

BrightStars

Recognizing, Improving, Connecting
Quality Care & Learning

Child Care Center Quality Framework

Updated March 2023

Introduction

BrightStars is Rhode Island's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for Early Care, Education, and School-age Programs

Early childhood experience affects the architecture of children's maturing brains. Like the construction of a house, brains are built from the bottom up, with early experiences setting the foundation for the rest of development. This is why high quality child care, education, and school-age programs are so important to Rhode Island.

Through BrightStars, Rhode Island is supporting a sustainable infrastructure of diverse and high quality early care, education, and school-age programs using research-based practices that promote positive outcomes for children and families.



BrightStars' five-level QRIS works to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care, education, and school-age programs. BrightStars meets programs where they are, using a strengths-based approach to continuous quality improvement (CQI).

DHS Child Care Licensing Regulations establish the foundation for operating early care, education, and school-age programs. These regulations specify the minimum standards that must be met to operate legally and are the first step in a QRIS. Each incremental quality rating recognizes programs for exceeding basic regulatory requirements and implementing best practices that research shows is best for children.

Since its inception, BrightStars has received invaluable guidance and support from the **BrightStars Advisory Committee** that includes representatives from all sectors of the early learning and child care field, state department leaders, early learning programs, and key local experts and advocates.



BrightStars supports programs in six quality domains:

- **Health, Safety, + Nutrition**
- **Enrollment + Staffing**
- **Staff Qualifications + Ongoing Professional Development**
- **Administration**
- **Early Learning + Development**
- **Family Engagement**

BrightStars is a public-private partnership managed by the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children. Key partners include the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS), the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), the Rhode Island Governor's Office, the Local SEIU Education Support Fund (ESF), and the Center for Early Learning Professionals.



BrightStars

Domains + Standards at A Glance

Health, Safety, + Nutrition

- Learning Environment
- Staff-Child Ratio
- Maximum Group Size

Enrollment + Staffing

Staff Qualfications + Ongoing Profesional Development

- Teacher Qualifications
- Program Leadership

Administration

- Continuous Quality Improvement

Early Learning + Development

- Curriculum
- Child Assessment
- Inclusive Classroom Practices

Family Engagement

- Family Communication + Involvement

Standard One: Learning Environment



Daily activities and interactions show that the program is providing a **safe, healthy, and stimulating environment.** The program provides **indoor and outdoor space** to support varied and enriching experiences for children. Daily interactions demonstrate that **staff respect, care for, and enjoy working with children.** The program **supports the inclusion of children with disabilities and developmental delays,** responds to the **cultural and linguistic diversity** of the population it serves, and promotes the acceptance of diversity among staff, families, and children.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
• Program is Licensed by DHS	• Compliance with DHS Licensing Regulations • Learning Environment Training **OR** • LearnERS Participant	• Average ECERS-3 and/or ITERS-3 score of 3.0 or Greater with no observed classroom score less than 2.5	• Average ECERS-3 and/or ITERS-3 score of 4.0 or Greater with no observed classroom score less than 3.0	• Average ECERS-3 and/or ITERS-3 score of 5.0 or Greater with no observed classroom score less than 3.0

	Level 1	Level 2-5
Standard Two: Minimum Staff-Child Ratio	Program is licensed by DHS	• **Compliance with Staff-Child Ratios** ◦ Infants 1:4 ◦ Toddlers 1:6 ◦ 3yo 1:9 ◦ 4yo 1:10 ◦ 5yo 1:12 • **Staff-Child Ratio Posted**
Standard Three: Maximum Group Size	Program is licensed by DHS	• **Compliance with Maximum Group Size** ◦ Infants 8 ◦ Toddlers 12 ◦ 3yo 18 ◦ 4yo 20 ◦ 5yo 24 • **Maximum Group Size Posted**

Classrooms with mixed age groups must follow the ratio and group size requirements for the youngest child in the group.



Standards 2 + 3 reiterate what is expected of programs through compliance with state regulation.

The program has enough staff members at all times to supervise the children and to support early learning and development.

Maximum group size is determined by the number of children cared for by a caregiver or group of caregivers in a classroom or designated area.

Standard Four: Teacher Qualifications

Each group of children shall have a teacher who works under the supervision of the Education Coordinator to care for the children and implement the classroom curriculum. The teacher has the **formal education and professional preparation** to work with children.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
• Program is licensed by DHS	• All teachers complete an **Individual Professional Development Plan**	• All teachers complete an **Individual Professional Development Plan** • **50%** of teachers have a **CDA or 3 college credits** in ECE or a related field.	• All teachers complete an **Individual Professional Development Plan** • **50%** of teachers have **12 college credits** in ECE or a related field PLUS • **25%** of teachers have an Associate's degree (or 60 college credits) PLUS • **50%** of preschool teachers complete relevant RIELDS training	• All teachers complete an **Individual Professional Development Plan** • **50%** of teachers an AA (or 60 college credits) +24 credits in ECE or a related field PLUS • **50%** of preschool teachers have a BA + 24 credits in ECE or a related field PLUS • **75%** of preschool teachers complete relevant RIELDS training

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Standard Five: Program Leadership

Each group of children shall have a teacher who works under the supervision of the Education Coordinator to care for the children and implement the classroom curriculum. The teacher has the **formal education and professional preparation** to work with children.

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
• Program is licensed by DHS	• Compliance with DHS Licensing Regulations	• The **Administrator OR Education Coordinator** has an Associate's Degree or higher • The **Education Coordinator** completes relevant RIELDS trainings	• **The Administrator OR Education Coordinator** has an Bachelor's Degree or higher and **6** college credits in ECE or a related field • **The Administrator AND Education Coordinator** completes relevant RIELDS trainings	• The **Administrator OR Education Coordinator** has an Bachelor's Degree or higher and **12** college credits in ECE or a related field • **The Administrator AND Education Coordinator** completes relevant RIELDS trainings

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Standard Six: Continuous Quality Improvement



The program conducts a comprehensive self-assessment, at least once a year, to assess compliance with regulations and standards and to determine its effectiveness in meeting the needs of the children and families it serves. The program then uses this information to create program goals to continually improve quality and documents progress towards achieving these goals

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
• Program is licensed by DHS • Quality Improvement Plan completed within 90 days of rating	• Compliance with DHS Licensing Regulations • Comprehensive Program Self Assessment that includes: ◦ at least 2 sources of evidence • Quality Improvement Plan completed within 90 days of rating	• Comprehensive Program Self Assessment that includes: ◦ ECERS and ITERS findings **AND** ◦ at least 2 other sources of evidence • Quality Improvement Plan completed within 90 days of rating	• Comprehensive Program Self Assessment that includes: ◦ ECERS and ITERS findings **AND** ◦ at least 3 other sources of evidence • Quality Improvement Plan completed within 90 days of rating	• Comprehensive Program Self Assessment that includes: ◦ ECERS and ITERS findings **AND** ◦ family survey results **AND** ◦ at least 3 other sources of evidence • Quality Improvement Plan completed within 90 days of rating

Standard Seven: Curriculum

The program uses curriculum, aligned to the RI Early Learning and Development Standards (RIELDS) and in partnership with the State's Curriculum Framework for Early Learnign, for all age groups served, including infants and toddlers. Teaching staff have emotional connections with children and respond appropriately to individual early learning and development needs. Classroom schedules and routines maximize time spent in early learning and development activities. The program provides many opportunities for children to learn and practice skills in all domains of the RI Early Learning and Development Standards

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
• Program is licenced by DHS	• Compliance with DHS Licensing Regulations	• Lesson plans aligned with the RIELDS OR • Head Start Compliance OR • NAEYC Accreditation OR • NECPA Accreditation	• Lesson plans aligned with the RIELDS AND • Curriculum Outline OR • Head Start Compliance OR • NAEYC Accreditation OR • NECPA Accreditation	• Lesson plans aligned with the RIELDS AND • RIDE-endorsed curriculum OR • Head Start Compliance OR • NAEYC Accreditation OR • NECPA Accreditation



Standard Eight: Child Assessment

The program connects families to developmental screenings for their children, and systematically and routinely gathers information about each child in order to meet the individual needs of children and provide differentiated learning experiences

Level 1	Levels 2-3	Level 4	Level 5
• Program is Licensed by DHS.	• Developmental Screening Information	• Developmental Screening Information AND • 2 methods of Child Assessment OR • Head Start Compliance OR • NAEYC Accreditation OR • NECPA Accreditation	• Developmental Screening Information AND • The program collaborates with Child Outreach to provide on-site developmental Screenings AND • 3 methods of Child Assessment OR • Head Start Compliance OR • NAEYC Accreditation OR • NECPA Accreditation

Accepted Methods of Child Assessment include:

- **Formative assessments**
- **Work Sampling**
- **Developmental Checklist**
- **Anecdotal/Running Records**
- **Valid and Reliable reports**
- **IEP/Outreach Screenings**
- **Family Questionnaire**
- **Photos**
- **Video clips**

Standard Nine: Inclusive Classroom Practices

The program **supports the inclusion** of children with disabilities and developmental delays and their families. A higher quality program makes appropriate accommodations and modifications to support children and thier families, and they collaborate with key partners to support children with developmental delays and disabilities in the least restrictive environment.



Level 1	Level 2	Levels 3-4	Level 5
• Program is Licensed by DHS.	• Compliance with DHS Licensing Regulations	• Written Program Philosophy OR • Head Start compliance	• Written Program Philosophy AND • Staff Release Time OR • Head Start compliance

"Staff Release Time" means that programs make staff available to collaborate with IEP/IFSP teams by attending meeting, participating in relevant training, and/or sharing information (ie. child assessment results) to support children with developmental delays or disabilities

Standard Ten: Family Communication and Involvement

The program communicates regularly with families by engaging in two-way communication with families, offering ongoing opportunities for family involvement, and working to build partnerships with families

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
• Program is licensed by DHS	• 2 or more strategies for family communication and involement	• 2 or more strategies for family communication and involvement AND • Family/Teacher Conferences 2x per year OR • Head Start Compliance OR • NAEYC Accreditation OR • NECPA Accreditation	• 2 or more strategies for family communication and involvement AND • Family/Teacher Conferences 2x per year AND • Annual Family Survey OR • Head Start Compliance OR • NAEYC Accreditation OR • NECPA Accreditation	• 2 or more strategies for family communication and involvement AND • Family/Teacher Conferences 2x per year AND • Annual Family Survey AND Parent Advisory Committee OR • Head Start Compliance OR • NAEYC Accreditation OR • NECPA Accreditation

Strategies for family communication could include:

- **Parent/Family Handbook**
- **Monthly newsletters**
- **Family meetings, social events, or workshops**
- **Ideas and suggestions to support learning at home**
- **Annual family surveys**
- **Parent/staff conferences**
- **Parent advisory committee**
- **Online communication tools/apps (ie. Tadpole, Brightwheel)**

Glossary

BrightStars Criteria are specific, measurable benchmarks within a standard that programs must meet in order to receive a BrightStars rating. For example, "Compliance with DHS Licensing Regulations," and "Family-Teacher Conferences" are criteria.

BrightStars Domain is a general area of program quality. BrightStars standards are organized into six domains (see p4).

BrightStars Standard sets a specific goal for program quality. For example, "Teacher Qualifications" is a program standard.

Child Development Associate (CDA) is a nationally-awarded certificate administered by the Council for Professional Recognition. A CDA can be obtained in infant/toddler, preschool, family child care, or home visiting.

Child Outreach is a universal developmental screening system designed to screen all children, ages 3-5 years old. Screening serves as a first step in identifying developmental delays or disabilities that could benefit from intervention.

Early Intervention promotes the growth and development of infants and toddlers who have developmental delays or disabilities, including children's speech, physical ability, or social skills, and who could benefit from intervention.

Early Childhood Education/Related Field includes specialized college coursework completed at an Institution of Higher Education.

Environment Rating Scales (ERS) assess process quality in infant/toddler, preschool, school-age, and family child care learning environments. Process quality is what children directly experience in their program that has a direct impact on their development. BrightStars currently uses the ECERS-3, ITERS-3, FCCERS-3, and SACERS-U to assess program quality.

Head Start Performance Standards are designed to ensure that the Head Start goals and objectives are implemented successfully, that the Head Start philosophy continues to thrive, and that all grantees and delegate agencies maintain high quality practices.

Glossary (Continued)

Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed by an IEP team for students with disabilities to ensure that the student is provided with a free, appropriate, public education designed to meet their needs and to provide the student with access and opportunity to attain those high standards.

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is a service plan that is developed after a child becomes eligible for Early Intervention services.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is a professional associations focused on the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age 8.

The National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NEPCA) is a national accreditation established in 1991 to encourage quality and recognize excellence in early childhood programs throughout the United States and other countries.

RI Department of Human Services (DHS) licenses child care centers, family child care homes, and after school programs to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of children while in care outside of their homes.

Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards (RIELDS) articulate shared expectations for what young children should know and be able to do. They provide a common language for measuring progress toward achieving specific learning goals.