want to spread throughout your program, and what procedures need to be adjusted. It is a starting point. There's always room for improvement even after you become accredited. Scoring a 7 for every item is an unrealistic expectation. Be honest with yourself and your program. You will probably have some items scored a 1 or a 2. Accept what you cannot change and focus on the areas you can improve. In Maryland EXCELS, the assessment process is not really about the scores. What's important is what you choose to do with the information after you have gathered it. The focus is on progress, not perfection.

Slide 17: Next Step

Narrator: Maryland EXCELS promotes continuous quality improvement as you aim to move up to higher quality ratings. After your self-assessment is completed, your next step is to create your program improvement plan also know as a PIP. Your PIP will be based upon the subscale average scores from your self-assessment and your program's priorities. Maryland EXCELS quality assurance specialists and the childcare resource and referral centers can provide support and technical assistance for ongoing improvement based upon your self-assessment.

Slide 18: The Gift of Feedback

Graphic: A cycle showing: Share Goals, Share Ideas, Find the best way to approach goal, Help and Support others, Success! Feel Good and returning to Share Goals.

Narrator: The feedback you provide your staff after the SACERS self-assessment and the program improvement plan you develop together will be very useful toward increasing your Maryland EXCELS quality rating. It will also be helpful when aiming to achieve and accreditation. Many of the items and indicators in the SACERS are also evaluated by many of the accrediting bodies.

Slide 19: Where can you purchase SACERS-u?

Narrator: The SACERS can be purchased through the Environment Rating Scales Institute website (www.ersi.info), Kaplan, Barnes & Noble, Amazon, and other retailers for approximately \$25.

Slide 20: Supplemental Materials

Graphic: Found on the Environment Rating Scale Institute website (www.ersi.info)

- Expanded score sheet (12 pages)
- Playground guidelines (2 pages)
- USDA Meal Guidelines (1 page)
- Table washing procedure (1 page)
- *Caring for our Children 3rd Edition*

Narrator: To help you in scoring and for teacher-training purposes, these supplementary materials are very useful. The ERS health and safety information is based on caring for our children sponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Slide 21: Resources

Graphic: Maryland EXCELS Self-Assessment for Infant, Toddler, and Preschool classrooms

- <https://marylandexcels.org/resource/program-assessments>
- Assessment tools and companion guides

Quality Assurance Specialists (QAS)

Program Coordinators (PC)

Child Care Resource and Referral Centers

info@marylandexcels.org

Narrator: Thank you for watching this video and as always, we are here to help you with every step of this process.

Music

Slide 22: Follow @Maryland EXCELS, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram