# Best Beginnings STARS to Quality
# Center Standards of Quality

**Welcome to the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Center Standards. This document will guide licensed centers, serving children from birth-12 years of age, through STARS to Quality. Additional information can be found by visiting STARS to Quality. For more detailed information, please refer to the STARS Guidance & Procedures.**
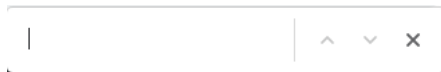
## *Document Navigation*

To navigate this document more easily, you may click "Ctrl F" and type a key word in the navigation bar. The navigation bar may look like
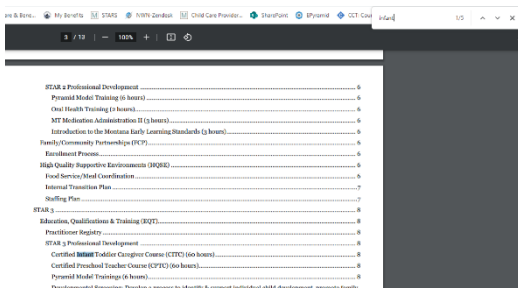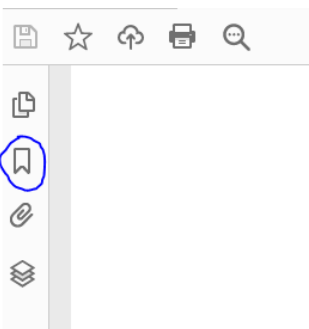
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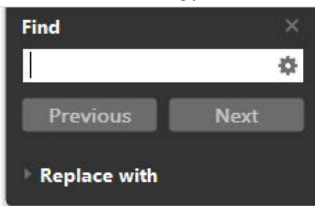
or this:

Keywords will be highlighted in the text. To see the next occurrence of the word, click the up and down arrows.

You may also select the bookmark icon on the left-hand navigation pane to view the document headings and subheadings.

# Instructions & Key

★ Criterion which require STARS-approved documents only will be marked with an asterisk (*)
★ Required forms are in the STARS Kit and can be found on the STARS Kits web page
★ All teaching staff in the standards means the Director, Lead Teacher, and Assistant Teacher

# Submitting for STARS to Quality

★ Required documents must be uploaded at time of submission into the STARS Site.
★ Programs are encouraged to use the New Staff Training Template located in the STAR Kits. It is highly recommended that all new staff have a Training Plan on file within 30 days of hire.
★ Criteria may require evidence to be uploaded in the STARS Site, however, not all evidence requires a document to be uploaded; many just require answers to be entered into the evidence box.
★ To see what is required for evidence, use your mouse to click on the green question mark in each standards box. The green question mark looks like this:

# Table of Contents

# *STAR 1*

## *Cost of Care*

Program must determine Cost of Care by completing the Cost of Care tab in the STARS Budget and Cost of Care Calculator template.

## *Quality Improvement Action Plan (QIAP)*

Program must complete the QIAP<mark>*</mark>, utilizing scores from the required self-assessments and specifically addressing any subscalescores below a 3.0. If a program is submitting for a STAR 3-5 a self-assessment is not required.

## *Education, Qualifications & Training (EQT)*

### *STAR 1 Professional Development*

### *STARS to Quality Essentials (2 hours)*

**EQT 1:** The Director (DIR) and all teaching staff (ECLT, ECAT) must complete this course. It is available through ChildCareTraining.org.

### *What's the Fuss: Assessments for Quality Improvement for Centers (3 hours)*

**EQT 2** The Director (DIR) must complete this course, or they must have completed both the ERS and PAS trainings. It is available through the local CCR&R.

### *Pyramid Model (2 hours)*

**EQT 3:** Introduction to the Pyramid Model (2 hours): Director (DIR) and all teaching staff (ECLT, ECAT) must complete this course. It is available online at ChildCareTraining.org.

### *Food Safety Course (minimum 3 hours)*

**EQT 4:** Direct food service staff attend(s) an approved Food Safety Training (offered through the County Health Dept., Sanitarian, Extension Agency if it is not a ServSafe approved course), or online at ChildCareTraining.org. Training must be in addition to the training required by CACFP.

## *Family/Community Partnerships (FCP)*

### *High Needs*

**FCP 1:** Programs must serve a minimum 10% of high needs children, as defined in *STARS Guidance & Procedures*. This information must be updated in the Classrooms tab within 1 month of STAR level submission.

## *High Quality Supportive Environments (HQSE)*

### *Self-Assessment*

**HQSE 1:** The Program must complete a self-assessment using the appropriate Environment Rating Scale(s) (ECERS-3; ITERS-3) unless submitting for a STAR 3-5.

- ERS subscale scores below a 3.0 must be addressed in the QIAP <mark>*</mark>. Programs may choose one classroom per tool to conduct a self-assessment.

## *Leadership & Program Management (LPM)*

### *Program Management*

**LPM 1:** Programs must complete or update the Program Profile (Program Info and Classrooms Tabs) in the STARS Application Site. Programs must assign a minimum of one classroom in the Classrooms tab and assign a lead teacher to each created classroom. High Needs data must be accurate and up to date. This must be updated within 1 month of STAR level submission.

### *Self-Assessment*

**LPM 2:** The Director or designated individual must complete a self-assessment using the Program Administration Scale (PAS), unless submitting for a STAR 3-5.

- A QIAP <mark>*</mark> is written to identify program-wide goals, and address the findings of the self-assessments, specifically addressing any subscale scores below a 3.0.
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# STAR 2

- **Must meet all criteria for STAR 1 along with the following:**

## Education, Qualifications & Training (EQT)

### Practitioner Registry

**EQT 1:** Director (DIR) must be current on the Practitioner Registry at Level 2 or higher.

### Individualized Professional Development Plan

**EQT 2:** Director (DIR) and all teaching staff (ECLT, ECAT) have an individualized written Professional Development Plan linked to the current Knowledge Base and updated annually.

### STAR 2 Professional Development

#### Pyramid Model (6 hours)
**EQT 3:** E-Pyramid Birth-5 Module 1 (6 hours): (Prerequisite Introduction to the Pyramid Model) (DIR) and all teaching staff (ECLT, ECAT) must complete this course.  It is available through the Montana Early Childhood Project, Statewide Training Calendar.

#### Oral Health Training (2 hours)
**EQT 4:** Lead Teachers (ECLT) must complete this course.  It is available online at ChildCareTraining.org.

#### MT Medication Administration II (3 hours)
**EQT 5:** This course must be completed by the Director (DIR), Lead Teachers (ECLT), and any other staff person that administers medication.  The Director and/or Lead Teachers are responsible for documentation of the licensing-required form, medication being stored properly, and implementation of all other course requirements and regulations. If an employee of the program is the parent of an enrolled child and has not taken the course, they are allowed to administer medication to their own child only, following all licensing rules and regulations. It is available online at ChildCareTraining.org.

#### Introduction to the Montana Early Learning Standards (3 hours)
**EQT 6:** Director (DIR), Lead Teachers (ECLT) must complete the Introduction to the MT Early Learning Standards Course. It is available online at ChildCareTraining.org.

## Family/Community Partnerships (FCP)

### Enrollment Process

**FCP 1:** The program must have a written enrollment process which describes the exchange of information between the program and families. The enrollment process describes program attributes and policies, in detail, and elicits information about the family's preference related to personal care routines and discipline.

## High Quality Supportive Environments (HQSE)

### Food Service/Meal Coordination

**HQSE 1:** All programs must be currently participating in the Montana Child and Adult Care Food Program, as eligible.

**HQSE 1:** Program must re-apply for CACFP at time of annual renewal, or submission to move up from STAR 2, *if the program was previously ineligible due to income eligibility requirements.*

**\* HQSE 1:** *If a program is not eligible for MT CACFP, the following indicators must be met:*
- At least 1 person is designated "in-charge" of food service/meal coordination. Other staff can assist in this role.
- Menus Posted

- o Written menus must be posted for the current and future week at the entrance to the facility and visible to the public.
- Adults, including program staff and visitors, participate in family style meal service with the children that is developmentally appropriate for the children in care.
- 'Division of Responsibility' In Feeding
  - o Ellyn Satter Institute 'Division of Responsibility' is followed in meal services to children.
- Special Dietary Needs Statement for Children and Protected Health Information form is completed for all children who require this.

## *Internal Transition Plan*

**HQSE 2:** The program has an appropriate, written plan to transition/move children within the program. The plan must include a supportive process for children, families, and caregivers as they transition from one space to another. The program's plan must address the following

- Individualization – The plan meets the needs and perspectives of different children and families

- Planning – Transitions are thoughtful and well planned (before, during, and after)

- Communication – Everyone is aware of the transition in advance

- Visitation – The child and family are able to visit the new space.

## *Staffing Plan*

**HQSE 3:** A written staffing plan is in place assuring continuity of care (including a plan for substitute staff situations), appropriate adult to child ratios, appropriate group size, and that children are benefitting from having primary caregivers.

# STAR 3

- Professional Development and Practitioner Registry status requirements at this level are required for employees working more than 1040 hours annually or working a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- An Assessor will be visiting the facility at this level.
- **Must meet all criteria for STAR 1 and STAR 2, along with the following:**

## Education, Qualifications & Training (EQT)

### Practitioner Registry

**EQT 1:** Director (DIR) must be current on the Practitioner Registry at Level 3 or higher.

**EQT 1:** 50% of teaching staff (ECLT, ECAT) are current at Level 2 or higher on the Practitioner Registry

### STAR 3 Professional Development

#### Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Course (CITC) (60 hours) and Certified Preschool Teacher Course (CPTC) (60 hours)

**EQT 2:** Director (DIR) and lead teachers (ECLT) must be enrolled in or have completed one of the 60-hour courses or its approved equivalent. Enrolled is defined as currently taking the course or beginning the course in the quarter following application for STAR 3.

Consideration for which course to take should be based on whether the program cares for or might care for infants and toddlers. If even one child is ages 0-2, the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Course is strongly recommended.

If a program is licensed for ages 2 and up, teachers may take the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Course to be prepared for varied developmental levels. If the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Course in not taken, the Certified Preschool Teacher Course must be completed.

It is available through the CCR&R, UM-Western, Dawson Community College, Salish Kootenai College, or Flathead Valley Community College.

- CPTC can be waived if an individual is a Level 4 or higher on the Practitioner Registry. If an individual is enrolled in college courses or the MT Apprenticeship program that will result in being a Level 4 on the Registry within 2 years of application for STAR 3, this course can be waived.
- CPTC can be waived if the Introduction to Early Childhood college-level course has been successfully completed with the grade of a C or higher.

#### Pyramid Model Trainings (6 hours)

**EQT 3:** E-Pyramid Birth-5 Module 2 (6 hours): (Prerequisite Introduction and Montana Blended Module 1 or E-Pyramid Birth-5 Module 1) Director (DIR) and all teaching staff (ECLT, ECAT) must complete this course. It is available through the Montana Early Childhood Project, Statewide Training Calendar.

#### Developmental Screening: Develop a process to identify & support individual child development, promote family engagement, & enhance program quality (4 hours)

**EQT 4:** Developmental Screening Course: Director (DIR) and all lead teaching staff (ECLT) must complete this course. It is available online at ChildCareTraining.org.

## Family/Community Partnerships (FCP)

### Community Resources

**FCP 1:** The program provides families with information regarding community resources. Examples of community resources may include: Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, public library, city recreation department, housing authority, parent resource center, public health clinic, hospital, public schools, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Office of Public Assistance, county health department, family support agency, early intervention organizations such as: Hi-Line Home Programs, Inc.,

Developmental Educational Assistance Program (DEAP), Quality Life Concepts (QLC), Support & Techniques for Empowering People (STEP), Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), Family Outreach, Child Development Center (CDC).

### Transitions

**FCP 2:** The program supports children and families while transitioning children into child care and out of child care into another educational setting.

### Family Engagement

**FCP 3:** The program provides families with multiple opportunities for involvement such as: open house, opportunities to volunteer, social events, potluck meals, parent/family surveys, parent resource center.

## High Quality Supportive Environments (HQSE)

### Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Assessment

**HQSE 1:** The program will receive a formal assessment with the appropriate ERS (ECERS-3 and/or ITERS-3).
- The average facility score must be at least 3.0 overall.
- The finalized report(s) will inform the QIAP *. Any subscale scores below a 3.0 must be addressed in the QIAP *.

### Curriculum

**HQSE 2:** The program has a written curriculum plan that is aligned with the MT Early Learning Standards and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (2009, 3rd Ed. by Carol Copple & Sue Bredekamp, eds).

### Observations

**HQSE 3:** The program demonstrates that observations of the children are used to inform curriculum and environment to support the individual needs of children.

## Leadership & Program Management (LPM)

### Program Administration Scale (PAS) Assessment

**LPM 1:** Programs will receive a formal assessment and must receive at least a 3.0 overall.
- Any subscales below a 3.0 must be addressed on the QIAP *.

# STAR 4

- Professional Development and Practitioner Registry status requirements at this level are required for employees working more than 1040 hours annually or working a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- An Assessor will be visiting the facility at this level.
- **Must meet all criteria for STAR 1, STAR 2, and STAR 3, along with the following:**

## Education, Qualifications & Training (EQT)

### Practitioner Registry

**EQT 1:** Director (DIR) must be current on the Practitioner Registry at Level 4 or higher.
**EQT 1:** 25% of teaching staff (ECLT, ECAT) are current at Level 3 or higher AND 50% of teaching staff (ECLT, ECAT) are current at Level 2 or higher

### STAR 4 Professional Development

#### Inclusion Course (15 hours)
**EQT 2:** Lead Teachers (ECLT) must be enrolled in or have completed Inclusion 1: Foundations for Inclusion (15 hours) or its equivalent. It is available at ChildCareTraining.org.

- This course can be waived for individuals at Level 6 or higher on the Practitioner Registry
- EDEC 340: Practicing Inclusion in Preschool Programs is a 3-credit course (45 hours) and is an acceptable equivalent for Inclusion I and Inclusion II. This course is available through UM-Western. Transcripts must be provided for this course.

## Family/Community Partnerships (FCP)

### High Needs

**FCP 1:** Programs must serve a minimum 15% of high needs children, as defined in *STARS Guidance & Procedures*. Information must be updated in the Classrooms tab within 1 month of STAR level submission.

### Conferences

**FCP 2:** The program offers, in addition to ongoing conversations, a meeting/conference with each child's family at least once per year. Together, the child's progress and needs are reviewed, and goals for the child are set.

### Home/School Communication

**FCP 3:** Opportunities are available to facilitate exchange of information between the program and families, such as home/school journals or notebooks, bulletin boards, newsletters, parent/family advisory councils, parent/family volunteers, parent/family participation.

### Developmental Screening

**FCP 4:** The program must have a screening process which is regularly reviewed. The program must offer developmental screening using a valid and reliable tool at the chosen tool's recommended intervals for all children enrolled. Screening data must be entered into the Organization Profile, Program info tab.

## High Quality Supportive Environments (HQSE)

### Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Assessment

**HQSE 1:** The program will receive a formal assessment with the appropriate ERS (ECERS-3 and/or ITERS-3).
- The average facility score must be at least 4.0 overall.
- The finalized report(s) will inform the QIAP*. Any subscale scores below a 4.0 must be addressed in the QIAP *.

## Leadership & Program Management (LPM)

### Program Administration Scale (PAS) Assessment

**LPM 1:** The program will have a formal assessment.  The average score must be at least 4.0

- Any subscale scores below a 4.0 must be addressed in the QIAP <mark>*</mark>.

# STAR 5

- Professional Development and Practitioner Registry status requirements at this level are required for employees working more than 1040 hours annually or working a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- An Assessor will be visiting the facility at this level.
- **Must meet all criteria for STAR 1, STAR 2, and STAR 3, and STAR 4 along with the following:**

## Accreditation

Programs must be Accredited and maintaining accreditation standards.

## Education, Qualifications & Training (EQT)

### Practitioner Registry

**EQT 1:** Director (DIR) must be current on the Practitioner Registry at Level 5 or higher.

### STAR 5 Professional Development

#### Inclusion Course (30 hours)

**EQT 2:** Lead Teachers (ECLT) must be enrolled in or have completed Inclusion II: Strategies for Inclusion (30 hours) or an equivalent.  It is available through ChildCareTraining.org.

- This course can be waived for individuals at Level 6 or higher on the Practitioner Registry
- EDEC 340: Practicing Inclusion in Preschool Programs is a 3-credit course (45 hours) and is an acceptable equivalent for Inclusion I and Inclusion II. This course is available through UM-Western. Transcripts must be provided for this course.

#### Building Skills and Safe Places for Childcare Providers (6 hours)

**EQT 3:** Director (DIR) and Lead Teachers (ECLT) must complete this course. It is available online at ChildCareTraining.org.

## High Quality Supportive Environments (HQSE)

### Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Assessment

**HQSE 1:** The program will receive a formal assessment with the appropriate ERS (ECERS-3 and/or ITERS-3)
- The average facility score must be at least 5.0 overall.
- The finalized report will inform the QIAP*.  Any subscale scores below a 5.0 must be addressed in the QIAP *.

## Leadership & Program Management (LPM)

### Program Administration Scale (PAS) Assessment

**LPM 1:** The program will have a formal assessment.  The average score must be at least 5.0.
- Any subscale scores below a 5.0 must be addressed in the QIAP *.