

10A NCAC 09 .3204 PROGRAM ASSESSMENT PATHWAY FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

(a) This Rule shall apply to operators of family child care homes that choose to earn a two through five-star rated license using the program assessment licensure pathway.

(b) For purposes of this Rule, "structured self-study" shall mean the process that family child care home operators use to reflect on current teaching practices and educational environments, and identify areas of strength, needs and action steps required to achieve the standards of the program assessment tool as set forth in Paragraph (c) of this Rule. A structured self-study shall be completed over a minimum of three consecutive months and include a self-assessment using the appropriate program assessment tool and additional resources located at <https://ncrlap.org/Resources/>, a written reflection of the self-assessment, including identification of goals for continuous quality improvement, and documentation of the structured self-study using forms found on the Division's website at <http://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Provider/Provider-Documents-and-Forms>.

(c) Family child care homes shall be evaluated using "Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, Third Edition" (FCCERS-3). Alternatively, the Commission may approve additional program assessment tools that meet the following criteria:

- (1) the program assessment tool is research-based;
- (2) the program assessment tool has demonstrated reliability and validity;
- (3) the program assessment tool has been developed and validated for the intended population;
- (4) the standards being evaluated by the program assessment tool are measurable;
- (5) the program assessment tool is published or otherwise publicly available;
- (6) the program assessment tool assesses and supports early childhood environments in a way that is sensitive and responsive to the needs of all children and families from culturally, linguistically, economically, and ability diverse backgrounds; and
- (7) the program assessment tool and training for its use has a process to reduce bias.

Upon approval of additional program assessment tools, the operator of a family child care home may choose which assessment tool they utilize to earn a star rating in this licensure pathway, as long as their choice is applicable to the ages of children served, the type of facility in operation, or other criteria specified by the Commission in its approval.

(d) For a family child care home to earn a two-star rated license, the following requirements shall be met:

- (1) The operator shall meet education standards at the two-star level set forth in Rule .3217 of this Section or higher.
- (2) The operator shall implement the family and community engagement foundational practices set forth in Rule .3220 of this Section.
- (3) The operator shall implement the continuous quality improvement standards set forth in Rule .3221 of this Section.
- (4) The operator shall complete a structured self-study.

(e) For a family child care home to earn a three-star rated license, the following requirements shall be met:

- (1) The operator shall meet education standards at the three-star level set forth in Rule .3217 of this Section or higher.
- (2) The operator shall implement the family and community engagement standards set forth in Rule .3220 of this Section for a three-star rated license.
- (3) The operator shall implement the continuous quality improvement standards set forth in Rule .3221 of this Section.
- (4) The operator shall complete a structured self-study.
- (5) The operator shall request and complete an external program assessment and use the results of the assessment in the continuous quality improvement plan set forth in Rule .3221 of this Section.

(f) For a family child care home to earn a four-star rated license, the following requirements shall be met:

- (1) The operator shall meet education standards at the four-star level set forth in Rule .3217 of this Section or higher.
- (2) The operator shall implement the family and community engagement standards set forth in Rule .3220 of this Section for a four-star rated license.
- (3) The operator shall implement the continuous quality improvement standards set forth in Rule .3221 of this Section.
- (4) The operator shall complete a structured self-study.
- (5) The family child care home operator shall request and complete external program assessment:
 - (A) For any assessment that occurs prior to January 1, 2028, the family child care home must earn a score of 3.5 or higher on its FCCERS-3 assessment. An operator using an

- approved alternative program assessment tool shall earn a comparable score based on the tool's scoring scale, as determined by the Commission.
- (B) For any assessment that occurs on or after January 1, 2028, the family child care home shall earn a score of 4.0 or higher on its FCCERS-3 assessment. An operator using an alternative approved program assessment tool shall earn a comparable score based on the tool's scoring scale, as determined by the Commission.
 - (6) Operators that are licensed to serve four-year-old children shall implement a curriculum as defined in Rule .0102(11) of this Chapter for use with children four years old and older.
 - (g) For a family child care home to earn a five-star rated license, the following requirements shall be met:
 - (1) The operator shall meet education standards at the five-star level set forth in Rule .3217 of this Section, or higher.
 - (2) The operator shall implement the family and community engagement standards set forth in Rule .3220 of this Section for a five-star rated license.
 - (3) The operator shall implement the continuous quality improvement standards set forth in Rule .3221 of this Section.
 - (4) The operator shall complete a structured self-study.
 - (5) The operator shall request and complete an external program assessment:
 - (A) For any assessment that occurs prior to January 1, 2028, the family child care home must earn a score of 4.0 or higher on its FCCERS-3 assessment. An operator using an approved alternative program assessment tool shall earn a comparable score based on the tool's scoring scale, as determined by the Commission.
 - (B) For any assessment that occurs on or after January 1, 2028, the family child care home shall earn a score of 5.0 or higher on its FCCERS-3 assessment. An operator using an alternative approved program assessment tool shall earn a comparable score based on the tool's scoring scale, as determined by the Commission.
 - (6) Operators that are licensed to serve four-year-old children shall implement a curriculum as defined in Rule .0102(11) of this Chapter for use with children four years old or older.

History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85 (3); 110-88(7); 110-90(4); 143B-168.3; S.L. 2011-145, s.10.7(b) and (d); 42USCS 9858e; 45 FR 98.45; Eff. July 1, 2025.