

Duval County’s (FL) Quality Rating and Improvement System



Documentation Guide for Providers

Effective July 1, 2025



Disclaimer

Guiding Stars of Duval 5.0 is Duval County's Quality Rating and Improvement System. The information provided in this document is intended to support those participating in the Guiding Stars validation process. As the need arises, clarifications and/or amendments made to current policies and procedures will be posted to the Early Learning Coalition of Duval website with the effective date. It is the provider's responsibility to read and adhere to the most current provider manual. Application to Guiding Stars does not guarantee a provider's ability to participate. Star ratings are renewed annually, however participation in Guiding Stars is contingent upon available funding.

Your comments

Your suggestions will help us continue to improve the accuracy, organization, and overall quality of the Guiding Stars guide. Please email any comments or suggestions to kdroubie@elcduval.org.

If you have issues, comments, or questions about specific information or procedures, please include very specific details, including the page numbers and any other details that will help us locate the subject you are addressing.

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ABOUT THE EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF DUVAL

MISSION: To lead and support the early learning community in building the best foundation for children birth to five.

VISION: We are Jacksonville's first stop for early learning through collaborative leadership that ensures:

- All children receive high-quality care and learning
- All families have the support they need for their children to succeed
- All children are ready for their academic and lifelong success



A QUALITY RATING IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM (QRIS) IS DESIGNED TO BENEFIT

PROVIDERS

&

PRACTITIONERS

so they can provide high-quality care and early learning experiences to children.

PARENTS

&

CAREGIVERS

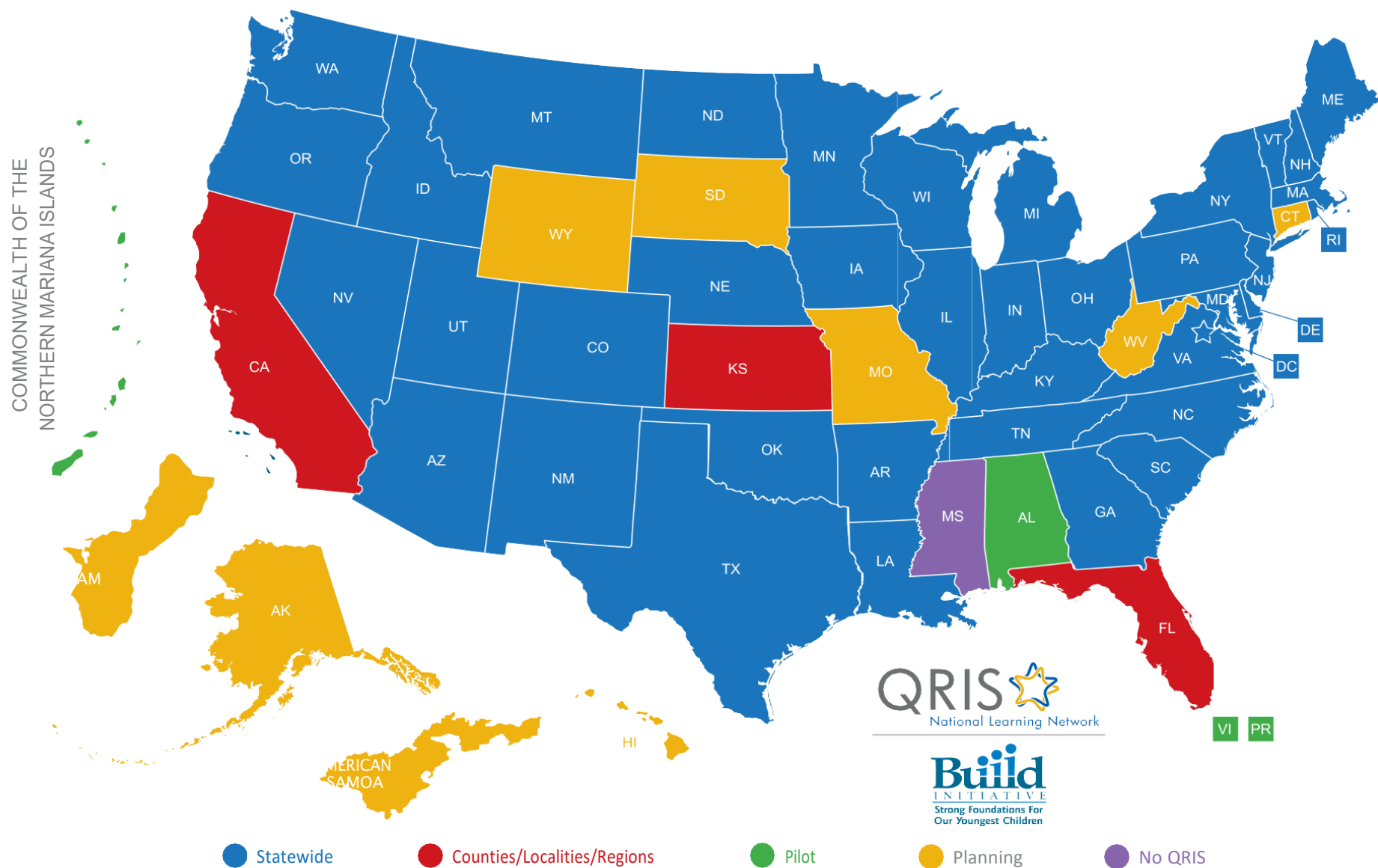
so they can find high-quality child care with an easy to understand rating system.

CHILDREN

so they can have high quality early learning experiences to help develop skills they need to be successful in life.

Current Status of QRIS in States

January 2017



www.qrisnetwork.org

GUIDING STARS OF DUVAL - 5.0

Participation in Guiding Stars, Duval County's Quality Rating and Improvement System for Providers is **voluntary**.

Star ratings are renewed annually.

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

PROGRAM PERSONNEL

Staff Qualifications and
Professional Development

30%

Teacher Child Interaction
CLASS* Observations

40%

PROGRAM CONTENT

Child Well-Being and
Child Assessment

30%

*Classroom Assessment Scoring System

PROGRAM PERSONNEL –
Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

PROGRAM PERSONNEL - STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – 30%

For Guiding Stars purposes, program personnel requirements apply to ALL providers (including licensed and licensed exempt).

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
___25% of all teaching staff have been employed for at least a year ___25% of all teaching staff completed 10 hours of annual in-service training which aligns with the professional development wage incentive requirement (6 Points)	Meets the previous level and: ___25% of all teaching staff have a CDA/FCCPC or higher education ___50% of all teaching staff completed 10 hours of annual in-service training which aligns with the professional development wage incentive requirement (12 Points)	Meets previous levels and: ___50% of all teaching staff have a CDA/FCCPC or higher education ___75% of all teaching staff completed 10 hours of annual in-service training which aligns with the professional development wage incentive requirement (18 Points)	Meets previous levels and: ___75% of all teaching staff have a CDA/FCCPC or higher education ___50% of all teaching staff completed 15 hours of annual in-service training which aligns with the professional development wage incentive requirement (24 Points)	Meets previous levels and: ___Director has an AA/AS degree or higher, or 60 credit hours of college coursework with 18 credits in ECE. ___25% of all teaching staff have an AS in Early Childhood Education, an AA or higher degree with 18 credits in ECE, or 60 credit hours of college coursework with 18 credits in ECE ___75% of all teaching staff completed 15 hours of annual in-service training which aligns with the professional development wage incentive requirement (30 Points)

All requirements must be met at each level in order to move to the next level. Points will only be awarded at the highest level. No partial credit will be given.

Documentation Required for Program Personnel

Level 1 Documentation Requirements

- **25% of all teaching staff** have been employed for at least a year.
 - Staff Qualifications worksheet must include the names and hire dates of all staff.
 - Names and hire dates for all teaching staff must be correct in the Quality Performance System.
- **25% of all teaching staff** completed 10 hours of annual in-service training which aligns with the professional development wage incentive requirement.
 - Training Certificates for **Teaching Staff** (lead and assistant teachers only) – all training must meet the requirements of the wage incentive letter. Training must be completed within the timeframe outlined in the letter in order to receive credit. You can access the most current copy of the [wage incentive letter](#) on our website. The training requirement includes all teaching staff, whether eligible for the wage incentive or not.

Level 2 Documentation Requirements

- **25% of all teaching staff** have a CDA/FCCPC or higher education.
 - Copies of DCF transcripts showing CDA/FCCPC or copies of the actual certificates for each qualified teaching staff (lead or assistant teachers).
- **50% of all teaching staff** completed 10 hours of annual in-service training which aligns with the professional development wage incentive requirement.
 - Training Certificates for **Teaching Staff** (lead and assistant teachers only) – all training must meet the requirements of the wage incentive letter. Training must be completed within the timeframe outlined in the letter in order to receive credit. You can access the most current copy of the [wage incentive letter](#) on our website. The training requirement includes all teaching staff, whether eligible for the wage incentive or not.

Level 3 Documentation Requirements

- **50% of all teaching staff** have a CDA/FCCPC or higher education.
 - Copies of DCF transcripts showing CDA/FCCPC or copies of the actual certificates for each qualified teaching staff (lead or assistant teachers).
- **75% of all teaching staff** completed 10 hours of annual in-service training which aligns with the professional development wage incentive requirement.

- Training Certificates for **Teaching Staff** (lead and assistant teachers only) – all training must meet the requirements of the wage incentive letter. Training must be completed within the timeframe outlined in the letter in order to receive credit. You can access the most current copy of the [wage incentive letter](#) on our website. The training requirement includes all teaching staff, whether eligible for the wage incentive or not.

Level 4 Documentation Requirements

- **75% of all teaching staff** have a CDA/FCCPC or higher education.
 - Copies of DCF transcripts showing CDA/FCCPC or copies of the actual certificates for each qualified teaching staff (lead or assistant teachers).
- **50% of all teaching staff** completed 15 hours of annual in-service training which aligns with the professional development incentive requirement.
 - Training Certificates for **Teaching Staff** (lead and assistant teachers only) – all training must meet the requirements of the wage incentive letter. Training must be completed within the timeframe outlined in the letter in order to receive credit. You can access the most current copy of the [wage incentive letter](#) on our website. The training requirement includes all teaching staff, whether eligible for the wage incentive or not.

Level 5 Documentation Requirements

- **Director** has an AA/AS degree or higher, or 60 credit hours of college coursework with 18 credits in ECE.
 - A copy of the degree or transcript must be provided.
- **25% of all teaching staff** have an AS in Early Childhood Education, an AA or higher degree with 18 credits in ECE, or 60 credit hours of college coursework with 18 credits in ECE.
 - A copy of the degree or transcript must be provided.
- **75% of all teaching staff** completed 15 hours of annual in-service training which aligns with the professional development wage incentive requirement.
 - Training Certificates for **Teaching Staff** (lead and assistant teachers only) – all training must meet the requirements of the wage incentive letter. Training must be completed within the timeframe outlined in the letter in order to receive credit. You can access the most current copy of the [wage incentive letter](#) on our website. The training requirement includes all teaching staff, whether eligible for the wage incentive or not.

Process For Review

- a. A reminder email will be sent with guidance on the documentation needed to get star rated.
- b. Documentation for ALL teaching staff will be submitted electronically, and will be reviewed by ELC Staff. The final deadline for submission is May 31st of each validation year.

**PROGRAM ASSESSMENT –
Teacher Child Interaction
CLASS Observations**

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT – TEACHER CHILD INTERACTION – CLASS OBSERVATIONS – 40%

(40 Points Total - Points Awarded for the Highest Level Reached Only – No Partial Credit Will Be Given)

TEACHER CHILD INTERACTION – CLASS OBSERVATIONS				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
SR Composite Program Assessment Score	SR Composite Program Assessment Score	SR Composite Program Assessment Score	SR Composite Program Assessment Score	SR Composite Program Assessment Score
4.00 – 4.24	4.25 - 4.49	4.50 – 4.99	5.00 – 5.49	5.50+
(8 Points)	(16 Points)	(24 Points)	(32 Points)	(40 Points)

*The *School Readiness (SR) Composite Program Assessment Score* is an average of all DEL -adopted program assessment tool dimension scores. For Pre-K and Toddler CLASS, the negative climate scores are omitted from the composite program assessment score calculation.

PROGRAM CONTENT -
Child Well-Being and Child Assessment

PROGRAM CONTENT – CHILD WELL-BEING AND CHILD ASSESSMENT – 30%

(30 Points Total – Points Awarded for the Highest Level Reached Only – No Partial Credit Will Be Given)

CHILD WELL-BEING & CHILD ASSESSMENT				
Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Current Year's SR Health & Safety Report shows: • No CLASS 1 violations and less than or equal to ten Class 2 and/or Class 3 violations (6 Points)	Meets the previous level and: Current Year's SR Health & Safety Report shows: • Less than or equal to seven Class 2 and/or Class 3 violations (12 Points)	Meets previous levels and: Current Year's SR Health & Safety Report shows: • Less than or equal to five Class 2 and/or Class 3 violations (18 Points)	Meets previous levels and: Current Year's SR Health & Safety Report shows: • Less than or equal to three Class 2 and/or Class 3 violations (24 Points)	Meets previous levels and: Current participation in child assessment for all School Readiness children enrolled, birth to kindergarten entry; must meet the requirement for a differential as required by the statewide assessment system (30 Points)

Levels 1 – 4 Documentation Requirements

All documentation will be reviewed by ELC Staff. Documentation requirements are listed below:

- a. All School Readiness health and safety reports for the current fiscal year (July 1 – June 30)

Process For Review

- a. Per the Division of Early Learning, federal legislation that reauthorized the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) includes new health and safety requirements for child care providers that receive CCDF funding. In late October 2016, Florida's new Health and Safety Checklists and Inspections rule became final. It requires at least one inspection each year for all child care providers with a School Readiness contract.
- b. In June of each year, all School Readiness health and safety reports will be pulled from the Department of Children and Families website for the current fiscal year (July 1 – June 30).
- c. Level 1 must be met in order to move to Level 2. Level 2 must be met in order to move to Level 3, and so forth.

1. Child Assessment (Indicator 1.5)

Providers must opt-in to participate in the statewide assessment system by indicating this on the School Readiness contract. Eligible providers must agree to conduct School Readiness Child Assessments using a reliable assessor as defined by the School Readiness Child Assessment tool, at least three times per year.

Child Assessment data for School Readiness children can only be accessed through the Early Learning Coalition. Documentation requirements are listed below.

Process For Review

- a. Providers must submit valid and reliable data to the statewide information system.
- b. The validation team will coordinate with Provider Services to determine if the requirement for participation has been met. This process for review will occur in May/June.
- c. **No child assessment documentation will be accepted directly from the provider.**

GUIDING STARS OF DUVAL 5.0 DEFINITIONS & WORKSHEETS

Term	Reference	Definition / Clarification
Assistant Director	Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	Assists the Director with the on-site administration and is responsible for the day-to-day operations, supervision and administration of the child care facility. Must be on-site when the Director is not present at the facility. Note: <i>For the purposes of Guiding Stars, an assistant director is considered other staff. (see definition for other staff)</i>
Assistant Teacher	Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	The person who implements program activities, is assigned to a classroom under direct supervision of the lead teacher, and meets the minimum adult/child ratio requirement. This definition includes teacher aides, program aides, paraprofessionals, etc. who meet the definition above. Note: <i>This definition excludes other staff. (see definition for other staff)</i>
CARES	Grounds for Termination	Childcare Administration, Regulation & Enforcement System
CDA/FCCPC	Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	A Child Development Associate (CDA) is the most widely recognized credential in Early Childhood Education. It is based on a core set of competency standards, which guide early care professionals as they work toward becoming qualified teachers of young children. The Florida Child Care Professional Credential (FCCPC) certificate program of study is approved by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) to provide the required training elements to obtain the Florida staff credential. Note: <i>All credentials earned must be from Birth – 5 and be current.</i>
Child Assessment	Child Well-Being and Child Assessment	Child assessment is an ongoing process that includes observation and provides information about development over time. It is ongoing in the sense that it requires a gathering of information about a child, reviewing that information, and then using the information to plan educational activities that are at a level the child can understand and is able to learn from. Assessment is a critical part of any high-quality, early childhood program.

		State law requires the Division of Early Learning to review and select child assessments that are valid, reliable and developmentally appropriate. While the statewide assessment system is voluntary, it can help improve School Readiness, benefiting more than 135,000 children, 10,000 providers and 15,000 teachers. It provides teachers, child care providers and parents a tool to guide instruction, document learning and development over time. School Readiness child care providers who meet eligibility requirements may receive a differential for conducting child assessments during the three child assessment periods. <u>Approved Assessment Tools</u> Teaching Strategies Gold http://www.floridaeearlylearning.com/Content/Uploads/floridaeearlylearning.com/files/Child%20Assessment%20Information%207-2019.pdf
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)	Teacher Child Interaction CLASS Observations	An observation-based program assessment tool that measures the quality of interactions between teachers and children. <i>Note: CLASS assessments are completed each program year.</i>
Director	Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	The Director is the administrator responsible for the day-to-day operations, supervision, and administration of the child care facility that must be on-site during the majority of hours that the facility is in operation.
ECE	Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	Early Childhood Education All teaching staff - If the degree is not in Early Childhood, a copy of the transcript(s) must be provided in order to document the 18 hours of ECE credits.
Floater/Substitute	Definitions & Worksheets	A floater/substitute is not assigned to a classroom but goes wherever is needed to meet the minimum adult/child ratio requirement. Note: <i>For the purposes of Guiding Stars, a floater/substitute is considered other staff. (see definition for other staff)</i>
Higher Education (College Degree)		A degree obtained from an institution accredited and recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. If a college degree is earned outside the U.S., it must be evaluated by an approved credential evaluation agency approved by the Bureau of Educators Certification or an accredited college/university to be equivalent to a U.S. degree.

		Note: A copy of the degree or a copy of the transcripts showing the graduation or completion date must be provided.
Lead Teacher	Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	The person primarily responsible for the care and education of a group of children. Every group of children must have a lead teacher. For the purpose of Guiding Stars, this excludes other staff. (see definition for other staff)
Licensed Exempt	Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	In accordance with section 402.306, Florida Statutes, the Department recognizes and exempts from licensure those religiously-affiliated providers that meet certain statutory requirements. More information can be found at the link below: https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/religious-exemption.shtml
Other Staff	Definitions & Worksheets	Includes all other staff with the exception of the director, lead teacher, or assistant teacher. Job titles may include administrative assistant, assistant director, after-school-only staff, education coordinator, floater, substitute teacher, van driver, cook, resource teacher, curriculum specialist, therapist, volunteer, etc.
Program Assessment	Teacher Child Interaction CLASS Observations	All School Readiness providers serving children birth to kindergarten entry must have a program assessment conducted and meet the Contract Minimum Threshold to be eligible to participate in the School Readiness program. School Readiness providers must receive a minimum Composite Program Assessment Score of 4.00 (rounding two decimals) to participate in the School Readiness program. <i>Note: Composite Program Assessment Score means an average of all DEL-adopted program assessment dimension scores, omitting the negative climate score, if included in the tool.</i>
Provider	Referenced throughout the Guide	There are 5 types of child care programs, as defined by Florida Statutes, which are licensed or recognized as licensure-exempt providers by the Department of Children and Families: Child Care Facility, Large Family Child Care Home, Licensed Family Day Care Home, Registered Family Day Care Home, Religious Exempt Program
QPS	Teacher Child Interaction CLASS Observations	QPS stands for Quality Performance System. It is the new name for the system formerly called the School Readiness Program Assessment System (SRPA).

		Note: Assigned staff must be present during the assessment.
Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)	Referenced throughout the Guide	A systemic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for restaurants and hotels, QRIS award quality ratings to early and school-age care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards. By participating in their State's QRIS, early and school-age care providers embark on a path of continuous quality improvement. Even providers that have met the standards of the lowest QRIS levels have achieved a level of quality that is beyond the minimum requirements to operate.
Teaching Staff	Definitions & Worksheets	Any staff person assigned to a classroom (which includes lead and assistant teachers), is responsible for or participates in providing academic support, and spends at least 15 hours per week in the classroom. Note: For the purpose of Guiding Stars, this excludes other staff. (see definition for other staff)
Wage Incentives	Staff Qualifications and Professional Development	A program designed by the Early Learning Coalition of Duval that provides financial incentives to providers enrolled in Guiding Stars. The eligibility requirements for wage incentives are available at the following link: wage incentive letter

Staff Qualifications Worksheets

Staff Qualifications - Director				
Name of Director	Date of Hire	Date AS or AA degree awarded OR BA / BS or higher awarded	Date(s) of 60 credit hours of college coursework with 18 credits in ECE awarded	Notes

Staff Qualifications Worksheet – Other Staff (Examples: Cook, Van Driver, Administrative Assistant, Assistant Director, Resource Teachers, etc. - See definition for Other Staff)		
Name	Date of Hire	Job Title

*No changes to Staff Qualification worksheets will be accepted after April 30th

Staff Qualifications – Teaching Staff (Do not include support staff such as floaters, cooks van drivers, office assistants)							
Teacher Name	Classroom Assignment	Teaching Role	Date of Hire	Date CDA / CDAE or FCCPC awarded	Date AS in ECE awarded	Has 60 credit hours of college coursework with 18 credits in ECE	Notes
		☐ Lead ☐ Assistant					
		☐ Lead ☐ Assistant					
		☐ Lead ☐ Assistant					
		☐ Lead ☐ Assistant					
		☐ Lead ☐ Assistant					
		☐ Lead ☐ Assistant					
		☐ Lead ☐ Assistant					
		☐ Lead ☐ Assistant					
		☐ Lead ☐ Assistant					
		☐ Lead ☐ Assistant					

*No changes to Staff Qualification worksheet will be accepted after April 30th

BONUS POINTS AND STAR RATING CALCULATION

ADDITIONAL BONUS POINTS

BP: Accreditation

Providers which have received accreditation from an accrediting agency that has been approved by the State of Florida, have met Florida Gold Seal Quality Care Program requirements, and have received the GOLD Seal designation through the Florida Department of Education.

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CALCULATION OF STAR RATING POINTS

Program Personnel – Staff Qualifications and Professional Development – 30%	30
Program Assessment - Teacher Child Interaction – 40%	40
Program Content - Child Well-Being and Child Assessment – 30%	30
 Bonus points: Accreditation	 10
 TOTAL	 110 points

STAR RATING POINTS DISTRIBUTION

1 to 20 Points – meets requirements which exceed health and safety requirements, and meets <u>few</u> of the quality benchmarks for program personnel, program assessment, and program content.	
21 to 40 Points – meets requirements which exceed health and safety requirements, and meets <u>some</u> of the quality benchmarks for program personnel, program assessment, and program content.	
41 to 60 Points – meets requirements which exceed health and safety requirements, and meets <u>several</u> of the quality benchmarks for program personnel, program assessment, and program content.	
61 to 80 Points – meets requirements which exceed health and safety requirements, and meets <u>many</u> of the quality benchmarks for program personnel, program assessment, and program content.	
81+ Points – meets requirements which exceed health and safety requirements, and meets <u>majority</u> of the quality benchmarks for program personnel, program assessment, and program content.	

GROUNDS FOR TERMINATION

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR A STAR-RATED CENTER OR FIRST-TIME PARTICIPANT PROVIDER

Thank you to all the participants of Guiding Stars, Duval County's Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care and early learning. Guiding Stars of Duval leadership reserves the right to take any action necessary for the betterment and preservation of the quality and validity of the system, or for the distribution of incentives. The leadership can initiate termination at any time based on recommendations of system partners after the provider has received an opportunity to have a meeting for due process and explanation.

1. Grounds for immediate termination from Guiding Stars:

- a. Placed on probation by the Early Learning Coalition of Duval at any time during participation;
- b. DCF Class 1 violation resulting in severe injury or death of a child at any time during participation;
- c. Any other major DCF non-compliance issues which endanger the health and safety of children in the center or family child care home at any time during participation.

In the cases above, the provider will be notified of their termination from Guiding Stars. Providers may reapply after meeting all eligibility requirements. An exit interview may be available upon request.

2. **Fraud:** Misrepresentation of ANY documentation submitted could result in immediate termination from Guiding Stars with eligibility revocation for up to five years.

3. **Change in owner or location:** If there is a change in ownership and/or location, the star rating does not transfer to the new owner and/or location. Continued participation during the current program year will be determined by the state's rule regarding School Readiness program assessments (CLASS). The coalition will determine if a School Readiness program assessment must be completed under the new ownership or location. According to Rule 6M-4.740, F.A.C., the provider may request to retain the most recent program assessment score from the prior owner or location without having to conduct a new assessment if the provider can provide documentation to the coalition that it has retained 80% of personnel. Examples of acceptable documentation include current payroll time sheets and evidence in CARES of monitored personnel during the pre-contractual health and safety inspection.

- a. If the new owner retains the most recent program assessment score, then they would be eligible to participate to become a star-rated provider during the current program year.
- b. If the new owner does not retain the most recent program assessment score, then they would be withdrawn from the Guiding Stars program for the remainder of the current program year.

4. **Opting out of annual star rating:** If a provider opts of an annual validation, they would be withdrawn for the remainder of the current program year, not be allowed to participate in the Guiding Stars program the next year, and could opt back in for participation the following program year.

For clarification on any of these requirements, please email Katy Droubie at the coalition, kdroubie@elcduval.org.

RESOURCES AND BENEFITS

1. **Resources**

a. **School Readiness Program Assessments (House Bill 1091)**

For information on the School Readiness program assessment requirement, please visit <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/statewide-initiatives/school-readiness-program-assessment>.

b. **Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)**

For more information on the CLASS tools, please visit <http://www.teachstone.com>.

You can also contact Early Learning Coalition of Duval to request a myTeachstone subscription. (Availability is pending contract renewal through the Division of Early Learning.) myTeachstone is an online learning resource with a growing number of classroom videos, courses, articles, activities and more. Email Katy Droubie at kdroubie@elcduval.org to register your center or family child care home today.

c. **Department of Children and Families (DCF)**

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/provider-resources.shtml>

d. **ELC of Duval Training Calendar**

For information on the available trainings offered by the Early Learning Coalition, please visit <https://www.elcduval.org/i-am-a-provider/register-for-a-training/>

e. **Developmental Screenings**

The Early Learning Coalition is pleased to offer the community a system that connects children with the services they need. Children at risk for developmental and behavioral problems may sometimes go undetected. ELC can help link these children and their families to community-based services and support programs.

You can get more information on developmental screenings by visiting our website at <http://www.elcofduval.org/>.

2. **Benefits of Participation** - Star-Rated providers participating in Guiding Stars of Duval 5.0 have the opportunity to take advantage of numerous opportunities:

a. **Director Support** from the coalition or early childhood partner agency on program assessment, which could include:

- Professional development trainings
- myTeachstone subscription for the center (pending availability through the Division of Early Learning)
- Technical assistance support from coalition or other agency staff (when appropriate and necessary)

b. Financial Incentives

- Wage Incentives for eligible staff
- Payment differential determined by Florida's Division of Early Learning
- Quality enhancement incentives, which could include stipends for provider materials up to \$500

c. Center Recognition

- ELC website recognition
- Social media recognition

EXCERPT FROM THE FLORIDA STATEWIDE QRIS COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION

Creating a Shared Vision for Early Childhood Industry Standards in Florida

January 11, 2015

BACKGROUND

In the last decade, eleven communities in Florida have developed local quality rating improvement systems (QRIS) to measure and support early learning performance standards. QRIS is a strategy demonstrated to improve children's school readiness and strengthen early learning programs through capacity building, accountability, and family and community engagement. While there has been variation in measurement and the supports provided to facilitate quality improvement, the communities have worked together in different ways over many years. In November 2014 a collaborative of QRIS funders – the Early Learning Coalitions and Children's Services Councils - convened to share best practices, challenges, and explore ways to strengthen community models. While there has been historical alignment of standards, it was determined that one model with shared standards and measurements would result in statewide consistency benefiting providers, children and families. This document summarizes the recommended standards, each of which are substantiated by research, are ambitious yet achievable, and build upon Florida's existing system.

IMPLEMENTATION IN FLORIDA

Given the demonstrated positive impact on child outcomes and early learning programs, the recommended industry standards focus on adult-child interactions, curriculum-based assessment, and professional development. By careful design, these priorities can be implemented statewide, ideally through improving the implementation of the early learning performance funding pilot AND can be integrated in local community efforts through a leveled-model like QRIS to facilitate incremental quality improvement successfully.

RECOMMENDED STANDARDS

The collaborative recommends three focused standards:

- 1) *Program Assessment: Evaluation of teacher-child interactions measured by the CLASS* or the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, if applicable
- 2) *Curriculum-Based Assessment*: Implementing observations of children to inform individualized care and instruction to best meet the individual developmental needs of each child. Upon statewide funding for curriculum-based assessments, implementing one of the three DEL-approved curriculum-based observation tools (Teaching Strategies GOLD).
- 3) *Staff Qualifications and Professional Development*: Professional development is a critical foundational element for addressing child and family needs. Based on lessons learned and best practices, all staff/providers will create a professional development plan focused on individual and program needs aligned to the standards. The focus will be on annual completion of evidence-based training for CEUs to ensure meaningful content focused on improving practice, with recommendations for credentials/degree equivalencies as appropriate.

Other standards were carefully reviewed through extensive deliberation and for a variety of reasons they were not included. Some have measurement challenges (e.g., ratios and group size, meaningful family engagement measures), and while others do not have an evidence base behind them that they directly impact child outcomes (e.g., business practices, more frequent screening). **Philosophically, the collaborative members feel strongly that it is best to focus on a smaller number of high impact standards with a proven relationship to children's outcomes rather than spread the assessment and quality improvement energies more broadly across standards that have uneven impact.** This is consistent with a national trend toward focus, simplification, and high impact standards that are highly related to children's outcomes.