

Baseline Quality Assessment Information Sheet

What is the Baseline Quality Assessment Project?

The Early Years Branch collaborated with the National Association of Regulatory Administration (NARA) in the United States to create and introduce differential monitoring, a system for monitoring and licensing child care facilities. The implementation of this new system, which includes the abbreviated checklist with key indicators and weighted risk indicators, commenced in the spring of 2021.

As part of this collaboration with NARA, a quality assessment tool was developed: Saskatchewan's Early Learning and Child Care Quality Key Indicator Instrument (SK Quality Tool). The ministry is now implementing use of this new quality assessment tool.

Participation in this differential monitoring approach to licensing and monitoring child care facilities is mandatory for all child care centres.

How was SK Quality Tool created and is it a valid assessment?

The Ministry of Education collaborated with Dr. Richard Fiene and the National Association for Regulatory Administration (NARA) to develop the SK Quality Tool. This tool is designed to evaluate the quality of child care centres in Saskatchewan. The 10 quality key indicators were selected from previous studies conducted by Dr. Fiene over the past 40 years. Dr. Fiene worked alongside the Ministry of Education to customize these indicators to suit the Saskatchewan context.

The tool's reliability and validity were established through a study conducted in spring 2023 across child care centres in Saskatchewan. To ensure consistent results across all age groups, centre quality was evaluated using both the SK Quality Tool and the well-known ECERS-3 tool (and ITERS-3 for infants and toddlers).

What does the SK Quality Tool assess?

The SK Quality Tool evaluates 10 essential quality indicators. These indicators include:

1. staff education levels;
2. environment (as per *Play and Exploration*);
3. developmentally appropriate curriculum based on assessments of each child;
4. relationships with families;
5. regular progress updates to families about their children;
6. encouraging children to communicate (Preschool groups);
7. language development for infants and toddlers (Infant and Toddler groups);
8. use of language to develop reasoning skills (Preschool groups);
9. active listening to children by educators; and,
10. warm communication style of educators towards children.

These 10 quality indicators are crucial to ensure that children are receiving high-quality care and education in their early years.

What happens next?

All child care centres in the province will be assessed using the SK Quality Tool over the next 18 months. Your centre will be contacted during this period to schedule the assessment at which time you will receive further information regarding length of time to conduct the assessment, name of assessor and sharing of results of the assessment.