

NCCIC Is A Service of the Child Care Bureau

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QUALITY RATING SYSTEMS: QUALITY STANDARDS

A quality rating system (QRS) is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, QRS award quality ratings to early care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. These systems provide an opportunity for States to increase the quality of care and education for children; increase parents' understanding and demand for higher quality care; and increase professional development of child care providers. QRS can also be a strategy for aligning components of the early care and education system for increased accountability in improving quality of care. Additional information about QRS is available on the NCCIC Web site at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/index.html#qrs>.

All QRS are composed of five common elements: (1) standards; (2) accountability measures; (3) program and practitioner outreach and support; (4) financing incentives; and (5) parent/consumer education efforts. Currently, 14 States (Colorado, District of Columbia, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Vermont) have a statewide QRS.

QRS standards are used to assign ratings to programs that participate in QRS, providing parents and the public with information about each program's quality. States typically use licensing standards as the starting point, or base of the system, upon which higher levels of quality standards are built. Every QRS contains two or more levels of standards beyond licensing, with incremental progressions to the highest level of quality as defined by the State. Systems vary in the number of levels and in the number of standards identified in each level. The types of standards used by QRS to assign ratings are based on research about the characteristics of programs that produce positive child outcomes.

Categories of standards in statewide QRS include the following:

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| Administrative policies and procedures; | Personnel/staffing; |
| Children with special needs; | Professional development/qualifications/training; |
| Health and safety; | Program evaluation; |
| Learning environment/curriculum; | Ratios/group size; and |
| Licensing status/compliance; | Staff compensation. |
| Parent/family involvement; | |

The following table includes links to each State’s QRS standards used to assign quality ratings. NCCIC does not endorse any organization, publication, or resource.

QRS Quality Standards

State	Start Date	QRS Name and Web Site (When Available)	QRS Quality Standards Web Site (When Available)
Colorado	2000	Qualistar Rating System www.qualistar.org	Qualistar Rating Components www.qualistar.org/professionals/components.php
District of Columbia	2000	Going for the Gold Web site not available	Web site not available
Iowa	2006	Iowa Child Care Quality Rating System www.dhs.state.ia.us/iqrs/	Child Development Homes and Child Care Center Charts www.dhs.state.ia.us/iqrs/

State	Start Date	QRS Name and Web Site (When Available)	QRS Quality Standards Web Site (When Available)
Kentucky	2001	STARS for KIDS NOW Child Care Quality Rating System www.kde.state.ky.us/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Early+Childhood+Development/STAR+S++for+KIDS+NOW+%28Quality+Rating+System%29.htm	STARS for KIDS NOW Level Requirements for Type I Centers www.kde.state.ky.us/NR/rdonlyres/983F734C-9991-4AA2-9861-BFDC809E0531/0/072006TypeIGridrtf.doc
			STARS for KIDS NOW Level Requirements for Licensed Family Child Care Homes www.kde.state.ky.us/NR/rdonlyres/AEE1D9FF-2491-49FD-AC1E-F17E31DC74B7/0/TypeIIGridJuly2002.doc
			STARS for KIDS NOW Level Requirements for Certified Family Child Care Homes www.kde.state.ky.us/NR/rdonlyres/7791938A-0590-4283-AFA0-0224FC98B1F5/0/072006CertifiedGridrtf.doc
Maryland	2001	Maryland Child Care Tiered Reimbursement Program www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/credentials/tiered	Tiered Reimbursement Levels Chart Web site not available
Montana	2002	Star Quality Rating System www.dphhs.mt.gov/programsservices/starqualitychildcare.shtml	Star Quality Rating System www.dphhs.mt.gov/programsservices/starqualitychildcare.shtml
New Hampshire	2006	Licensed Plus www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/CDB/licensedplus.htm	Licensed Plus Quality Standards www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/CDB/LIBRARY/Form/licensedplus-applications.htm

State	Start Date	QRS Name and Web Site (When Available)	QRS Quality Standards Web Site (When Available)
New Mexico	2005	Look for the Stars www.newmexicokids.org/caregivers	AIM HIGH Essential Elements of Quality www.newmexicokids.org/Resource/Library/AIMHIGH/EssentialElements.pdf
North Carolina	1999	North Carolina Star Rated License http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/parents/pr_sn2_ov_sr.asp	Program Standards summary http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/parents/pr_sn2_ps.asp
			Education Standards summary http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/parents/pr_sn2_es.asp
			Child Care Rules—full text of all standards http://nrc.uchsc.edu/STATES/NC/nc_0506T_OC.htm
Ohio	2006	Step Up to Quality www.stepuptoquality.org	Step Up to Quality Benchmarks and Indicators www.stepuptoquality.org
Oklahoma	1998	Reaching for the Stars www.okdhs.org/programsandservices/cc/stars	340:110-1-8.3. Certification of facilities to receive a differential quality rate www.okdhs.org/library/policy/oac340/110/01/0008003.htm

State	Start Date	QRS Name and Web Site (When Available)	QRS Quality Standards Web Site (When Available)
Pennsylvania	2002		Keystone Stars Performance Standards for Center www.dpw.state.pa.us/PartnersProviders/ChildCareEarlyEd/KeyStoneStarChildCare/PerformanceStandards/003671059.htm
		Keystone STARS (Standards, Training, Assistance, Resources, and Support) www.dpw.state.pa.us/PartnersProviders/ChildCareEarlyEd/KeyStoneStarChildCare	Keystone Stars Performance Standards for Family Day Care Home www.dpw.state.pa.us/PartnersProviders/ChildCareEarlyEd/KeyStoneStarChildCare/PerformanceStandards/003671060.htm
			Keystone Stars Performance Standards for Group Home www.dpw.state.pa.us/PartnersProviders/ChildCareEarlyEd/KeyStoneStarChildCare/PerformanceStandards/003671058.htm
Tennessee	2001	Child Care Evaluation and Report Card Program (Required for all licensed and approved child care providers in Tennessee) www.tnstarquality.org	Web site not available
	2001	Star-Quality Child Care Program www.tnstarquality.org	Web site not available
Vermont	2003	STep Ahead Recognition System for Child Care Programs (STARS) www.STARSstepahead.org	STARS Program Guide www.starsstepahead.org/press/program_guide.pdf