

Family Child Care Provider (FCC) Third Party Observation Protocol: Virtual

In Spring 2022, the Picard Center for Child Development will conduct third party CLASS® observations in approximately 40, second-year participating FCC provider homes (virtually or in person) with the coordination and support of the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) and local Resource and Referral Agencies (R&R). This document is meant to serve as a guide for planning and observing in FCC provider homes.

Planning Phase

1. The LDOE will provide the Picard Center with a list of the second year FCC providers, the schedule for R&R spring 2022 local observations including the date, age type and optimal learning time.
2. The Picard Center will coordinate with the R&R coaches, following their observation schedule. The coaches will provide the Picard Center with the observation details (when available):
 - i. Coach contact information: email address and phone number
 - ii. Zoom link
 - iii. Optimal learning time: time when the majority of the children are present
 - iv. Number of adults in the home interacting with children during the optimal learning time
 - v. Enrollment numbers and ages of children
 - vi. Site location details: provider name, address, and contact information (in the event a virtual observation is not possible)
3. The Picard Center will contact the coach 1-3 days before the scheduled observation date(s) to confirm the observation. The coach should also contact the Picard Center should any issues arise.
4. If an observation needs to be canceled the Picard Center will work with the coach to reschedule the observation (the initial reschedule).

Site Preparation for Virtual Observations

1. For virtual observations the coaches will provide device support (if needed) and conduct initial connectivity tests with providers. Potential video/audio device(s) that could be used for streaming video (e.g. iPad, laptop computer, speakers, webcam, or High Definition camera, etc.). The minimum Zoom system requirements for connectivity and streaming are linked below:
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362023-System-requirements-for-Windows-macOS-and-Linux>
2. During the initial test the coach and provider will identify ideal locations within the home to set up the video/audio device following Teachstone's video quality considerations (link below):
<https://info.teachstone.com/hubfs/blog-attachments/CLASS%20Video%20Guidance.pdf>
 - Video is viewable on a basic level
 - a. **Sound-** placement of the capture device is away from noisy heaters/air conditioners, loud musical devices, sinks, televisions, etc.

- b. **Lighting-** lights are turned on, curtains/blinds are open and lighting is bright enough to see children and caregiver(s)
 - c. **Picture-** no buffering, distortions or freezing
 - d. **Locations-** provider and coach should discuss the various locations where the observation could take place, ensuring most of the locations are tested beforehand.
 - Provider(s) and some children are visible for the majority of the cycles
 - Observer(s) can see and hear interactions taking place
 - Streaming device is fully charged and will not go into 'sleep mode'
 - Video orientation is locked and provides wide-angle view
 - 'Do Not Disturb' mode is selected if applicable to minimize disruptions
3. The provider may use a stand to hold/prop up the chosen streaming device thus making it easier to move and maneuver the device around the home.
 4. The provider and coach will identify the optimal learning time, the observable times within the daily activities (mapping out four, 15-20 minute observation cycles with 10-minutes of coding in-between each cycle). The providers should set up and prepare for the observation by joining the Zoom call 15-20 minutes before the scheduled optimal learning time.
 5. (Optional) The provider can obtain consent forms from all child participants for their records [see appendix]. The Picard Center will conduct live streaming observations only. The consent for recording applies only when a teacher or coach records the Zoom observation.

Video Capture and Streaming Guidance

1. Observers will watch and code nearly all activities, including:
 - Outsides time (toddler and infant age groups)
 - Snack and mealtimes
 - Bottle feeding
 - Preparing for nap
 - Infant care and response to needs
 - Hand-washing, self-care, and other daily routines
 - Transitions
2. Observers will not watch and code the following:
 - Nap time when all children are sleeping
 - Bathroom time for preschool-age children
 - Outside time for preK
3. In family homes there may be a designated space for children to play such as a large family room or activities may take place in the same space where other family members interact and live. The provider and coach should discuss these details during the test Zoom.
4. The coach and observer(s) may provide ongoing guidance to the provider on where and when to move the camera during the observation. The coach will unmute her microphone when the provider either needs to move the location of the streaming device or when the camera angle needs adjusting.

5. The provider and observer(s) will use the following guidance from [Teachstone's Sample Observation Protocol for Observing in family Child Care Homes](#) when addressing activity content/format:
 - a. Whole-group or group time format: the provider is addressing the majority of the children at once. This can include stories, songs, calendar instruction, discussions, book reading, or demonstrations. The provider will place the camera in a pre-selected location to capture the best angle and sound of her/himself and children.
 - b. Small group time: the provider decides what children are to be doing and assigns which children to participate, even if the provider is not participating in the group. Children are working in small groups that have been organized or directed by the provider. Small groups can include group art projects, writing stories, collective building, cooking projects, small group instruction, science experiments, structured PE activities, etc. The provider will either use a preselected location in the classroom for each of the small groups or move around the room to capture each group. If the camera does need to be moved, the observer(s) should guide the provider when the camera needs to be moved with a goal of capturing an equal amount of time with each group during the observation cycle.
 - c. Free choice/centers or individual activities/formats: children are able to select what and where they would like to play or learn. Activities can include individual art projects, blocks, pretend play, puzzles, reading, puppets, computers, science areas, etc. The provider should use Teachstone's guidelines and capture interactions where the majority of the children are interacting with the teacher. If multiple adults are interacting with children, the provider should move the camera around the room to capture most of the interactions in the classroom.

For example, if there are two providers interacting with children during center time, the video should focus on the main provider for 10 minutes capturing his/her interactions and 10 minutes capturing the second provider.
 - d. For routines/transitions the provider should move the camera around the room(s) and capture the interactions.
 - e. During the observation cycle, the Site Designee will ensure that the camera is focused on the interactions and no visual obstructions occur.
6. Ending a cycle early- if an observer needs to end a cycle early due to circumstances such as all children going down for a nap, going home or going outside (for preK observations) the observer may assign ratings to the CLASS codes on what has been observed up to that point only if the observer has been observing for 10 minutes. If not, the observer will need to start a new observation cycle when the children wake up or the circumstances allow the next cycle to begin.
7. Multiple adults- the observer should weigh the interactions of each adult based on the number of children with whom they are working, the amount of time they spend with the children, and their responsibility for the activities. The interactions of non-caregiver adults, 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.
 - i. Example: A grandmother who does puzzles with preschoolers while the provider sets out lunch is enhancing the preschoolers' experiences.
 - ii. Example: A neighbor who engages the provider in a long conversation which takes the provider's attention away from the children is detracting from their experiences.

Conducting Virtual Observations

1. The provider and coach have agreed upon an optimal learning time to begin the observation. The coach will send the Zoom link and observation details to the Picard Center 1-3 days prior to the scheduled observation. If the observation cannot be conducted the morning of the scheduled observation the Picard Center will work with the coach to reschedule the observation on the first cancellation.
2. The Picard Center, provider and coach will join the virtual Zoom call 15-20 minutes before the scheduled start time to ensure everyone is ready to begin the observation on-time and to determine which CLASS® tool should be used. The approach for determining the age type will be based on the ages of the children present on the day of the scheduled observation. This information will be documented in the Picard observer(s)' observation booklet. For mixed age groups, the tool will be selected for the age of the majority of the children. If there is a combination of infant, toddler, and preK children present or infant and preK children and there is no clear majority among the age groups, the toddler tool will be used.
 - a. Infant CLASS may be used from 0-18 months
 - b. Toddler 15-36 months
 - c. Prekindergarten (preK) 3-5 years of age
3. The observation can begin when at least one child is present.
4. The coach will contact the provider when technical difficulties arise by unmuting her microphone or using the chat function.
5. During the observation the Picard observer(s) will ensure the following:
 - a. The microphone on their computer is muted
 - b. Their video is turned off with their name visible on the black screen
 - c. They have a timer/stopwatch to time the observation and scoring cycles
 - d. They are following best practices for coding including wearing headphones during the observation (link below):
<https://info.teachstone.com/hubfs/blog-attachments/CLASS%20Video%20Guidance.pdf>
6. The coach and the Picard observer(s) will determine who will take the lead on the cycle start and end times.
7. The selected lead will utilize the chat function or Zoom to prepare the start of the first observation cycle- approximately 2 minutes before the intended start time.
8. The lead will countdown 5-4-3-2-1 through the video function (using hand signals and/or voice) to start the first cycle of observation.
9. Observer(s) will observe for 15 minutes (infant tool) and 20 minutes (preK and toddler tool). After the 15-20 minute observation cycle has ended the observer(s) will turn off video and mute their sessions. Observer(s) will score independently for 10 minutes.
10. The lead will use the Zoom chat feature to communicate the times for scoring and the start time for the next cycle. For example:
 - a. Scoring Time: 8:30 AM-8:40 AM
 - b. Second Cycle: 8:42 AM
11. The observer(s) will have 2-3 minutes between back-to-back cycles in order to turn off Zoom video and prepare to start the next observation cycle.

12. If the schedule does not allow for back-to-back cycles or the provider requests a break in back-to-back cycles, the observer(s) will begin with the next cycle at the agreed upon time either through the chat function or voice. The observer(s) will access Zoom 2-3 minutes before the start of each cycle.
13. All Picard observers will review and use Teachstone’s guidance for conducting CLASS® observations during Covid-19 (link below):
<https://info.teachstone.com/blog/guidance-for-conducting-class-observations-during-covid-19>

Troubleshooting Potential Problems

1. Effective communication between provider, coach, and Picard observer(s) is essential throughout the observation. Picard observers will notify the coach and provider immediately if connection is lost at any time during any observation cycle.
2. The provider will contact the coach and observer(s) immediately via the chat box on Zoom or voice if they are experiencing any persistent technical difficulties. The coach and observer(s) will work with the provider to troubleshoot the issues and continue the observation during the next cycle.
3. If the schedule permits, an additional cycle could be observed if connection was lost for any of the participants (observer(s), provider or coach).
4. If the observation is unable to be completed virtually due to streaming or connectivity issues, the Picard Center will schedule a test Zoom with the provider.
 - a. If the initial connectivity/streaming issues are resolved, the Picard Center will schedule a new observation date.
 - b. If the connectivity/streaming issues persist, the observation will default to an in person observation and the Picard Center will take the lead on conducting the observation.
5. The Picard observer(s) will document in their notes any potential issues during the observation including but not limited to:
 - a. Sound and video quality
 - b. Positioning of camera (if caregiver moved the camera during the observation)
 - c. Video capture concerns
 - d. Connection issues
 - e. Site communication difficulties or challenges

Common Issues	Troubleshooting Tips
Lag in video or audio	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Switch to an alternate device ii. Log off Zoom meeting and reconnect to meeting iii. Reboot router iv. If using WiFi connection, try using a data plan instead
Audio quality issues	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Move the device closer to the children or provider ii. If wearing a mask, change the mask type iii. Provider can increase his/her speaking volume iv. Switch to an alternate device



Video placement far from provider and children	i. Observer(s) or coach can guide provider on video placement to ensure view includes both children and provider in frame
Site communication issues	i. If the observer uses the chat function to communicate and the provider does not respond the observer can unmute their microphone to communicate or attempt to troubleshoot with the coach



Appendix A



**Video Conferencing Guidance and Consent Form
Early Childhood Classrooms**

When using video conferencing tools,

1. consider using the invitation option or the password option to ensure only those invited will have access.
2. develop guidelines for all participants (no recording the conference, no photographs, no screenshots, use only first names, control the chatbox, manage student or child conversation, etc.)
3. ensure that you know how to mute video and audio and are ready to do so.
4. consider providing the following consent language to early childhood programs for them to include with their existing consent documents such as media release consent.

If you choose to record classrooms with conferencing tools (or in-person),

1. try to keep children's faces out of the video.
2. get parental consent in advance (see below).
3. ensure that the recording is stored securely.
4. do not share the recording with anyone other than lead agency staff, site administration, or community network authorized classroom evaluators.
5. if providing access to the recording, ensure that the video cannot be downloaded or re-shared in any manner.
6. If other observers, such as teacher preparation providers and on-site reviewers who are required per BESE policy or under the auspices of a contract approved by BESE to observe teacher candidates, need access to the recording, lead agencies or school systems should ensure that MOUs have been updated to cover the recording, the way it is protected, and the destruction protocol.
7. consider a destruction policy that aligns with community network/school system record retention policies.

The first consent example below is an opt-in style consent. If the local school board or the early learning center has adopted a policy that allows for opt-outs (see pg. 13 of [Louisiana's Data Governance and Student Privacy Guidebook](#)), consider the opt-out sample form.

Sample Parental Consent Form

[INSERT SCHOOL OR CENTER NAME] VIDEO AND TELECONFERENCING CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are receiving this consent form because your child's teacher may be observed in accordance with Louisiana early child care requirements. These observations are required by Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education policy, and help support your child's teacher in providing high-quality care and education to your child this fall. Due to social distancing guidance, observations may occur virtually and may require recording that would include your child's audio or video. Every effort will be made to avoid capturing your child's face, and recordings will not be shared with anyone else for any other purpose.

As the parent/legal guardian of _____ (*Child's Name*), I give my consent for him/her to be present during observations conducted using video or teleconferencing.

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

Parent/Legal Guardian Full Name (please print)

My Child's Full Name (please print)

Date



**Video Conferencing Guidance and Consent Form
Early Childhood Classrooms**

Sample Opt-Out Parental Notification

[INSERT SCHOOL OR CENTER NAME] VIDEO AND TELECONFERENCING PARENTAL NOTIFICATION

Dear Parent or Guardian,

You are receiving this notification because your child's teacher may be observed in accordance with Louisiana early child care requirements. These observations are required by Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education policy, and help support your child's teacher in providing high-quality care and education to your child this fall. Due to social distancing guidance, observations may occur virtually and may require recording that would include your child's audio or video. Every effort will be made to avoid capturing your child's face, and recordings will not be shared with anyone else for any other purpose.

If you choose to exercise your right to **opt-out** of having your child present during an observation using video recording or teleconferencing, please sign and return this form. Otherwise, we will assume you consent. Please note that if you choose to opt-out, different child care arrangements may need to be made for your child on the day of the observation.

As the parent/legal guardian of _____ (*Child's Name*), I do not give consent for my child to be present during observations conducted using video or teleconferencing.

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian

Parent/Legal Guardian Full Name (please print)

My Child's Full Name (please print)

Date