

Clarifications for Delaware Stars Verification & Assessment Process

Continuous quality improvement (CQI) means constantly evaluating progress and finding ways to make improvements, even when you reach the upper star levels. In this model, programs strive to provide the same high quality services to children and families every day, not just on the day of the Verification and Assessment visits.

Determining Star levels through verification and assessment is an evidence-based process. Programs are responsible for understanding the process so that they may take charge of their own continuous quality improvement journey in Delaware Stars.

- ★ **Requesting Verification:** Multiple steps are involved in requesting Verification in the database. Please plan ahead because each of these steps may take time, and the 60-day window does not begin until the final step.
 - 1) TA complete button is pushed in the database.
 - 2) Documents (Ages Worksheets, Schedules, ASTMF1292, if applicable) are received and reviewed by the scheduler.
 - 3) Request button is released in the database.
 - 4) Classrooms are entered and up to **7 blackout dates** are selected in which the Assessors will **not** visit the program within the next 60 calendar days.
 - 5) Request is submitted in the database and the 60-day window begins.
- ★ **ITERS-R to ECERS-R Transition:** The enrollment of a classroom on the **day of assessment** (not the date the request is submitted) determines the ERS scale that will be used to assess that room.
 - For example, if a program submits for Verification on 11/11/16 with 1 infant classroom, 2 toddler classrooms where the majority of children are under 30 months, and 3 preschool classrooms where the majority of children are 30 months or older, the scale breakdown at that time would be 1 infant ITERS-R room, 1 toddler ITERS-R room, and 1 ECERS-R room. However, if one toddler room “ages up” (the majority of children in that room become 30 months or older) on 12/11/16 before the Assessor observes the program, the ratio changes to 1 infant ITERS-R room, 1 toddler ITERS-R room, and 2 ECERS-R rooms.
- ★ **ERS Assessment:** The Assessor(s) will conduct the unannounced assessment(s) on any of the days during the 60-day window that is not “blacked out”. For programs with multiple rooms being assessed, all observations will be completed within 3 weeks, whenever possible.
- ★ **Verification of Stars Standards:** The Verifier will contact the program to schedule a visit to review the program’s documentation of Stars Standards, also within the 60-day window. The Verifier may visit **before or after** the ERS observations, therefore the program should be prepared for **both** the ERS assessment and Verification of Stars standards when submitting for Verification. There is only **one** visit scheduled to verify the Stars Standards.
 - For example, if a program requests Verification on 10/15/16, the verifier will call and schedule a visit between 10/16/16 and 12/16/16. If the visit is scheduled for 11/15/16, whatever paperwork and documentation that is available on that date will be reviewed, scored, and entered. The program is not able to continue submitting documentation through 12/16/16.
- ★ **Skipping star levels:** Programs are welcome to verify on as many standards as they would like at the verification visit. The verifier will review all of the program’s materials for selected standards at the (1) scheduled verification date. If a program believes they may be “skipping” a star level, they must have enough standards ready to review at that visit. There is **not an extension to the 60-day window** for programs to receive another verification visit if they score higher on the ERS than they had planned to.

- For example, if a SL3 program (requesting for SL4) verified on 70 points during their verification visit and then learned 2 weeks later that they scored 5.5 on their ERS assessment, a second visit to verify on additional standards so that the program can move to SL5 will not be scheduled.
- ★ **Star Level Movement:** By requesting for Verification, either to verify or re-verify a star level, providers are agreeing to accept the results of that process. The ***star level that the program assesses and verifies at will be the star level assigned*** to that program. That means that programs may go up a star level, go up multiple star levels, or go down one or more star levels. Programs are able to request Verification again in 3 months.
 - For example, if a SL4 program requests for Re-verification 8 months prior to their expiration date and scores 4.0 on the ERS and/or 58 points on the Standards, the program will be assigned a SL3 once the Verification process is complete. The SL4 does not remain until the original expiration date.
- ★ **Expiration Letters:** At the end of each quarter, Stars will send Expiration Letters to programs that will be ***expiring in 1 year***. The purpose is to make sure programs have the time to be intentional in preparing for the verification process. The letters also provide the “request date” for each program.
- ★ **Request Date:** The “Request Date” is ***60 days + 3 weeks*** (81 days) before the expiration date. This is the date by which the verification request must be submitted in the database OR an extension request is submitted. This time accommodates the 60-day window as well as the allocated time for scoring, entering, and checking to ensure that the Verification processes can be completed and star level awarded by the expiration date.
- ★ **Extensions:** Programs may be eligible for ***one 6-month*** extension at each star level. In order for an extension to be granted, the program will need to submit an Action Plan ***by the request date*** that includes a realistic timeline and steps for each area that needs to be addressed before the program is ready to request for Verification.
- ★ **SL3-SL5 Expiration:** If a SL3-5 program reaches their expiration date, that program will be ***moved to SL2*** until the Verification process is completed.
 - For example, if a SL4 program is due to expire 3/15/17, then their Request date would be 12/24/16. If the program submits their Verification request in the database on 2/15/17 and has not received their new star level by their expiration date, then that program will be moved to SL2 on 3/16/17 until the Verification process is complete, at which point the program will be moved to the star level earned. Please note, ***this will impact tiered reimbursement.***
- ★ **SL1-SL2 Expiration:** If a SL1-2 program reaches their expiration date, that program will be ***removed from Stars***. Stars will send a letter encouraging the program to reapply when they are ready to participate in the Stars CQI process. If a program will not be able to complete the requirements to move to the next star level by their request date and they decide to re-apply to Stars in order to reset the timeline, the provider is welcome to submit an application through the website at that time – they do not need to wait until the original expiration date. The program will be reset at Starting with Stars, but TA can continue seamlessly.
- ★ **Re-applying to DE Stars:** The “exit” letter providers receive when they leave Stars states that they are welcome to re-apply to Stars at any time. When providers re-apply, they will be required to begin at Starting with Stars and complete the necessary requirements to move to SL2. Providers who have taken the previous version of Building on Quality ***will be required to take the new Creating a Plan for Action: Building on Quality*** before moving to SL2.