

Environment Rating Scales (ERS)

Frequently Asked Questions - FAQ

Many providers in Southwest Florida have questions regarding the ERS and we've discovered through our technical assistance process that many providers have the same questions. Here, we will answer frequently asked questions, but welcome any of the providers to call us with their specific questions if it is not answered below. We've seen an overall increase in the scores on the ERS in Southwest Florida between last year and this year! We encourage our providers to keep up the great work!

1. Where can I find the playground safety standards that are used to assess my playground?

The Consumer Product Safety Commission handbook can be found at www.cpsc.gov

2. Does everything that is labeled with "Keep out of the reach of children" have to be locked away?

Yes. Anything containing a label requiring it to be kept out of the reach of children must be locked away. Being placed on a high shelf, inaccessible to the children, isn't sufficient for the purpose of the ERS.

3. Does bleach water solution have to be locked away?

No. As long as the bleach water solution is mixed appropriately, it does not have to be locked away, but must be placed on a high shelf, or otherwise located so that is inaccessible to the children (children are unable to touch or grab solution).

4. What is the appropriate mixture for bleach water solution?

1 tablespoon of bleach for 1 quart of water or ¼ cup for 1 gallon of water

5. When do I need to sanitize the sinks?

If you use the same sink to wash hands after toileting/diapering and before and after meals and snacks, you must sanitize the sink after each child washes their hands to discourage cross contamination.

6. What does accessible mean?

Accessible is defined as children being able to reach and are allowed to use toys, materials, furnishings and/or equipment without barriers. (A barrier is, for example, a high shelf blocking toys/materials, or a teacher telling a child they cannot play with a certain toy/material.)

7. Can I use a sanitizing solution other than bleach water?

Any type of sanitizing solution is acceptable as long as you follow the manufacturer's instructions for use. Pay close attention to the amount of time the solution is required to be in contact with the surface before being able to be wiped away. Does one need to wear eye goggles and gloves while using the solution? If so, they must be utilized appropriately.

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8. Can I use shaving cream with my children as a sensory experience?

Shaving creams warn on the label to “keep out of the reach of children”. Shaving cream is not an acceptable substance for sensory play.

9. Where can I find the ERS notes for clarification?

www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers/ - click on the scale you are interested in (ITERS, ECERS, FCCERS) and then click on additional notes

10. Why do I need a hands-free trash can?

Having a hands-free trash can allow the staff to dispose of waste (diapers, tissues, etc.) without having to contaminate the trash can with his/her soiled hands. Diapers are required to be disposed of in a covered trash can. A hands-free trash can will allow staff to throw away a soiled diaper without having to use their hands to open the lid.

11. What is the proper sanitation procedure?

In order to properly sanitize a surface, one must first use a soapy water solution to remove dirt. Following the soapy water, one must use a solution such as bleach/water to sanitize, or remove germs from, the surface.

If a sink is used for multiple purposes (after toileting and before meals) the sink (faucets and bowl) must be sprayed using the above mentioned procedure. The sanitizing solution should be allowed to remain on the surface for **2 minutes** before being wiped off, or allowed to air dry. The same practice can be used for eating surfaces as well as diaper changing surfaces.

***Beginning 7/1/11-sanitation solution must remain on the surface for 2 minutes.**

12. How can I store naptime mats and linens if I do not have a lot of space?

Mats that can be folded can be placed in large storage bags as long as the bags can be stored in a locked cabinet. Pieces of cardboard that have been laminated to make them non-porous can be used to separate stacked mats.

13. Can I use plastic bags in my classroom?

Any type of plastic bag is considered a choking hazard and should not be used in the classroom. This includes grocery bags, ziplock storage bags, etc. Plastic bags must be stored in a locked cabinet or must be kept out of the classroom.

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14. Are infants/toddlers allowed to watch TV?

It is developmentally inappropriate for young children considering that young children learn mostly through interactions and hands-on experiences. Based on this fact, children under the age of 24 months should not be allowed to watch TV.

***Beginning 7/11/11, facilities that use any TV with children under the age of 24 months will score a “1” on the item “Use of TV, video, and/or computer” on the ITERS scale.**

ADDITIONAL ITEMS:

- Food items or items that smell like food (food extracts, etc.) cannot be used for art materials according to the ITERS-R.
- Head bands, hats, or any other item worn on the head must be removed after a child uses the item and sanitized prior to being reintroduced to the classroom.
- Some traditional songs, much like fairytales, have frightening lyrics and may be inappropriate for use.
- Photographs of children in the group and their families cannot be counted in “Promoting Acceptance and Diversity”, but can be counted in Display for Children.