How to read the stars.

Understanding YoungStar child care quality ratings.
Every year, YoungStar rates thousands of child care 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 parents find the right place for their child to learn and grow. They also show caregivers their strengths and points out ways they can improve.

But before you can use the stars, you need to know how to read them.
Can anyone earn a YoungStar rating?

Any Wisconsin child care provider who serves children from birth through school age can join YoungStar, as long as they meet state regulations. (Programs that have had their license or certification revoked, denied or suspended are rated 1 Star.) In fact, providers who receive a Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy must participate.

Can a child care provider’s rating change?

Absolutely. YoungStar rates participating child care providers every other year. That way, everyone has the most up-to-date information about their community’s child care options. And YoungStar offers caregivers lots of training opportunities, tools and financial support to help them improve.

We’re here to help providers earn the best possible rating—so Wisconsin’s kids can get the best possible start in life.
What do the stars measure?

YoungStar’s rating system gives parents and providers a snapshot of a program’s overall quality. YoungStar measures that quality by evaluating four important areas of care:

- **The Provider’s Education & Training**
  Children benefit when their teachers and care-givers have a solid foundation in early childhood development. So YoungStar weighs the academic achievements of a program’s teachers, administrators and caregivers.

- **The Learning Environment & Curriculum**
  Young minds need activity and engaging, meaningful experiences to grow. It’s important for healthy brain development. So YoungStar reviews each program’s learning materials, activities, lesson plans and more.

- **The Program’s Professional & Business Practices**
  When a program runs smoothly, it’s better able to focus on the needs of children and their families. YoungStar values programs that treat their employees fairly, involve parents fully, and manage obligations responsibly.

- **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. So YoungStar rates how programs address the whole needs of a child.
How do the stars add up?

Every other year, YoungStar-rated child care providers go through a quality-based evaluation process that sets quality standards based on the program’s size and structure. (A day camp is rated differently than a group provider, for example. Just as a group provider caring for 40 children must meet different standards than a family provider who cares for only three, for example.) Programs must meet specific quality benchmarks for each star level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Star Program</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 Star</td>
<td>Meets highest levels of quality standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Star</td>
<td>Meets elevated levels of quality standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Star</td>
<td>Meets proficient levels of quality standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Star</td>
<td>Meets health and safety standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Star</td>
<td>Program does not meet health and safety standards, and therefore cannot participate in YoungStar.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who awards YoungStar ratings?

Child care programs can earn their stars one of two ways. Most ratings are awarded by YoungStar staff. They visit providers, conduct on-site reviews and help programs identify areas for improvement.

Providers can also opt for an automatically generated rating based on standards they've already met, like minimum state-mandated health and safety requirements or accreditations.

YoungStar also automatically grants stars to those providers who participate in programs with exceptionally high education or performance standards (like Wisconsin's federally-spearheaded Head Start programs).

When stars are awarded by the Department of Children & Families, a review of the program is reflected in the YoungStar rating certificate the program is awarded (see example above). This certificate shows the star rating the program earned, along with a description of the high-quality practices they use.
Using YoungStar is easy:

Check out [youngstar.wi.gov](youngstar.wi.gov) to compare providers, find resources or locate a YoungStar office.

YoungStar’s Child Care Finder allows you to search for and find child care programs in your area that meet your family’s needs.

Visit [childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov](childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov).

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.

DCF-P-5028 (R. 06/2022)