

The information below applies to any program that currently has an ExceleRate Illinois Gold Circle of Quality through the Head Start Path. Information is also relevant to any Silver Head Start program preparing to apply for Gold.

Your program site contact received email communication on December 11, 2024 about the transition to using ITERS-3 in classrooms with children birth to 36 months. Please see additional information below related to this transition.

To learn more about ITERS-3, please visit:

[Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale®, Third Edition \(ITERS-3™\) | Environment Rating Scales®](#)

1. When will ExceleRate begin using ITERS-3?

Assessment in classrooms with children birth to 36 months scheduled for JANUARY 1, 2026 and beyond will include **ITERS-3**. However, please be aware of the timeframes included in the following questions.

2. How does this affect my center that holds an ExceleRate Circle of Quality??

ExceleRate Illinois will transition to using **ITERS-3** instead of ITERS-R over the course of several months. Programs with renewal months of JANUARY 2025 - SEPTEMBER 2025 will continue using ITERS-R for classroom self-assessment, as well as on-site assessment.

Beginning with OCTOBER 2025 renewals (and beyond), ITERS-3 requirements will start.

**See detail below in #3 for programs starting with October, November, December 2025 renewal months.*

As a reminder, a Circle of Quality is granted for a 3-year eligibility period. The month the center was initially found eligible for ExceleRate is the renewal month. Each year, the center must submit an ExceleRate annual report with specific information to maintain the Circle of Quality. At the end of the 3-year eligibility period, the center must meet all ExceleRate requirements including training, self-assessment, as well as on-site assessment scores and verification of additional ExceleRate standards.

3. When will ITERS-3 requirements be implemented for the Head Start Path?

Centers with a GOLD Circle of Quality who have a reporting month of **October, November or December 2025** should pay particular attention to the details below:

- Annual Report (October, November, December 2025) - Centers should be learning about and completing self-assessment using the ITERS-3 assessment tool in preparation for future on-site assessment.
- Three-year Renewal (October, November, December 2025) - Centers at the end of the 3-year eligibility period will need to:
 - Complete classroom self-assessment using ITERS-3.
 - Complete on-site assessment requirement, inclusive of the ITERS-3.

4. Why do programs with an October, November and December 2025 renewal include ITERS-3? (If ITERS-3 assessments will not begin until after January 1, 2026)

When a program submits their ExceleRate renewal application to INCCRRA, there is potential for the application to be incomplete. To allow the center time to complete needed requirements, ExceleRate policy and procedure allows for a pending timeframe for the center to complete the requirements. Due to this, it is likely that a center renewing in October, November and December 2025 would have an assessment window after January 1, 2026.

5. What is the wait time from when a center submits the 3-year renewal paperwork to when the on-site assessment may occur?

The McCormick Institute for Early Childhood, Center for Early Childhood Leadership at National Louis University (NLU) schedules on-site assessment windows for Silver and Gold licensed child care centers, licensed family child care providers and Head Start programs after applications are processed and information is provided by INCCRRA.

As the application process is on-going, no definite timeframe can be provided for how many weeks out the assessment window will be. As mentioned above in #4, there is also a pending application timeframe that may be granted for programs missing documentation. Generally, a program should anticipate the assessment window will be scheduled at least 6-8 weeks from the notice received from INCCRRA (sometimes less, sometimes more). Scheduling depends on several factors, including number of programs in the queue for assessment, number of classrooms within each center, etc.

6. Who should I contact if I have questions around the ITERS-3 implementation?

If you have questions on renewal timeframes or specifics related to your center's ExceleRate eligibility, please contact INCCRRA at 866-697-8278 to speak with an ExceleRate Counselor or you can submit email at info@exceleRateillinois.com.

The ExceleRate Illinois website, www.exceleRateillinois.com, will also have limited information under "Upcoming Changes".

