
Steps to Quality



What is IdahoSTARS Steps to Quality?

Children benefit from high quality early care and education. **Steps to Quality**, Idaho's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), provides child care programs with a set of tools to cultivate a high quality early learning and care setting. IdahoSTARS, in conjunction with the child care programs that currently and potentially participate in **Steps to Quality**, recognize that continuous quality improvement leads to early success for Idaho's most precious resource – our young children.

Steps to Quality is a voluntary program that empowers early learning professionals through coaching and resources to provide high-quality care that supports each child's learning and development so they are prepared to be successful in school and life.

Steps to Quality is designed to celebrate and reward child care programs that choose to participate. Participation in Steps to Quality is one of the best choices a child care program can make to demonstrate a commitment to quality and a commitment to children.

How does Steps to Quality work?

Steps to Quality measures the quality of a child care program in six key areas:

1. Health & Safety
2. Staffing & Professional Development
3. Child Growth, Development & Learning
4. Children with Diverse Abilities
5. Strengthening Families & Communities
6. Leadership & Management

As a program moves across the steps, it is acknowledged as each step is verified. A program becomes STAR rated at Step 3. In Steps to Quality, a program evolves as it moves from step 1 to step 6. A successful program implements the quality indicators in its current step, while maintaining the quality of the previous steps. Continuous quality improvement has deep roots.

What does Steps to Quality mean for parents?

Choosing child care is an important decision. Families deserve to know that their children are in quality care environments that foster a love of learning, promote each child's unique skills and culture, and support the development of the whole child. Parents deserve a supportive, professional partnership with their child care program.



Steps to Quality helps parents and caregivers find high-quality child care and early learning programs that fit the needs of each individual family. Participating child care and early learning programs receive resources and training to improve the quality to their programs, at no additional cost to families.

How does **Steps to Quality** affect currently Star Rated child care programs?

IdahoSTARS listened to feedback from many different stakeholders including parents and providers and researched best practices across the country. In response, we have taken what was a complicated system and simplified it. We have also maintained a level of excellence that provides parents with a sense of security and helpful information about choosing quality child care for their family.

IdahoSTARS wants families to understand that the decision to make these changes had nothing to do with the quality of care being provided by our current Star rated programs. We fully anticipate these currently participating programs will continue in **Steps to Quality** while offering the same excellent care to children.

In Steps to Quality a child care program is Star Rated once they have been verified in Step 3. Child Care Programs will work closely with IdahoSTARS consultants to transition to the new system and we anticipate these programs will move through the steps and achieve a Star rating.

What does high quality child care look like and why is it important?

High quality child care helps children enter school ready to succeed. These programs have:

- Nurturing and supportive relationships between adults and children
- Care and education that meets each student's individual needs
- Facilities that are safe, well-organized and have age appropriate resources
- Activities that support the development of the whole child
- Open communication and genuine engagement with families
- Meaningful efforts to embrace diversity

What can I do as a parent?

For parents who have enrolled their child to a child care program participating in **Steps to Quality**, say *Thank You!* Your child's program has made a commitment to quality and is helping to lead the way and set the standard for quality child care in Idaho. To learn more about **Steps to Quality**, talk to your child's care provider, visit the IdahoSTARS website (www.idahostars.org), or call 2-1-1 Idaho Careline.