

## Practice

*Observational tools such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and related scales for family child care and school-age child care can provide objective measures of child care and preschool practices. These measures, however, require trained observers to spend several hours in a child care setting to provide an appropriate and valid assessment of child care practices. As a result, they are often beyond the scope of initiative/program's evaluation capacities.*

*Many of the initiatives that aim to improve providers' knowledge and skills also aim to have an effect on their practice--the way they work with children in their programs. We include three samples based on a composite of instruments developed by Minnesota, Alabama, and Connecticut. Minnesota's survey was used to evaluate training for family child care providers, while Alabama used the questionnaire with providers who had participated in an initiative that offered materials and support on how to use them. Connecticut uses its survey to determine if its career development system has had an effect on its participants.*

*Two of these instruments are designed for providers; the third for child care administrators. Each is based on information gathered from participants rather than observations that are conducted by someone else. Like the tools for measuring changes in knowledge and skills, these instruments can be used for initial assessments as well as for evaluating outcomes. You can use them without making any changes or you can tailor them to reflect the content of your initiative.*

*Practice tools can be administered before or after a participant attends a program, or at both times, as described below. Tools assessing practice are most often used several months after a program's completion.*

### **Pre-test only administered.**

*A pre-test used alone can function as a needs assessment tool to determine a participant's child care practice before he/she participates in an initiative/program. It is usually administered before the initiative/program begins, but it can be used after the participant completes the initiative/program to provide a retrospective view from the participant's perspective.*

***Post-test only administered.***

*A self-assessment post-test that providers complete several months after participating in a quality initiative program indicates their view of their practice at that time. However, without a pre-test baseline, you will not know whether or not providers would have described their practices differently before the program.*

***Pre-test and post-test both administered.***

*When a pre-test is administered before a quality initiative program and a follow-up post-test is administered sometime after, you will be able to compare participants' self-reported practice before and after the program. This provides an indication of the effect of the program.*

## Examples One and Two – Provider’s Self-Report of Practice

*Example One uses a yes/no format and the same set of questions for both a retrospective pre-test and a post-test. Example Two uses a four-point scale for a post-test.*

### Example One.

Please check **Yes** or **No** in the columns for “Prior to Grant” and “Now, After Grant” to indicate activities in which you engaged before you participated in the initiative, and after you completed it.

	Prior to Grant		Now, After Grant	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>As a child care provider, did/do you:</b>				
a. Use the skills and implement what you learned in trainings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Use program plans or lesson plans with the children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Offer enrichment activities for the children such as art, music, dance, or language lessons?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Have a formal continuous process for obtaining feedback from families?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Example Two.

Please indicate how often you perform the following activities:

	Nearly Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
Include specific skills taught in training.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Use program plans or lesson plans with the children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Offer enrichment activities for the children such as art, music, dance, or language lessons.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Share information about the child with his/her parent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Example Three – Child care administrator’s report on staff practice

*This example of a post-test used alone asks a child care administrator to describe a staff member’s practices following her/his participation in a quality initiative activity. These questions can be modified to relate to specific content of your initiative.*

	Nearly Always	Often	Sometimes	Never
The teacher provides a safe, healthy and purposeful environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher is knowledgeable about child growth and development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher advances children’s physical and intellectual development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher advances children’s social and emotional development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher manages an effective program/classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher establishes productive relationships with families	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher assesses children’s learning and development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The teacher is very professional	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>