

## How to Conduct an Internal Assessment Using the Developmental Environment Rating Scale (DERS)

NOTE: The DERS is available through an app to trained and reliable Pennsylvania Key DERS assessors; however, it is not available to the general public without purchase and attendance at the professional development. Although the DERS is being used for the purpose of internal assessment, it will be conducted as a virtual assessment by a DERS reliable Program Quality Assessor (referred to as assessor throughout this document).

### DERS assessment at-a-glance

- 1-hour timed observation
- Completed when children are engaged in free play
- No teacher interview or document review
- Based on observation only

### Required materials

The program will need:

- Reliable internet connection
- Device to provide live stream for virtual assessment by the trained and reliable DERS assessor
  - NOTE: Assessors are not permitted to view or save recorded video; they must see a live classroom environment when conducting virtual internal assessment.
- Capability for audio connection between the assessor and videographer throughout assessment for prompting purposes

The assessor will need:

- iPad with DERS app installed.
- Reliable internet connection.
- Capability for audio connection between the assessor and videographer throughout assessment for prompting purposes.

### Supplemental materials

- Montessori Assessment Playbook (provides some information about the DERS) ISBN 978-1-7338691-1-9

### Purchase the materials:

- The DERS is not available for purchase.

### Conduct the Internal Assessment

#### 1. Learn about the DERS

- The more you learn about the quality practices described in the DERS, the more you will be able to assist the assessor in a live streamed observation.
- Review the following article (linked below or found in the [Program Quality Assessment Professional Development Catalog](#) (PQA PD catalog)
  - The [Developmental Environmental Rating Scale \(DERS\) Summary](#)
- Contact a DERS assessor from the list found in Appendix A of the [PQA PD Catalog](#) to obtain clarification on any questions related to DERS expectations and internal assessment.

## 2. Prepare to conduct the internal assessment

- The assessor will have a conversation with the videographer regarding details of the observation, specific practices that need to be seen, and the following:
  - The observation will occur in real-time as the videographer is live streaming.
  - The observation focuses on child and adult behaviors and the environment.
  - The observation will last for one continuous hour. Set aside a total of 1 ½ hours of time to allow for conversation with the videographer prior to the observation commencing and the actual assessment.
- Choose a preschool classroom (the majority of the children are 2 ½ - 5 years of age) to be assessed.

## 3. When to conduct the internal assessment

- It is best to conduct the assessment when the majority of the children have arrived during an active time of the day.

## 4. Conduct the internal assessment

### The Program will:

- Assure the chosen classroom maintains a typical schedule (as much as possible) as the observation is occurring.

### The assessor will:

- Review the details of the observation with the videographer.
- Exercise ongoing communication with the videographer to ensure coverage of all aspects of the classroom.
- Score all attributes and frequency indicators as accurately as can be observed from the live stream video feed.

## 5. Review the observation results

- Upon completion of the observation, the assessor will engage in a brief dialogue with the director and/or classroom teacher about observed practices (dependent on program availability).
- A written report will follow within a week.
- A detailed follow-up conversation will be scheduled with the assessor after the written report is completed.

## 6. Review strengths, areas for potential growth, and strategies to try

- Conducting a DERS assessment is only the first step of the process toward growth. Review your observation with those people responsible for implementing changes.
- Review your written report with your Internal Assessment Team, Quality Coach and Program Quality Assessor. They can celebrate the strengths with you and together, consider areas for CQI goals/improvement.
- Identify goals to achieve growth and include them in your Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQI).

## 7. Next steps

- Incorporate areas for growth into your CQI plan.
- Assure everyone has contributed ideas and ensure everyone knows the next steps to take toward improvement.
- Start small. Focus on one attribute at a time.
- Be patient. Do not be discouraged if the initial scores are not what you expected.
- Change what you can and accept those things that are outside of your program's ability to improve.
- Share the plan with everyone involved on your team.
- Remember, you can continue to consult with the Program Quality Assessor even after your internal assessment is completed. The assessor has an abundance of knowledge of the scale and implementation practices to support your program in their CQI journey.

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