

Quality Counts Quality Rating System

Frequently Asked Questions

July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014
(revised February 2014)

What is the Quality Counts Quality Rating System (QRS)?

A voluntary system for family child care providers who meet specific indicators of quality child care. Providers who meet required criteria are awarded QRS certification. Providers caring for children who are eligible for state child care assistance also receive an add-on to the standard reimbursement rate. QRS is funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS). Center based providers are now included in the State's new quality rating and improvement system, ExceleRate Illinois.

What is the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)?

The Child Care Assistance Program is an Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) funded program that helps pay child care expenses for families of low-income. Parents must be working or in an approved education or training program. CCAP is an income-based program in which parents are assessed a co-payment based on their family size and income. Parents are able to select child care providers who fit their family's needs, either through the certificate program, in which applications and payments are processed through local Child Care Resource & Referral agencies (CCR&R) or by choosing a facility that has a contract to provide child care services for families of low income.

Why should my program participate in QRS?

Being eligible for QRS means your program has achieved specific quality indicators. QRS certification can be used as a marketing tool, showing parents/guardians that your program is recognized by the State of Illinois for commitment to providing higher quality care. QRS certification results in a quality add-on to the state standard rate for providers who care for CCAP children. This quality add-on assists with the higher costs of offering quality care.

Who can apply for QRS?

License exempt family child care providers and Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (IDCFSS) licensed family/group home providers can apply. Specific training must be completed and eligibility requirements met for a provider to apply for QRS.

Licensed providers must be licensed for 1 year prior to applying to QRS and be caring for children full day (defined as 8 or more consecutive hours) and operate a minimum of 9 months per year.

The application process is administered by the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (INCCRRA).

Is there an application fee for QRS?

There is no application fee for QRS.

How does QRS work? What must a provider/program do to be eligible?

QRS offers progressive levels which providers can achieve depending on the type of care they provide. Specific quality criteria must be met to achieve a level. Once a child care provider has met the required criteria for a level, they are awarded QRS certification. Providers caring for CCAP children receive a quality add-on to the standard reimbursement rate.

For **license exempt family child care**, there are three **Training Tiers** to achieve. Approved training includes the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity ECE Credential Level 1 modules covering health, safety, child development and much more. Once a provider completes a Training Tier, they will receive a training certificate and a quality add-on to the standard daily CCAP rate of 10%, 15%, or 20% (depending on which Training Tier has been completed). Completion of all three Training Tiers will result in award of the ECE Credential Level 1 certificate.

For **licensed family child care providers**, there are four **Star Levels**. There are various indicators of quality that need to be achieved at each Star Level. For each Star Level, the child care learning environment is evaluated by an independent assessor. To learn more about the assessment process, you are required to attend Environment Rating Scale training. At higher Star Levels, the quality of business management is evaluated by an independent assessor. National Accreditation is recognized at these levels. You will need to attend the Business Administration Scale (BAS) training for family child care providers before you can apply at Star Level 3 or Star Level 4. All of these training are available at your local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R) for a fee of \$15 each.

Programs achieving a Star Level will receive QRS certification. If caring for CCAP children they will receive a quality add-on to the standard daily CCAP rate of 5%, 10%, 15%, or 20%.

Technical assistance and training for all provider types is provided by local CCR&Rs. To find the CCR&R in your area, contact 877-202-4453 or visit the Quality Counts website at www.ilqualitycounts.com

What training is required in order to apply for QRS?

In order to apply for QRS, attendance at the following Orientation and trainings are required for each type of program/provider. Orientation and trainings are offered by local Child Care Resource & Referrals (CCR&R).

License Exempt Family Child Care Provider

- Attend a free QRS Orientation.
- Complete, at a minimum, Training Tier 1 modules.

Licensed Family/Group Home Child Care Provider

- Attend a free QRS Orientation.
- Attend Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Training (Date of completed training must have been from year 2007 and on)
- Attend Business Administration Scale (BAS) Training (only if applying at Star Level 3 or 4).

*ERS and BAS trainings are \$15 each.

Does my program currently have to be caring for CCAP children to apply for QRS?

No, programs do not have to be serving CCAP children to apply for QRS. However, providers that are awarded QRS certification and are caring for CCAP children will receive a quality add-on to the standard rate.

What is the timeframe of the application process?

Provider, with all required documents, shall be notified in writing of their application status within 15 business days of being received.

Provider/program, missing any required documents, will have up to 60 days from the date the application was received to submit all required documents.

What is an annual report? When is the annual report due?

To maintain eligibility in QRS, Licensed providers/programs must submit an annual report within 60 days of their original eligible processing month for the year(s) between initial applications.

License-exempt providers are not required to submit an annual report.

When can my program expect the CCAP quality add-on rate if found eligible?

A license exempt family child care provider may submit their application and training attendance certificates after completing the Orientation and training modules for at least Training Tier 1. INCCRRA will review the materials submitted and issue a determination letter within 30 days. If a CCAP provider is eligible, the quality add-on rate will take effect the month following approval.

For licensed family/group home, the application process may take up to 9 months from the date of submission of the application to the INCCRRA office. Eligible CCAP programs will receive the quality add-on rate the month following eligibility notification.

Will the CCAP quality add-on rate be retroactive to the date of application?

No, the CCAP quality add-on is not retroactive. The add-on rate is effective the month after a program receives QRS eligibility notification.

What do I do if I notice a missing quality add-on from my check?

Any QRS certified program that cares for CCAP children must notify the CCR&R and INCCRRA if there are any program changes that affect your CCAP payment. This could include a change in your FEIN number, becoming a Collaboration program, etc. Failure to notify the CCR&R and INCCRRA will result in missing add-on payments.

If your program currently does not care for CCAP children but enrolls CCAP children in the future, it is your responsibility to notify the local CCAP staff or appropriate funding agency to begin receiving the quality add-on. You must also notify INCCRRA.

If a licensed family child care provider is eligible for a QRS Star rating, how long does the Star Certification remain in effect?

If a licensed provider is eligible for QRS, the Star Certification will remain in effect for three years with annual reporting required to verify maintenance of certain quality indicators including current IDCFS license, training/qualifications and current Accreditation certification (if applicable).

Providers that are found eligible based on QRS assessments will be required to have a new set of assessments conducted every three years.

If my program is not eligible for the Training Tier/Star Level applied for, will my program be eligible for the Training Tier/Star Level before it?

If a program is not eligible for the Training Tier/Star Level applied for, a QRS counselor will review all the documentation, and determine if the program is eligible for a Training Tier/Star Level before it.

If found ineligible, when can my program reapply to QRS?

If a license exempt family home provider is found ineligible, they may reapply after completing the training module(s) for a Training Tier that was not completed.

Licensed providers, who are missing training hours or other qualifications, can reapply when these requirements are met. If the program's ERS, BAS or PAS score is not high enough for the Star Level applied for, the provider must wait one year before reapplying.

What is National Accreditation?

Accreditation is a voluntary process that provides family child care homes programs the opportunity to examine their services based on recognized standards of high quality. IDHS has funds available through local CCR&Rs to assist in obtaining NAFCC (National Association for Family Child Care).

What are the Environment Rating Scales (ERS)?

Environment Rating Scales are program assessment tools used by providers to measure and assess the level of quality in a program. These are user-friendly tools designed for the following program types and/or age groups.

- Family Child Care Rating Scale-Revised (**FCCERS -R**) – designed to assess family child care programs in a provider’s home

Environment Rating Scales can be used by a provider/program for self-assessment, or by an outside consultant or assessor.

What is the Business Administration Scale (BAS)/ Program Administration Scale (PAS)?

The Business Administration Scale (BAS) is a user-friendly assessment tools designed to assess the quality of administrative management practices in family child care programs. Areas the BAS assesses in family child care homes include: qualification and professional development, work environment, fiscal management, record keeping, provider-parent communication, marketing/public relations, income/benefits, risk-management, community resources, and provider as employer. BAS can be used by a provider for self-assessment, or by an outside consultant or assessor.

What training hours are accepted for Family Child Care/Group Home Providers?

Trainings must be a minimum of 1 hour in length, occur outside of the provider’s home, or in an approved online format, and offer a proof of completion. Trainings must focus on Childhood Development, Early Childhood Education, or applicability to Family Child Care Business.

Where can I learn more about QRS?

If you're having trouble finding the information you need here on the Quality Counts website, please contact the INCCRRA office toll free at (866) 697-8278 to speak to a QRS counselor.