

Fall 2023 Local Observation Protocol Guidance for **[Community Network Lead Agency]**

The Louisiana [Early Childhood Education Act \(Act 3\)](#) of the 2012 Legislative session requires that the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) establishes and carries out a statewide accountability system used to measure the quality of all publicly-funded early childhood programs. To achieve that statutory requirement, [Bulletin 140 §503](#) requires Community Network Lead Agencies to develop a plan and process to coordinate and conduct local observations reliably and without conflict of interest. The Department requires all Community Network Lead Agencies to adopt a written local observation protocol that meets the minimum requirements included in this document.

Community Network Lead Agencies must develop a Coordinated Observation Plan by **September 30, 2023** and have a schedule for completing local observations for each observation period. A [template](#) for this plan has been developed to assist Community Network Lead Agencies as they develop observation protocols for the 2023-2024 year. If you have questions or need assistance, contact robert.jones4@la.gov.

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Observation Protocol Updates

In addition to the considerations for typical local observations, the Department has also provided additional protocols and guidance for observing FCC educators. For observations conducted at FCC sites, Community Network Lead Agencies should refer to protocols in both “Column A: Local Protocol Requirements” and “Column B: Additional FCC Observation Considerations.”

[Community Network Lead Agencies should add community-specific policies and/or clarifications in yellow boxes if applicable.]

Before the Observation Begins		
	Column A Local Protocol Requirements	Column B Additional FCC Observation Considerations
Minimum Observer Qualifications	<p>Local observers must meet the following minimum qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be certified by Teachstone as a reliable observer for every age group that will be observed by that observer in the 2023-2024 school year (including certification on Pre-K-3rd 2nd Edition for all pre-K observers). Observation certification should be filed with Community Network Lead Agency ● Participate in on-going calibration exercises at least once per observation period ● Have a valid Child Care Criminal Background Check (CCCBC) that is on file with the Community Network Lead Agency (for early learning center observers only) <p>[]</p>	<p>Because FCC enrollment can change frequently and often includes multiple ages, the Department recommends that observers who observe FCC sites are certified in multiple tools. This will enable the observation to take place without rescheduling if a different tool should be used. For more guidance on age configurations in relation to FCCs, refer to “Observer Arrival on Site” in the Day of Observation table.</p> <p>[]</p>
Scheduling Observations	<p>Community Network Lead Agencies must develop a written plan to ensure they have all sites and the classrooms for each site, with correct age types, entered in the CLASS® Portal by September 30 and have a schedule for completing local observations for each observation period.</p> <p>[]</p>	<p>Community Network Lead Agencies should contact FCCs to ensure that at least half the children enrolled will be present on the day of the observation and to verify the age of the children enrolled. Because some FCCs operate after school or during non-traditional hours, schedules may have to accommodate this. For reference, any FCC that receives public funding and that cares for children for 20 hours per week (or 6 hours during any one weekday) must be observed.</p>

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Observer Schedules	<p>Community Network Lead Agencies must establish a process to review observer schedules for schedule conflict, conflicts of interest, or other concerns, and make adjustments that are communicated to observers and sites.</p> <p>[]</p>	<p>Although some FCC observations may have to occur in the evening, Community Network Lead Agencies must ensure that observers are not conducting more than one observation per day. An observer should not conduct an observation at a school or early learning center in the daytime then conduct an FCC observation in the evening. This is in accordance with Teachstone guidance and recommendations.</p> <p>[]</p>
Site Notification	<p>Community Network Lead Agencies must establish a process to contact sites to determine the optimal learning time during which to conduct observations. Community Network Lead Agencies must establish a process to require sites to contact the local CLASS® coordinator or the observer with any events that would preclude an observation no later than one week before the scheduled timeframe of the observation.</p> <p>Communication between the Community Network Lead Agency, site, and observer must adhere to a local protocol for rescheduling observations.</p> <p>[]</p>	
Rescheduling Observations	<p>Communication between the lead agency, site, and observer must adhere to a local protocol for observations. If an observation needs to be canceled, lead agencies should re-evaluate within two weeks to determine if observation(s) can be safely conducted.</p> <p>[]</p>	

[Community Network Lead Agencies should add community-specific policies and/or clarifications in yellow boxes if applicable.]

The Day of the Observation		
	Column A Local Protocol Requirements	Column B Additional FCC Observation Considerations
Observer Demeanor, Attire, and Conduct	<p>Observers should be professional in demeanor and attire at all times and never let personal preferences influence scoring.</p> <p>Observers will not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask teachers to change schedules, move rooms, rearrange children or groups; engage in conversations with children or teachers; use their phone during the observation (time must be kept via a clock, watch, or stopwatch) conduct observations during the 10-minute break time between cycles; conduct more than four cycles of observations; or perform more than one observation in a day. <p>At the conclusion of the observation, the observer will confirm with the teacher that the observation is complete.</p>	<p>The observer should always be cognizant of the fact that they are a guest in the FCC educator’s home. For example, FCC educators may request that observers remove their shoes or may require that the blinds remain open during the observation. The observer should accommodate any request that does not detract from their ability to observe the classroom.</p>
Observer Arrival at Site	<p>Upon arrival at the site/school the observer must report to the administration office and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduce themselves to office staff and site administrator (if available); present identification and sign-in on appropriate site documentation; present a Child Care Criminal Background Check (for licensed centers only); request a roster of children and verify classroom information 	<p>Some family child care homes have a space set aside for child care such as a finished basement or a large family room that has been converted into a child care area. In other homes, activities take place in the same space where the family lives. Teachstone recommends that the observer find a place to sit or stand where they can see and hear without being disruptive, keeping in mind that they may need to move around.</p> <p>The observer should be aware that the educator may be the only</p>

with site administrator/director or designee (e.g., classroom locations by age and correct spelling of the teacher’s name);

- receive an updated daily schedule for the classroom being observed; and
- request access to a quiet space for four, 10-minute scoring cycles.

Based upon site reported optimal learning times, the CLASS® observation typically starts at the beginning of the school day and continues throughout the morning for at least 2 hours. The total time the observer is present at the site is dependent upon the daily schedule and extracurricular activities.

For infant classrooms - While it is important that observers know the daily schedule of the infant classrooms that they observe, there is more flexibility in scheduling Infant CLASS® observations. Observers should start Infant CLASS® observations at the same time as they would start toddler and pre-K observations as much as possible. However, infant classroom observations may be conducted at different times of the day as appropriate.

For mixed infant and toddler classrooms, the Toddler CLASS® tool will be used if 50% or more of the children are 15 months or older. The Infant CLASS® tool will be used if more than half of the children are younger than 15 months of age.

For mixed toddler and pre-K classrooms, the Pre-K CLASS® tool will be used if 50% or more of the children are 36 months or older. The Toddler CLASS® will be used if more than half of the children are 15 months up to 36 months of age.

For classrooms where all three ages are present, use the tool

adult present and it may take a few minutes to answer the door.

For mixed age classrooms, the observer should use the tool corresponding to the age of majority (as of October 1, 2023) for the children present on the day of the observation. To determine which tool to use, refer to the Local Protocol Requirements for this section.

The following table provides two examples to help illustrate this. For site-specific questions, please reach out to robert.jones4@la.gov.

	Classroom A	Classroom B
Children Enrolled	One infant, two toddlers	Two infants, one toddler, three preschoolers
Children Present During Observation	One infant, one toddler	Two infants, one toddler
Observation Tool and Rationale	Toddler; 50% toddlers in a toddler/infant classroom	Infant; majority infants in a toddler/infant classroom

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	<p>corresponding to the age of majority in the classroom. If there is no clear age of majority, the Toddler tool should be used.</p> <p><i>Note: Use the age of the children on October 1, 2023 to determine the classroom configuration for the school year.</i></p> <p>[]</p>	
<p>Observer Classroom Entry</p>	<p>Upon entering the classroom, the observer will introduce themselves and request a daily schedule if they have not received one from the office. Based on the daily schedule, the observer will plan for the observation/scoring.</p> <p>The observer may be accompanied by a second observer to shadow score simultaneously. The primary purpose of this shadow score is to ensure inter-rater reliability, which has no reflection of the quality of the site being observed or alters the score.</p> <p>If the classroom is not available or the observer is unable to complete the observation, the following actions should be taken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If it is practical (close enough/time available) and the classroom is likely to become available for observation, the observer should wait until the observation can begin. ● If the site/school has multiple classrooms with children of the same age as the originally assigned classroom, the observer should contact the Community Network Lead Agency for reassignment. ● If the site/school has mixed classes with infants and toddlers or toddlers and preschoolers, contact the Community Network Lead Agency to determine which age type the classroom is classified as in the Early Childhood portal. <p>[]</p>	<p>Family child care homes are likely to be visited less frequently by unfamiliar adults than school or center-based programs. As a result, children in family child care homes may be especially curious about CLASS® observers. The observer should ask the FCC educator to let the children know who they are and why they are there (for example, “to see how our day goes and see the activities we do during our time together”). The observer should be as unobtrusive as possible and avoid interrupting any activities.</p> <p>To minimize disruptions to the routine, the observer should plan to arrive early to give the children time to get used to their presence.</p> <p>If the observation cannot be completed on the day that the observation is scheduled, the Community Network Lead Agency should complete the FCC Accountability Observation Attempts form. Each attempt should be thoroughly documented using this form and submitted to the Department no later than 10 days after the attempted observation visit. A team member from LDOE Early Childhood Strategy will reach out to ensure this observation is completed at a later date.</p> <p>[]</p>

Teacher and Child Attendance	<p>A classroom must have the regularly assigned lead teacher, who has been employed at least 10 work days, present during the observation. Lead substitute teachers are eligible for a CLASS® observation if they have been in the classroom for at least 10 consecutive days. Paraprofessionals or classroom aides who have taken on responsibility for primary instruction may be observed if they have been in the classroom for at least 10 work days and if children typically receive instruction from this adult.</p> <p>If the teacher scheduled is no longer employed by the site or the teacher is in a classroom with a different age type, the observer should contact the Community Network Lead Agency for assistance. If observers are unsure whether a classroom has been observed by another local observer, they should contact the Community Network Lead Agency before they begin observing.</p> <p>At least 50% of children on the classroom roster must be present. If less than 50% of children are present, contact the Community Network Lead Agency for assistance.</p> <p>[]</p>	
Observer Interactions	<p>Observers will not interact with teachers beyond requesting a daily schedule and class roster, and will do their best to refrain from and minimize any communications, distractions, or intrusions into the classroom. Observers will not ignore children’s bids for attention or greeting; they will simply state their purpose of being in the classroom (to do their work) and kindly re-direct the children to their activities.</p> <p>[]</p>	
Scoring Cycles	<p>The observation will consist of four 20-minute observation cycles each followed by 10-minute scoring cycles (120 minutes total time) for pre-K and toddler observations, and four 15-minute observation cycles followed by 10-minute scoring cycles (100 minutes total time) for infant observations.</p> <p>In pre-K classes, when possible the observer will leave the classroom to complete each 10 minute scoring cycle; however, in order to minimize distraction in infant and toddler classrooms, Teachstone recommends observers remain in the classroom when scoring. In the event that observers remain in the classroom, they should turn their back on the class and quietly complete the scoring.</p> <p>[]</p>	<p>Before beginning the observation, the observer should determine where they will complete scoring between observation cycles. The FCC may not have a separate space in the learning environment for the observer to score; an outdoor area or separate room may be used to accommodate this.</p> <p>[]</p>

Conducting Observations	<p>Observers should follow the recommended procedures for using the CLASS® tool located within the CLASS® Manual. Infant teachers are required to spend time keeping records related to feeding, diapering, etc., which constitutes observable time. How the teacher interacts with the children during those periods of recordkeeping will impact the CLASS® score.</p> <p>[]</p>	
Extra-Curricular Pull-Out and Special Visiting Teachers	<p>The following sessions conducted by extra-curricular pull-out teachers and/or special visiting teachers will not be observed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Physical Education ● Music ● Computer ● Library ● Art <p>Cafeteria-based meals and pre-K toileting will not be observed. Diapering in infant and toddler classrooms is an observable time.</p> <p>Outdoor recess is not included in pre-K observations but is included in toddler and infant observations. However, if pre-k teachers are leading instructional or interactional activities outside, these interactions can be observed. <i>Note: When a quiet space is not available at the site, observers may sit outdoors to complete scoring. This is not an opportunity to collect additional data for pre-K observations.</i></p> <p>[]</p>	<p>In some FCCs, non-caregiver adults or children may interact with children in the home. These interactions, such as parents dropping off their children or family members who live in the home, should be taken into account in coding only if they enhance or detract from children’s experiences.</p> <p>To illustrate this point, a grandmother who does puzzles with preschoolers while the provider sets out lunch is enhancing the preschoolers’ experiences. Conversely, a neighbor who engages the provider in a long conversation which takes the educator’s attention away from the children is detracting from their experiences.</p> <p>[]</p>
Taking Notes	<p>Notes must be detailed and must provide concrete examples of observations from the classroom. Summary statements for each dimension should address each indicator noting the presence/absence of particular behaviors.</p> <p>[]</p>	
Observation Concerns	<p>In the unusual circumstance of any suspected abuse or neglect observed at the time of the observation, the observer must report the observed behaviors as mandated by law.</p> <p>[]</p>	

Additional Requirements

Providing Observation Feedback	<p>Community Network Lead Agencies must establish and implement a protocol to ensure that written results and feedback from each local observation are reported to sites within ten business days. Observers should provide high-quality supportive feedback that recognizes teachers' high-quality practices while focusing on opportunities for growth and skill development.</p> <p>[]</p>
Reporting Scores	<p>CLASS® scores must be entered in the portal within ten days of conducting the observation, or by the end of the observation period, whichever is first. Community Network Lead Agencies are responsible for ensuring that all local observers submit their score sheets in a timely manner, and that they retain these score sheets on file for a period of three years.</p> <p>[]</p>
Error Corrections	<p>If the Community Network Lead Agency determines that there is a mistake in the EC Portal, an error correction form should be completed. All corrections must be completed by June 30, 2024, though it is recommended that corrections be submitted as soon as possible. The Department may reach out for further information if needed. As a reminder, if a local observation is deleted, another observation must be completed to fulfill the Bulletin 140 requirement of one local observation per semester.</p> <p>[]</p>
Observer Accuracy and Shadow Scoring	<p>Community Network Lead Agencies should ensure that all local observations entered into the CLASS® System are conducted according to Teachstone's standardized procedures. Develop and implement a written process to monitor and compare the results of all local observers for the purpose of ensuring accurate observations. Identify a process to address concerns regarding reliability of local observers to ensure they can continue to observe for the accountability system. For local observation scores, high scores, low scores, and concerning patterns will trigger additional third party observations to ensure accuracy. Bulletin 140 §503 requires the state to take action when observers are demonstrably unreliable.</p> <p>The Community Network Lead Agency should conduct a minimum of one observation calibration activity each semester and ensure that all observers participate in at least one observation calibration activity each semester. In addition, at least 10% of all local observations each observation period must be shadow scored. Every local observer must be shadow scored at least once per year in each age configuration for which they conduct observations.</p> <p>[]</p>
Conflict of Interest	<p>Community Network Lead Agencies must collaborate with all program partners to establish and implement written procedures that</p>

	<p>minimize potential observer conflict of interest as described in Bulletin 140 and in guidance published by the Department.</p> <p>[]</p>
Record Keeping	<p>Community Network Lead Agencies must collect and maintain copies of current certification documents for all observers, copies of the background checks necessary to enter sites for all observers, and original or complete copies of all observation scoring forms from the school year. These records must be maintained and available upon Department request for 3 years.</p> <p>[]</p>
Appealing Local Observations	<p>Because local observations are managed by Community Network Lead Agencies, the Department does not prescribe a specific policy or protocol for local appeals. Community Network Lead Agencies should create a procedure that allows sites to elevate concerns in a timely manner and provides the agency with time to review concerns before observation data is finalized for the 2023-2024 academic year.</p> <p>[]</p>

References & Additional Resources

Teachstone. (2020). Considerations for Observing in Family Child Care Homes. Retrieved from

[https://f.hubspotusercontent10.net/hubfs/336169/Considerations%20for%20Observing%20in%20Family%20Child%20Care%20Homes%20\(10 8 2020\).docx.pdf](https://f.hubspotusercontent10.net/hubfs/336169/Considerations%20for%20Observing%20in%20Family%20Child%20Care%20Homes%20(10%208%202020).docx.pdf).