Delaware Stars for Early Success

Program Guide

2014
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Quality Rating and Improvement Systems

A National Movement

A quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) is a systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs (National Child Care and Technical Assistance Center, 2010). The first QRIS was launched in Oklahoma in 1998 and quickly became a policy trend across the nation. Numerous states followed in Oklahoma’s path soon after, creating a movement that today includes at least 36 states that implement a statewide or regional QRIS and numerous more that are at some stage of development or piloting.

QRIS use multiple strategies to increase the quality of early and school-age care and education systems and to support and improve children’s development. Most QRIS have five common elements: standards, accountability measures, program and practitioner outreach and support, financial incentives, and parent/consumer education efforts (National Child Care and Technical Assistance Center, 2010).

Delaware Stars for Early Success

About Delaware Stars

In 2002, the Center for Disability Studies of the University of Delaware and the Delaware Early Childhood Center conducted a Baseline Quality Study that used the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) to evaluate the quality of child care centers, family child care programs, Head Start and Early Childhood Assistance Programs, and part-day programs statewide. The results, published in March 2005, showed the overall quality of early care and education programs in Delaware was mediocre to poor (Gamel-McCormick, Buell, Amsden, & Fahey, 2005). These findings were evidence of the need of a QRIS and were the basis for developing Delaware Stars.

In 2007, Delaware Stars began its pilot phase with several select programs from each county. Over the next few years and with enrollment of additional programs, changes to the system were made in response to feedback from participating sites, technical assistants, and other stakeholders.

In 2009, Delaware Stars was signed into Delaware Law (Title 14, Chapter 30, 3001), ensuring its existence and future.

In 2010, Delaware Stars moved from the public sector to the University of Delaware. The following year, a complete system redesign began after extensive research, moving the system from a building block system to a points system and switching to a new evidence-
based technical assistance model. The new system was implemented in January 2012 and is described in this guide.

In 2011, Governor Markell made clear his commitment to early childhood by investing 22 million dollars to fund Purchase of Care tiered reimbursement and Delaware Stars. Additionally, Delaware was one of nine states awarded a Race to the Top Early Challenge Grant in December 2011. Race to the Top is a federal initiative that will allocate funds to the workforce, Delaware Stars, data systems and kindergarten readiness.

Vision and Mission

Delaware Stars fulfills a part of Delaware’s Early Childhood Plan for Early Success (Delaware Early Care & Education Council and Early Childhood Comprehensive Steering Committee, 2006) and supports its primary goal that all children enter life and school ready to succeed. Ensuring access to high quality early care and education programs for all of Delaware’s children, especially children from low-income families, is an essential component of the plan.

Delaware Stars works to increase access of quality early care and education for all of Delaware’s children, with a primary focus on children and families of low-income. The purpose of Delaware Stars is to design and implement a system that defines quality and supports the development of quality early care and education programs throughout the state. The program also engages the legislature and policymakers in supporting the implementation of Delaware Stars and provides consumer education about the importance of early care and education.

Organization of Delaware Stars

Delaware Stars is a collaborative effort between state, private, and public stakeholders. Information on program organization and decision making processes for Delaware Stars and can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Governance of Delaware Stars.

Evaluation of Delaware Stars

Delaware Stars is evaluated on an on-going basis using a variety of methods including program, staff, and stakeholder feedback and evaluations. Standards and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure reflection of best practice.

Program Eligibility and Application Review

Programs are eligible to apply for enrollment in Delaware Stars if they have been open and serving families with a current, valid license from the Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) for a minimum of 6 months after issuance of their annual license and are not under any
enforcement action, including suspension, probation, or warning of probation. In addition, there must be no outstanding concerns with Purchase of Care (POC) or the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under **Program Eligibility**.

If a program meets eligibility requirements, they must complete and turn in the [application](#) found on the Delaware Stars website. Delaware Stars has a rolling admissions policy; applications will be accepted at any time. All applicants will be considered under the current criteria for enrollment set by the state. Criteria may include consideration for POC enrollment, program type, program size, geography, and maximum number of programs being accepted. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under **Program Application**.

Programs accepted into Stars will receive a Letter of Acceptance from the Delaware Department of Education welcoming them to Delaware Stars. Programs will also receive a letter from the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood welcoming them and outlining the first steps in participating as a Delaware Stars program. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under **Acceptance as a Stars Program**.

**Program Enrollment and Participation**

**Program Commitment**

Programs participating in Delaware Stars are expected to make a commitment to improving quality. By making a commitment to improving quality, programs are acknowledging that their participation in Delaware Stars is a multi-step process that takes time and dedication by all staff with leadership from within their program.

Once accepted, programs are required to sign the [Letter of Expectations](#). This is an agreement between Delaware Stars and the program that outlines the key responsibilities and expectations for both parties. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under **Program Commitment**.

**NAEYC Accredited Programs**

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredited programs, once accepted into Delaware Stars, must provide a copy of their accreditation and complete the Delaware Stars Orientation specific to NAEYC programs. Once complete, NAEYC programs are designated Star Level 5 and may keep their Star Level by maintaining their NAEYC accreditation and submitting copies of their annual NAEYC reports to Delaware Stars. NAEYC programs are assigned a Technical Assistant (TA) to be their contact person for Delaware Stars, but are not eligible to receive ongoing technical assistance visits or Delaware Stars grants and awards. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under **Alternative Pathway for NAEYC Accredited Programs**.
Head Start/ECAP Programs

Head Start and ECAP programs, once accepted into Delaware Stars, must provide a copy of their most recent Compliance Monitoring Report and complete the Delaware Stars Orientation specific to Head Start/ECAP programs. Once complete, programs are designated Star Level 4 and may keep their Star Level by maintaining good standing with Head Start and ECAP monitoring standards and by submitting copies of their annual monitoring reports to Delaware Stars. Programs may choose to maintain at a Star Level 4 or move up to a Star Level 5. To achieve Star Level 5, programs must request an ERS assessment and meet the minimum required classroom scores for that level. Programs are eligible for technical assistance when actively working on achieving Star Level 5, but are not eligible for any grants or awards. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Alternative Pathway for Head Start Programs/ECAP Programs.

Public School Programs

Early childhood programs in public school settings enrolling in Delaware Stars will receive consideration for the demonstrated quality of their services. Participation and Stars designation for public school programs that use Part B/619, Title I, Local funding/Parent Fees, POC/Licensed Child Care/Stars and Blended funding will each be given specific consideration based on quality standards, requirements and oversight provided by funding sources. Additional information can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Public School Programs.

Private School Programs

Private schools serving preschool through 6th grade children may participate in Delaware Stars if the preschool portion of the program is either licensed or NAEYC Accredited. Private schools may also apply to participate if they are accredited by Middle States Accreditation. Additional information can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Private Schools.

Program Changes

Programs are required to inform Delaware Stars when there are significant changes in their program. Notification of significant changes should be made prior to implementation, but no later than 30 days of implementation. Failure to do so may jeopardize Stars grants and tiered reimbursement bonuses. Information on program change resulting in a change in licensure status can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Program Changes in Administration or Operation. Examples of such changes may include, but are not be limited to the following:

- Change in ownership
- Site location changes
In order to support programs that have been participating in Delaware Stars greater than one year, the following guidance is offered to facilitate continued participation in quality improvement efforts. Delaware Stars staff will coordinate with OCCL staff during the provisional phase.

A program that has been enrolled in Delaware Stars for less than 6 months and has major changes in operation resulting in a change in licensure status will have to reapply for admission.

Not all program changes result in a change in licensure status, but may have the potential to impact the continuous quality improvement efforts of a program. Notification to Delaware Stars of significant changes should be made prior to implementation, but no later than 30 days of implementation. Failure to do so may jeopardize Stars grants and tiered reimbursement bonuses. Additional information can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Program Changes in Administration or Operations. Examples of such changes may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Major change in administration (i.e. new Administrator)
- Programmatic changes that (i.e. beginning to serve infants)

Critical Incidents

Programs which experience a critical incident involving emergency response personnel or resulting in a police report must notify Delaware Stars Deputy Director by email within 24 hours. Additional information can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Critical Incidents.

Enforcement Action

Programs under enforcement action by OCCL will be deferred from full participation in Delaware Stars until deemed in good standing with OCCL and no longer under any enforcement action. Enforcement actions include any of the following actions: Warning of Probation (WOP), Probation (P), or Suspension (S). Programs deferred from Delaware Stars may not advertise their Star Level and are not eligible for tiered reimbursement bonuses during the time period of enforcement action. During the period of enforcement action the program loses any designated Star Level. Once a program is no longer under enforcement action with OCCL, Delaware Stars will re-verify the program for a Star Level Designation. Programs cannot begin actively working towards a higher Star Level until re-verification is complete. Programs under Suspension by OCCL for a period of less than two months may be exempt from re-verification.

During enforcement action by OCCL, Delaware Stars staff will collaborate closely with OCCL specialists to determine the most effective TA and action plan to assist the program. Programs will have access to some services and benefits from Delaware Stars dependent on the level of OCCL enforcement action. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Program on Enforcement from the Office of Child Care Licensing.
In addition to issues related to being under enforcement action by OCCL, programs that are found to be guilty of fraud in POC, CACFP, Head Start, ECAP or other state or federally funded programs will be suspended from participation in Delaware Stars. A program that submits false information or omits significant information will jeopardize their continued participation in Delaware Stars and receipt of tiered reimbursement.

Withdraw

Programs may withdraw at any time by submitting a completed Program Withdrawal from Delaware Stars form. Once withdrawn, programs may not advertise their participation or Star Level and are not eligible for tiered POC reimbursement or Delaware Stars grants and awards. Programs are also required to return their Delaware Stars banner. If a program chooses to reapply to Delaware Stars at a later time, they will re-enter Delaware Stars as a new program and must complete all initial requirements for participating in Delaware Stars.

Delaware Stars may terminate a program in instances where the program closes or is no longer licensed due to revocation of their license. A program may also be terminated if the initial requirements of participation have not been met within one year from acceptance in Delaware Stars.

The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Programs Terminating from Stars.

OCCL Violations and Mandatory Reporting

Open and regular communication is expected between Delaware Stars staff and the Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) specialists to build strategies to assist providers and ensure the safety of children in child care programs. Delaware Stars staff will use reasonable evaluation of observed situations while onsite in a childcare facility or home.

- Any incident that puts a child in imminent danger, observed while onsite, shall be reported to OCCL immediately and will be documented in the program file.
- Persistent non-compliance issues as cited in the most recent OCCL compliance review, other on-going non-compliance documented by Delaware Stars staff, and/or reports to program Administrator that resulted in continued unresponsiveness from program will also be reported and documented.

The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Stars Observation of OCCL Violations.

All Delaware Stars staff are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. Delaware Stars follows the DSCYF Mandatory Reporting guidelines set forth by the Division of Services for Children, Youth, and their Families (DSCYF). The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Mandatory Reporting of Abuse and Neglect.
Database

The Delaware Stars database is a comprehensive database used by Delaware Stars staff and participating Delaware Stars programs. At Star Level 2 programs have access to their information and are required to update the database as needed to ensure it reflects accurate and current information about the program. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under [Stars Database].

Delaware Stars Logo and Promotional Materials

Delaware Stars programs at Star Level 2, 3, 4, and 5 may display the Delaware Star banner and use the official Delaware Stars logo in promotional materials in accordance with the guidelines provided in [Promoting Your Delaware Stars Program] found on the Delaware Stars website.

Programs on enforcement action with OCCL or programs that have voluntarily or involuntarily been terminated from Delaware Stars may not display the banner and must not use any materials displaying the Delaware Stars logo in connection with the programs or promotion of the program. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under [Program Use of Stars Logo and Promotional Materials].

Moving Up Through the Star Levels

Delaware Stars Standards

There are four sets of standards, one for each of the program types: Early Childhood Centers, School-Age Programs, Family Child Care, and Large Family Child Care.

Each type of program is cored using the following score range to determine Star Level Designation:

- Star Level 3: 40-59 points
- Star Level 4: 60-79 points
- Star Level 5: 80-100 points

The Delaware Stars Standards are divided into 4 domains:

- Family & Community Partnerships
- Qualifications & Professional Development
- Management & Administration
- Learning Environments & Curriculum

Each domain contains numerous standards, which are considered indicators of quality. The standards reflect the practice that programs need to engage in. The verification section lists different ways, or strategies, programs can use to demonstrate they are meeting the standard. The Delaware Stars Verification Manuals provide additional details and
explanation about the required verification for each standard and may be found on the Delaware Stars website. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under *Program Standards*.

**Quality Improvement Planning**

Each program is required to develop a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that reflects their specific goals for improving quality. The TA will assist the program in identifying Stars standards they want to meet and the efforts needed to accomplish each standard chosen. The QIP is initially developed during the *Starting with Stars* phase and is updated as needed and after the program completes a Star Level and begins working toward the next level. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under *Quality Improvement Planning*.

**Starting with Stars**

After a program has been accepted for enrollment, the program has one year to complete the following:

- Orientation session
- Building on Quality (6-hour professional development session)
- On-boarding visit from TA
- Initial Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

After successful completion, the program is eligible to move up to Star Level 2. If the program does not achieve Star Level 2 within a year, the program will be terminated and must reapply for enrollment in Delaware Stars. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under *Starting with Stars*.

**Star Levels 2 through 5**

Programs at Star Level 2 and above that are actively engaged in the quality improvement process are required to have a QIP that shows which Delaware Stars standards the program has chosen to accomplish to achieve the next Stars Level. Programs must successfully complete the verification process in order to move up to the desired Star Level.

**Maintaining**

Programs at Star Level 3 and above may choose to maintain at a Star level and not actively pursue a higher Star Level. It is expected that the program will continue to implement efforts that will sustain the quality level and requirement of their Star Level. Programs maintaining at a Star Level will be re-verified every three years.
Verification

Verification refers to the process of verifying a program’s supporting documentation for all standards required and chosen in order to determine if the program meets the minimum requirements for the desired Star Level. After a program achieves Star Level 2, they must re-verify for their current Star Level every three years if maintaining or actively working to achieve a higher Star Level.

For Star Levels 3 through 5, verification is a two-part process; after the program requests verification, an ERS assessment is scheduled. If the minimum required classroom scores for the desired Star Level are not met, the verification process stops and the program is not eligible to move up to the desired Star Level. The program may not request verification again until 3 months after the date of their last assessment. If a program misses the intended score due to one classroom for one of the age groups assessed, the program may be eligible for an abbreviated re-assessment within 60 days. Programs which have had recent reports made to OCCL of violations observed by Delaware Stars staff will not be eligible for the abbreviated re-assessment option.

If the minimum required scores for the desired Star Level are met, a verification of supporting documentation is scheduled. If the program successfully demonstrates they meet the remaining chosen standards, they achieve the desired Star Level. If the program is unsuccessful in demonstrating they meet the chosen standards, a grace period of 30 days is given to allow programs to produce the appropriate supporting documentation and still use their ERS assessment scores. If the appropriate documentation is received and verified within 30 days, the program achieves the desired Star Level. If the appropriate documentation is not met, the program is not eligible to move up to the desired Star Level, and may not request verification again until 3 months after the date of their last assessment.

If the ERS score meets the requirement for a Star Level higher than what is being requested, the program has the option of delaying the verification visit up to 60 days in order to meet additional standards and gather supporting documentation that would qualify them for the higher Star Level.

Programs who achieve a Star Level will receive a new Star Level Certificate and confirmation that they have successfully met all required standards for the desired Star Level from DOE.

The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Program Assessment: Verification.
Program Supports

Technical Assistance

Programs are assigned a TA after confirmation of their acceptance into Delaware Stars and are contacted by their assigned TA to schedule the on-boarding visit shortly after. From this point forward, the TA is the program’s primary contact for Delaware Stars and will guide and assist the program through the quality improvement process.

In the Starting with Stars phase, programs receive one to three visits from their TA with the goals of completing the on-boarding observation with feedback and the initial QIP. The on-boarding observation includes an environment scan of each classroom or all child care areas in the program. These visits are usually with the program’s Administrator and/or the person designated to lead the quality improvement efforts within the program.

Programs at Star Levels 2, 3, and 4 that are actively working towards a higher Star Level receive visits from their TA approximately twice per month. Programs at Star Level 5 or that are maintaining at a lower Star Level may receive TA in preparation for re-verification. Required Delaware Stars standards and the standards the program has chosen to complete shape the focus of the program visits and should be reflected on the program’s current QIP and in the database. Visits may include meeting with the program’s Administrator or the person designated to lead the quality improvement efforts within the program, meeting with individual or small groups of classroom staff, presenting to a larger group of program staff, and classroom observation.

TAs may utilize multiple strategies to assist programs and individual classroom staff in their quality improvement efforts. These strategies include mentoring, coaching, and technical assistance. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Technical Assistance.

Some programs may be accepted into Delaware Stars as a group, or cohort. Cohorts will be assigned one TA and will meet regularly and receive technical assistance and professional development as a group in addition to higher frequency on-site TA visits. These groups are designated as Stars Plus Cohorts and must meet criteria set by the Delaware Stars Management Team. Criteria and participation requirements can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Stars Plus Cohorts and under Stars Plus Cohort Resources.

Specialty Technical Assistance

Programs have access to specialty technical assistance in the areas of ERS, Infant & Toddler Care, and Health & Nutrition. Programs may request specialty TA if there is a demonstrated need and goals for improvement are reflected on the QIP. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under New Resources to Support Program Quality.
Practice Assessment

Programs may request one practice assessment as they are working towards improving quality to meet minimum score requirements for the Star Level they are working on. Programs should consult with their TA to determine the ideal time to request a practice assessment.

For practice assessments, programs choose the room to be assessed but are encouraged to choose their weakest room. Practice assessments and feedback are completed in the same way as verification assessments.

Programs in which only one room or setting is used may use their practice assessment score for the Star Level Designation. This situation is common in Family Child Care settings.

The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Practice Assessment.

Grants

Grants are one time to programs at Star Levels 2, 3, and 4 that are actively working toward the next Star Level. Grant requests must relate to goals on a program’s QIP and may be used for materials and/or professional development. Grant funding may not be used for materials or professional development that is required to meet licensing standards. For-Profit programs must have a current Delaware Business License number listed in the Stars database and Not-For-Profit programs must have a Non-Profit letter on file with Department of Education for grant payments to be processed.

Programs are expected to have a record keeping system in place to track funding received from Delaware Stars. Documentation including proof of purchases and receipts are to be kept according to tax guidelines. Delaware Stars reserves the right to review documentation at any time and programs may be subject to audit for funds received by the State of Delaware.

Grants are administered by the DOE. Programs must be vendors with the state of Delaware to access funds. Procedures for becoming a vendor may be found at: https://dew9.accounting.delaware.gov/accounting/w-9.nsf/w9!OpenForm.

The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Program Grants.

Purchase of Care Tiered Reimbursement

Programs accepting POC are reimbursed at 65% of the 75th percentile of market rate plus $.50 for each eligible child. The tiered reimbursement incentive payment then is the
difference between the 65% already being received by the program and the amount the
Star 3 program would be eligible to receive for 80% of market rate. Beginning July 1, 2014
Early Childhood programs, including Family and Large Family Child Care, at Star Level 4
and Star Level 5 will receive increased tiered reimbursement percentages. The increase
will be only for infants, toddlers and preschool children with POC. The increase does not
include school age children with POC. The increases will be 93% of the 2011 market rate
for Star 4 programs and 102% of the 2011 market rate for Star 5 programs. School age
children with POC will continue to be reimbursed at 90% in Star 4 programs and 100% in
Star 5 programs. All programs at Star 3 will continue to receive 80% reimbursement for all
children with POC regardless of the child’s age. Payments for the months of July, August
and September 2014 which will be made at the end of November, will reflect the new
increases.

Tiered reimbursement begins the first of the month in which the verification visit that
determined the program’s Star Level was completed. For example, if the verification visit
was completed on April 30, the program would receive tiered reimbursement from April 1.
Tiered reimbursement is a separate payment to programs; their regular POC payment is
paid monthly from the Division of Health & Social Services, and the additional tiered
reimbursement payment (the difference between their regular payment and their tier
level) is paid quarterly.

The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Purchase of
Care Tiered Reimbursement Incentive.

Environment Rating Scale Assessment

Environment Rating Scales (ERS)

The ERS are tools used to assess the quality of early care environments and are the
measure for assessment chosen by Delaware Stars. There are four scales, each used to
assess a specific age group:

The Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R) is used to assess
classrooms where the majority of children are birth to 36 months. Large Family Child Care
programs may be assessed using this scale if they only serve children in this age group.

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Revised (ECERS-R) is used to assess
classrooms where the majority of children are 36 months up until the first day of
Kindergarten. Large Family Child Care programs may be assessed using this scale if they
only serve children in this age group.

The School-Age Environment Rating Scale – Updated (SACERS-U) is used to assess
classrooms or groups of children from Kindergarten through the 6th grade. Large Family
Child Care programs may be assessed using this scale if they only serve children in this age
group.
The Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised (FCCERS-R) is used to assess the unique features of the multi-age environment of Family Child Care and Large Family Child Care programs.

The scales were developed by staff at the Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina. Each scale is grounded in research, rigorously field tested, proven valid and reliable, and continually updated for clarity and to reflect best practice and current research in the early childhood field. Additional information and updates to the scales can be found at: http://www.ersi.info/index.html

The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Program Assessment: Environment Rating Scales.

Delaware Stars Clarifications

The Delaware Stars Clarifications are required to be used with Environment Rating Scales and can be found on the Delaware Stars website. The clarifications include information from Delacare Rules, explanations from the All About the ECERS-R and All About the ITERS-R books, and additional information identified by Delaware Stars that are included in assessments. Clarifications will be reviewed and updated annually. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Program Assessment: ERS Clarifications.

Assessors

Delaware Stars Assessors are rigorously trained to reliability and participate in on-going reliability assessments to maintain their status. It is not uncommon that multiple Assessors are scheduled for the same classroom assessment together for training or reliability purposes.

Assessors cannot answer specific questions related to an observation, provide feedback, or provide technical assistance to the program. Assessment results and summaries are given to the program’s TA to provide feedback and technical assistance around any areas identified as needing improvement. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Program Assessment: Verification.

Verification Assessment

For centers: Once a verification request is received, classroom assessments are scheduled for 1/3 of each age group enrolled in the program. Classrooms and alternate classrooms are randomly chosen.

For infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms in a center: Programs will not be informed of which classrooms/groups will be assessed until the assessor(s) arrive on the date of assessment. Alternate classrooms are only assessed if, on the day of assessment, the first
classroom chosen would not reflect a typical day (for example, the lead staff person is out sick, the class is going on a field trip, etc.).

Assessors will arrive between 8:00 am and 8:30 am the day of the assessment. They will meet briefly with the Administrator and then proceed to the classroom being assessed. They will ask a series of questions of the lead staff person in the classroom to frame the observation, but once the observation begins, they are not allowed to interact with staff or children. A typical assessment may last between 3-4 hours, but may take longer to ensure mealtime and nap is observed, if they are regular components of the classroom schedule. After the observation ends, the lead staff member will need a period of time when they are not responsible for the care of children to answer questions to complete the assessment. Administrative staff are not interviewed as part of the assessment process.

The playground and any indoor gross motor area need to be accessible to the assessor, regardless of whether it is used the day of the assessment so that items related to those areas may be assessed. The assessment is incomplete if these areas are not assessed. This applies to all scales.

For school-age classrooms in a center or school-age programs: During the school-year, programs will be informed which school-age classrooms/groups will be assessed when the assessment is scheduled, so arrangements can be made in advance for the lead staff to arrive or be available an hour before afterschool care begins to answer questions for the assessment. Usually, additional time is needed at the end of the observation for questions that were not observed or answered prior to the observation. These assessments usually last up to 3 hours, depending upon when the children arrive and when the center closes or the hours of the after-school program.

For school-age assessments during the summer when children are in care all day, the same format described above for infant, toddler, and preschool classrooms will be followed.

For school-age programs on school campuses, it is the program’s responsibility to insure that school personnel know that Delaware Stars staff will be on their campus prior to the assessment to interview program staff and that assessors must have access to the playground as part of the assessment.

For Family Child Care and Large Family Child Care programs: Assessments will be scheduled to take place on a typical day. Assessors will arrive between 8:00 am and 8:30 am the day of the assessment. They will ask a series of questions to frame the observation, but once the observation begins, they are not allowed to interact with the provider or children. A typical assessment may last between 3-4 hours, but may take longer to ensure mealtime and nap is observed, if they are regular components of the program schedule. After the observation ends, the provider will need to be available for a period of time to answer questions to complete the assessment.

The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Program Assessment: Verification.
Appeals

The Appeals Process regarding ERS assessments, verification for Star Level Designations and suspension from Delaware Stars is posted on the Delaware Stars website. The Appeals Process involves two levels of review including an internal review and a review by the Stars Management Team, including state agency members. The request form for appeals, the Technical Review/Dispute Resolution Form, is posted on the Delaware Stars website. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Appeals.

Partner Agencies/Programs

Department of Education

The Department of Education (DOE) Early Childhood Workgroup is responsible for numerous early childhood initiatives. Information and additional links can be found at: http://www.doe.k12.de.us/infosuites/students_family/earlychildhood/default.shtml.

Information for current ECE providers or those interested in working in the field can be found on the Early Childhood Development website: http://www.doe.k12.de.us/dpecweb/.

The Office of Child Care Licensing

The Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) is the regulating body for all licensed child care programs in Delaware. OCCL rules were used as a foundation to build upon when creating the Delaware Star Standards. Some Delaware Stars Clarifications concerning health and safety were developed in collaboration with OCCL.


Purchase of Care

Purchase of Care (POC) is a Delaware Health and Social Services program designed to provide support to families who need child care but who cannot pay for all or part of the cost. This service is available to parents, grandparents, or other related adults responsible for the child’s care. Additional information can be found at: http://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dss/childcr.html.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition program for children and adults designed to reimburse facilities for nutritious, creditable meals served to children or adults in a direct care
environment. Funding for CACFP is provided to individual states that contract with sponsoring organizations that monitor child care programs. Sponsoring organizations in Delaware include Children & Families First, Catholic Charities, and Delaware Parents Association. Additional information can be found at: http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ChildCare.htm.

**Children & Families First**

Children & Families First (CFF) is a non-profit organization that provides numerous services and programs that support children and families statewide. CFF is the administrator of several programs that support quality improvement efforts of early childhood programs including the Capacity Grant and Infrastructure programs. Additional information can be found at: http://www.cffde.org/. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under *New Resources to Support Program Quality.*

**Easter Seals**

Easter Seals is a non-profit organization that provides services to help children and adults with disabilities and/or special needs as well as support to their families. Additional information can be found at: http://www.easterseals.com.

**Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children (DAEYC)**

The Delaware Association for the Education of Young children (DAEYC) is an affiliate of the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the leading membership association for those working with and on behalf of children from birth through age eight. Founded in 1969, DAEYC serves and acts on behalf of the needs, rights and well-being of all young children and their families in Delaware. DAEYC operates numerous programs that help support early care providers in Delaware including T.E.A.C.H, C.O.R.E, and career advisement. Additional information can be found at: www.daeyc.org.

**T.E.A.C.H.**

T.E.A.C.H® (Teacher Education And Compensation Helps) is a national program that addresses education compensation and retention issues in the ECE field. T.E.A.C.H. provides scholarships for Associate and Bachelor Degrees in ECE, the ECE Director’s Certificate, and the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA). Teaching staff in Delaware Stars programs have priority access to T.E.A.C.H. scholarships. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under *T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship Support for Staff of Stars Programs.* DAEYC is the licensed administrator for T.E.A.C.H. in Delaware. Additional information can be found at: http://www.daeyc.org/TEACH.html.
CORE

CORE (Compensations, Retention, and Education Awards) is an incentive program for early childhood professionals in Delaware to motivate them to advance their formal education and credentials and stabilize their positions with their current employers. Early childhood programs may also qualify for awards if they recruit qualified staff. CORE offers three types of awards: Education Attainment Awards, Retention Awards, and Recruitment Awards. DAEC is the administrator for CORE. The related policy can be found at: www.daeyc.org. Additional information can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under New Resources to Support Program Quality.

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants

Delaware Stars programs have access to early childhood mental health consultation through the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Services. This service is free and assists programs in addressing and supporting children’s social and emotional development. For further information, call 302-781-3211. The related policy can be found in the Delaware Stars Policy Manual under Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation.
References
