

Overview

The State of Ohio was an early adopter of a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) for licensed child care providers. Ohio recognizes the importance of a well-defined, progressive pathway to improving the quality of early learning and development programs. Now, as part of Ohio's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant, the state is expanding its comprehensive rating system to rate and monitor all state-funded early learning programs, including programs in school districts, child care facilities and private homes funded by Ohio Department of Education (ODE) or Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). This expansion will ultimately improve the quality of all child care programs that serve high-needs children from birth to five years.

The goal is to provide a single definition of quality, inclusive of all program types, that is measurable, easy to understand, and provides necessary flexibility so child care programs achieve the highest levels of quality. Please visit the "Implementation Timeline" link for specific details regarding implementation for various early learning and development program types.

History of Determining Quality

In 1999, ODJFS brought together 60 stakeholders and asked them to create early learning and development program standards. This was the beginning of Ohio's Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) program. A pilot SUTQ program began in eight counties in 2005, and statewide implementation began in late 2006.

Currently, participation in SUTQ is open to any ODJFS licensed program. ODJFS licensing specialists verify SUTQ standards through classroom observations, teacher interviews and document review.

ODE monitors state funded preschool programs operated by school districts, educational service centers, and joint vocational schools. ODE began utilizing a monitoring and continuous improvement process called the Integrated Monitoring Process and Continuous Improvement Tool (IMPACT) in 2010. The IMPACT review focuses on the indicators outlined in Ohio's Early Learning Program Guidelines. ODE staff verify IMPACT standards using documentation submission, desk audits and on-site reviews.

As Ohio implements the Early Learning Challenge Grant, ODJFS and ODE will both transition to the new SUTQ model outlined below.

The New Model

Development

A cross-agency team began working in May 2012 to develop a new single framework for quality that the state can apply to all early learning and development programs. The team includes ODJFS and ODE staff and key external stakeholders. The team's work was facilitated by Anne Mitchell, a national TQRIS expert, who was able to share current research and models used by other states as the new Ohio vision, goals and standards were developed.

Organization

The program standards are organized into the following four domains:

- **Learning and Development:** Is the program using research based curricula aligned to Ohio's new early learning and development standards for birth to kindergarten entry?
- **Staff Qualifications and Professional Development:** Have administrators, teachers and assistant teachers obtained required credentials and ongoing professional development hours?
- **Administrative and Leadership Practices:** To what extent does the program adhere to an annual continuous improvement process?
- **Family and Community Partnerships:** How well does the program engage families and community partners to support children and families while enrolled in the program and as they transition into and out of the program?

Structure

The original Step Up To Quality program contained three levels, or ratings. Programs had to meet all standards for a given level before advancing to the next level.

The new model uses a combination of the above building block approach and a newly designed points approach to create “star ratings” that correspond to each level of achievement. A program in level one will receive one star; a program in level two will receive two stars; and so forth. Programs in levels one, two and three must meet all standards at the lower level before advancing to the next level. Beyond step level three, programs are awarded points based on their adherence to step level three requirements and their ability to achieve additional performance targets. Programs must achieve a minimum of at least one point in each of the four domains and can earn extra points for accreditation, lower staff/child ratios, and group size. A program will be awarded four or five stars depending on the program’s point total.

Verification

ODE and ODJFS will cross train staff members to conduct SUTQ reviews and verify the star rating attained by a program. Both agencies are working together to develop the review and verification process and to identify the documentation and other evidence programs will need to provide.

The draft standards document recently posted for public comment includes the standards necessary for each star rating. Before implementing the new quality measures, programs will receive a guidance document containing details about the review process and how the state will verify each standard.

Participation

Recent legislation in HB 487 and SB 316 requires all publicly funded early learning and development programs to participate in Step Up To Quality as a condition of funding. The state will phase in the new star rating system. The following chart provides the timeline specified in legislation.

Program Type	Begin Participation	All Programs Rated
Early Childhood Education (State PK)	State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2014	July 1, 2016
Preschool Special Education	SFY 2014	July 1, 2018
Subsidized Child Care in Centers	Already Participating	July 1, 2020
Subsidized Child Care in Small Family Child Care Homes	SFY 2015	July 1, 2020

Note that all programs licensed by ODJFS and ODE may voluntarily participate even if they are not receiving public funds.

Supporting Resources

ODE and ODJFS will provide a variety of resources to help programs achieve and maintain a high star rating.

- The state will create a guidance document detailing best practices, defining objectives, and providing clear guidelines.
- ODE, ODJFS and their affiliated State Support Teams (SST) and Child Care Resource and Referral Organizations (CCR&R) will offer numerous and ongoing professional development opportunities.
- Staff working at star rated programs will be eligible to receive T.E.A.C.H. scholarships.
- The state will offer technical assistance to programs that do not yet meet the new standards.
- Ohio Department of Health’s health promotion consultants and Ohio Department of Mental Health’s early childhood mental health consultants, as well as SST’s and CCR&R’s will assist programs with specific areas of concern.



STAR RATINGS

Programs in Step 1, 2 and 3 must meet all standards at the lower steps before advancing to the next step. Beyond Step 3, programs will be awarded points based on their adherence to Step 3 requirements and their ability to earn additional points. Programs must achieve a minimum of at least one point in each of the four domains and can earn extra points for accreditation, lower staff/child ratios and group size.

STEP 4 and STEP 5

Step 4 and Step 5 programs must score at least one point in each of the four domains. They also can score additional points by meeting the below standards.

To achieve a Step 4 designation, programs must score 35-50 points.

To achieve a Step 5 designation, programs must score 51-80 points.

ADDITIONAL POINTS

Accreditation Accredited from an approved accrediting body (5 points)	Preschool and School Age (4 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 to < 48 months 1:10/2:20 • 48 months to < school age 1:12/2:24 • Mixed Age, 36 months to < school age 1:10/2:20 • K to age 14 1:15
Staff/Child Ratios and Group Size Infants & Toddlers (6 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to < 18 months 1:4/2:8/3:10 • 18 to 36 months 1:6/2:12 • Mixed Age, 0 to 36 months 1:4/2:8/3:10 Infants & Toddlers (4 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth to < 18 months 1:5/2:10 • 18 to 36 months 1:7/2:14 • Mixed Age, 0 to 36 months 1:5/2:10 	Preschool and School Age (2 points) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 to < 48 months 1:11/2:22 • 48 months to < school age 1:13/2:26 • Mixed Age, 36 months to < school age 1:11/2:22 • K to age 14 1:16

		STEP 1 ★			STEP 2 ★★			STEP 3 ★★★		
		STEP 1 ★			STEP 2 ★★			STEP 3 ★★★		
LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT (Max 21 points)	Curriculum & Planning	Program engages in a process to identify an evidence-based, aligned, comprehensive curriculum that is developmentally appropriate. Each classroom has a copy of the Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Common Core State Standards and Ohio Academic Content Standards: K-12 in social studies and science (appropriate to the age group served). Teachers utilize a dated, written plan of activities.	Program obtains an evidence-based, comprehensive curriculum aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Common Core State Standards and Ohio Academic Content Standards: K-12 in social studies and science (appropriate to the age group served) that is developmentally appropriate. Each teacher has daily access to a copy of the curriculum.	Program implements a written, evidence-based, comprehensive curriculum aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards and/or Common Core State Standards and Ohio Academic Content Standards: K-12 in social studies and science (appropriate to the age group served) and maximizes growth across a broad range of developmental and content areas.	Teacher's written plans reflect the needs/abilities/interests of children and address all developmental domains (5 points). Program updates and rotates materials to support the activities in the written plans and the needs/interests/abilities of children (3 points).					
	Child Screening & Assessment	Program (except those serving school-age children) engages in a process to identify a developmentally appropriate screening tool that is valid and reliable and that identifies staff to be trained to administer, score and use the instrument appropriately.	Program (except those serving school-age children) obtains a developmentally appropriate screening tool, and staff are trained to administer, score and use the instrument appropriately.	Program (except those serving school-age children) ensures that all children receive a developmental screening that is valid and reliable within 60 business days of entry into the program and annually thereafter. Necessary referrals are completed within 90 days of identification of need, and the results are formally communicated with families. Program assesses children using formal and informal methods on an ongoing basis. Formal results are shared with families.	Ongoing child assessment results are used to inform instruction (5 points). Assessment results are formally shared with families at least twice a year (4 points).					
	Classroom Environment	Program engages in a process to determine the quality of the classroom environment and the quality of adult-child interactions by selecting a self-assessment tool addressing measures of quality.	Each classroom completes an annual self-assessment related to the quality of the classroom environment and the quality of adult-child interactions.	Each classroom identifies an area for improvement and creates action steps based on the results of annual self-assessment. A score is obtained from a reliable rater on an observational tool related to the classroom environment and/or adult-child interactions. <i>* Working with national experts to identify measures of quality tool to be used for required score.</i>	Teacher documents progress on action steps and evaluates effectiveness of desired improvements (4 points).					
ADMINISTRATIVE & LEADERSHIP PRACTICES (Max 18)	Benefits & Compensation	The program has a written wage schedule.	Program offers one of the approved benefits for employees.	Program offers two of the approved benefits for employees.	Program offers three or more of the approved benefits for employees (3 points).					
	Program Administration	Program completes an annual program self-assessment using an identified tool.	Program completes a continuous improvement plan using results from self-assessment.	Program seeks input from staff and families and implements the continuous improvement plan.	Program's annual continuous improvement plan has strategies to engage community partners to support child and family outcomes (3 points). The program conducts an annual survey with identified stakeholders and/or community partners to review accomplishment of program goals. (3 points)					
	Staff Management	Administrators, lead teachers and assistant teachers/teachers' aides must have annual professional development plans.	All teaching staff have formal observations annually.	Formal observations inform individual development plans.	Results of the formal observations of teaching staff inform the program's continuous improvement plan (4 points). Results of annual classroom self-assessment are used to inform individual professional development plans (3 points). All staff have two formal classroom observations completed annually (2 points).					

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (Max 16 points)	Staff Education	<p>Administrator has Child Development Associate (CDA) or Career Pathways Level (CPL) 2.</p> <p>One lead teacher has an associate's degree appropriate to the age groups noted below or a CPL 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Early Childhood Teachers</i>—An associate's degree in early childhood education (ECE) or an approved related field. <i>School-Age Teachers</i>—An associate's degree in an approved field. 	<p>Administrator has an associate's degree in ECE (or approved related field for school-age-only programs) or Career Pathways Level 3.</p> <p>25% of lead teachers have an associate's degree appropriate to the age groups noted below or a Career Pathways Level 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Early Childhood Teachers</i>—An associate's degree in early childhood education (ECE) or an approved related field. <i>School-Age Teachers</i>—An associate's degree in an approved field. 	<p>Administrator has an associate's degree in ECE (or approved related field for school-age-only programs) or Career Pathways Level 3.</p> <p>50% of lead teachers have an associate's degree appropriate to the age groups noted below or a Career Pathways Level 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Early Childhood Teachers</i>—An associate's degree in early childhood education (ECE) or an approved related field. <i>School-Age Teachers</i>—An associate's degree in an approved field. 	<p>Administrators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master's degree in ECE or approved related field or bachelor's degree with CPL 5 or bachelor's degree in ECE with an Administrator Credential Level (ACL) 3 (5 points) or Bachelor's degree in ECE or approved related field with an administrator license or associate's degree in ECE or approved related field with an ACL 3; (4 points) or Bachelor's degree in ECE or approved related field or CPL 4 or associate's degree in ECE or approved related field with an ACL 2 (3 points). <p>Lead Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% have a bachelor's degree appropriate to the age groups noted in Step 3 or a CPL 4 (5 points) or 50% have a bachelor's degree appropriate to the age groups noted in Step 3 or a CPL 4 (4 points) or 100% have an associate's degree appropriate to the age groups noted in Step 3 or a CPL 3 (3 points). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Early Childhood Teachers</i>—A degree in early childhood education or an approved related field <i>School-Age Teachers</i>—A bachelor's degree in education or approved related field (4 and 5 points) or an associate's degree in an approved related field (3 points) <p>Assistant Teacher/Aides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% of classrooms have Child Development Associate (CDA) or CPL 2 or ODE Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) qualified (3 points) or 50% of classrooms have associate's degree in ECE (or related field for school-age teachers) (3 points) or 75% of classrooms have CDA or CPL 2 or ODE ESEA (2 points) or 50% of classrooms have CDA or CPL 2 or ODE ESEA (1 point).
	Professional Development	<p>Administrators, lead teachers and assistant teachers/teachers' aides receive a minimum of 20 clock hours of approved specialized training every two years. Individuals who currently are enrolled in a degree-granting program in early childhood or related field can use coursework to fulfill the annual training requirement. Renewal of Ohio Department of Education teaching license ensures approved professional development needed to meet the 20-hour requirement.</p> <p>Individuals must complete prerequisite training requirements prior to completing other professional development.</p>	<p>Administrators, lead teachers and assistant teachers/teachers' aides receive a minimum of 20 clock hours of approved specialized training every two years. Individuals who are currently enrolled in a degree-granting program in early childhood or related field can use coursework to fulfill the annual training requirement. Renewal of Ohio Department of Education teaching license ensures approved professional development needed to meet the 20-hour requirement.</p> <p>Individuals must complete prerequisite training requirements prior to completing other professional development.</p>	<p>Administrators, lead teachers and assistant teachers/teachers' aides receive a minimum of 20 clock hours of approved specialized training every two years. Individuals who are currently enrolled in a degree-granting program in early childhood or related field can use coursework to fulfill the annual training requirement. Renewal of Ohio Department of Education teaching license ensures approved professional development needed to meet the 20-hour requirement.</p> <p>Individuals must complete prerequisite training requirements prior to completing other professional development.</p>	<p>100% of staff have obtained 30 or more hours of approved professional development over a two-year period (3 points) or</p> <p>100% of staff have obtained 25 or more hours of approved professional development over a two-year period (2 points) or</p> <p>50% of staff have obtained 30 or more hours of approved professional development over a two-year period (2 points) or</p> <p>50% of staff have obtained 25 or more hours of approved professional development over a two-year period (1 point).</p>
FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS (Max 10 points)	Transitions	<p>Program provides written information to families on transitioning children into, within and out of the program.</p>	<p>Program provides age-appropriate activities for children to prepare them for the transition to a new classroom or educational setting and transfers any child records to the new setting at the family's request and with the family's written consent.</p>	<p>Program meets with families to exchange information regarding a child's transition to another classroom or educational setting.</p>	<p>Program develops and engages in activities to support families and children in the transition process (2 points).</p>
	Communication & Engagement	<p>Program asks/surveys the family about their culture, child-rearing practices, family perspectives, and preference of communication and engagement opportunities.</p> <p>Program provides information regarding resources and community services to families.</p>	<p>Program communicates with families using different modes of communication.</p> <p>At least once per year, information on topics addressing health and child development are provided to families.</p> <p>Program offers at least one opportunity for families to engage in activities.</p>	<p>Program organizes at least one educational training, workshop or event to support families' engagement in children's learning and development.</p> <p>Program reviews the results of comprehensive health screenings with families. Appropriate referrals are documented.</p> <p>Programs and parents create written, developmental and/or educational goals for children.</p>	<p>Program has written documentation of formal and/or informal agreements with community partners and other family-serving agencies, programs and entities (3 points).</p> <p>Program develops and implements policies and procedures that utilize families' preferred modes of communication (2 points).</p> <p>Program uses a formal model or process to enhance family engagement strategies (2 points).</p> <p>Program has an organized and active parent volunteer group (1 point).</p>