Child Care Quality System (CCQS)

Observer Reliability and Observation Fidelity

The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) and the School-Age Program Quality Assessment (SAPQA) measure best practices observed in early childhood and school-age programs through the lens of what the children in care experience on a typical day. Observations conducted by reliable observers using these tools provide programs with objective feedback regarding program quality.

What is reliability? Reliability is the level of accuracy to which an observer adheres to the scoring standards set by the observation tool's developers. In order for an observer to become qualified to use one of these tools to assess quality, the observer must undergo rigorous reliability training and testing. Only observers who meet and maintain reliability requirements are authorized to perform observations for CCQS.

Why is reliability important? Reliability helps ensure that observations are conducted consistently statewide and with integrity to the standards required by the tool's developers.

Initial Reliability The Environment Rating Scales has two levels of reliability: **anchor reliability** and **observer reliability**. ERS anchor reliability qualifies an individual to verify the reliability of ERS observers, provide ongoing training to ERS observers and finalize observation reports. Initial anchor and observer reliability requirements are set by the Environment Rating Scales Institute.

Anchor reliability is reached when an individual achieves an average of 90 percent reliability or higher in an average of three consecutive observations conducted during authorized trainings from the Environment Rating Scales Institute.

Observer reliability is reached when an individual achieves an average of 85 percent reliability or higher in an average of three consecutive observations conducted with an approved anchor.

Observers using the SAPQA tool are reliable when they become endorsed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality.

Ongoing Reliability

The Office of Child Care closely monitors the reliability of anchors and observers performing observations for CCQS. To remain reliable on an observation tool, anchors and observers undergo regular reliability training and testing. Reliability training and testing ensures that anchors and observers score observations consistently and in accordance with the guidelines provided by the tool's developers.

- ERS anchors are re-assessed for 90 percent reliability or higher once every four months throughout the year.

- ERS observers are re-assessed for 85 percent reliability or higher once every four months throughout the year.

- Observers using the SAPQA tool are re-endorsed by the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality semi-annually, in addition to participating in ongoing reliability checks with the OCC After School Specialist and the Utah Afterschool Network.

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