

Reading the Stars: Choosing Child Care with YoungStar

A YoungStar Guide for Families

Every year, YoungStar rates thousands of providers—from 1 Star (for programs that do not meet health and safety standards) to 5 Stars (for the highest quality of care). These stars help families find the right place for their children to learn and grow. But before you can use the stars, you need to know how to read them.

Understanding Star Ratings



5 Star Program

Meets highest levels of quality standards



4 Star Program

Meets elevated levels of quality standards



3 Star Program

Meets proficient levels of quality standards



2 Star Program

Meets health and safety standards



1 Star Program

Does not meet health and safety standards, and therefore cannot participate in YoungStar

What the Stars Measure

YoungStar-rated child care providers go through an evaluation process based on a program's size and structure. For example, a large school-age program goes through a different evaluation process than a small family child care provider. The number of stars a program receives depends on the criteria the program meets within four key areas of care:

1) The Provider's Education & Training

Children benefit when their teachers and caregivers have a solid foundation in early childhood or youth development. YoungStar recognizes the education and training of a program's teachers, administrators and caregivers.

2) The Learning Environment & Curriculum

In order to promote healthy brain development, a young mind needs opportunities to participate in experiences that are meaningful and engaging. YoungStar reviews each program's learning materials, activities, lesson plans, and more.

3) The Program's Professional & Business Practices

When a program runs smoothly, it's better able to focus on the needs of the children and their families. YoungStar values a program that treats their employees fairly, involves parents fully, and manages its responsibilities carefully.

4) The Children's Health & Well-Being

Children develop best in nurturing environments that provide well-rounded care—from physical activity and nutrition to playtime with others. YoungStar rates how programs address and support the needs of the whole child.

Using YoungStar Is Easy

At youngstar.wi.gov, parents can watch videos, download articles, and find useful information on early childhood education, nutrition, and more. You can even discover activities that encourage healthy brain development.

When you are visiting potential providers, look for the **YoungStar rating certificate** to learn more about the program's rating and services.



Need Additional Help?

Visit supportingfamilies.together.org/find-my-local-ccrr-and-frc to get personalized help from a local Child Care Resource & Referral Agency (CCR&R).

Compare Your Options

Want to find local child care programs that match your family's lifestyle, budget, and individual needs? YoungStar gives families the in-depth information they need to make informed choices, including each program's evaluation history, violations it may have received, and special services it provides.

Visit childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov to search thousands of YoungStar-rated programs by:

- Location
- Star rating
- Type of care
- Special features
- Hours of operation
- Your child's age

Look Beyond the Stars

YoungStar-rated providers meet criteria across four categories of care. This means a program with excellent teachers may still earn a lower star rating if its business practices need improvement. That's important information that might change how you look at a program.

Check the YoungStar Rating Details (available online in the Child Care Finder: childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov) to see what criteria a program met within each category. It's a simple way to make sure the child care provider you choose has the qualities you value most.



The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Early Care and Education at 608-422-6002. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.