



Tips for Using the INFANT/TODDLER ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALE-REVISED

- **Be sure to provide many opportunities for children to have free play.** *Free play* according to the ITERS-R, means that the “child is permitted to select materials and companions, and as far as possible to manage play independently.” Non-mobile children will have to be offered materials for their free choice and moved to different areas to facilitate access. Activities such as art, fine motor, blocks, dramatic play, books, music, nature and science, and math should be accessible to the children for *much of the day*. The term *much of the day* means “most of the time that any child is awake and able to play.” Children should not be prevented from using materials for long periods by lengthy routines, being kept in groups, or being kept in areas where access is not possible.
- **Be sure that toys and materials are accessible to all of the children.** *Accessible* means that children can reach and are allowed to use toys, materials, furnishings, and/or equipment. Toys on open shelves must be within easy reach of children. No barriers can be present to prevent children from reaching them. For example, toys are not accessible if they are in containers with lids that the children cannot manage, unless the provider regularly makes the toys accessible by opening the containers. At a minimum, toys and materials must be accessible to children for at least one hour daily.
- **Don’t forget the babies!** All non-mobile children should have a variety of toys and materials brought to them. Try to limit the amount of time that non-mobile children are restricted by being placed in high chairs, bouncy chairs, or play pens. The optimal situation is for the provider to be on the floor with the non-mobile children engaged in conversation, reading books, and showing them a variety of toys and materials.
- **An outdoor area should be used for active physical play at least one hour daily, weather permitting.** In Illinois the term “weather permitting” means temperatures between 25 and 90 degrees, taking into consideration the wind chill. For example, if the temperature is 30 degrees, but 18 degrees with the wind chill factored in, it is not expected that children have outdoor play time.
- **Remember to follow proper handwashing procedures.** According to the ITERS-R, handwashing for children and adults requires that both hands be washed with liquid soap and rinsed thoroughly under warm running water for at least ten seconds. Hands should be dried with individual paper towels that are not shared. Using gloves, wipes, or antiseptic waterless washes does not count as a substitute for handwashing. Proper handwashing procedures should be followed upon arrival, before and after meals, after toileting, when re-entering the classroom after outdoor play, before shared water play and after messy sand or water play, after dealing with bodily fluids (running noses, vomit, blood) and after touching pets or contaminated objects (trashcan lids, the floor). If the same sink is used for toileting/diapering and food-related routines or for other purposes, the sink and faucets must be sprayed with a bleach-water solution between uses.
- **Don’t forget to use proper sanitizing procedures.** Tables and high chairs should be washed with a soap/water solution, dried with a paper towel, and sanitized with a bleach-water solution before and after being used for meals and snacks. The bleach-water solution should be allowed to sit for at least ten seconds before being wiped dry. Diapering surfaces must also be washed and sanitized following the appropriate procedures.
- **Be sure to supervise sleeping children.** According to the ITERS-R, staff must be alert and able to visually supervise sleeping children. Infants must be in easy view and visually checked periodically during nap.
- **Use caution with art materials.** Toxic or unsafe materials include shaving cream, glitter, permanent markers, or small items that may pose a choking hazard such as Styrofoam peanuts, beans, or beads.
- **Be aware of potential safety hazards indoors and outdoors.** Common indoor safety hazards include: exposed electrical outlets; electrical cords; heavy objects or furniture that children can pull down; and less than a six inch raised edge on the diaper changing table. Common outdoor safety hazards include: lack of a fence or barrier that prevents children from leaving a designated play area; open access to a road or driveway; unsafe walkway or stairs; and insufficient cushioning around playground equipment. The Environment Rating Scales Web site (<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers>) includes a link to “Playground Information to Use with the Environment Rating Scales.”