

## Requirements for a Valid Assessment

In order to record a realistic picture of how a classroom or family/group childcare home operates day after day, the *Environment Rating Scale* observation needs to reflect a typical day. The number of children in care at any one time is a very important consideration. The *Environment Rating Scales* clearly define the number of children necessary for a valid assessment. They say: **At least one more than half the highest number of children allowed to attend at any one time** must be present during the observation.

Across the United States, the actual number required (above half) varies but is consistent within states so that all programs are held to the same standard. IdahoSTARS requires that **half plus one** of daily enrolled children be present to conduct an assessment.

In family or group child care settings (and some center classrooms with a broad age range), it is required that if an infant is enrolled, that infant must be present during the observation.

Why is the number of children present important? If less than half of a group enrolled is present, the provider's level of supervision, interaction, and language will be affected. Other indicators of quality, including children's access to toys and how the space functions will not be typically represented.

*Environment Rating Scale* assessments take into account the age ranges of all children enrolled in a family/group home or center classroom. The assessor must observe materials and accessible space for all children enrolled, whether or not those children are present during the observation. The assessor must record how well the space and materials satisfy the needs of all the children enrolled. The *Environment Rating Scales*, when used correctly, provide a stable quality score that looks beneath the surface, as test-retest evidence has shown.

A valid observation is critical to quality improvement. An accurate, valid assessment gives the provider the information s/he needs to create an action plan for improvement.

Sign-in sheets to verify enrollment may be requested prior to the assessment(s).

**Reminder: An ERS assessment is valid for three months after it is conducted.**

**This means that if the application is submitted after the three months, new assessment(s) are required and will be purchased by the participants at a rate of \$250/assessment.**