

IdahoSTARS QRIS (*Quality Rating and Improvement System*)

The IdahoSTARS *Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)* will open to the early care and education community in early 2010, available on a first come, voluntary basis as funding allows. Orientations will begin in January in each regional Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) office.

The QRIS has been designed with input from child care providers and professionals in design phases during 2007 and 2008. It is planned to roll out statewide early 2010, available on a first come, voluntary basis as funding allows.

What is the QRIS?

The quality of the child care facility will be rated through a system of five stars. The *QRIS* includes a built-in system for improvement in each of eight quality standards.

The QRIS is a voluntary quality rating and improvement system for child care facilities in Idaho. The quality of the facility is rated through a system of five stars, similar to ratings for hotels, movies, and restaurants. The QRIS includes a built-in system for improvement in each of the eight Quality Standards. In this way, the QRIS credits facilities for the quality practices already in place while providing a roadmap to increased quality.

What are the QRIS quality standards?

1. **Environment:** Measures health, safety and environment through the *Environment Rating Scales*
2. **Education:** Documents current education level of director/owner and teachers
3. **Professional Development:** Documents ongoing education and training of staff
4. **Inclusion:** Documents how a facility supports children's full participation and ways staff intentionally plan for each child and family to be successful, especially when a child has an identified disability
5. **Strengthening Families:** Documents implementation of *Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education*
6. **Group Size:** Documents the number of children in each group
7. **Child-to-staff Ratio:** Documents ratio of children to staff in each group
8. **Business Practices:** Documents business practices

Why has the QRIS been developed?

The QRIS has three goals:

1. Inform Parent Choice
 - Provide information to help parents seek quality in child care
 - Educate parents so they know what quality care is and are encouraged to request it
 - Measure quality
2. Improve the quality of child care
 - Increase quality
 - More programs are prepared to serve children with special needs
 - Child care providers see themselves as professionals and increase their training and education
 - Produce positive outcomes for children
3. Implement *Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education*
 - Reduce incidents of child abuse and neglect by building family strengths
 - To strengthen families and their networks in the prevention of child abuse and neglect

How was the QRIS designed?

The QRIS began with Enhancement grants in 2004-05, which provided practice in documenting quality improvements over time. The grants introduced providers to the *Environment Rating Scales* and laid the foundation for an assessment network of trained assessors.

The grants were followed by two design phases, one in 2007 and the other in 2008.

In addition, IdahoSTARS has used the following strategies in the design process:

- Study of other states' QRIS
- Peer-to-peer work with Missouri
- National QRIS conferences
- Monthly conference calls with QRIS participants
- QRIS evaluation from each design phase
- Independent consultation to revise standards to ensure uniformity of scale and scope, and to produce measurable results
- Public forums in each region
- Site visits in each region
- Focus groups across the state

What changes have been made to the QRIS as a result of the design phases and public input?

- The assessment network has been restructured to ensure reliability and accountability.
- Training will be offered for mentors and IdahoSTARS Regional Offices so they are prepared to offer technical assistance and connect providers to the resources they need.
- A QRIS Workbook and other materials have been developed to explain and support the QRIS.

How to Get a Star Rating: The QRIS Process

The IdahoSTARS QRIS emphasizes **quality improvement**. Facilities in the QRIS are recognized for the quality practices already in place. At the same time, facilities must intentionally plan improvements for the three years a STAR rating is valid. Funding is available to support planned improvements as long as goals are met along the way and funding is available.

How long will it take? There are many steps to receiving a star rating; the process from attending the QRIS Orientation to getting a rating may take 18 months or longer. Facilities operate on their own schedule.

There are only two 'deadlines' for the QRIS:

- *Application for a Facility Profile* is due 90 days after the QRIS site visit with the Consultant.
- *Application for a STAR Rating* is due one year after a facility receives funding for the *QRIS Improvement Plan*

STEP 1: The facility obtains a license. All facilities must be licensed to participate in the QRIS. Licensed facilities must meet the health and safety requirements of the state of Idaho, including criminal history checks.

STEP 2: The facility director attends an orientation to the QRIS. The QRIS Orientation is available in each region of the state through the CCR&R office.

STEP 3: The Regional Quality Child Care Consultant visits the director who has signed the *QRIS Letter of Commitment*.

STEP 4: The facility director attends training on the *Environment Rating Scales*. This training explains the scales and prepares the director for the assessment process.

- STEP 5: Classroom(s) in the facility receive an environment assessment using the *Environment Rating Scales*.
- STEP 6: The facility completes an *Application for a Facility Profile*. This is a self-study of current practices as they relate to the quality standards.
- STEP 7: The director submits the *Application for a Facility Profile* in to the Consultant **within 90 days of the first QRIS site visit**.
- STEP 8: A *Facility Profile* is generated by the QRIS office. The *Facility Profile* verifies the quality indicators that the facility has documented. The *Profile* outlines the facility's strengths and areas needing improvement.
- STEP 9: The facility uses the *Facility Profile* to create an improvement plan toward highest quality, using the QRIS quality indicators as a planning tool.
- STEP 10: The facility submits the *IdahoSTARS QRIS Improvement Plan* and *Funding Request* to the QRIS office.
- STEP 11: After working to implement the improvement plan (for 6 months or longer) the facility applies for a STAR rating. This application is due one year from the time the facility receives funds for the improvement plan.
- STEP 12: The facility receives a STAR rating.
- STEP 13: Facilities submit yearly reports, improvement plans, and funding requests.
- STEP 14: Facilities apply for STAR rating renewal every three years.

How is IdahoSTARS preparing for the launch of the QRIS?

IdahoSTARS is working to create easy-to-use materials and to train mentors and Regional Offices on the materials and the QRIS system as a whole. We will spend the next few months training on the QRIS. In November, we hosted a statewide conference for mentors, trainers, assessors and IdahoSTARS staff to put the final changes on the QRIS materials and offered trainings.