

Kentucky All STARS Operations Manual

For Licensed and Certified Child Care

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Kentucky Division of Child Care – 275 E Main St 3C-F Frankfort KY 40621
844.209.2657 – kyallstars@ky.gov - www.kyallstars.ky.gov



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1. All STARS Program Overview

Kentucky All STARS is Kentucky's expanded five-star quality rating and improvement system for early care and education programs. Studies show that children who attend high quality early learning environments have better math, language and social skills. The unified system serves all early care and education programs including child care centers, Head Start and public preschool.

Kentucky All STARS is based on Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards and research-based indicators of quality. It recognizes programs that have made a commitment to continuous quality improvement. On the path toward higher quality, programs can benefit from supports including training, technical assistance, and coaching. Kentucky All STARS aligns with [Kentucky's Early Childhood Standards](#)¹ and [research-based indicators of quality](#)².

Kentucky All STARS is designed to:

- ★ Increase kindergarten readiness
- ★ Publicly recognize quality early care and education providers
- ★ Create systems of support for caregivers to pursue continuous quality improvement
- ★ Provide assurances of quality for families and caregivers
- ★ Reduce the amount of funds spent on remediation at later grades
- ★ Increase graduation rates
- ★ Provide opportunities for collaboration among families, caregivers, and early care and education providers.

¹ <http://kidsnow.ky.gov/Improving-Early-Care/Documents/Kentucky%20Early%20Childhood%20Standards.pdf>

² <https://www.kentuckypartnership.org/products/kentucky-tiered-quality-rating-and-improvement-system-pilot-study>

Kentucky All STARS is committed to upholding these Guiding Principles:

- ★ Helping families and caregivers to identify the quality of early care and education programs
- ★ Providing high quality administrative and technical assistance services to early care and education programs
- ★ Creating a system to support higher levels of quality in early care and learning
- ★ Building upon the existing strengths of early care and education programs to pursue continuous quality improvement

Organizational Structure

Partnering Organizations

Numerous partnering agencies and organizations have worked collaboratively to develop a unified tiered quality rating and improvement system for early care and education programs. Kentucky All STARS is the product of many years of research, pilot programs, and community engagement efforts. State agencies, early childhood experts, and community stakeholders have been incredible resources for the development and implementation of All STARS.

- ★ Governor's Office of Early Childhood
- ★ Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services
- ★ Kentucky Department of Education
- ★ The University of Kentucky and Child Care Aware
- ★ Eastern Kentucky University
- ★ Early Childhood Advisory Council
- ★ U.S. Department of Education, Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant

Unified TQRIS Delivery

The unified Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) is designed to help providers and care seekers to easily identify the expectations of high quality early care and education programs in Kentucky. In order to reduce administrative burden and provide transparency and clarity, DCC and KDE have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to commit to a unified TQRIS. The MOU states that no changes will be made to domains and standards or shared processes without consultation of both agencies in partnership with the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC).

DCC is responsible for the engagement of all licensed type I & II child care centers and certified family child care homes in Kentucky All STARS including all licensed Head Start programs. KDE is responsible for the engagement of preschool and non-licensed Head Starts. Both agencies work collaboratively to ensure interagency reliability in delivery of the All STARS domains and standards, application processes, and environmental observation standards and practices.

Division of Child Care Roles & Responsibilities

The Quality Initiatives Section, housed within DCC, is responsible for the day-to-day operation of Kentucky All STARS for all licensed and certified early care programs.

Quality Initiatives Positions:

- ★ **Quality Initiatives Section Supervisor**

Supervises program workload and staff responsibilities to improve quality early care and education, monitor program status and assess training needs, and develop and recommend policy and procedure alternative pertinent to section operations.

- ★ **Quality Initiatives Administrative Specialist III**

Processes all STARS program approvals and renewal ratings, issues renewal and Annual Quality Review report notifications to providers and processes STARS annual quality reviews.

- ★ **Quality Initiatives Administrative Specialist**

Initial contact point for customer service within the All STARS Program. Track and manage Civil Penalty information for Kentucky All STARS participants. Coordinate Annual Quality Review Assignments to field staff.

★ **Resource Management Analyst III**

Performs analysis and makes recommendations regarding policy and/or budget issues; or performs functional supervision or technical policy or budget activities of an agency; calculates and generates Tiered Quality Rating Incentive payments; and performs other duties as required.

★ **Raters**

Conduct on-site environmental observations, review evidence documentation for standards of quality, recommend All STARS quality ratings based on those observations and evidence documents. Maintain reliability on all 4 scales. There are several Rater positions employed directly by DCC and other subcontracted positions through Eastern Kentucky University (EKU).

The Division of Child Care also contracts with Child Care Aware to deliver technical assistance and professional development for early care providers.

Child Care Aware Positions related to All STARS:

★ **Content Coordinators**

Provide oversight for early childhood project activities to meet contract deliverables. Content support and resource for early care and education Coaches to ensure that all contract deliverables are met. Work with Technical Assistant Specialists, Regional Child Care Administrators (RCCAs) and funders to develop and implement strategic plans to address critical issues and needs regarding licensing systems, quality rating and improvement systems, and professional development support and requirements. Monitor statewide and regional needs and provide support to address critical issues and needs across Kentucky's early care and education system.

★ **Regional Child Care Administrators**

Ensure contract deliverables are met, and provide oversight of project activities and regional staff to ensure regional and statewide deliverables are met. Analyze data,

develop data collection systems and support evaluation of regional and statewide activities.

★ **Quality TA Specialists**

Provide support to Quality Coaches in the field, including technical assistance services to cover gaps in regional services to licensed and certified providers involved in the quality rating and improvement process. Work with field staff to identify regional TA targets, review quarterly, maintain and conduct reliability with STARS Raters, and update as needed. Coordinate statewide work to ensure consistency across regions. Work in conjunction with RCCAs to ensure that TA for quality improvements is based on quality regulations, supported by evidence-based practices, and is consistent across regions. Work with TQRIS Content Coordinator to ensure Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) reliability for Raters and Coaches.

★ **Health and Safety TA Specialist**

Provide support to Health and Safety Coaches in the field, including technical assistance services to cover gaps in regional services to licensed, certified and registered child care providers. Work with field staff to identify regional TA targets, review quarterly, and update as needed. Coordinate statewide work to ensure consistency across regions. Work in conjunction with RCCAs to ensure that TA for regulatory compliance is based on licensing regulations, supported by evidence-based practices, and is consistent across regions.

★ **Early Care and Education Quality Coaches**

Provide technical assistance using effective and current evidence-based practices to support quality rating and improvement system, including maintaining reliability of at least 85% on the four Environment Rating Scales. Evaluate technical assistance, implement activities based on feedback, and document activities according to policies and procedures. Outreach and recruitment activities to minimize attrition and bring in new facilities.

★ **Early Care and Education Health and Safety Coaches**

Provide technical assistance to licensed, certified and registered child care providers that serve infants through school age, with an emphasis on providers who serve high need populations as defined in the KY CCDF State Plan. Provide targeted TA to providers who have received intermediate sanctions referral from the Division of

Regulated Child Care (DRCC) within and across regions as appropriate. Conduct outreach and recruitment activities to minimize attrition and bring in new facilities. Conduct Getting Started in Child Care with potential providers.

★ **Early Care and Education Training Coach**

Technical assistance and support to early care and education trainers to promote quality trainings; Recruit trainers as needed to ensure training coverage in the region and provide assistance to potential providers; Provide train the trainer sessions as needed and under direction of the Division of Child Care. Outreach and recruitment activities bring in new trainers and promote quality assurance process.

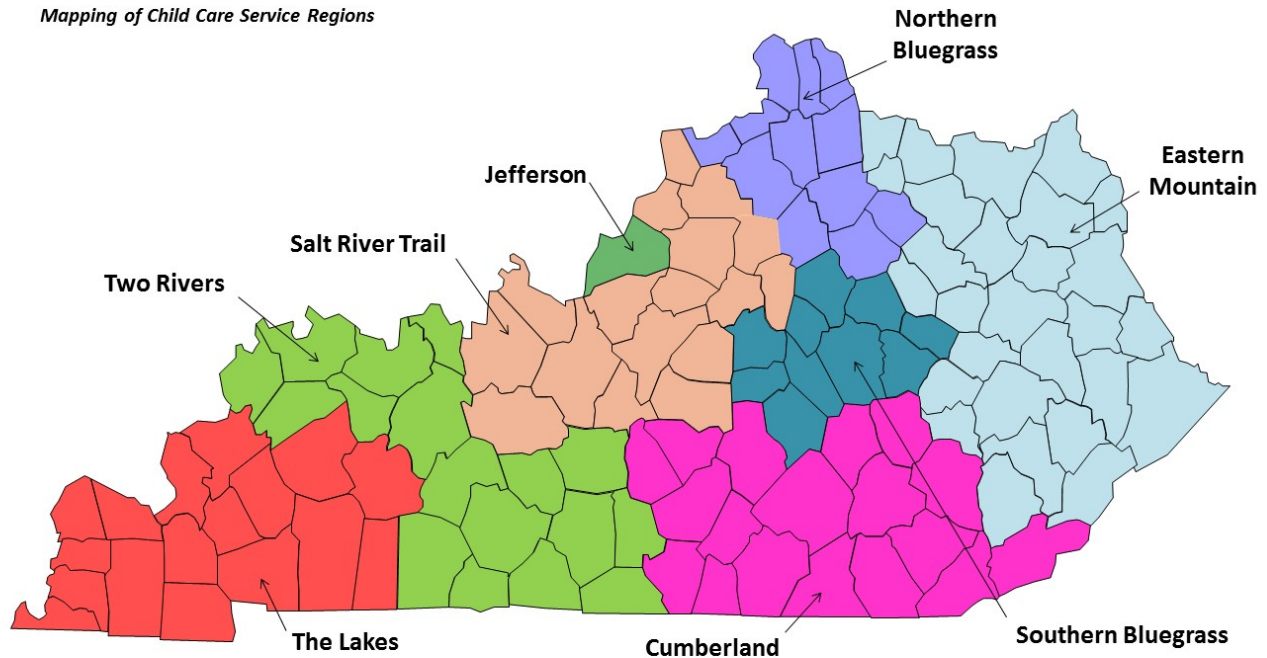
★ **Early Care and Education Professional Development Coach**

Provide technical assistance related to professional development to existing and potential scholars based on effective and current evidence-based practices. Evaluate technical assistance, implement activities based on feedback, and document activities according to policies and procedures. Outreach and recruitment activities to bring in and retain scholars.

Child Care Service Region Map

The state is divided into eight child care service regions. Each region is assigned an RCCA and region-specific Coaches. Raters may work in several service regions based on need and availability.

Mapping of Child Care Service Regions




Introduction to the All STARS Tiered Quality Rating System

What is a Tiered Quality Rating System?

The previous TQRIS program in Kentucky, STARS for KIDS NOW, operated on a building block quality rating system where the requirements for each level must be met before moving on to the next level. In an effort to better serve the diverse needs of our child care programs in Kentucky, the Kentucky All STARS program adopted a hybrid rating system. This system combines elements of the building block rating model with elements of a points rating model.

In the new hybrid system, programs are required to meet specific domains and standards at each quality rating level. In addition to the required standards, programs must also meet a specific amount of points associated with each level. These points can be earned by choosing from a menu of standards listed in *DCC-431 Kentucky All STARS Standards of Quality*.

 *Coaching Tip*

Head Start programs and providers holding select accreditations may qualify for alternative pathways to high quality. Please refer to ...

Registered child care providers who wish to participate in Kentucky All STARS are encouraged to become Certified Family Child Care providers. The pathway for Registered Providers is outlined in the [Registered Provider Pathway](#) resource available online and through DRCC field staff.

All new providers with a regular child care license are automatically enrolled in Kentucky All STARS at a Level 1. Programs receiving any form of public funding are required to participate. Programs not receiving public funds may apply to opt-out of the program.

To qualify for Levels 2-5, providers *must* meet the following standards:

- ★ 50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening.
- ★ Program/Site administrator/Director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices or teaching and learning; OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.
- ★ 50% of teaching staff receive 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices or teaching and learning; OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.

Levels 3-5 must also meet the requirements outlined below:

Categories	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Classroom & Instructional Quality (20 points possible)	8	8	8
Family & Community Engagement (10 points possible)	2	2	2
Staff Qualifications & Professional Development (10 points possible)	2	2	2
Administrative & Leadership Practices (10 points possible)	2	2	2
Additional Points Required From Any Domain	7	17	27
Environmental Observation Required with Minimum Score of:	no minimum score	4.0	5.0

All STARS Quality Rating Requirements

All STARS Level 1

All child care providers are automatically enrolled as a Level 1 in the Kentucky All STARS program once they receive a preliminary license or certification. Programs will remain at a Level 1 until they apply to move to a higher level or choose to opt-out of the program by submitting a *DCC-433 All STARS Opt-Out Request*. Licensed programs may only apply for a higher level once they receive their regular license. Programs receiving public funds are statutorily mandated to participate.

The only requirement for Level 1 is that the provider meets regulatory requirements in accordance with [922 KAR 2:090](#)³ for licensed centers or certification in accordance with [922 KAR 2:100](#)⁴.

There are no monetary incentives for participating at a Level 1 in All STARS.

All STARS Level 2

The following standards are required for Level 2 providers:

- ★ 50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening.
- ★ Complete an environmental self-assessment using a valid and reliable tool appropriate for ages/settings of children served.
- ★ Program/site administrator /director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices, and/or teaching and learning OR has an approved early childhood credential or degree.

³ <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/kar/922/002/090.htm>

⁴ <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/kar/922/002/100.htm>

- ★ 50% of teaching staff receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices, and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.

No additional points are required for a Level 2 rating. At this level, providers are eligible for initial and annual monetary incentives while funding is available.

All STARS Level 3

The following standards are required for Level 3 providers:

- ★ 50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening.
- ★ Complete an environmental self-assessment using a valid and reliable tool appropriate for ages/settings of children served.
- ★ Program/site administrator /director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices, and/or teaching and learning OR has an approved early childhood credential or degree.
- ★ 50% of teaching staff receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices, and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.
- ★ Participate in an environmental observation using a valid and reliable tool. No minimum required score.

In addition to the required standards, providers can select from the Standards of Quality to compile 21-30 points to complete the Level 3 Quality Rating:

- ★ 8 points from Classroom and Instructional Quality
- ★ 2 points from Family and Community Engagement
- ★ 2 points from Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
- ★ 2 points from Administrative and Leadership Practices
- ★ At least 7 points from any domain

Level 3 providers are considered High Quality. They are eligible for initial, annual, and subsidy enrollment monetary incentives while funding is available.

All STARS Level 4

The following standards are required for Level 4 providers:

- ★ 50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening.
- ★ Complete an environmental self-assessment using a valid and reliable tool appropriate for ages/settings of children served.
- ★ Program/site administrator /director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices, and/or teaching and learning OR has an approved early childhood credential or degree.
- ★ 50% of teaching staff receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices, and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.
- ★ Participate in an environmental observation using a valid and reliable tool. Must have a minimum score of 4.0 in all rated classrooms.

In addition to the required standards, providers can select from the Standards of Quality to compile 31-40 points required to complete the Level 4 Quality Rating:

- ★ 8 points from Classroom and Instructional Quality
- ★ 2 points from Family and Community Engagement
- ★ 2 points from Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
- ★ 2 points from Administrative and Leadership Practices
- ★ At least 17 points from any domain

Level 4 providers are considered High Quality. They are eligible for initial, annual, and subsidy enrollment monetary incentives while funding is available.

All STARS Level 5

The following standards are required for Level 5 providers:

- ★ 50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening.
- ★ Complete an environmental self-assessment using a valid and reliable tool appropriate for ages/settings of children served.
- ★ Program/site administrator /director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices, and/or teaching and learning OR has an approved early childhood credential or degree.
- ★ 50% of teaching staff receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices, and/or teaching and learning OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.
- ★ Participate in an environmental observation using a valid and reliable tool. Must have a minimum score of 5.0 in all rated classrooms.

In addition to the required standards, providers can select from the Standards of Quality to compile 41-50 points required to complete the Level 5 Quality Rating:

- ★ 8 points from Classroom and Instructional Quality
- ★ 2 points from Family and Community Engagement
- ★ 2 points from Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
- ★ 2 points from Administrative and Leadership Practices
- ★ At least 27 points from any domain

Level 5 providers are considered High Quality. They are eligible for initial, annual, and subsidy enrollment monetary incentives while funding is available.

All STARS Domains and Standards

DCC-431 Kentucky All STARS Standards of Quality is a regulated form that outlines the required standards and additional menu of standards that providers may choose from to accumulate the points for their desired quality rating. Points associated with each standard can be found in the *DCC-432 Standards of Quality Verification Checklist*. The intent of each standard as well as examples of supporting documentation that may be accepted can be found in the *Standards of Quality Verification Checklist Guide*.

The following standards are required to move to a Level 2 rating or higher. Required standards do not count towards points in the Hybrid Rating System.	
Classroom & Instructional Quality	50% of teaching staff have professional learning activities in developmental screening.
	Completes an environmental self-assessment using a valid and reliable tool appropriate for the ages/settings of children served.
	Participates in an environmental observation on a valid and reliable tool: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not required for Level 2 • No minimum at Level 3 • Minimum of 4.0 per classroom at Level 4 • Minimum of 5.0 per classroom at Level 5
Staff Qualifications & Professional Development	Program/Site administrator/Director receives 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices or teaching and learning; OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.
	50% of teaching staff receive 10 hours of professional learning in curriculum, instructional practices or teaching and learning; OR have an approved early childhood credential or degree.

The following standards earn points in the Hybrid Rating System		
Domain	Points	Standard
Classroom & Instructional Quality (20 Points)	2 points	Ensures developmental screening within 90 days of enrollment and referral (if needed) within 30 days of screening for all enrolled children.
	2 points	Implements curriculum that aligns with Kentucky Early Learning Standards (KYELS).
	1 point	Implements specialized supplemental curricula.
	2 points	Kentucky Early Learning Standards are incorporated into lesson plans.
	2 points	Staff support Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and/or Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals of individual children.
	2 points	Staff conduct ongoing curriculum-based assessment to inform instruction.
	2 points	Assessment results are used to inform individual and group instruction.
	2 points	Instructional assessment findings are shared with families.
	1 point	National accreditation acknowledged by state approved organization.
	4 points	Maintains National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) staff-to-child ratios and group size requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meets for infants (2pts) • Meets for toddlers (1pt)
Family & Community Engagement (10 Points)	2 Points	Program/Site administrator and 75% of staff complete professional learning activities related to strengthening family engagement.
	2 Points maximum	Implements family engagement activities that promote children’s development and learning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements at least one family engagement activity per year that promotes children’s development and learning. (1pt) • Implements at least three family engagement activities per year that promote children’s development and learning. (2pts)
	2 Points	Two-way communication with families.
	2 Points	Implements transition supports for children and families.
	1 Point	Shares community resources with families.
	1 Point	Builds partnerships with community agencies.

Staff Qualifications and PD (10 Points)	1 point	50% of teaching staff participate in professional learning activities related to curriculum-based assessment.
	1 point	Program/Site administrator achieves the Kentucky Director Credential OR holds an administrator certificate in a field not related to early childhood and the equivalent of 3 credit hours in child development or at least 5 years full time related experience in early childhood field.
	3 points maximum	Program/Site administrator achieves appropriate credential as outlined on the Kentucky Career Lattice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice (1pt) • Level 3 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice (2pts)
	4 points maximum	Teaching staff completes appropriate credentials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% achieve Level 1 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice (1pt) • 40% achieve Level 2 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice (2pts) • 30% achieve Level 3 or above on the Kentucky Career Lattice (3pts)
	1 point	Individual Professional Development (PD) plan aligns with state identified professional core knowledge and competencies.
Administrative and Leadership Practices (10 points)	1 point	Administrator/Director is a member of Early Childhood professional organization.
	2 points	Teaching staff are provided weekly lesson planning time.
	2 points	Has a system for evaluating staff performance by monitoring and providing feedback for improvement.
	2 points maximum	Implements a continuous quality improvement plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeks input from staff on the continuous quality improvement plan. (1pt) • Seeks input from families annually on implementation of the continuous quality improvement plan. (1pt)
	3 points maximum	Provides at least 11 days paid time off annually (1pt); health insurance (1pt); retirement (1pt).

Providers submit a *DCC-432 Standards of Quality Verification Checklist* and supporting documentation to apply for a Quality Rating.

For more details on the Standards Verification process, refer to [Standards Verification](#).

Environmental Observation Requirements

In order to qualify for a Level 3 Rating or higher, an environmental observation must be completed for at least 1/3 of the total number of classrooms including at least 1 classroom for each age group for which the program provides care.

Kentucky All STARS utilizes the following [Environment Rating Scales \(ERS\)](#)⁵ to assess classrooms:

- ★ ITERS-R – Infant/Toddler Childhood Environment Rating Scale Revised is applied to children ages 0 to 3 years of age.
- ★ ECERS-3 – Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale 3rd Edition is applied to children 3 years of age to school-age⁶.
- ★ SACERS – School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale is applied to group-care programs for children of school age.
- ★ FCCERS-R – Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, Revised is applied to in-home child care facilities for children from infancy through school-age.

Environmental observations for the purpose of quality ratings must be performed by an All STARS Rater or a program designee. Environmental observation visits for child care programs are initiated by the provider upon submission of the *DCC-432 Standards of Quality Verification Checklist*. Visits are unannounced and are scheduled during a two week window that is predetermined by the provider and the Rater.

For more details on the Environmental Observation process, refer to [Rating Process](#).

⁵ <https://www.ersi.info/>

⁶ School age means an age group of children who meet the age requirements of KRS 158.030 or who attend kindergarten, elementary, or secondary education.

Incentives for Participating in All STARS

Technical Assistance

Kentucky All STARS offers technical assistance designed to support providers who are committed to quality improvement and maintaining high-quality learning environments for Kentucky's children. Technical assistance is offered in the form of one-on-one coaching in the areas of Quality Improvement, Professional Development, Health & Safety, and Training. Providers new to Kentucky All STARS will work with a Health and Safety Coach to ensure their program is meeting all regulatory standards and to identify areas for quality improvement. Once a provider is ready to apply for a high quality rating in All STARS, they will be connected with a Quality Coach, who will help them to prepare for an environmental observation and support them through the standards verification process.

Providers can locate coaches in their area by visiting the [Kentucky Partnership website](#)⁷.

For more details on the Technical Assistance process, refer to [Technical Assistance Process](#).

Monetary Incentives

Providers rated at Levels 2 and above qualify for monetary incentives while funding is available. Awards are granted for the initial achievement of Levels 2-5. Providers will also receive annual awards for maintaining their quality rating between levels 2-5. Levels 3-5 qualify for subsidy enrollment awards if they serve children supported by subsidies. In order to receive monetary awards, providers must be in good regulatory standing and must maintain all standards of quality in accordance with the All STARS regulation.

⁷ <https://www.kentuckypartnership.org/about/our-staff>

For more details on Monetary Incentives, including payment charts, refer to [Awards and Incentives](#).

Provider Resources

Providers have access to a variety of resources to both promote their participation in Kentucky All STARS to families and communities, and also to help pursue higher quality ratings within All STARS. Resources such as press releases, parent letters, application guides, trainings, and tools can be found on the [Kentucky All STARS website](#)⁸.

Providers are also encouraged to reach out to their Child Care Aware Coach if they have any specific requests for materials to aid in quality improvement.

Kentucky Child Care Provider Search

All licensed and certified providers in Kentucky can be found in the [Benefind Child Care Provider Search](#)⁹. This online portal is designed to aid parents and families in the search for regional childcare. The Provider Search organizes search results to display providers in order of their quality rating in All STARS. For example, if a parent searches for infant/toddler programs within 20 miles, programs with a 5 Star quality rating will display before programs with a 3 Star rating. Programs not participating in All STARS will appear at the bottom of the search results.

Monitoring and Compliance

Kentucky All STARS Quality Rating Certificates are issued with an expiration date of the provider's renewal month in the year most approximating three years from the date of issue. This means that a certificate may be issued for less or greater than 3 years depending on when the quality rating is approved. A certificate will never be issued for a time period shorter than 2 years and 6 months or greater than 3 years and 6 months.

⁸ <https://kentuckyallstars.ky.gov/Pages/index.aspx>

⁹ <https://benefind.ky.gov/kccps>

Providers are required to submit a *DCC-434 Kentucky All STARS Annual Quality Review* during their licensure month each interim year of their quality certification. This narrative-based form is submitted through the KICCS Provider Portal and requires no supporting documentation. Failure to submit the *DCC-434* will result in an automatic deduction to a Level 1 quality rating and the halting of all monetary incentives.

Technical Support Systems

The Division of Child Care utilizes three primary systems in relation to Kentucky All STARS:

- ★ The [Kentucky Integrated Child Care System \(KICCS\)](#)¹⁰ houses system-generated forms, provider submissions, and correspondence related to All STARS participation and administration. Providers and staff members can use this portal to view any and all data related to their participation in the program. This includes previous standards submissions, current ERS scores, and any correspondence that has been issued from the Division of Child Care. Staff members can utilize the Worker Portal to view pending tasks, complete processes, and access provider data. Providers should log-in to the Provider Portal regularly to ensure current compliance with All STARS requirements. All regulated forms and requests are submitted through the KICCS Provider Portal. To access KICCS, users must establish a Kentucky Online Gateway account. Instructions for creating a KOG account can be found on the [DCC KICCS page](#)¹¹.
- ★ The [Early Care and Education Training Records Information System \(ECE-TRIS\)](#)¹² is a centralized database which maintains training records, credentials, and degrees for Early Care and Education professionals throughout Kentucky. All STARS staff utilize ECE-TRIS records to verify professional development and

¹⁰ <https://kog.chfs.ky.gov/home/>

¹¹ <http://chfs.ky.gov/dcbs/dcc/kiccportal/>

¹² <https://tris.eku.edu/ece/>

training requirements for quality ratings. Providers should work with their training coach to ensure all ECE-TRIS records are current to avoid unnecessary confusion during the quality rating application process.

- ★ The [Benefind Child Care Provider Search](https://benefind.ky.gov/kccps)¹³ provides data to the public on all active child care providers in Kentucky. Benefind displays the All STARS quality ratings for all Licensed and Certified providers.

¹³ <https://benefind.ky.gov/kccps>

2. All STARS Enrollment and Application Process

This section outlines the automatic enrollment of licensed and certified providers in Kentucky All STARS and options for initial involvement with the program.

Level 1 Enrollment

All licensed and certified providers in Kentucky are automatically enrolled at a Level 1 Quality Rating in Kentucky All STARS. Upon enrollment, KICCS will generate an *All STARS Notice of Enrollment* letter and an *All STARS Quality Rating Certificate*.

Providers participating at a Level 1 must comply with all license and certification regulations. Level 1 participation does not require annual renewal or recertification. There are no monetary incentives for Level 1 providers.

Opt-Out

Programs who receive any form of public funds must participate in Kentucky All STARS. Programs not receiving public funds may apply to opt-out by submitting a *DCC-433 Opt Out Request* in KICCS. The *DCC-433* is processed by the Division of Child Care. Upon review and approval, DCC will issue either an *Opt-Out Acceptance Letter* or an *Opt-Out Denial Letter* to the provider through the KICCS system. Programs who are approved to opt-out will be listed as “Not Participating” in the [Benefind Child Care Provider Search](#)¹⁴ and will not be eligible for monetary incentives. If, at any time, a provider begins accepting public funds, they will be automatically re-enrolled in Kentucky All STARS at a Level 1. Providers who have opted-out may re-enroll at any time by submitting an Opt-In Request through the KICCS portal.

¹⁴ <https://benefind.ky.gov/kccps>

Applying for Higher Quality

A provider wishing to move to a higher quality rating may do so by submitting a *DCC-432 Standards of Verification Checklist* through the KICCS Provider Portal. Providers moving to higher quality for the first time are highly encouraged to contact a Quality Coach to receive technical assistance with the application process.

For more information about applying for higher quality, refer to the [Technical Assistance Process](#)

Provider On-line Training

Providers can learn more about the Kentucky All STARS program by taking an on-line training offered through the University of Kentucky. This short training is free of charge and provides a high-level overview of the program. The training can be found here:

[Introduction to Kentucky All-STARS Standards](#)¹⁵.

¹⁵ <https://learn.hdi.uky.edu/course/introduction-to-kentucky-all-stars/>

3. Technical Assistance Process

Technical assistance is provided at no cost to all child care providers in Kentucky through the [Kentucky Partnership for Early Childhood Services](#)¹⁶ and Child Care Aware. Through the process of applying for an All STARS quality rating, providers have opportunities to gain valuable insight from expert Coaching staff. This section outlines the various ways that providers can interact with Coaches and the steps that Coaches can take to help providers move towards higher quality.

The following technical assistance services are available to providers:

- ★ Needs assessments
- ★ Regulatory requirements education and guidance
- ★ Professional development guidance and identification of PD opportunities
- ★ Training guidance and identification of training opportunities
- ★ General education and assistance for Kentucky All STARS
- ★ Environmental observations using the appropriate scales
- ★ Development of Quality Improvement Plans

Initial Coaching Visits

Providers who are automatically enrolled in Kentucky All STARS will receive an *All STARS Notice of Enrollment Letter* from DCC. This letter outlines next steps for providers who wish to further engage with Kentucky All STARS. In most cases, the Health & Safety Coach within the provider's region will make first contact with a new provider. In the initial visit for a new provider, the Health & Safety Coach will provide general information about Kentucky All STARS, complete a needs assessment, and will

¹⁶ <https://www.kentuckypartnership.org/>

offer suggestions for how the provider can take steps to ensure safe and reliable child care is provided through their program.

If a provider decides they would like to move to higher quality, the Health & Safety Coach will work with them until they meet all basic requirements for regulated child care and level 2 submissions. They will then refer the provider to a Quality Coach in their region. Providers already established at high quality may begin working directly with a Quality Coach. The Quality Coach works with a provider to meet the required standards for higher quality and aids in the preparation for an environmental observation visit and Standards Review.

Both the Health & Safety Coach and the Quality Coach may make referrals to a Professional Development or a Training Coach if specific needs in those areas are identified.

Needs Assessment

Targeted technical assistance (TA) is provided based on a Needs Assessment conducted in each facility. The Needs Assessment consists of an informal walk through of a facility and to determine what TA is needed in order to progress toward high quality All STARS participation.

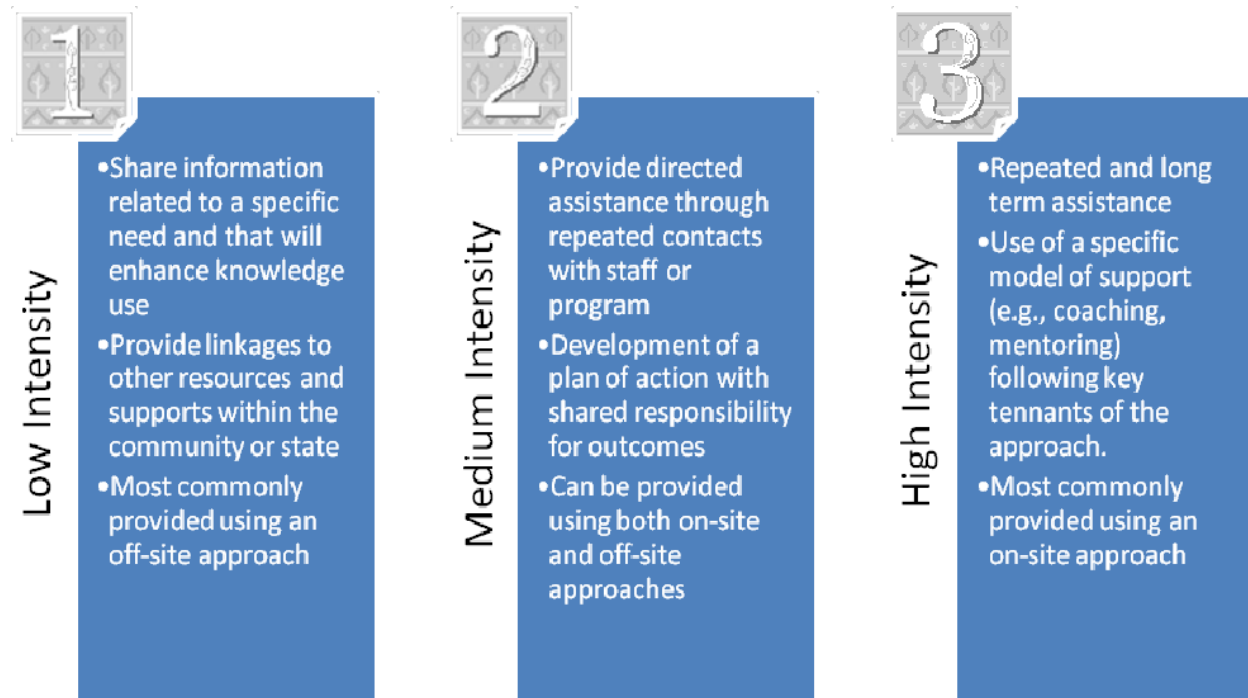
Letter of Commitment

If a provider consistently fails to meet deadlines or uphold their portions of a Technical Assistance Plan, the Coach may utilize a Letter of Commitment. This letter outlines specific expectations for the continuation of Technical Assistance. Failure to uphold the commitments outlined within the letter could result in the discontinuation of technical assistance services for that provider.

Technical Assistance Plan

The Coach and the provider will work together to draft a Technical Assistance Plan. This plan is a non-contractual agreement between the Coach and the provider that identifies specific goals and a timeline for achievement. Providers and Coaches can also schedule a date for follow-up to assess the implantation of the plan and decide if new goals should be set or changes should be made.

The level and intensity of TA may vary from low (brief encounters) to high (intense on-site support over time), with the intent to provide support to staff in effectively implementing a practice or set of practices. TA is aligned with education and/or training to support the transfer of knowledge and/or skills into the work environment. This means that further areas for education and training may be identified as part of the TA process.



Environmental Observation

Providers who wish to move to a Level 3 Rating or higher must participate in an environmental observation. Official observation visits are conducted by All STARS designated Raters and do not entail coaching or feedback sessions. To help a provider prepare for their official visit, providers may request a preliminary environmental observation conducted by a coach using the same scale/s on which the provider will be rated. This allows the provider to identify any problem areas prior to an official rating visit and allows the Quality Coach to offer targeted coaching to better assist the provider with continual quality improvement. This unofficial environmental observation does not count towards the All STARS rating process and will not result in a change in the provider's rating.

All STARS Application Assistance

As a provider works towards quality improvement, they should be encouraged to apply for a higher quality rating in Kentucky All STARS. Level 1 programs may apply for a higher rating as soon as they are granted a regular license. Level 2-4 programs may apply for a higher rating no sooner than three months from the date of their last quality rating and no more than twice in a 12 month period. ERS scores may not be applied to a quality rating if they were performed longer than 6 months prior to the application date.

Once a provider decides to move to higher quality, they can work with their Quality Coach to complete *the DCC-432 Standards of Quality Verification Checklist*. This form must be submitted through the KICCS Provider Portal along with supporting documentation. The submission of the *DCC-432* will trigger an ERS visit if needed.

Once the Raters have approved both the *DCC-432* and completed an environmental observation (if required), a Quality Initiative staff member will have final approval of the provider's quality rating. The completion of a quality rating will automatically initiate an

approval letter, a quality rating certificate, and a *DCC-430 All STARS Rating Summary Report*. The report gives a high level overview of the standards verification and environmental observation results. If the provider received an ERS visit than a Quality Initiative staff member would generate a summary report of the ERS Visit and email the report to the provider with their Quality Coach cc'd. Providers can request a more in depth ERS report from the Division of Child Care Central Office if they would like more detailed information on the specific subscales and comments from their environmental observation.

Coaches should expect to work with providers after a quality rating to celebrate success and identify areas for quality improvement. All questions regarding environmental observations and standards verifications should be routed through the Coach and not through the Rater.

For more detail on assisting providers with the application process, refer to the [Standards Verification Process](#).

Quality Tracking System (QTS)

Brief overview of QTS

Reporting License Violations and Concerns

We value the well-being of every child served and staff member employed by Kentucky's childcare facilities. Coaches should be familiar with the policies on mandated reporting concerns witnessed within a child care facility. Please refer to the section on [Imminent Risk](#) for guidance on this topic.

4. Standards Verification Process

The standards verification process allows the provider to compile a custom set of standards from the All STARS Standards of Quality to meet the requirements for their desired All STARS Quality Rating Level. This section will outline the steps for submitting, reviewing, and assigning points in the standards verification process.

Standards Verification Submission

Coaching to Success

The first step in the successful completion of standards verification is ensuring the provider understands the process. The Division of Child Care has created a *Standards of Quality Verification Checklist Guide* to help providers identify the requirements for evidence documentation of each standard. While Coaches are not expected to verify evidence documentation, they should work closely with providers to provide tips for successful applications and to ensure they understand the submission process.

Compiling Documentation

The provider can choose to initiate a new application for higher quality at any time as long as they hold a regular license or certification, have not had a STARS certificate issued in the past three (3) months, or twice (2) in a 12 month period. Prior to starting the application process, the provider should prepare their evidence documentation. Records that can be found in ECE-TRIS do not require submission. Some documents may provide evidence for multiple standards. In this case, the document should only be submitted once. Documents should be scanned into individual files and named using the license number and standard indicator/s for easier reference and uploading (ie. L123456 B1R B4 B3).

Submitting Documentation

The *DCC-432 Standards of Quality Verification Checklist* is submitted through the KICCS Provider Portal. Please refer to the various [KICCS Guides](#) for best practices regarding submission. Once the provider submits the application, DCC Central office will assign a Rater to work the Standards Checklist. If the Standards Checklist is approved for a Level 3 or higher, an ERS visit request will be automatically generated for DCC to assign to a Rater.

Special Circumstances

DCC requires 90 days to accept and process provider-requested evaluations and certification renewals. Programs that are only open a portion of the year, such as migrant, after-school, and summer programs or programs which are closed for the summer require special consideration during the All STARS process.

Programs closed for the summer may submit their application anytime during their renewal year and should allow enough time for the rating process to be completed prior to their expiration to avoid a lapse in rating. If an environmental observation is required for a rating, providers should ensure an application is submitted at least 90 days in advance of their seasonal closing. If an application is submitted less than 90 calendar days prior to a certificate expiration, the Division of Child Care (DCC) cannot guarantee that the application and rating visit will be processed prior to expiration. These programs will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Standards Verification Review

Assigning Verification Reviews

Upon submission of a *DCC-432*, a Quality Initiatives staff member will assign the standards verification to a Rater. Raters are assigned based on availability and region. A Rater will not be assigned a standards verification for a region in which they perform environmental observation visits. Once the standards verification has been assigned, it will be visible in the appropriate evaluation workbasket in the KICCS Worker Portal. The Rater will have 30 Calendar days to process the *DCC-432*. If a Rater needs to re-assign a Standards Verification Checklist at any time, they will need to contact the Quality Initiatives (QI) Supervisor to transfer responsibility.

Acceptable Supporting Documents

Supporting documentation for standards should demonstrate that the **intent of the standard is being met**. Acceptable documents listed in the *Standards Verification Checklist Guide* are merely suggested examples. Other documents may be accepted unless specifically noted in the standard. Raters should be looking for evidence of ongoing and sustainable practices or the ability to implement practice if required.

- ★ Evidence documentation must provide dates if timelines are required by the standard.
- ★ Providers may use similar documents for multiple centers if demonstrating shared policy and practice. However, site-specific evidence must be provided for event-based and staff-specific standards such as family engagement activities, and staff training records.
- ★ All documentation should be legible and identifiable as belonging to a specific standard. Providers are encouraged to write the applicable standards on the documents before scanning AND to name the file using their license number and the applicable standards. (ie L123456 B1R B4)

Reviewing the Standards Verification Checklist

The assigned Rater will review the DCC-432 within the KICCS Worker Portal. Standards for review will be highlighted and will have some element of evidence documentation attached to each standard. Be sure to read the comments section of each domain to see if alternative pathways to high quality have been identified or if multiple standards are documented using a single document.

The Rater will have the option to accept, return, or approve each standard. Returned Standards marked incomplete will be returned to the provider for review and the opportunity to comment. The Rater will then email the provider with the CCA coach cc'd informing them of the returned Standards sheet and explain the reasoning for the return. The coach will contact the site administrator via phone or email to notify them of the necessary steps. Providers will have 14 calendar days to respond to a request for additional information before the level is reduced to a level 1.

If the Rater identifies additional standards for which the provider may qualify, they can note this in the comments field before returning to the provider.

Points for each domain are automatically calculated based upon the approved standards within the form. Raters should pay close attention to the final points before submitting the verification.

Once the Rater approves the DCC-432, it will be forwarded to a Quality Initiatives staff member for final approval. If an ERS visit is required to obtain a Level 3-5 rating, an ERS visit request will automatically be generated in KICCS.

If extenuating circumstances (Provider portal access issues, DRCC reported emergencies) are identified the provider may have an additional 14 days to submit the standards with the requested changes.

If the provider re-submits the DCC 432 with no changes the Rater should contact the provider's Coach and inform them of the situation.

5. Rating Process

In order to qualify for Levels 3-5 in Kentucky All STARS, providers must participate in an environmental observation by a Cabinet designated Rater. This section outlines the steps for scheduling and conducting a rating visit as well as how we communicate observation scores with providers and their Coaches.

Scheduling a Rating Window

Assigning Verification Reviews

Upon DCC approval of the *DCC-432*, a request for an environmental observation will be automatically generated if one is necessary. Utilizing the ERS Visit Needed Workbasket the Lead Rater for each STARS Region will assign the observation to appropriate staff members. Once the observation has been assigned, it will be visible in the appropriate workbasket in the KICCS Worker Portal. If a Rater needs to re-assign an observation at any time, they will need to contact the QI Supervisor to transfer responsibility of the visit.

The Lead Rater

The purpose of the lead Rater is to establish a single rater on a monthly basis who will have the following responsibilities:

- Contacting the provider to establish the 2 week window
- Communicating with Rater colleagues within the region to establish the rating team
- Conducting the on-site walk through and closing of the rating visit
- Assuring all rating documents have been uploaded to KICCS within the required timeframes-this includes actually finalizing the upload of ERS Scores in KICCS

Central Office will need to be provided a schedule by each region for the Lead Rater every 6 months.

Contacting the Provider

Once the observation has been assigned to a Rater, a KICCS workbasket will prompt them to schedule a rating window. The assigned Rater will contact the provider to determine a two-week rating window for the observation. The rating visit must be completed and scored within 60 days of the *DCC-432* submission. Raters should try to schedule visits no fewer than 14 days prior to the provider's certificate expiration date if possible. Rater's must contact the provider within 14 days from the receipt of the provider's application in accordance with regulations.

When scheduling a rating visit window, the Rater should gather any critical information for the day of the visit including the age groups served and the number of classrooms to be rated. Take special note of times for school-age programs.

Provider Phone Log

All correspondence between a provider and a Rater should be recorded in the *Provider Phone Log* and filed for future reference.

Verification Letter

Once the rating window is scheduled, Raters will enter the dates into KICCS, which automatically generate a *Rating Visit Confirmation Letter* to be mailed to the provider. The letter outlines for the provider how to prepare for and what to expect during the rating visit.

Raters will need to email the *Rating Visit Confirmation Letter* to the RCCA over the region the rating visit will take place. Raters can also cc the provider's Quality Coach.

Failure to Contact

If the Rater has failed to contact the provider to schedule a rating visit window after three attempts, the Rater should archive the observation process. At this point, the

provider will fail to qualify for a Level 3-5 rating and the ERS scores will reflect as N/A on the *DCC-430 All STARS Rating Summary Report*. System glitch happening with this currently. Currently there's a system fix update for April 2019 that's supposed to address this.

Rating Visit Best Practice

Before the visit

The Rater will need to synch up tablets the day or night before to load the facility information for the rating visit or visits.

Arriving On-Site

On the day of the ERS visit, Raters are required to arrive at the site(s) scheduled for the rating visit no later than 9:00 a.m. Rater(s) should arrive no earlier than 6 a.m. in accordance with Cabinet personnel policy (OHRM Personnel Procedures Handbook - 5.19 Work and Flex Schedule). For SACERS visits, Raters should arrive 15-30 minutes prior to the arrival of school-age children. Approximate arrival information should be gathered when arranging the two-week window.

If extensive travel or unforeseen circumstances prevent adherence to this arrival timeframe, please discuss these situations with your supervisor in advance of the observation date.

In the event that a provider location seems closed or no one is home and there is no posting or notification as such, allow a forty-five (45) minute waiting period. If at the end of that time the provider is still unavailable, conclude the visit and send the provider a *Rating Visit Cancellation* letter.

Before the observation begins, the Rater will introduce themselves to the staff and

briefly explain the procedure. Raters will need to ask the provider for some information to prepare for the random classroom selection:

- ★ Birth dates of the oldest and youngest children in each group
- ★ Number of children enrolled in the group
- ★ Are children with identified disabilities in the group?

Tips for a Successful Visit

During the observation, the Rater(s) will not interact with the children or the teachers/provider (unless necessary), and will take care not to disrupt the program's daily activities. The observation should include a mealtime and at least the beginning of nap/rest time.

Some portion of the ERS visit may need to be completed via staff interview to ask questions about indicators that were not observed. The Rater should not give feedback of the observations and should continue to maintain objectivity at all times.

When all ERS questions have been asked and validation of the program's compliance with STARS Standards requirements is completed, the Rater will inform the provider of the next steps in the rating process including the projected receipt of the Rating Summary Report. Raters can also feel free to encourage providers to use technical assistance. This concludes the rating visit.

Defining Classrooms

Classrooms must be first defined and then grouped according to age group served so that a random selection of each group may occur.

922 KAR 2:120, Section 2(2)(a) States that for Type I centers, a classroom is defined as having two major characteristics:

- 1) Be separately maintained in a defined area unique to the group; and
- 2) Have specific staff assigned to, and responsible for, the group.

Bookcases, partial walls and other dividers may be adequate separators of space, but both requirements must be met in order to be considered a classroom.

In the instance of tape being used as a separator or lack of visible boundaries, consider again if both requirements are being met at that specific point in time. Does the group have a dedicated space? Does the group have assigned staff responsible for only that group? Also, consider the age of the group. It is unrealistic to expect infants and/or toddlers to maintain a boundary of space marked off in tape on a floor. However, this may be suitable for school-age children. If both conditions are met, you may consider the area a classroom and therefore eligible for ERS observation.

Situational Examples:

- ★ A center has two classrooms within the same designated space. Classroom A and classroom B have their own defined unique area separated by a bookcase. Classroom A serves the infant age group and is under the direct supervision of teacher A. Classroom B serves the toddler age group and is under the direct supervision of teacher B. Both classrooms must maintain their own separate ratios as defined by age group.
- ★ A center has two classrooms serving infants within the same unique designated space. Both Baby Steps Classroom #1 and Crawlers Classroom #2 serve infants within their own defined unique area separated by a partition or physical barrier. Classroom #1 serves the infant age group and is under the direct supervision of teacher A. Classroom #2 also serves the infant age group and is under the direct

supervision of teacher B. Both classrooms must maintain their own separate ratios as defined by age group.

Classroom Ratios

The age of the youngest child in the group determines both the staff-to-child ratio and the maximum group size*.

Age of Children	Ratio	Maximum Group Size
Infant	1 staff for 5 children	10
Toddler	1 staff for 6 children	12
2 to 3 years	1 staff for 10 children	20
3 to 4 years	1 staff for 12 children	24
4 to 5 years	1 staff for 14 children	28
5 to 7 years	1 staff for 15 children	30
7 and older	1 staff for 25 children (for before and after school)	30
	1 staff for 20 children (full day of care)	30

*Maximum Group Size shall be applicable only to Type I centers

Definition of Age Groups

Once physical classrooms are defined, the age of the majority of children in the classroom at that time determines the overall age group of the classroom.

In the event there is a 50/50 split between age groups in a classroom, overall classroom age (and subsequently ERS scale) should be determined based on the children present at that time. If there is still a 50/50 split, the classroom age and ERS scale should be defined based on the youngest group.

All STARS determines age groups based on the definitions utilized by the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) as follows:

- ★ Infant - an age group of children who are less than twelve (12) months of age.
- ★ Toddler - an age group of children who are between the age of twelve (12) month and thirty-six (36) months.
- ★ Preschool – an age group of children who are older than a toddler and younger than school-age. A child who has reached the third birthday up to, but not including the sixth birthday.
- ★ School-age - an age group of children who meet the requirements of KRS 158.030 or who attend kindergarten, elementary, or secondary education.

Selection of Classrooms and ERS Scales

Adherence to 922 KAR2:270, section 3(5), mandates that a completed environment rating assessment meet the terms of two (2) regulatory components:

- (a) represent one-third (1/3) of the total number of classrooms **and**
- (b) include at least one (1) classroom for each age group which the child care center serves.

All environmental assessments completed during a rating visit must meet the two (2) compliance requirements mentioned above.

Once overall classroom ages have been identified, Raters are to randomly select classrooms to be assessed. This is often completed by drawing classrooms from a hat or another method of blind selection.

All centers must have at least 1/3 of the classrooms in the entire center assessed. If the center has multiple classrooms of different age groups, then the Rater must ensure that at least one classroom of each group is assessed, (this may put the percentage over 1/3). In the event that the Rater must assess more than one classroom from each age group to meet the 1/3 requirement, the additional classroom selection(s) should be based on random selection from the largest or "main" age group being served.

Situational Examples:

- ★ A center has two infant rooms, six toddler rooms, four preschool rooms, and two school-age rooms for a total of fourteen classrooms. One-third (1/3) of the classrooms equal four; therefore, the Rater would need to conduct an ERS assessment on one infant room, one toddler room, one preschool room, and 1 school-age room.
- ★ A center has one infant room, one toddler room, two preschool rooms, and one school-age room for a total of five classrooms. One-third (1/3) of the classrooms equal one; however, in order to meet the regulatory requirement of observing one classroom for each age group, the Rater would need to conduct an ERS assessment on: one infant room, one toddler room, one preschool room, and one school-age room.

If the program is approved by the Division of Regulated Child Care (DRCC) to provide services for the age group represented and there is at least one (1) child in attendance in the classroom at the time of the rating visit the Rater is required to perform an observation on that age group. This applies to any classroom. If children are blended with other classrooms, scale selection of that classroom is determined based on age majority as previously defined. ERS interaction must be based, at minimum, on the time period children are in attendance and up to 2-3 hours, depending on the specific ERS requirements.

Responses to scale items not observed due to children departing early should be based on staff interview. Documented responses should be detailed with specific examples. In addition, technical assistance will recommend that room arrangements be setup for observation prior to the arrival of school-age children.

Situational Example:

A center has a school-age program with an enrollment of 1-4 students per day in a school age classroom. The operational hours are 3:30 pm – 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday. On the day of the program’s scheduled rating visit, only 2 students are in attendance from 3:30 to 4:15. Regardless of the operational hours and/or attendance, the program serves the school age group; therefore, the Rater(s) would need to complete a SACERS for regulatory compliance. In this instance, the Rater would need to observe the interactions during the entire 45 minutes the students are in attendance. Review of the materials may occur before or after this window, and staff interviews will be completed following the students’ departure.

Exemption to the selection of classrooms

An exception to this selection process may be allowed when information is gathered during the preparatory environment rating assessment (walk-through) that a classroom is designated as a therapy room for a select group of individuals. This classroom shall be excluded from the random selection of classrooms assessed if the following policies and procedures are documented and verified:

- ★ Facility and/or staff are licensed or certified by an outside entity to provide such services. Documentation for children with disabilities may be presented in the form of an eligibility letter, physician statement or award notice associated with an entity such as:
 - **First Steps** (Eligibility determination letter issued by First Steps (services provided for children birth to 3))

- **Social Security Administration** Retirement, Survivors and Disability Insurance Notice of Award
- **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)** – Signed physician letter of documented disability and/or special need.
- ★ Policy signed by parents/guardians informing them of their child(ren)'s schedule for being removed from his/her assigned classroom and added to the therapy room ratio and group size.
- ★ Written permission from parents/guardians for specific services to be rendered in the therapy room.
- ★ Individualized Education Program (IEP) specifying these services on file for the individuals in this classroom.
- ★ Long-term plan on file for inclusion into an age group and classroom defined by the Division of Regulated Child Care.

Situational example:

A center has seven classrooms. There are two infant rooms, one toddler room, two preschool rooms, one school-age room and one therapy room (meeting all requirements above) for a total of seven classrooms. Based on the above policy, the Rater would not include the therapy classroom in the random selection of classrooms to be assessed. Therefore, only six classrooms would be included in the random selection of classrooms. One-third (1/3) of the classrooms equals two; therefore, the Rater would need to conduct an ERS assessment on at least one infant room, one toddler room, one preschool room and one school-age room.

Required Hours of Observation

Scale Used	Suggested Observation Hours
ITERS-R	Minimum of 3 hours

ECERS-3	Minimum of 3 hours
FCCERS-R	Minimum of 3 hours
SACERS-U	Minimum of 3 hours*
*3 hour timeframe only applicable for facilities that are open for 3 hours or more.	

Exit Letter

Upon completion of the rating visit, the Rater should inform the provider that they have completed the assessment before departing. No scoring information or feedback should be given at the time.

The Rater should leave the provider with the *Rating Visit Exit Letter*. This letter explains the next steps for the provider and when they can expect follow-up.

Scoring a Rating Visit

Raters will score the observation after the rating visit is complete and according to the ERS requirements for each indicator. The Rater has ten (10) working days from the date of the observation to submit the final rating.

Raters should avoid the use of subjective language in rating comments. All comments made are subject to public records requests.

Communication with Quality Coach

Awaiting policy from CCA/DCC. Currently working on getting system access to CCA staff, depending on access that can be granted will change communication steps required.

Currently after ERS Reports are generated through Branagh Software Quality Initiatives Staff email the report to the provider with the CCA staff cc'd to the email.

ERS Summary Report

Once final scales are submitted, DCC Central Office will have final approval of the observation and the provider's subsequent quality rating. The approval of a quality rating will automatically initiate an approval letter and a *DCC-430 All STARS Rating Summary Report*. The report gives a high level overview of the standards verification and environmental observation results. If the provider received an ERS visit than a Quality Initiative staff member would generate a summary report of the ERS Visit and email the report to the provider with their Quality Coach cc'd. Providers can request a more in depth ERS report from the Division of Child Care Central Office if they would like more detailed information on the specific subscales and comments from their environmental observation.

Rater Reliability

All staff who conduct official or unofficial rating visits or who supervise and train staff on the rating scales must complete reliability training.

The Technical Assistance Specialists and the Quality Content Coordinator act as the reliability trainers or "anchors" for the Division of Child Care. The anchors train together yearly for purposes of inter-agency reliability. The anchors then ensure inter-rater reliability within their own agencies. For the purposes of the ECERS-3, anchors also become reliable with representatives from KDE and Head Start to ensure a unified approach to the shared rating scale.

QEI Anchors maintain Inter-Rater

- ★ During their first year of employment, STARS Raters will complete Inter Rater Reliability (IRR) on all four scales each quarter, maintaining an average of 85% or higher over three ERS Scores.
- ★ If reliability is maintained at 90% for an entire year, the STARS Rater will then be eligible for quarterly IRR on one scale each quarter resulting in all four scales

annually. If IRR scores fall below the 90% average, the Rater will go back into training and have IRR checked each quarter on the identified scale until 90% reliability is reached.

- ★ Reliability scores are calculated by the consensus of +1 or -1. Example of +1 or -1: Rater scores “6” and Anchor scores “7”.
- ★ Per the STARS Rater Flow chart distributed by Central Office, the QEI Anchor is the contract for any ERS questions or clarifications.
- ★ A quarterly ERS review will be held in each region by the QEI Anchor.
- ★ A STARS Rater training will be held annually by Central Office.

Establishing Inter Rater Reliability

The process for establishing reliability will be the same for all ERS- ITERS-R, ECERS-3, SACERS-U, and FCCERS-R:

- ★ The QEI Anchor will schedule three individual site visits for the same scale to be done. A STARS Rater will only focus on one scale at a time until reliability is achieved on that scale, beginning with the STARS Rater’s area of strength.
- ★ The three scores will be averaged and must reach 85% average or above in order for the STARS Rater to begin doing that scale independently on official STARS Ratings. If the STARS rater does not reach an 85% average, the QEI Anchor will schedule an additional three site visits and the new site visits will be averaged.
- ★ If the STARS rater’s average does not reach 85%, the STARS Rater’s training plan will be re-evaluated by Central Office to determine the next course of action.

Maintaining Inter Rater Reliability

The STARS Rater must maintain an 85% average or higher on all ERS. The following guidelines are followed to maintain reliability.

- ★ If a 90% average is achieved, the STARS Rater will be required to conduct one scale per quarter to maintain IRR.
- ★ The STARS Rater will schedule their IRR with their QEI Anchor as early as possible to eliminate last minute issues.
- ★ If an 85% average is achieved, the STARS Rater will follow the IRR plan for establishing IRR, however it will be the STAR Rater's responsibility for scheduling IRR visits with their QEI Anchor.
- ★ When the site visit is confirmed, it will be the responsibility of the STARS Rater to share visit details with the QEI Anchor that will include but is not limited to: program name, program locations/address, date visit is scheduled, and time visit is scheduled.
- ★ If a cancellation occurs, it will be the responsibility of the party contacted to share that information as soon as possible.
- ★ If a site visit is available to conduct a FCCERS-R for reliability purposes, priority will always be given to that visit so that FCCERS-R reliability can be maintained each year.

6. Awards and Incentives

This section outlines the specific awards and incentives available to providers through Kentucky All STARS. Monetary awards are only available to providers participating at a Level 2 or higher and require that providers maintain all Standards of Quality in alignment with 922 KAR 2:270.

All STARS Quality Rating Certificate

Upon approval of a provider's quality rating, an *All STARS Quality Rating Certificate* will be made available to the provider in the KICCS Provider Portal. Certificates are issued with an expiration date of the provider's renewal month in the year most approximating three years from the date of issue. This means that a certificate may be issued for less or greater than 3 years depending on when the quality rating is approved. A certificate will never be issued for a time period shorter than 2 years and 6 months or greater than 3 years and 6 months.

The Quality Rating Certificate includes the following information:

- ★ Site-specific name of the provider
- ★ License/certificate number
- ★ Date of issue
- ★ Date of expiration (aligned with annual license date closest to three years from issuance of certificate)
- ★ All STARS Quality Rating

Providers should be encouraged to print and display their certificate in a prominent location within their facility. Quality Initiatives can print and mail full color certificates upon request.

Monetary Awards

There are three types of monetary awards available to All STARS rated Type I licensed child-care centers, All STARS rated Type II licensed child-care centers, and All STARS rated certified family child-care homes. To the extent funds are available, the Initial Achievement Award, Annual Quality Award and Subsidy Enrollment Award are issued to All STARS rated providers. Providers must maintain All STARS standards of quality and all regulatory requirements to qualify for monetary incentives.

Eligibility for All STARS award payments will be calculated and submitted for payment within 30 days of approval of the qualifying application or annual quality review.

Initial Achievement Award

Once a provider is assigned an All STARS Quality Rating at a Level 2 or higher, an Initial Achievement Award will be processed for the first time they meet each new level. A provider can only earn an Initial Achievement Award once for each level. Awards are processed and remittance statements are issued by DCC within 30 days of the initial quality rating achievement.

Initial Achievement Award			
Licensed Type I Centers		Licensed Type II & Certified Family Child-Care Homes	
All STARS Level	Amount	All STARS Level	Amount
2	\$500	2	\$250
3	\$1,500	3	\$750
4	\$3,000	4	\$1,500
5	\$5,000	5	\$2,500

Annual Quality Award

Upon verification of standards from the Annual Quality Review process, a provider that maintains their current level will be eligible for an Annual Achievement Award. Awards will be processed within 30 days of verification of the quality rating.

Annual Quality Award			
Licensed Type I Centers		Licensed Type II & Certified Family Child-Care Homes	
All STARS Level	Amount	All STARS Level	Amount
2	\$300	2	\$150
3	\$900	3	\$450
4	\$1,800	4	\$900
5	\$3,000	5	\$1,500

Subsidy Enrollment Award

This award is granted to All STARS Levels 3-5 rated programs that serve children enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Awards are processed by DCC within 30 days of the application approval or the annual verification of the provider's quality rating. Subsidy enrollment awards will only be paid once within a 12 months period. This award is calculated using the following formula:

Kentucky All STARS Level			
Subsidy Children Over Age of 3 Served			
average # of children	X	award amount	=
Subsidy Children Under Age of 3 Served			
average # of children	X	award amount	=
Subtotal			
multiplied by # of Months in Operation		X	
Total Amount Due			

Subsidy Enrollment Award					
Licensed Type I Centers			Licensed Type II & Certified Family Child-Care Homes		
All STARS Level	Amount Per Subsidy Child Per Month		All STARS Level	Amount Per Subsidy Child Per Month	
	Children Under 3 Years	Children Over 3 Years		Children Under 3 Years	Children Over 3 Years
3	\$25	\$23	3	\$20	\$18
4	\$35	\$33	4	\$30	\$28
5	\$45	\$43	5	\$40	\$38

Award Remittance Letter

Once the Quality Initiatives staff member approves a provider payment, KICSS will automatically generate an *Award Remittance Notice*. This notice outline all payments for the current remittance and the formulas used to calculate each award.

7. Annual Quality Review and Renewal Process

In order to maintain their current Quality Rating, providers must submit a *DCC-434 Annual Quality Review* during their license renewal month every interim year of their certification. In the year their certificate is set to expire, providers will submit a *DCC-432 Standards of Quality Verification Checklist* in order to renew their quality rating. Both processes are completed through the KICCS Provider Portal.

Annual Quality Review Process

Annual Quality Review (AQR) Submission

KICCS will generate an *Annual Quality Review Notice* 100 days in advance of the submission deadline for an AQR. To complete the AQR, providers complete a *DCC-434 Kentucky All STARS Annual Quality Review* within the KICCS Provider Portal.

If the provider has completed a *DCC-432-Standards of Quality Verification Checklist* within KICCS for their current quality rating, the AQR will be pre-populated with the standards they submitted for their rating. If the provider does not have a current *DCC-432* on file, then the AQR workbook will display all of the All STARS quality standards and the provider will need to complete enough narratives to match the required points for their current quality rating.

The AQR requests a written narrative detailing how providers are maintaining the standards of quality required for their current quality rating. It also asks providers to examine their current quality improvement plan or speak to how they are maintaining continuous quality improvement. The narratives, in combination with training records in ECE-TRIS, should provide a clear picture of the provider's efforts to maintain their All STARS quality rating. Providers should be encouraged to use the *Guidelines for Annual Quality Review* document to aid in the completion of their AQR.

No supporting documentation is required for submission of the *DCC-434*.

Annual Quality Review Assessment

Once the AQR is submitted by the provider, a Quality Initiatives staff member will assign it to a Rater for review and approval in KICCS. The Rater examines the form for narratives that provide a clear explanation of how the standards are being maintained.

The Rater should also examine training records in ECE-TRIS to verify that providers are seeking current training opportunities for their staff. It is important to note that some requirements are only due every three years in All STARS. If a provider appears to be behind on a training schedule, they can still be approved for an AQR as long as a process is identified for remaining current in time for recertification.

If further explanation is needed on an AQR, the Rater should return the standards to the provider through KICCS with comments on additional details needed. If a form is returned to the provider, the Rater should notify them by email or phone that further steps are needed to complete the process.

Finally, the Rater must ensure that the provider completed enough standards to meet the points required for their current quality rating. Raters can use the *Guidelines for Annual Quality Review* document for assistance in reviewing AQRs.

If a Rater need to transfer the approval task to another rater for any reason, the Quality Initiatives Supervisor can assist with that task.

The Rater has 30 calendar days from the date assigned to them to either accept or return the AQR.

Returned Annual Quality Reviews

If the Rater determines the AQR cannot be approved in it's current form due to not meeting the AQR requirements per regulations then the AQR will be returned to the provider. The Rater will mark all submitted standards incomplete that don't meet

regulation requirements and then return to the provider for review and the opportunity to comment. The Rater will then email the provider with the CCA coach cc'd informing them of the returned AQR and explain the reasoning for the return. The coach will contact the site administrator via phone or email to notify them of the necessary steps. Providers will have 14 calendar days to respond to a request for additional information before the level is reduced to a level 1.

Once the AQR is resubmitted by the provider the rater will then determine whether to approve or deny the AQR. Please see the next two sections in regards to approvals and denials.

Annual Quality Review Denial

An AQR would be denied if the Rater determines that the submitted information doesn't verify that the provider is maintaining their current All STARS level, this will trigger a [Cabinet Requested Re-evaluation](#). Please refer to that section for next steps.

Annual Quality Review Approval


Once the form is approved by a Rater, KICCS will automatically generate an *Annual Quality Review Approval* letter to be mailed to the provider. This will also trigger annual incentive payments to be processed by Quality Initiatives staff.

All STARS Certificate Renewal

Certificate Renewal Notice

The cabinet will issue a *Certificate Renewal Notice* letter to the provider at least 90 calendar days prior to the expiration of their STARS Certificate. Level 1 certificates do not expire. Providers at Levels 2-5 will be notified of a Cabinet Requested Re-evaluation

in the KICCS Provider Portal where they will be directed to complete a [DCC-432 Standards of Quality Verification Checklist](#).

 *Coaching Tip:*

When working with providers who are renewing their certification, it is important to remind them that the cabinet has 60 days to process all paperwork and scoring. Providers should be encouraged to submit their renewal within 30 days of notification. This will allow ample time for processing and should help to avoid a lapse in certification and payments.

Certificate Renewal Assessment and Approval

The process for assessment and renewal of an All STARS Certification is identical to the initial application process for Levels 2-5. Please refer to [Standards Verification Process](#) for more details.

8. Reevaluation

There are several triggers that could lead to the reevaluation of a Kentucky All STARS provider. This section outlines the process for requesting a reevaluation and potential outcomes related to reevaluation.

Cabinet Requested Reevaluation

DCC may require the re-evaluation of a provider's All STARS level under the following circumstances:

- ★ Provider's location of child care services change
 - When DCC receives the application, a Rater will be notified to conduct the environment rating within 90 calendar days of receipt of the assignment. This timeframe includes negotiating the 2 week rating visit window.
- ★ Provider does not detail sustained adherence to the All STARS Standards of Quality upon submission of the *DCC-434 Annual Quality Review*.
- ★ Cabinet receives a report or finding indicating a reduction in the quality of care and services such as:
 - Failure to make payments arrangements for a civil penalty within 60 calendar days
 - Failure to comply with CCAP regulation [922 KAR 2:160](#)¹⁷
 - Two or more Type A level civil penalties within a 12 month period

The cabinet shall notify the provider within 30 days of the need to undergo reevaluation by issuing a *Reevaluation Notice* letter.

The provider has 30 days from notification to submit a *DCC-432 Standards of Quality Verification Checklist* and all supporting documentation through the KICCS Provide Portal. Providers wishing to maintain a Level 3 rating or higher will also require a new

¹⁷ <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/922/002/160.htm>

environmental assessment. The assessment and approval of this process is identical to the [Standards Verification Process](#) with the exception of the Environmental Rating timeframe.


Environmental Rating Timeframe for DCC Requested Reevaluation

Upon the approval of the Standards Checklist, the Rater will be notified to conduct the environment rating within 90 calendar days of the approval date of the Standards Checklist. This timeframe includes negotiating the 2 week rating visit window.

Provider Requested Reevaluation

Providers seeking a higher quality rating may request a reevaluation at any point during their certification period. Reevaluations can take place no sooner than 3 months from the date of the last rating and no more than twice in a 12 month period.

For reevaluation, providers request a reevaluation within the KICCS Provider Portal. They will be prompted to submit a *DCC-432 Standards of Quality Verification Checklist* and all supporting documentation. Providers wishing to apply for a Level 3 rating or higher will also require a new environmental assessment.

 *Coaching Tip:*

When working with providers who are requesting reevaluation, be sure they understand the timeframes for annual quality reviews and certificate renewals. Offer an environmental observation visit if they have not met the classroom scores required of a higher rating. A Level 5 rating is difficult to achieve for most child care centers and may take longer than the provider anticipates to prepare for.

The assessment and approval of this process is identical to the [Standards Verification Process](#) with the exception of the Environmental Rating timeframe.

Environmental Rating Timeframe for Provider Requested Reevaluation

Upon the approval of the Standards Checklist the Rater will be notified to conduct the environment rating within 90 calendar days of the approval date of the Standards Checklist. This timeframe includes negotiating the 2 week rating visit window.


Reduction of STARS Level

If a provider fails to submit the *DCC-434 Annual Quality Review*, they will be automatically reduced to a Level 1.

If a quality rating is reduced, the cabinet will notify the provider by issuing a *Quality Rating Reduction Notice*. This notice is automatically generated by KICCS if a lower rating is approved.

The provider will have ten days to respond before any negative actions are applied by the cabinet. After ten days, the quality rating is automatically adjusted in KICCS and the new All STARS quality rating will be reflected on the [Benefind Child Care Provider Search](#)¹⁸. Monetary incentives will also reflect the new rating.

Reevaluations can take place no sooner than 3 months from the date of the last rating and no more than twice in a 12 month period. Providers may also choose to appeal the decision as outlined in [Appeals](#).

 **Coaching Tip:**

Providers may be disappointed to hear that they have been reduced in quality ratings. It is important for the entire All STARS team to work together to identify opportunities for engagement and coaching with the provider to return them to their desired quality rating. While a provider always has the opportunity to

¹⁸ <https://benefind.ky.gov/kccps>

appeal, the appeal process can often take a considerable amount of time and effort for all parties involved. Quality coaching and good customer service could help a provider return to their desired rating in as little as 3 months.

Revocation of STARS Certificate

The following circumstances will result in the revocation of a provider's All STARS certificate:

- ★ Provider is subject to closure pursuant to [KRS 13B.125](#)¹⁹ and [199.896\(4\)](#)²⁰.
- ★ Provider is subject to denial of relicensure in accordance with [922 KAR 1:090](#)²¹ or recertification in accordance with [922 KAR 2:100](#)²².
- ★ Provider is pending suspension or revocation action

The cabinet will notify the provider of revocation by issuing a *Notice of Certificate Revocation Letter*. The provider will have ten days to respond before any negative actions are applied by the cabinet. After ten days, monetary incentives will cease and the quality rating certificate will be revoked from KICCS. If a provider's license has been suspended or revoked, the provider will be removed from the [Benefind Child Care Provider Search](#)²³ by the Division of Regulated Child Care.

If the provider's license or certificate is reinstated or the issue that triggered the revocation is resolved, the provider will be automatically re-enrolled in Kentucky All STARS at a Level 1. Providers may then submit a *DCC-432 Standards of Quality Verification Checklist* to apply for a higher rating.

¹⁹ <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/Statutes/statute.aspx?id=797>

²⁰ <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/Statutes/statute.aspx?id=44071>

²¹ <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/kar/922/002/090.htm>

²² <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/kar/922/002/100.htm>

²³ <https://benefind.ky.gov/kccps>

Appeals

In accordance with [922 KAR 2:260²⁴](#), a provider may request an appeal of any negative action. Appeals must be submitted within 30 days of the notice of the negative action.

To request an appeal, the provider mails a *DCC-88 Child Care Service Appeal Request* to the Quality Assurance Section. Once notification of an appeal is received, the staff member should begin the Appeal Process in the KICCS Worker Portal. Instructions for this process can be found in the KICCS Design Document.

If the adverse action taken by DCC is overturned, a Quality Initiatives staff member will need to enter the correct All STARS level in KICCS and verify the effective date (original issue date) and end date (original end date) of the certificate. Once the quality rating has been re-instated, a new approval letter will be issued and the Quality Rating Certificate will once again be available on the KICCS Provider Portal.

Service Complaint Process

If the matter is not subject to an administrative review, the cabinet shall inform the individual in writing that the:

1. Matter is not appealable; and
2. Resolution of the matter may be pursued through the service complaint process described in [922 KAR 2:260²⁵](#) Section 4.

When the cabinet receives a Service Complaint, there will be dialogue with the Rater and Coach involved in preparation of the facility. After the discussion, the Division of Child Care will provide a written response to the complainant within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt of a written complaint not subject to an administrative hearing. Response will include language explaining that all Raters are trained and reliable in administering

²⁴ <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/922/002/260.htm>

²⁵ <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/922/002/260.htm>

the environmental rating scales and that observation is based on a snapshot in time. Regulatory guidance will also be provided for those wishing to request a reevaluation. Quality Initiatives staff will encourage providers to take advantage of free technical assistance prior to any future rating visits.

If the provider asks for a different Rater to complete any future ratings, record of the complaint will be documented in the History Notes section of KICCS. From that point, it is each Rater's responsibility to check the History Notes in the future to determine if he/she should not take part in a particular rating visit. Please know routinely an alternate Rater will not be sent to the facility for future ratings unless the complainant specifically makes that request.

9. Imminent Risk

The wellbeing of children and staff within the child care environment is critical to all aspects of Kentucky All STARS. This section outlines the expectations of All STARS staff when confronted with imminent risk in child care facilities.

Reporting

All cabinet staff and agents of the cabinet are Mandated Reporters according to [KRS 620.030](#)²⁶ Duty to report dependency, neglect or abuse.

The Department for Community Based Services (DCBS), Division of Protection and Permanency has primary responsibility for receiving and investigating reports of alleged child abuse and neglect and for providing services to children and their families where abuse and neglect are found.

The Division of Regulated Child Care (DRCC) is responsible for licensing and investigating complaints against licensed child care facilities, certified family child care homes, residential child caring facilities, and child placing agencies. Violations indicate non-compliance with regulations, but do not necessarily rise to the level of abuse or neglect.

Everyone is a mandated reporter for suspected child abuse or neglect.

KRS 620.030 states “Any person who knows or has reasonable cause to believe that a child is dependent, neglected, or abused shall immediately cause an oral or written report to be made...”

If you make a report to DCBS alleging abuse/neglect, please notify DRCC as well. The allegations may not meet acceptance criteria for DCBS to investigate, but the concerns may result in citations from DRCC. However, if you report something to DRCC it does

²⁶ <http://www.lrc.ky.gov/Statutes/statute.aspx?id=41833>

not mean you have to report it to DCBS unless the concern involves suspected maltreatment.

What to report and to whom:

DCBS	DRCC only
Child walks out of center and no one notices until the police bring the child back.	A caregiver physically disciplines a child or a child is subjected to inappropriate discipline but sustains no injury.
Child is injured from discipline (inflicted injury).	Staff-to-child ratios not met for more than three (3) minutes.
Child ingests another child's medication that was left unattended on a counter.	A caregiver is verbally inappropriate with a child.
Any allegations of sexual abuse.	Medications are not stored properly.
	The facility doesn't meet regulatory requirements.
	The facility is providing services outside of their licensure.

REMEMBER: Any time you are uncomfortable with what you observe and think a child may be in an unsafe or potentially hazardous situation, err on the side of caution and report to both agencies. You may also wish to consult with your RCCA about concerns.

10. Records Retention

Records retention for Kentucky All STARS is governed by the *General Schedule for State Agencies: Record Retention Schedule*²⁷. Government records in Kentucky cannot be disposed of unless they are approved for destruction by the State Archives and Records Commission.

Remember, all state government employees are responsible for maintaining the integrity of records whether those records are stored electronically or in hard copy. Information must be accessible to the appropriate parties until all of the legal, fiscal, and administrative retention periods have been met, regardless of the medium.

Questions regarding Records Retention at your specific work site should be routed through your direct supervisor.

²⁷

<https://kdla.ky.gov/records/retentionschedules/Documents/State%20Records%20Schedules/kystateagency.pdf>

11. Reference Documents

Kentucky All STARS Support Documents	
Regulated Forms	<p>922 KAR 2:270 DCC-88 Child Care Service Appeal Request DCC-108 Notice of Adverse Action for Child Care DCC-430 All STARS Rating Summary Report DCC-431 All STARS Standards of Quality DCC-432 Standards of Quality Verification Checklist DCC-433 All STARS Opt-Out Request DCC-434 Annual Quality Review</p>
Non-Regulated Forms	<p>Award Remittance Statement Quality Rating Certificate</p>
KICCS Generated Letters	<p>Annual Quality Review Approval Letter Annual Quality Review Notice Annual Quality Review Reduction Notice Award Remittance Notice Certificate Renewal Notice Inactivation Notice Level 2 Approval Letter Level 3 Approval Letter Level 4 Approval Letter Level 5 Approval Letter Notice of Enrollment Letter Opt-Out Approval Letter Opt-Out Denial Letter Quality Rating Reduction Notice Rating Visit Confirmation Letter Reevaluation Notice Letter</p>
Field Resources	<p>All About All STARS Flyer Annual Quality Review Guide Provider Phone Log Rating Visit Cancellation Letter Rating Visit Exit Letter Registered Provider Pathway Standards Verification Checklist Guide</p>
Provider Resources	<p>Parent Letter Provider Press Release</p>