Delaware Stars for Early Success

Program Guide

2012
# Table of Contents

**Quality Rating and Improvement Systems** ................................................................. 1  
  A National Movement ...................................................................................................... 1  

**Delaware Stars for Early Success** .................................................................................. 1  
  About Delaware Stars ...................................................................................................... 1  
  Vision and Mission .......................................................................................................... 2  

**Organization of Delaware Stars** .................................................................................. 2  

**Program Eligibility and Application Review** ............................................................... 2  

**Program Enrollment and Participation** ...................................................................... 3  
  Program Commitment ..................................................................................................... 3  
  NAEYC Accredited, Head Start, and ECAP Programs ..................................................... 3  
  Database ........................................................................................................................... 4  
  Starting with Stars .......................................................................................................... 4  
  Technical Assistance ....................................................................................................... 4  
  Verification ....................................................................................................................... 5  
  Grants and Awards .......................................................................................................... 5  
  Purchase of Care Tiered Reimbursement Bonus .............................................................. 6  
  Program Changes .......................................................................................................... 7  
  OCCL Violations and Mandatory Reporting .................................................................. 11  
  Enforcement Action ........................................................................................................ 11  
  Withdraw .......................................................................................................................... 12  

**Evaluation of Delaware Stars** .................................................................................... 12  

**Delaware Stars Standards** ........................................................................................... 13  

**Environment Rating Scale Assessment** .................................................................. 13  
  Environment Rating Scales (ERS) ................................................................................. 13  
  Delaware Stars Clarifications ......................................................................................... 14  
  Assessors ........................................................................................................................ 14  
  Practice Assessment ...................................................................................................... 14  
  Verification Assessment ................................................................................................ 14
Appeals ................................................................................................................................. 16

Partner Agencies/Programs .................................................................................................. 16
  Department of Education .................................................................................................. 16
  The Office of Child Care Licensing .................................................................................. 16
  Purchase of Care ............................................................................................................... 16
  The Children and Adult Care Food Program ................................................................... 17
  Children & Families First .................................................................................................. 17
  Easter Seals ....................................................................................................................... 17
  Capacity Building Grant ................................................................................................... 17
  T.E.A.C.H® ....................................................................................................................... 17

References ............................................................................................................................. 18
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 29 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. The Delaware Stars Governance Chart and Delaware Stars Management and Operations reflect the program organization and decision making process for Delaware Stars and can be found on the Delaware Stars website.

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 12 months prior to application and at the time of enrollment, 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).

If a program meets eligibility requirements, they must complete and turn in the application found on the Delaware Stars website. All applicants will be considered under the current criteria for enrollment set by the Delaware Stars Management Team. Criteria may include consideration for POC enrollment, program type, program size, geography, and maximum number of programs being accepted.

The Delaware Stars Application Review Committee considers all applications through blind review. The committee consists of representatives from Delaware Stars, OCCL, the Department of Education (DOE), Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), and the Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children (DAEYC). Programs will be notified in writing if they are accepted, deferred, or denied.

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.

NAEYC Accredited, Head Start, and ECAP 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.

Head Start and ECAP programs, once accepted into Delaware Stars, must provide a copy of their most recent 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.

Database

The Delaware Stars database is a comprehensive database used by Delaware Stars staff and participating Delaware Stars programs. 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.

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.

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 two 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.

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.

**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 two years if maintaining or actively working to achieve a higher Star Level.

Verification request forms can be found on the Delaware Stars website and must be completed and given to the program’s TA for sign off and submission to Delaware Stars.

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 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.

**Grants and Awards**

Grants and awards 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.

Grants are available based on annual funding determinations 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.

Merit Awards are given to programs for achievement of Star Levels 3, 4, and 5.

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.

The *Grants and Awards Guidelines* and *Grants and Awards Request* may be found on the Delaware Stars website.

**Purchase of Care Tiered Reimbursement Bonus**

Programs accepting POC up through Star Level 2 are reimbursed at 65% of market rate. This is the standard POC rate for any program in the state of Delaware. Programs at Star Level 3 receive reimbursement at 80% of market rate; programs at Star Level 4 receive reimbursement at 90% of market rate; and programs at Star Level 5 receive reimbursement at 100% of market rate.

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.

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. The first type of program change outlined is a **change in licensure status**. Examples of such changes may include, but are not be limited to the following:

- Change in ownership
- Site location changes
  - new site location
  - separating an existing program into 2 separate operations with 2 separate licenses

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.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in Licensure status</th>
<th>Participation in Delaware Stars</th>
<th>Continuation of SLD &amp; Tiered Reimbursement</th>
<th>Verification of SLD</th>
<th>Re-application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program has been in Delaware Stars for less than 6 months</td>
<td>Not eligible to continue to participate in Delaware Stars</td>
<td>Tiered reimbursement will discontinue</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>May reapply after being in operation for a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New ownership – same location</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes – to determine SLD • Re-signing of Letter of Expectations • Verification of staffing patterns</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Licensure status</td>
<td>Participation in Delaware Stars</td>
<td>Continuation of SLD &amp; Tiered Reimbursement</td>
<td>Verification of SLD</td>
<td>Re-application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New site for existing program</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, up to maximum of 6 months SLD &amp; Tiered Reimbursement will terminate if the program does not re-verify for a designated Star Level</td>
<td>Yes – to determine SLD • Re-signing of Letter of Expectations • Verification of staffing patterns • Verification of standards • ERS assessment (if appropriate)</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separating an existing program into 2 separate operations with 2 separate licenses</td>
<td>Yes, for the site with the original license</td>
<td>• Yes for site with the original license • No for site with the new license</td>
<td>Yes, for site with the original license – to determine SLD • Re-signing of Letter of Expectations • Verification of staffing patterns • Verification of standards • ERS assessment (if appropriate)</td>
<td>• Site with new license may reapply to Stars within 90 days after receiving a 6 Month Provisional License • Acceptance is not guaranteed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change in Licensure status</td>
<td>Participation in Delaware Stars</td>
<td>Continuation of SLD &amp; Tiered Reimbursement</td>
<td>Verification of SLD</td>
<td>Re-application</td>
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<td>-----------------------------</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Changing existing service delivery that results in issuance of a new license (i.e. LFCC to Center program, FCC to LFCC, etc.) | Program must reapply to participate in Stars | No | NA | • New operation may reapply to Stars within 90 days after receiving a 6 Month Provisional License  
• Acceptance is not guaranteed |

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. Examples of such changes may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Major change in administration (i.e. new Administrator, Curriculum Coordinator, etc.)
- Staff changes (i.e. those that impact classroom configuration & leadership)
- Programmatic changes that will significantly impact the operation of the program (i.e. provision of a new service)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other causes for Re-verification of SLD</th>
<th>Provisional Status in Delaware Stars</th>
<th>Continuation of SLD &amp; Tiered Reimbursement</th>
<th>Verification of SLD</th>
<th>Re-application</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Change in administration               | Yes – until the following have occurred  
  • Staff contact information updated  
  • New staff oriented to Delaware Stars Policies & Procedures  
  • QIP updated | Yes | NA | NA |
| Staff Changes                          | Yes – until the following have occurred  
  • Staff contact information updated  
  • New staff oriented to Delaware Stars Policies & Procedures | Yes | NA | NA |
| Addition of a new service within an existing program (i.e. infant care, after-school care, etc.) | Yes – up to 6 months to complete verification of SLD  
  • Yes, for up to 6 months for the existing services  
  • SLD & Tiered Reimbursement will terminate if the program does not re-verify for a designated Star Level including the new service | Verification including the new service model (i.e. infant care, after-school) must be completed by the end of the 6 months  
  • Verification of staffing patterns  
  • Verification of standards  
  • ERS assessment (if appropriate) | NA | NA |
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. This has been reviewed with OCCL. 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.

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).

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 (see table on next page).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCL Enforcement Action</th>
<th>Delaware Stars Deferment Category</th>
<th>Star Level Designation during Enforcement Action</th>
<th>Services available from Delaware Stars</th>
<th>Access to Tier Reimbursement Bonus</th>
<th>Re-Verification of Previous Star Level Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warning of Probation (WOP)</td>
<td>Warning of Probation (WOP)</td>
<td>None *May not advertise SL</td>
<td>Grants and TA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probation (P)</td>
<td>Probation (P)</td>
<td>None *May not advertise SL</td>
<td>TA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension (S)</td>
<td>Suspension (S)</td>
<td>None *May not advertise SL</td>
<td>No services available</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes, unless the suspension is less than a period of 2 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revocation</td>
<td>Revocation (Terminated from Delaware Stars)</td>
<td>None *May not advertise SL</td>
<td>No services available</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Re-application if becomes licensed again</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 notifying Delaware Stars in writing. 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.

**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.
Delaware Stars Standards

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 column lists different ways, or strategies, programs can use to demonstrate they are meeting the standard. The Delaware Stars Indicator Manuals provide additional details and explanation about the required verification for each standard and may be found on the Delaware Stars website.

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 (SACERS) 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 SACERS is the only scale that has not been revised since its original publication in 1996.

The Family Child Care 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

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.

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.

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. The Request for Practice ERS Assessment can be found on the Delaware Stars website and must be completed and given to the program’s TA for sign off and submission to Delaware Stars.

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 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.
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.

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.

- Rules and regulations:
  http://kids.delaware.gov/occl/occl_resources.shtml#occlregs

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 Children and Adult Care Food Program

The Children 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. Additional information can be found at: http://www.cffde.org/.

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.

Capacity Building Grant

The Capacity Building Grant provides funding to eligible programs who serve children in the following identified gaps in service areas: infants and toddlers, school-age youth, children with disabilities, non-traditional hours, and mildly-ill children. Funds are used to create, expand, or enhance the quality of programs. Programs must be licensed through OCCL and accept POC. Additional information can be found on the DIEEC website at: http://www.dieec.udel.edu/overview.

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. TEACH provides scholarships for Associate and Bachelor Degrees in ECE, the ECE Director's Certificate, and the Child Development Associate Credential (CDA). The Delaware Association for the Education of Young Children (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.
References
