

## **Information on Authorized Trainers for the Environment Rating Scales (ERS)**

In the past years there has been an extraordinary increase in the use of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS)—ECERS-R, ITERS, FDCRS and SACERS. This has been greatly due to continuing research that ties higher environment rating scales scores to better child development in a broad range of areas that are considered necessary for success in our society. Throughout the United States, and internationally as well, the Environment Rating Scales are now heavily used for both program quality assessment and improvement. This has resulted in an increase in training on the scales. Training is provided to early childhood and school-aged care practitioners, professionals who deliver technical assistance to encourage quality improvement, and to assessors who evaluate program quality for licensing, quality rating systems, or research purposes.

Training on the scales has always varied in scope and accuracy, which until the late 1990s caused few concerns. Researchers using the scales were never held accountable for individual scores, and the ERS are robust as research instruments, allowing a certain amount of error while still providing meaningful results. When used in program improvement efforts, or informal assessments, the exactness of scores was not considered important. Under these conditions, many people provided training on the scales, but too often training has provided incorrect information and procedures, weakening the relationship between scale scores and child outcomes.

In the late 1990s, with the advent of “high-stakes” scale use in quality rating and improvement systems, tiered reimbursement systems, rated licensing systems, and other consumer awareness efforts, the necessity for extremely reliable and accurate scale use has increased dramatically. Official assessors in high-stakes systems must be trained correctly to use the scales according to the authors’ interpretations and procedures required to maintain high levels of reliability to ensure fair and accurate observations across the system.

*Since accurate and correct training on the ERS is a necessity under high-stakes conditions, the authors are the only people authorized to provide training on the scales for these purposes. We realize that others may indicate that they are appropriate trainers under these conditions, but in too many cases agencies who have used unauthorized trainers, have run into difficulties because the scales have not been used properly resulting in practitioner confusion, unrealistic scores for programs, lack of fairness across a system, and no relationship between scale scores and desirable outcomes for children. The ERS authors have had to retrain too many improperly trained assessors, after the fact, and have also needed to give advice on how to help a ineffective quality rating system to be improved.*

*The authors (specifically Thelma Harms and Debby Cryer, and their associates of Environment Rating Scales Institute, Inc.) are the only authorized trainers on the ERS.*