



Quality Rating System Standards About the Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

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 (1) increase the quality of care and education for children; (2) increase parents' understanding and demand for higher quality care; and (3) increase professional development of child care providers. QRS can also be an effective 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 National Child Care Information Center (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. As of November 2006, 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 built on the foundation of child care licensing requirements and add multiple steps between licensing and higher quality standards, such as accreditation standards. Of the 14 States with a QRS, three have quality standards related to the inclusion of children with special needs in programs participating in the QRS. The following includes excerpts from the States' quality standards. Links to the States' quality standards are available in the document, *Quality Rating Systems: Quality Standards*, available on NCCIC's Web site at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/qrs-criteria-websites.html>.

STATE OVERVIEWS

New Hampshire

QRS name: Licensed Plus

Web site: www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/CDB/licensedplus.htm

Category of QRS standards: Children with Special Needs

Standards document: *New Hampshire Licensed Plus Quality Rating System – Option 1 Standards* (March 2006)

Web site:

www.dhhs.state.nh.us/DHHS/CDB/LIBRARY/Form/licensedplus-applications.htm

This document has the following information about the standards about children with special needs that child care centers and family child care homes must meet, and the ways programs must document that they have met the standards. New Hampshire has one level of standards that is between licensing requirements and accreditation standards.

Center Based Programs and Family Based Programs

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS	
Licensed Plus Standards	Documentation
The program must welcome children and families of all abilities and must modify the program and make reasonable accommodations to maintain children with special needs in the program.	Written documentation that explains the inclusive policy and demonstrates that the program welcomes children and families of all abilities, makes modifications and reasonable accommodations to maintain children with special needs in the program, and supports employed staff in their professional development. The documentation may include a statement in your parent/family handbook with the applicable pages highlighted, promotional materials, and/or other written parent communication.

(p. 3)

Ohio

QRS name: Step Up to Quality
Web site: www.stepuptoquality.org

Category of QRS standards: **Early Learning**

Standards document: *Step Up to Quality Benchmarks and Indicators* (November 2006)
Web site: http://jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/docs/Statewide_tiers.pdf

This document has the following information about the early learning standards and criteria that child care centers must meet to reach steps one through three in the QRS. Within these standards, there is a requirement at Step Two that all children (except school-age children) receive a developmental screening within 60 days of enrollment. If needed, referrals must be completed within 90 days. Ohio’s QRS applies only to child care centers at this time.

EARLY LEARNING	
Level	Criteria
Ohio's State Licensing Regulations	<p>Program must have a written plan in place for children who are transitioning from one group to another.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>All children are required to have a daily health check, a completed medical [exam], and, if needed, a health care plan.</p>
Step One	<p>Programs serving preschoolers must have a copy of Ohio's Early Learning Program Guidelines available for use.</p> <p>At a minimum one copy of Ohio's Early Learning Content Standards, and/or Ohio's Infant Toddler Guidelines, and/or Ohio's K-12 Standards are available for use in each classroom dependent on the age of children served.</p> <p>A formal transition process is utilized for when children enter, move within, and/or exit the program.</p>
Step Two	<p>Center has an identified curriculum and planning is aligned with the Infant/Toddler Guidelines and/or Ohio's Early Learning Content Standards and/or Ohio's K-12 Standards.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>All children (except school age) receive a developmental screening within 60 days of enrollment. Referrals, if needed, are completed within 90 days.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Each classroom conducts an annual self-assessment using a tool relevant to the age of children served (ITERS, ECERS-R, ELLCO, SACERS^[1]).</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Children's progress is formally communicated with parents.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>A formal transition process is utilized for when children enter, move within, and/or exit the program.</p>

^[1] ITERS = Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale; ECERS-R = Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale–Revised; ELLCO = Early Learning and Literacy Classroom Observation; SACERS = School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale.

EARLY LEARNING	
Level	Criteria
Step Three	<p>Center has an identified curriculum and planning is aligned with the Early Learning Content Standards, and/or Infant Toddler Guidelines, and/or Ohio's K-12 Standards, and utilizing on-going child assessment data.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>All children (except school age) receive a developmental screening within 60 days of enrollment. Referrals, if needed, are completed within 90 days.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Program creates and implements an annual classroom action plan based on self-assessment results using the ITERS, ECERS-R, ELLCO, or SACERS.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>Children's progress is formally communicated with parents.</p> <p>AND</p> <p>A formal transition process is utilized for when children enter, move within, and/or exit the program.</p>

(p. 1)

Pennsylvania

QRS name: Keystone STARS (Standards, Training, Assistance, Resource, and Support)

Web site: www.dpw.state.pa.us/child/childcare/KeystoneStarChildCare/

Category of QRS standards: Partnerships with Family and Community

The Keystone STARS Web site has the following information about the inclusion of children with special needs in the overall QRS standards and criteria.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILY AND COMMUNITY	
Level	Criteria
STAR 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No requirements at this level.
STAR 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the child has an IEP or IFSP^[2], the program requests a copy to inform classroom practice.
STAR 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A plan is written to refer families to community resources.
STAR 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activities are implemented to meet IEP/IFSP goals.

^[2] IEP = individual education plan; IFSP = individual family service plan

Child Care Centers

Categories of QRS standards: Partnerships with Family and Community

Standards document: *Center Performance Standards for FY 2005-06 (July 2005)*

Web site:

www.dpw.state.pa.us/Child/ChildCare/KeyStoneStarChildCare/PerformanceStandards/003671059.htm

This document has the following information about the QRS standards and criteria related to including children with special needs that child care centers must meet to earn one to four stars.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT	
Level	Criteria
Start with Stars	No requirements.
STAR 1: Performance Standards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At enrollment, families are provided with information regarding public, social and community services. 2. A “Getting to Know You” meeting with parents is offered within 60 days of enrollment.
STAR 2: Performance Standards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least once per year, written information on topics including health and human services, wellness, nutrition and fitness, and/or child development is given and explained to parents and staff. 2. If applicable to the child, provider requests from parents copies of child’s IEP or IFSP, written plans, and/or special needs assessments completed by professionals to inform classroom practice. 3. Individual child information is shared in written form with parents on a daily basis for infants and toddlers, and on an as needed basis for other age groups. 4. Specific group or classroom information is shared with parents daily using a visual communication format. 5. One parent conference is offered per year to discuss the child’s progress, behavioral, social and physical needs.
STAR 3: Performance Standards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A plan is written and implemented describing procedures to refer parents to appropriate social, mental health, educational, wellness, and medical services. 2. Coordinate at least one annual group activity to involve parents in meeting program learning goals. 3. At least two parent conferences are offered per year to discuss the child’s progress, behavioral, social and physical needs. A written report of the child’s progress is provided during at least one of these conferences.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES/FAMILY INVOLVEMENT	
Level	Criteria
STAR 4: 1. Performance Standards, or 2. NAEYC/NAA/NAFCC/ NECPA ^[3] Accreditation, or 3. DPW ^[4] Regulated, Fully Integrated Head Start	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If applicable, provider, in conjunction with parents and service providers from public social and community service organizations, implements activities appropriate to meet IEP or IFSP goals and/or special needs plans and objectives. 2. Program has policies that demonstrate engagement and partnership with parents in program planning and decision making.

Group Family Child Care Homes

Categories of QRS standards: Partnerships with Family and Community

Standards document: *Group Home Performance Standards for FY 2005-06 (July 2005)*

Web site:

www.dpw.state.pa.us/Child/ChildCare/KeyStoneStarChildCare/PerformanceStandards/003671058.htm

This document has the following information about the QRS standards and criteria related to including children with special needs that group family child care homes must meet to earn one to four stars.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES	
Level	Criteria
Start with Stars	No requirements.
STAR 1: Performance Standards	No requirements.
STAR 2: Performance Standards	Families are provided with information/application for publicly funded child care/health insurance programs, and tax credit information (Earned Income Tax Credit, PA TAX BACK) upon enrollment.
STAR 3: Performance Standards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parents are provided local health/human services information twice a year. 2. A written plan describing procedures referring parents to appropriate social, mental health, educational, and medical services.
STAR 4:	Full-time staff have at least 2 clock hours of training within

^[3] NAEYC = National Association for the Education of Young Children; NAA = National Afterschool Association; NAFCC = National Association for Family Child Care; and NECPA = National Early Childhood Program Accreditation

^[4] DPW = Department of Public Welfare

1. Performance Standards, or 2. NAEYC/NAA/NAFCC/NECPA Accreditation, or 3. DPW Regulated, Fully Integrated Head Start	the last 3 years on how to access services for children with disabilities, and access local health and human services resources for families in the community.
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Family Child Care Homes

Categories of QRS standards: Partnerships with Family and Community

Standards document: *Family Day Care Home Performance Standards for FY 2005-06*
(July 2005)

Web site:
www.dpw.state.pa.us/Child/ChildCare/KeyStoneStarChildCare/PerformanceStandards/003671060.htm

This document has the following information about the QRS standards and criteria related to including children with special needs that family child care homes must meet to earn one to four stars.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES/SPECIAL NEEDS	
Level	Criteria
Start with Stars	No requirements.
STAR 1: Performance Standards	No requirements.
STAR 2: Performance Standards	1. At enrollment, families are provided with contact information of resources for publicly funded child care/health insurance programs and tax credits (Earned Income Tax Credit, PA TAX BACK). 2. Provider has obtained general information/facts on any of the special needs issues of children in care.
STAR 3: Performance Standards	1. A written plan describing procedures referring parents to appropriate social, mental health, educational and medical services is included in the policy and procedures manual. 2. Basic information from special needs assessments completed by professionals is requested. 3. All prescribed special needs treatments are followed. If applicable, provider has a copy of child’s IEP or IFSP and a written plan. (Note: signed statement if parent will not comply)
STAR 4: 1. Performance Standards, or	All staff have at least 2 hours of training in the last 2 years on inclusive early education and care practices, including how to access local community health and human services

COMMUNITY RESOURCES/SPECIAL NEEDS	
Level	Criteria
2. NAEYC/NAA/NAFCC/ NECPA Accreditation, or 3. DPW Regulated, Fully Integrated Head Start	resources for families.

The National Child Care Information Center, a service of the Child Care Bureau, does not endorse any organization, publication, or resource. For more information, please contact NCCIC: 10530 Rosehaven Street, Suite 400, Fairfax, Virginia 22030; Ph: 800-616-2242; Fax: 800-716-2242; TTY: 800-516-2242; Email: info@nccic.org; Web site: <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov>.