

Additional Notes for Clarification for the SACERS-U

Be sure to replace older notes with newer notes. **Most recent changes are in purple:**

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| <i>Release Date</i> | |
| 08-2016 | Item 11, 16, 22 |
| 09-2024 | Administering the SACERS-U, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 36, 37 |

**General Notes for
“Administering the
SACERS-U”**

It is recommended by ERSI that the following items be eliminated from a program’s average total score, since most, if not all, of the indicators measure structural quality, usually as reported by staff, and do not measure features of a program that children directly experience (process quality): 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 33, 34, 35, 38, 39, 40, 41.

If a child with a diagnosed disability is enrolled in the group and present on the day of the observation, then only item 42 of the “Special Needs Supplementary Items” subscale is scored. Items 43-47 are omitted. If there is no child with a diagnosed disability present on the day of the observation, then score item 42 “NA.”

General Note for “accessible”: The 30 minute requirement for access to materials at the good (5) level of quality must be observed during the 3-hour observation. If the program operates for less than 3 hours, then the time requirement is adjusted proportionately, for example, 20 minutes for a program which operates for two hours.

2. Space for gross motor activities

- 1.2, 3.2 To score 1.2 “Yes” and 3.2 “No,” the lack of protection from the elements in outdoor space must be observed to cause a significant problem in terms of using the space for gross motor play. For example, poor drainage results in many large puddles throughout the space, or the lack of shade on a hot and humid day makes it obviously uncomfortable for the children to use the space for active play. If the program observed never uses outdoor gross motor space, then score 1.2 “No” and 3.2 “Yes.”
- 5.2 Fall zone surfaces (protective cushioning required under and around gross motor equipment) cannot count as one of the two surfaces, and so that example should be removed from the scale. However, if a soft cushioning surface extends well beyond what is needed for protective cushioning around equipment so that children can use it for gross motor play away from the actual fall zone space, then it can be counted. In addition, for grass to count as a “soft surface” it must be well established. Hard-packed dirt with sporadic patches of grass is considered a hard surface and not soft.

3. Space for privacy

- 1.1, 5.1, 7.2 Up to 3 children can be considered a “small group.”

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| 4. Room arrangement | 7.1 | To give credit, 5 well-defined interest centers must be observed. |
| 5. Furniture for routine care | 3.1 | Hooks can count as individual storage space for children’s belongings, as long as there are enough hooks for each child enrolled, and the hooks are large enough and spaced far enough apart so that children can use them to store all of their belongings, including backpacks and jackets/coats. Some minor touching of children’s possessions is allowed at this level of quality. If hooks are extremely close together or too small so that children end up leaving many of their belongings on the floor, credit cannot be given. |
| | 3.2, 5.2 | Score 3.2 “No” if there is a serious repair problem with the routine care furniture that is likely to result in a serious injury. Do not take off for small problems at this level of quality. To score 5.2 “Yes,” there can be no major repair problems, as described above and only a few minor issues. |
| 6. Furnishings for learning and recreational activities | 3.1 | Score “No” if there is a serious repair problem with the furniture for learning and recreational activities that is likely to result in a serious injury. |
| | 3.2 | For extra materials to be “convenient,” they should be on-site and easily accessible to staff (e.g., if in a locked closet, staff has easy access to the key). |
| | 5.2 | To give credit, there must be two pieces of children’s work displayed as well as two other materials of interest to the children (e.g., posters, photos). |
| | 7.1 | At least 3 pieces of specialized furniture for different kinds of learning and recreational activities must be accessible weekly to score “Yes.” |

7. Furnishings for relaxation and comfort

- 3.2 To score “Yes,” most soft furnishings should be in reasonably good condition and reasonably clean, with no major repair or cleanliness issues. Do not be overly perfectionistic in scoring this indicator.
- 5.2 “Many” requires at least 3 soft furnishings. In addition, change the indicator requirement of “one-third of the time children are in care” to “30 minutes during the 3-hour observation (adjusted proportionately for programs operating for less than 3 hours).”
- 7.1 A “cozy area” is a clearly defined space with a substantial amount of softness that has been set up specifically for children to relax, read, or engage in other quiet play. The cozy area must provide enough softness for children to completely escape the normal hardness of a typical school-age setting.
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8. Furnishings for gross motor activities

Replace the original note in the scale with the following:

- 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 Since these 3 indicators address the use of stationary and portable equipment separately, the number of skills encouraged should also be considered separately. To score 5.1 and 5.2 “Yes,” the stationary equipment must stimulate 3 different age-appropriate skills: additionally, to score 5.2 “Yes,” all accessible stationary equipment must be safe and appropriate for the children. To score 5.3 “Yes,” the portable equipment must stimulate at least 5 different skills, with no more than 2 skills attributed to the same type of material (e.g, throwing and catching for balls), unless an additional piece of equipment is added to use with the equipment (e.g, a basketball hoop, plastic baseball bat, or soccer goal).
- 7.2 This indicator requires at least two different examples of equipment/materials that promote a variety of skill levels, for example large balls for kickball and small balls for wiffle ball, a rock wall climbing component and an arch climber, or overhead horizontal ladders and vertical sliding poles.
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11. Health Policy

- 5.2, 7.1 If the program does not give medication and this is a stated policy, score indicators 5.2 and 7.1 NA.
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| 16. Departure | 1.3, 3.3, 5.3 | Being “bused” means being driven between their home and school by a school bus. “Going home on their own” means getting home by themselves from school without being bused, driven, or accompanied by a parent or their adult designee). For programs that do not allow children to go home on their own and do not use buses, indicators 1.3, 3.3 may be scored NA. |
| | 5.3 | If all children go home on their own or with a parent or their adult designee and no buses are used, score indicator 5.3 NA. |

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| 18. Personal hygiene | 3.2 | If any of the required supplies runs out during the observation, it must be replaced in a timely manner to give credit. |
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| 20. Music and movement | 5.2 | No specific number of materials is required to give credit, as long as 2 of the 3 types are accessible (instruments, recorded music, and dance props), and the materials are plentiful enough so that children do not have to compete over their use. |
| | 7.1 | To meet the requirement of this indicator, the music/movement instruction must be available to the entire group and not just as a supplementary activity for which parents pay an additional fee. |

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| 21. Blocks and construction | | Blocks are building materials of various shapes and sizes which are stacked and balanced to create structures. Examples include unit blocks made of wood, foam, or plastic, small wooden table blocks, Jenga blocks, and kappa blocks. Interlocking building materials and functional carpentry tools and supplies are also counted in scoring this item. |
| | 5.3 | To give credit for a variety of accessories for blocks and construction, at least 3 different types of accessories should be accessible. |

22. Dramatic play/theatre

5.1 This indicator should read: Variety of dramatic play materials **accessible** for both boys and girls that support many roles and situations (Ex: work, adventure, fantasy, theatrical productions).

To give credit for a variety of materials, there must be plentiful props representing at least two themes. There should be enough materials for each theme to allow children to combine and use props together to engage in more complex dramatic play scenarios. The materials should go beyond the traditional home living theme and should include props to interest both boys and girls. In addition, the materials must be observed to be accessible for 30 minutes during a 3-hour observation, with the required time adjusted proportionately for programs that operate for less than 3 hours.

7.1 If evidence is not readily observable, staff should report at least one example of using stories, trips, or videos to extend children’s dramatic play.

7.2 At least one example must be observed or reported to give credit.

23. Language/reading activities

3.2 To give credit, one example of staff interacting with children around the use of a language game must be observed. Examples include helping children select a game and setting it up, explaining the rules and helping the children begin the game, playing a language game with one or more children, or initiating an informal rhyming game with interested children. If children do not use a language game and staff do not encourage their use, this indicator must be scored “No.”

3.1, To give credit for 3.1, there must be at least two appropriate language games and at least 10 appropriate books.

5.1 To give credit for 5.1, there must be at least three appropriate language games and at least 30 appropriate books. Appropriate books match the children’s developmental level and do not show graphic violence, have obviously frightening content, or show prejudice towards any group of people. In addition, the content does not promote a negative social message, such as using violence to solve a problem. Any inappropriate books cannot be counted to meet the requirements of 3.1 or 5.1.

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| 24. Math/reasoning activities | 3.2 | To give credit, one example of staff interacting with children around the use of a math/reasoning material must be observed. Examples include helping children select a math game and setting it up, asking a child math/reasoning questions while they use a math material, or participating in a math game or activity with one or more children. If children do not use math materials and staff do not encourage their use, this indicator must be scored “No.” |
| | 7.2 | If evidence is not readily observable, staff should report at least one example of encouraging more experienced children to teach other children new games or help with math homework. |

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| 25. Science/nature activities | 5.1 | Replace the word “games” in the indicator with “materials/activities.” |
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| 27. Greeting/departing | 5.1 | Individual and group greetings can be counted to give credit for this indicator, as long as with any group greeting, all children are clearly aware that they have been warmly greeted by staff. |
| | 5.3 | This indicator requires that as a general practice, staff acknowledge when children leave the program, although it is not required to be observed for each child. In addition, to give credit for this indicator, if any child has trouble becoming integrated into the group upon arrival, staff must be observed helping them get settled into the ongoing activities of the program. |

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| 28. Staff-child interactions | 5.2 | To “show respect for children” means that staff interact with all children in a way that lets them know they are valuable human beings. This means that staff treat children with the same politeness and concern they would show towards their own friends and colleagues. To score 5.2 “Yes,” staff must show, throughout the observation, that they accept children for who they are and treat them politely and kindly. This must be consistently observed across all children, with only a few minor lapses, if any. |
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29. Staff-child communication

- 5.4 To give credit, two examples of staff asking children questions that elicit longer, more complex answers must be observed. The length of the answers for creditable examples will vary depending on the ages and abilities of the children in the group, with more detail and complexity required in observed answers to such questions for older children.
- 7.1 To give credit, there should be much social talk between staff and children observed. Most, if not all, of the children should be recipients of this frequent social talk, with no child obviously ignored.
- 7.2 To give credit, at least two examples must be observed of staff either substantially adding to information that the children share or asking questions to encourage the children to expand on their own ideas.
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30. Staff supervision of children

- 3.1, 3.2 To give credit, most supervision should be neutral or pleasant with only a few mildly negative interactions observed, and with no harsh interactions observed that cause undue distress to any child.
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31. Discipline

- 3.2 To give credit, expectations for behavior should generally match children's ages and abilities. At this level of quality, some mildly inappropriate expectations, such as a long wait during a transition or access to more limited materials at times, are allowed. However, there should be no obviously inappropriate expectations observed that cause undue distress.
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32. Peer interactions

- 3.1 To give credit, children should be able to move freely and experience natural peer groupings (indoors or outdoors, including play and routines, such as snack) for at least 30 minutes of a 3-hour observation (adjusted proportionately for programs that operate for less than 3 hours).
- 3.2 To give credit, staff should intervene when any strongly negative peer interactions are observed. In addition, the intervention should be generally neutral or positive with no obviously harsh interaction observed. Small problems that the children are able to resolve themselves do not require staff attention.
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36. Schedule

- 3.3 A fine motor or language activity must be set up for children and accessible to give credit. One or the other is required, but not both.
- 3.4 To give credit, some gross motor time must be observed. There is no time requirement, but the experience must be long enough to be satisfying for the children. The observed gross motor activity can take place indoors or outdoors. Outdoor gross motor, weather permitting, is not required at this level of quality.
- 5.3 To give credit, some *outdoor* gross motor time (weather permitting) must be observed for children. There is no time requirement, but the experience must be long enough to be satisfying for the children and it must take place outdoors, unless there is active precipitation or a weather advisory.

37. Free choice

- 3.2 If group activities are observed with children and no child obviously does not want to participate, credit can be given for this indicator, even if it is not clear that children are allowed to leave the group if they wish. However, if any child shows obvious distress (e.g., showing clear signs of extended unhappiness, upset, or anxiety) because of the activity and he or she is not allowed to leave the group and choose to do something else, this indicator must be scored “No.”
 - 5.1 To give credit, children must have the opportunity to engage in free play for 1 hour of the 3-hour observation, including indoors and/or outdoors. The time should be adjusted proportionately for programs operating for less than 3 hours. In addition, during the observed free play period(s), children should have many different choices and a wide range of materials accessible. Gross motor free play periods do not require non-gross motor materials to be accessible, but the requirements for a “wide variety” should be met for the gross motor play options.
 - 5.3 Since the intent of this item is to measure children’s opportunities for free choice, this indicator requires that the children have the opportunity to experience different groupings throughout the observation, with an emphasis on self-selected small group or individual activities. Large group activities may also be offered, but they are not required to give credit.
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