

# Early Childhood Education and Care

Pacific Union Conference

## High Quality ECE

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In recent years, early childhood programs have been given a scrutinizing eye by researchers, media, politicians, parents of young children and child advocates. The cry for high quality, college-educated teachers and accreditation has increased in intensity. This cry has led several states to legislate quality assessment and control measures linked to public rating systems and tiered reimbursement rates.

This article is a review of two assessment tools frequently used within early childhood settings: the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised* [ECERS-R] by Harms, Clifford and Cryer (1980;1998) and the *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Extension* [ECERS-E] by Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart (2006). The purpose is to familiarize our directors and teachers with both scales and solidify an understanding of how each is used. Additionally, within the Pacific Union, it is our desire to encourage the use of these two assessment tools for either self-evaluation within each center, or as a third-party assessment tool.

### **Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised [ECERS-R]**

For almost thirty years and in more than twenty countries, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale [ECERS] by Harms, Clifford and Cryer (1980;1998) has been used as an “imaginative and sturdy tool for research, self-audit and inspection” (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2006). Researchers around the world have used the ECERS and the ECERS-Revised as a “conceptual template on which to build a very different assessment system to suit environments and practices” (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2006).

The ECERS and subsequent scales were designed to assess “process quality” in an early childhood, infant/toddler, family or school-age care groups. “Process quality” encompasses the myriad of interactions which take place in an early childhood program between the staff and children, staff, parents, and other adults, among the children themselves, and the interactions children have with the materials and activities in the environment, as well as those features, such as space, scheduling and materials supporting these interactions (<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers/>).

Initially developed in the 1980’s, the ECERS-R was based on the broadly-used concepts of developmentally appropriate practices (DAP). These concepts focused mainly on the social and emotional environment within the early childhood program, distantly examining the “cultural and intellectual diversity” within a setting (Sylva, Siraj-

Blatchford and Taggart, 2006). Because of the focus on developmental appropriateness, the ECERS-R only lightly assessed the academic aspects of the early childhood program.

Through the use of observation, “process quality” has been found to be more predictive of child-based outcomes than the typically-used structural indicators such as staff to child ratios, group size, cost of care, and even type of care (e.g. child care center versus family child care home). In fact, the ECERS-R and subsequent scales have been successfully used in several major studies, including the Early Head Start Study (<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers/>).

In addition, the scales have been used in research studies and program improvement efforts in other countries including Canada, Germany, Italy, Sweden, Russia, Iceland, Portugal, England, Spain, Austria, Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, Hungary and Greece (<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers/>). Within the U.S., the scales are used not only for self-assessment and voluntary improvement measures, but they are also used in preparation for accreditation. Specifically,

- Arkansas has trained personnel, who do assessments and provide training and technical assistance so that child care centers and homes can increase their quality of care. In addition, parents who select child care facilities with an average of 4.5 or higher on these scales are eligible for two times the state child care tax exemption.
- Connecticut and North Carolina use the ECERS-R scales in selecting child care facilities for the inclusion of children with handicapping conditions and program improvement after placement. North Carolina also currently uses scale scores as part of their 5 star rated license system; a trend quickly sweeping the nation.
- Program improvement and evaluation were the initial purpose for Colorado’s use of the ECERS-R. Currently, though, a tiered reimbursement system based upon the scales is being considered.
- In Oklahoma, a three star tiered license incorporates an evaluation using the ECERS-R scales as a basis for quality improvement and provides technical assistance based on scores for meeting tiered reimbursement and accreditation standards.
- Tennessee has begun a required rated license system which is to be updated annually, posted publicly and tied to tiered reimbursement rates.
- Other states, including California, Massachusetts, Montana, Mississippi, Kansas, Oregon, Kentucky, New

# Professional Growth

## High Quality ECE, continued

Mexico, Georgia, Florida, Wisconsin, and Nebraska have also initiated quality evaluation and improvement programs using our scales.

- All US military services use the scales routinely in their centers and family child care homes for program improvement and monitoring.
- The District of Columbia uses the scales as a basis for technical assistance which provides on-site, multi-visit consultation services.
- The rating scales are widely used by programs in preparation for accreditation because they provide an improvement plan for gradual, permanent change, rather than hurried changes which are temporarily put into place for the sake of the accreditation visit.
- Finally, the content of the scales has been proven to be completely supportive of the various credentialing and accreditation programs available to early childhood programs.

### Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Extension [ECERS-E]

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale Extension [ECERS-E] was developed and piloted by a team of researchers at the University of London to supplement the ECERS-R (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2006). Originally published in 2003, it reflects the shifting focus of DAP through the use of four new sub-scales evaluating literacy, mathematics, science and diversity.

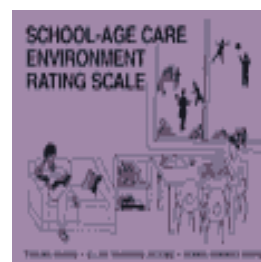
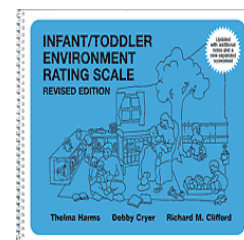
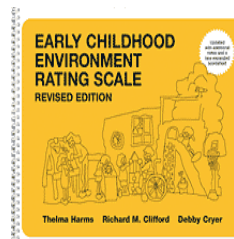
Whereas the ECERS-R assesses the social and emotional environment within the early childhood program, the ECERS-E is a better predictor of children's progress in language, non-verbal reasoning, number skills and pre-reading skills (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2006). Across the four sub-scales, each item is scored in reference to pedagogy, resources and the setting's organization with higher marks given to settings balancing child- and adult-initiated activities and a good deal of "sustained shared thinking" (Sylva, Siraj-Blatchford and Taggart, 2006).

The authors of both the ECERS-R and ECERS-E feel the two assessment tools are consistent philosophically and consider them to be complementary. Used together, a center can obtain valuable information about their program, staff and interpersonal relationships. Doing so will inevitably help the program attain higher and higher levels of quality.

For more information, consider the following websites:

### ECERS-R

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecers/>



### ECERS-E

[http://www.trentham-books.co.uk/pages/ecerse\\_new\\_revised.htm](http://www.trentham-books.co.uk/pages/ecerse_new_revised.htm)



(See References on page three.)

# Updates & Reminders

## Antibacterial Soaps Risk Reminders

Simple soap and water is an age-old and highly effective way to prevent the spread of germs, but with recent emphasis on the importance of handwashing, marketing efforts have pushed the value of adding a chemical to soap that kills bacteria. These “antibacterial soaps” typically contain something called triclosan.

To evaluate the impact of antibacterial soaps in the community, researchers reviewed a total of 27 previously published studies. They found that antibacterial soaps containing the usual amounts of triclosan were no more effective than plain soap in preventing symptoms of infectious illness or reducing the amount of bacteria on the hands; on the other hand, several laboratory studies showed that bacteria could become resistant to triclosan, and this resistance could limit the effectiveness of certain antibiotic medications.

The authors concluded that these soaps offer little health benefit, but have the potential to increase the problem of bacteria becoming resistant to available antibiotics (Aiello AE et al: *Clinical Infectious Diseases*, September 1, 2007, Supplement 2, pp. S137-147).

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### High Quality ECE References

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Harms, T., Clifford, R., and Cryer, D. (1980; 1998). *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale [ECERS]*. Williston, VT: Teachers College Press.

Sylva, K., Siraj-Blatchford, I., and Taggart, B. (2006). *Assessing quality in the early years: Early childhood environment rating scale extension four curricular subscales* (revised edition). Sterling, VA: Trentham Books Limited. ISBN-13: 978-1-85856-393-0.

Whitebook, M., Howes, C. & Phillips, D. (1989). *Who Cares? Child Care Teachers and the Quality of Care in America*. National Child Care Staffing Study Executive Summary. Oakland, CA: Child Care Employee Project.

### Spring-Board Devices

Each year, the local conference Risk Management officers attempt to communicate reminders regarding risk factors within our schools and preschools. Here are a couple which have been brought to our attention in the past few months.

Trampolines, mini-tramps, waterbed bladders and other spring-board devices have been prohibited by our insurance carrier for many years. Because of this, each school year we have every school principal and preschool-director certify that they do not have any of these devices at their facility. In the event of an injury to a student, adult or other visitor involving one of these devices the facility has no liability insurance to defend them or pay a claim. This places not only the entire preschool facility at financial risk but the Conference as a whole.

When it comes to these specific devices, it is not a matter of the closeness of the supervision, it's just that they are prohibited by our insurance carriers who refuse to cover them. There is a specific insurance policy that can be purchased to cover these devices, but for a small school or preschool, the cost is generally prohibitive.

If there are any questions or if you are requesting a insurance quote for one of these devices, please contact your local conference Risk Management office.

### Second-Hand Items

With tight budgets and generous clientele, we often find ourselves the recipients of second-hand materials and toys. When this occurs, be sure these items are in good repair and proper working order.

Broken, missing or loose parts/pieces can cause serious injury to an unsuspecting young child. Keep in mind, also, some items might be on company recall lists. Product recalls can be determined by visiting the Consumer Product Safety Commission web site ([www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)) or calling 1-800-638-CPSC.

Because of the large number of consumer product recalls this past summer, the Child Health Alert newsletter is producing a special edition of recalls issued by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. To order a copy, contact [alertsrus@comcast.net](mailto:alertsrus@comcast.net).

# Early Childhood Education and Care

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## Upcoming Meeting Opportunities

There are two early childhood meetings coming this fall. One is an annual meeting; the other is first-time ever event!

### **Adventist Child Care Network 2007 Annual Meeting Chicago, November 7-10**

The annual meeting, of course, is the Adventist Child Care Network meeting held in conjunction with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) conference. It is not too late to make arrangements to join us in Chicago this fall. Conference sessions will be held at McCormick Place Convention Center located at 2301 S. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, Illinois, 60616.

Per the preliminary program:

*The Adventist Child Care Network will meet on Wednesday, Nov. 7 from 7:00-8:30 p.m. for the annual business and networking meeting. On Friday, Nov. 9, from 6:30-8:00 p.m., Adventist early childhood professionals are welcome to join us for a sundown worship service. Saturday morning we will assemble for Sabbath morning worship service and lunch. ACCN meetings will be held in an NAEYC assigned room; see final bulletin for room assignments. For more information, contact Christine Gillan-Byrne at (805) 490-6055, or [christine@puconline.org](mailto:christine@puconline.org)*

The other event taking place this fall is just a couple of weeks away! **October 14 and 15** are the dates for the first-ever, union-wide, **Early Childhood Directors' Workshop!** Most of our directors have responded to our invitation to attend, but we still need to hear from a few. Please take advantage of this opportunity to meet other Adventist program directors, local conference personnel, network, share, learn and grow. There is no cost to individual directors or centers. *This workshop has been planned to encourage camaraderie with colleagues while learning.*

## Job Openings

The Southeastern California Conference has a couple of ECE teaching positions needing to be filled this fall. If interested, please contact Teri Boyatt at (951) 509-2307.

Red Bluff Adventist Church in northern California is looking for a **director** for their soon-to-open **preschool**. If interested, please contact Coreen Hicks at the Northern California Conference Office of Education at (925) 685-4300. Mrs. Hicks' email is [chicks@ncc.adventist.org](mailto:chicks@ncc.adventist.org)

Certainly there are additional employment opportunities throughout the Pacific Union territory. Please keep the Union Office of Education Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Division informed and we will do our best to help find a qualified individual to fulfill each center's needs. Employment opportunities will be posted on the PUC ECEC Division website, in the PUC ECEC Newsletter, in the Adventist Child Care Network Newsletter and forwarded to the Early Childhood Department at Pacific Union College.

## 2007 Dates to Remember . . .

Sep. 30	Opening Reports due to Union ECEC Division office
Oct 2-4	NAD ECE Task Force (teleconf.)
<b>Oct 14&amp;15</b>	<b>PUC ECEC Directors' Workshop</b> <b>(Westlake Village, CA)</b>
Oct 18	PUC ECEC Board (Westlake Village, CA)
Nov 7-10	NAEYC/ACCN Annual Conference (Chicago, IL)
Dec 4-6	NAD ECEC Curriculum Advisory (Palm Springs, CA)

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