Policy Guide

Revised September 2016

Contents

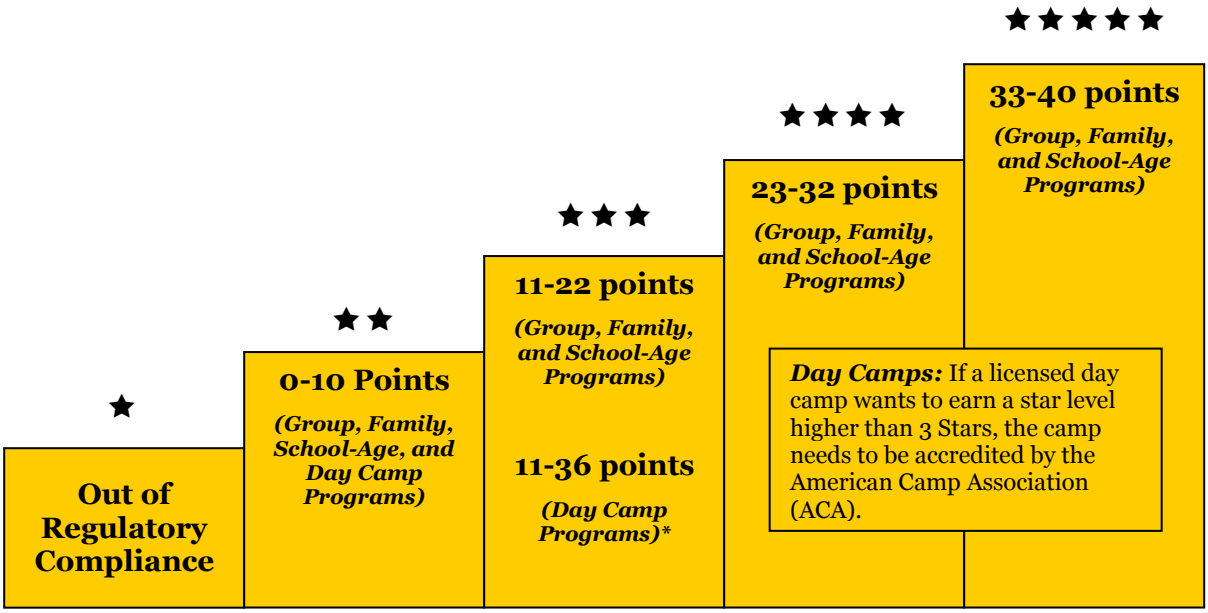
Quality Rating and Improvement System Overall Model 6
Purpose of *YoungStar Policy Guide* 6
Purpose of YoungStar 6
YoungStar Organizational Structure 7
Administrative Agencies 7
Distribution of Regulatory Functions 7
Licensing *7*
Certification *7*
Public Schools *7*
Creation and History of YoungStar 8
Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) 12
Definition 12
Components 13
Research 13
Validity of Measurement Criteria 14
The Rand Corporation QRIS Research 14
Quality in Early Childhood Environments 14
Definition 14
Components 14
YoungStar Participant Categories 15
Optional Participation 15
Mandatory Participation 15
Head Start Program Participation 15
Head Start 5 Star Automatic Rating Eligibility *15*
ACF Deficiencies *15*
Head Start YoungStar Participation Procedures *16*
Public School Board-Managed Program Participation 17
Child Care Programs Operated by Private Schools 17
School-Age Program Participation 17
Day Camp Participation 17
Out-of-State Provider Participation 18
In-Home Provider Participation 18
Staff in YoungStar Programs 19
YoungStar Supervisory/Administrative Staff 19
YoungStar Lead Teaching Staff 20
YoungStar Quality Indicators 22
Provider Training and Educational Qualifications 22
The Registry, The Registry Certificate, and Career Levels *22*
The Registry Individual and Program Profiles *24*

Assigning YoungStar Staff in The Registry Program Profile: Considerations *24*
Typical YoungStar Staffing Requirements for Directors/Site Supervisors *27*
Variations to YoungStar Staffing Requirements for Directors/Site Supervisors *27*
"Grace Period" for Staffing Changes *29*
Staff Changes during a Formal Rating *32*
Environment and Curriculum 33
YoungStar-Developed Self-Assessment Tools *33*
Other Optional Self-Assessment Tools *34*
Business and Professional Practices 36
1. Program Administration Scale (PAS) (for Group Providers) *36*
2. Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care (BAS) *36*
Health and Well-Being 37
Nutritional Practices *37*
Physical Activity *37*
WI Pyramid Model/Social and Emotional Foundations/Inclusion Training *37*
Strengthening Families/Darkness to Light Training *38*
Accreditation and YoungStar 39
Definition 39
YoungStar-Recognized Accrediting Agencies 39
Lapses in Accreditation and YoungStar 40
Voluntary Lapse *40*
Involuntary Lapse *40*
YoungStar Application Process 41
Step 1 - Complete a YoungStar Contract 41
Step 2 - YoungStar Contracts Processed at Local YoungStar Offices 41
Step 3 - YoungStar Ratings Assigned 42
YoungStar Automated Rating *42*
YoungStar Ratings without Technical Consultation *42*
YoungStar Ratings with Technical Consultation *43*
YoungStar Technical Consultation: Process Details *46*
Step 4 - Maintenance and/or Changes to a Star Rating 47
Basic Maintenance of a Rating (No Significant Changes to Program Details) *47*
Circumstances Requiring a New Rating before the Annual Observation *47*
Provider Location Change 47
Regulatory Compliance and Location Changes 47
YoungStar Rating Process and Location Changes 48
YoungStar Technical Consultation Services and Location Changes 48
Accredited Providers and Location Changes 48

Rating Changes 49
When Education Levels Change Enough to Affect Star Levels 49
Providers Requesting a Change to the *Type* of Rating They Receive 49
Rating Changes for Providers who Attain Accreditation 50
Rating Changes for Suspended and/or Revoked Providers 50
YoungStar Providers' Leave-of-Absence Process 51
Group/School-Age Provider 51
Director/Site Supervisor *51*
Lead Teacher/Group Leader *51*
Family Provider 52
Maternity Leave of Absence *52*
Other Leaves of Absence *52*
Star Rating Appeals Process 52
Rationale 52
Design ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
Steps in the YoungStar Appeals Process ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
Withdrawal from YoungStar 56
Voluntary YoungStar Participant Withdrawal 56
Wisconsin Shares Recipient Withdrawal 56
Implementation of YoungStar: The YoungStar Contracted Vendor 57
YoungStar Contracted Vendor Partners 57
Cultural Competence 57
YoungStar Contracted Vendor Responsibilities 57
YoungStar Implementation *57*
Delivery of Technical Consultation Services *58*
Micro-Grant Administration *58*
Formal Rating Services *59*
Early Care and Education Partnerships *59*
Public Outreach and Communication *60*
YoungStar Contracted Vendor: Timeline Management 60
Local YoungStar Office Administration–Timeline Management *60*
Technical Consultant & ERS Observer Communications–Timeline Management *60*
YoungStar Conflict of Interest Procedures 62
Conduct Statement 62
Definition 62
Examples 62
Evaluation of YoungStar 63
DCF Internal Review 63
External State-Level Review 63

External National-Level Alignment 63
YoungStar Websites 64
Public DCF Child Care Finder Website 64
Secure YoungStar Case Management Website 64
REFERENCES 65
APPENDIX A: A Summary of the YoungStar Definitions of *Lead Teacher* and *Director* 66
YoungStar Lead Teacher 66
YoungStar Director 66
APPENDIX B: YoungStar Participation Policy 68
Participation Policies 68
Definitions [of *YoungStar Participation Policy* terminology] 71

Quality Rating and Improvement System Overall Model



Programs out of regulatory compliance are not able participate until coming into compliance with regulation.
**To achieve a 4 or 5 Star rating, Day Camps must be accredited; Day Camps are not eligible to achieve a 4 or 5 Star rating in the YoungStar point system alone.*

Purpose of *YoungStar Policy Guide*

The purpose of the YoungStar Policy Guide is to provide a central document for use in understanding, disseminating, and applying YoungStar policies to all early childhood and school-age providers involved in delivering YoungStar services. Additionally, this document is a resource to which Department of Children and Families (DCF) dcf.wisconsin.gov staff will direct other Early Care and Education (ECE)[1] providers for reliable information related to application procedures, eligibility policies regarding participation in YoungStar, and information about technical consultation and rating services. ***PLEASE NOTE***: All documents developed to communicate YoungStar policy with a revision date subsequent to the date of this Guide (see bottom of page) are to be recognized as current policy.

DCF has developed a continuously updated quick-reference tool for ECE providers to turn to for answers to frequently asked questions. The *YoungStar Frequently Asked Questions* tool can be accessed here: http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/faqs.

Purpose of YoungStar

DCF created YoungStar ***http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/program*** to assist ECE and school-age providers in the assessment and improvement of the level of quality in services they offer. YoungStar is a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) built on the foundation of regulatory compliance with State of Wisconsin licensing and certification statutes and rules. YoungStar offers incentives to participants to encourage awareness of, and increase focus on, levels of quality *exceeding* the minimum requirements set by regulatory compliance standards. The program has been developed based on research and other states' experiences to establish criteria that are research-based, objective, and verifiable on a regular basis.

---

[1] YoungStar defines "**Early Care and Education (ECE)**" as the care and education provided to children from birth through entrance to first grade, as well as the care and education provided to school-age children outside of school hours. In this document, ECE programs are **family child care programs, group child care programs, school-age programs, and day camps**.

YoungStar improves ECE in Wisconsin by providing more targeted information about child care programs to parents, helping them to choose higher-quality child care. YoungStar rewards quality child care providers by awarding financial incentives for demonstrating a commitment to continuous quality improvement. It ensures that providers that are operating within state regulations, and *exceeding* the minimum health and safety standards required by law, are recognized and rewarded for their efforts and benefit from a higher star rating.

Rating providers in YoungStar:

- Improves the overall quality of child care and promotes the health and development of children in early care and education programs
- Empowers parents by providing an easily understandable tool to assist them in choosing higher-quality child care for their children
- Creates incentives and provides supportive resources for providers to improve quality of services, particularly for low-income children
- Establishes a connection between level of quality offered in a child care program and the payment rates provided through the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program - http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/wishares

YoungStar Organizational Structure

Administrative Agencies

YoungStar is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, Bureau of Early Learning and Policy (BELP), within the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE). YoungStar is built on the foundation of *regulatory compliance* http://dcf.wi.gov/youngstar/providers/faqs#reg with licensing and certification statutes and rules.

Distribution of Regulatory Functions

Licensing

As a function of DECE, *licensing* is administered at the state level by DCF. Licensing specialists are located throughout the state to provide regulatory oversight at the local level.

- General information about licensing can be found at: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cclicensing
- DCF Chapters 250, 251, and 252 Licensing Rules can be found at: http://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/cclicensing/rules

Certification

Certification is a county-administered regulatory service that has state-level oversight. For the majority of counties, certifiers are located in each county.

- General information on certification can be found at: http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/cccertification
- DCF Chapter 202 Certification Rules can be accessed at: legis.wisconsin.gov/rsb/code/dcf/dcf202.pdf

Public Schools

Public schools may operate and receive Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy funding for child care facilities under Wisconsin State Statute 120.13 (14). The operation of the child care facility is overseen by the public school board. The public school board may also contract with another entity to operate the child care facility under the supervision of the public school board.

Creation and History of YoungStar

The QRIS model approved by the Joint Committee on Finance (also called the Joint Finance Committee, or JFC) legis.wisconsin.gov/lfb/jfc.html is a hybrid point system. It is based on both the 2005 proposal developed by the public/private KidsFirst: Quality Counts for Kids Task Force and the building-block model contained in the 2009- 11 biennial budget. It has been enhanced to reflect feedback from the child care community and the Legislature. Significant effort went into the development of the current YoungStar model:

2004

- The KidsFirst: Quality Counts for Kids Task Force, composed of representatives from 21 public and private organizations and agencies, met seven times to examine a wide range of quality rating and tiered reimbursement options and was guided by national research and the experiences of other states when developing quality rating systems.
- Three public hearings were held in October 2004 to receive comments on the Task Force recommendations. Comments were also received directly by the Department of Workforce Development [DWD was the state agency in charge of QRIS development until the creation of DCF in 2008 (see below)].

2008

- Various programs of the Department of Health and Family Services were combined with others from the Department of Workforce Development, to create a new Wisconsin Department of Children and Families.
- DCF collected further feedback from meetings with stakeholders beginning in late 2008. The feedback the Department received consistently reaffirmed the need to support quality child care and to reward providers who strive for greater quality. Feedback from the meetings also showed programs providing higher-quality care should receive higher reimbursement than those adhering only to the minimum health and safety standards.

2009

- June 29: *2009 Wisconsin Act 28* Section 9108(7f) legis.wisconsin.gov/2009/data/acts/09Act28.pdf , the 2009-11 biennial budget for Wisconsin, passed and included a directive for the creation of a child care quality rating and improvement system.

2010

- March 24: Then-DCF Secretary Reggie Bicha submitted to the Joint Committee on Finance a letter and plan for the implementation of YoungStar.
  - Secretary Reggie Bicha's letter on YoungStar implementation - https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/secBichaletterysimplementation.pdf
  - *The YoungStar Proposal* (March 2010) - https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ysproposal.pdf
- June 23: YoungStar was unanimously passed by the Joint Committee on Finance in *Motion 38* https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/motion38.pdf , which detailed how YoungStar would be implemented, including immediate training and technical consultation opportunities in twelve counties. The Motion also required DCF to return to the Committee in November with a five-year plan for the implementation of YoungStar.
- June 30: A *Request for Proposal* https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/initialysrfp.pdf was issued to select the YoungStar regional entities to be responsible for training, technical consultation and rating in the six YoungStar regions of Wisconsin.
- August-December: Training and technical consultation was provided to over 5,000 participants through over 200 trainings in twelve Wisconsin counties. Topics: YoungStar Overview, Environment and Curriculum, Health and Wellness, and Professional Practices.

- November: A contract was issued to the YoungStar Consortium, an organization made up of Celebrate Children Foundation, Supporting Families Together Association, and Wisconsin Early Childhood Association to implement YoungStar in all six regions of Wisconsin.
- November 22: DCF submitted its Five-Year Plan for YoungStar.
  - Secretary Reggie Bicha's overview letter to co-chairs of Joint Committee on Finance https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/secBichaoverview.pdf
  - Financial request letter to co-chairs https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/financialrequestcochairs.pdf
  - YoungStar Five-Year Plan https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/fiveyearplan.pdf
  - YoungStar Five-Year Plan: Appendices and Glossary https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/fiveyearplanappendices.pdf
- December 14: The Joint Committee on Finance approved DCF's YoungStar Five-Year Plan.
- December: Providers began to apply to participate in YoungStar and were rated; parents were able to search for YoungStar-rated providers on the *YoungStar Provider Search* page childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov/Search/BasicSearch.aspx.

2011

- March 1: DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson sent the final report on YoungStar immediate training and technical consultation to the Joint Committee on Finance.
  - Secretary Anderson's letter to co-chairs of Joint Committee on Finance https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/secretarylettercochairs.pdf
- DCF final report on YoungStar immediate training and technical consultation https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ysimmediatetta.pdf
- June 26: *2011-2013 Executive Budget, 2011 Wisconsin Act 32* SECTION 1381. 49.155(6)(e)

  The biennial budget for Wisconsin passed and included a directive for Wisconsin Shares tiered reimbursements beginning July 1, 2012. Act 32 changed the tiered reimbursement schedule to provide modifications to the incentives proposed in the original plan. See *Tiered Reimbursement Details* below.

2012

- March 1: School-age providers are invited to apply to be part of YoungStar.
- July 1: Tiered reimbursement rates for Wisconsin Shares began.

2013

- January 1: Tiered reimbursement rates for 5 Star providers increased to 25%.
- December 29: Tiered reimbursement rates for 4 Star providers increased to 10%.

2014

- March 1: Licensed Day Camps enrolling children for 14 weeks or fewer are eligible to participate in YoungStar.
- June 1: Licensed Day Camps that take Wisconsin Shares Child Care subsidy payments are required to participate in YoungStar prior to June 1, 2014.

2016

- July 1: YoungStar Contracted Vendor becomes Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA).

YoungStar Adjustment Details

1 Star = provider is prohibited from receiving Wisconsin Shares child care subsidies.

2 Star = rates are decreased by 5%

3 Star = rates have no change.

4 Star = rate is increased by up to 10%

5 Star = rate is increased by up to 25%

YoungStar Implementation Period - (Jan. 2011 – July 1, 2013)

During the YoungStar Implementation Period, a provider's YoungStar Contract was used to determine Wisconsin Shares payments by tying these payments to the provider's YoungStar anniversary date (the date the program received its *first* YoungStar rating). If the YoungStar renewal resulted in a rating increase or decrease, the provider received an adjusted payment at the new rating level dating back to the YoungStar anniversary date.

After July 1, 2013, Wisconsin Shares payments are now directly tied to the date a child care program receives its annual YoungStar rating or the program's anniversary date, whichever is later:

- If an annual rating is completed *prior* to the program's YoungStar anniversary date, the rating is not activated until the anniversary date.
- If the rating is completed *after* the program's YoungStar anniversary date, the Wisconsin Shares payment is not adjusted until the rating process is complete.

All Certified Family and School-Age providers, Licensed Family providers, Licensed Group child care centers, Day Camps, and public school programs that provide care outside the normal school day must participate in YoungStar before they can receive a Wisconsin Shares authorization. This requirement can only be met with the submittal of a *YoungStar Contract*. Once the *YoungStar Contract* is received, **AND** the provider is in full regulatory status, authorizations can be created to the previous Sunday of receipt of the *YoungStar Contract*. For example, if a *YoungStar Contract* is received on Thursday, October 11, 2014, and the provider is regulated, authorizations can be created starting Sunday, October 7, 2014.

Thus, to create a Wisconsin Shares authorization, the following two things must be in place during the authorization period:

- The provider must be regulated.
- The provider must have a contract on file:
    - YoungStar Contract
    - Wisconsin Shares Contract (for in-home and out-of-state providers, since these providers cannot participate in YoungStar)

A *YoungStar Contract* is valid for one year and must be renewed on an annual basis. DCF mails renewals a minimum of 120 days prior to the due date of the renewal contract.

NOTE: YoungStar Contract terms will extend to two years beginning January 1, 2017.

YoungStar and MyWIChildCare

The MyWIChildCare EBT card will provide Wisconsin families with the ability to pay for child care using approved Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy funds using an EBT card. It will also allow eligible parents to have an EBTcard authorized with their approved child care subsidy. Under the MyWIChildCare model, the customer relationship shifts from one that is between the child care provider and the state, to a relationship that is between the child care provider and the parent. This shift will empower and promote parental

responsibility by having parents directly involved in the negotiation of child care payments for their children. With the use of the MyWIChildCare card, there is opportunity for improved customer relationship between parents and child care providers.

The Wisconsin Shares EBT Card will be rolled out in two phases:

- Phase I - October 2016: The MyWIChildCare Card will be issued to Wisconsin Shares parents in the La Crosse area. Phase 1 counties include Buffalo, Clark, Jackson, Monroe, Pepin, Trempealeau, Vernon, and La Crosse counties.
- Phase II – February 2017: The MyWIChildCare Card will be rolled out state-wide to all parents receiving Wisconsin Shares benefits.

After the parent initiates the payment, the Department of Children and Families will continue to support quality child care facilities under the new MyWIChildCare payment process. Payments will be transferred directly into the provider's bank accounts monthly. A prospective payment will be made to the provider based on Wisconsin Shares cases and YoungStar rating level.

YoungStar Rating

- The YoungStar rating batch will run in the evening on the 15th of every month. If the star level goes up or down, the local YoungStar office will contact the child care program. The rating will then be effective the 1st of the following month.
- If a provider's star level decreases due to a staff change, they move into a grace period of 90 days from the day the rating batch runs. If, at the end of that time the program has not replaced the departed staff with an equivalently qualified staff member, the provider's lower rating will be activated. In YoungStar CMS, the rating will show up as active the first of the next month. However, the provider **WILL NOT** have funding recouped from them for the time they were in a grace period. **This is a change from current practice.** For example, Sandy's Child Care is rated 5 Stars, but then loses a staff person on October 4th. When the rating batch on October 15th occurs, a pending 4 Star rating is generated for the program. The program chooses to use its grace period. On January 15th, if the rating batch runs and still shows the program at 4 Star, the YoungStar staff will activate the October 15th 4 Star pending rating. The YoungStar Adjustment moving forward will become reflective of the 4 Star rating beginning February 1st.

YoungStar Adjustments

- The YoungStar Adjustment will be calculated when an authorization is created.
- The YoungStar Adjustment amount will be given to the program prospectively. For example, if a child is authorized for 160 hours per month, the YoungStar Adjustment for that month will be initiated on the 1st of the month based upon that authorization.
- This quality adjustment is meant to support child care programs that provide high quality care.
- If a provider does not update their Program Profile in time to make the rating batch cutoff (the 15th of every month), the YoungStar rating will not be updated until the following rating batch on the 15th of the next month and the rating will become active the 1st of the following month. For example, if the program updates their program profile on October 17th, the program's rating will update on November 15th and this rating will become effective December 1st. No back payments will be issued to cover this time lapse.
- The subsidy amount loaded on the parent's MWCC EBT card will be decreased by 5% if they choose a 2 Star program.
- If the parent chooses a 3, 4 or 5 Star program, their MWCC EBT card will be loaded up to the county maximum (minus the copayment) or the provider's price (whichever is lower). YoungStar Adjustments will not be loaded onto the cards.
- If the parent chooses a 4 or 5 Star program, the YoungStar Adjustment will be paid directly to the provider by the state's EBT vendor, FIS.

Notices and Information Sharing

- The Parent Authorization Notice will show the subsidy amount loaded on the card, but will not show the YS adjustment.
- The **DCF MyWIChildCare Parent Portal** will not show the YoungStar Adjustment. It will show only the subsidy amount loaded onto the MyWIChildCare EBT card.

- The Provider Authorization Letter will not include any information about the subsidy amount loaded on the MyWIChildCare EBT card or the YoungStar Adjustment. It will simply tell them that they have been authorized to care for a child(ren) receiving Wisconsin Shares (it will include the child's name, age and the authorization period) and will contain the following statement:
    - *If your program is rated 4 Stars or 5 Stars, a YoungStar Adjustment will be made directly to you to support quality services within the child care setting. For providers located outside of Wisconsin, the subsidy amounts are issued at the 3 Star level and are eligible for a 10% increase based on accepted accreditations. For more information on YoungStar, visit the website at: youngstar.wi.gov*
- The provider can see the YoungStar Adjustments made at a deposit level by logging into their FIS account on ebtEDGE.com. For example, if five children are authorized to a 5 Star program, the YoungStar Adjustments for all five children will be one lump-sum deposit for a given month.
- The **DCF Child Care Provider Portal** will include information about which children are authorized to the provider and will also show a list of YoungStar Adjustments made to the provider by month and child. For example:

October	
Child Name	**YoungStar Adjustment Amount**
Sam Smith	$25

Errors and Mistakes

- If a child was authorized to the incorrect provider and the provider was incorrectly given a YoungStar Adjustment based on that error, the incorrect amount will be deducted from the provider's future YoungStar Adjustments. This could happen for other reasons, such as a child authorized and then later found to be ineligible for Wisconsin Shares. If the provider's star rating drops below a 4 Star for the month following this type of error, that provider would no longer be receiving a YoungStar Adjustment. Therefore, recoupment will need to occur through benefit recovery.
- Whenever the YoungStar Adjustment amount changes for a 4 or 5 Star provider, a YoungStar Adjustment will also be made. Positive amounts will be sent to the provider. Negative amounts will be offset by future positive amounts (i.e., future payments will be reduced to offset the negative adjustments).

Fraud

- In cases of YoungStar fraud by the provider, the parent will be held harmless. Any YoungStar quality payments or Wisconsin Shares funds paid to the provider that are later found to be fraudulent will be recouped from the provider either through deduction from future YoungStar Adjustments or through the benefits recovery system (determined on a case-by-case basis).

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

Definition

The National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement (a service of the Office of Child Care) defines a QRIS as follows:

> A quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) is 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.[2]

[2] National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement, A Service of the Office of Child Care. (March 2012). *QRIS in statutes and regulations*. Retrieved from http://www.qrisnetwork.org/sites/all/files/resources/gscobb/2012-04-02%2011:56/Report.pdf

**Alliance for Child Care Financing. (2007). Quality Rating and Improvement Systems: A Powerful Policy for Improving and Unifying Early Care and Education.*

Components

An effective QRIS has the following five components[3]:

- **Quality Standards for Programs and Practitioners:**
  - **Legal/Regulatory Standards**
  - **Funding Standards**
  - **Voluntary Standards**

  Quality standards (known as "quality indicators" in Wisconsin) vary by state but are built on state licensing and certification regulations and generally include two or more levels of quality.
- **Support/Infrastructure to Meet Standards:**
  - **Programs: Technical Assistance & Support**
  - **Practitioners: Professional Development**

  Support helps programs meet higher standards and promotes participation. Training, mentoring, and technical consultation are the supports provided in most cases.
- **Monitoring & Accountability (to ensure compliance with standards):**
  - **Programs**
  - **Practitioners**

  Monitoring and accountability document how all programs are meeting standards (quality indicators). A symbol (identified by "stars" in Wisconsin) is awarded to each participating program, which represents the program's level of quality.
- **Ongoing Financial Assistance (linked to meeting standards):**
  - **Programs**
  - **Practitioners**
  - **Consumers**

  Financial incentives linked to compliance with quality standards help to increase program participation and quality and offer provider support. To promote quality in child care, Wisconsin ties the rate of Wisconsin Shares payment to the level of child care quality as represented by YoungStar quality levels.
- **Engagement & Outreach (selling the vision):**
  - **Programs**
  - **Practitioners**
  - **Consumers**

    Engagement and outreach efforts help families learn about quality, as well as program ratings, so they can make more informed choices on behalf of their children.

Research

The YoungStar Five-Year Plan[4] (which was submitted to Wisconsin's Joint Committee on Finance on November 22, 2010) states on p. 4:

> Child care quality and outcomes for children have improved substantially in states that have implemented Quality Rating and Improvement Systems. For example, when Oklahoma's *Reaching for the Stars* QRIS was implemented in 2003, less than 46% of children who received child care subsidies similar to Wisconsin Shares were receiving child care in a higher-quality center. After only two years, that percentage moved up significantly to over 76% receiving child care in a high-quality center. Additionally, we know that when QRIS programs are implemented correctly, they are valid and reliable sources of information for parents who are choosing care for their children. [5]

---

[3] This framework was adapted from:

- QRIS National Learning Network. (2013). *Quality rating and improvement systems framework*. Retrieved from http://www.qrisnetwork.org/our-framework
- Early Childhood Ohio. (2014). *Step up to quality guidance document: Guidance document part one*, p. 5. Retrieved from http://www.earlychildhoodohio.org/sutq_guidance_faq.php

[4] *YoungStar Five-Year Plan*: http://dcf.wi.gov/youngstar/pdf/101122_youngstar_5_year_plan.pdf

[5] Based on research found in: *QRIS and the Impact on Quality*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, accessed 1

Validity of Measurement Criteria
YoungStar was established using objective and research-based criteria. It is critical that criteria measured to demonstrate quality are objective, reliable, regularly available, and efficient to administer. Valid and objective criteria reduce the risks of subjective judgments of raters. It is also critical the criteria used to measure quality are reliable and regularly available to ensure the system operates efficiently. The criteria established for measurement in YoungStar were selected because they meet these characteristics.

WECCS: Wisconsin Early Child Care Study
Through funding from the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant, Wisconsin undertook a validation study of YoungStar. The study asked two formative research questions:

- Do lower-rated programs have lower levels of observed quality than higher-rated programs?
- Do three-to-five year old children in higher-rated programs gain more during a school year in terms of school readiness compared with similar children in lower-rated programs?

Details on the WECCS can be found here:
http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/validationexecutivesummary.pdf
https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/validationexecutivesummary.pdf

The Rand Corporation QRIS Research
The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analyses and effective solutions that address the challenges facing public and private sectors around the world. In their 2008 study, *Child-Care Quality Rating and Improvement Systems in Five Pioneer States: Implementation Issues and Lessons Learned*, the RAND Corporation looked at 5 states to determine successful common elements of a quality rating improvement system. [6]

They identified several common themes among *successful* state systems. All of these elements are incorporated in the fundamental design of YoungStar.

1. Clear goals and expectations
2. Incentives for participating
3. Monitoring performance
4. Evaluation of expectations
5. Encouraging of improved performance through quality improvement support.[7]

Full RAND Study details can be found here:
rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG795.pdf

Quality in Early Childhood Environments

Definition
"Quality child care commonly refers to early childhood settings in which children are safe, healthy, and receive appropriately stimulation. Care settings are responsive, allowing children to form secure attachments to nurturing adults. Quality programs or providers offer engaging, appropriate activities in settings that facilitate healthy growth and development, and prepare children for or promote their success in school."[8]

Components
"Research typically points to two dimensions of quality: structural features and process features. The structural elements of a child care environment establish the foundation for optimal process conditions. Structural

---

July 2014. http://qrisnetwork.org/resource/2015/chapter-8-impact-early-learning-challenge-state-quality-rating-and-improvement-systems
[6]Zellman, Gail L. and Perlman, Michal. *Child care Quality Rating and Improvement Systems in five pioneer states: implementation issues and lessons learned.* RAND Corporation, 2008.
http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG795.pdf
[7] *QRIS and the Impact on Quality*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, accessed 1 November 2010.
[8] Child care & early education glossary. Child Care & Early Education Research Connections, accessed 8 December 2014.
http://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/childcare-glossary#Q

features refer to the way in which the program is organized such as staff-to-child ratio and teacher qualifications. Process quality refers to the experiences children have in child care and include such aspects as adult–child interactions, children's exposure to and involvement with learning materials, and parent–caregiver relationships. These are critical components that directly affect children's behavior and learning experiences in the child-care setting. The most important process element in quality child care is the human relationships between the teaching staff and children and their families." (Uttal, 2002)[9]

YoungStar Participant Categories

Optional Participation

Licensed family, certified family, day camp, certified school-age, and licensed group providers who are *not* receiving Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy payments are eligible to participate in YoungStar on a voluntary basis.

Mandatory Participation

Licensed family, certified family, licensed group, day camp. certified school-age, and public school programs who receive Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy payments *must* participate in YoungStar to receive subsidy payments.

Head Start Program Participation

Head Start programs that accept Wisconsin Shares child care subsidies *must* participate in YoungStar. Head Start programs that do *not* accept Wisconsin Shares child care subsidies *may* participate in YoungStar voluntarily and are encouraged to do so. The guidelines for Head Start program participation in YoungStar are outlined in *Head Start Participation in YoungStar*: http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-faq/ys-faq-headstart.pdf

Head Start 5 Star Automatic Rating Eligibility

Participating Head Start programs will be awarded a 5 Star automatic rating if the program delivers ***3 or fewer hours*** of child care per day and if all criteria outlined in YoungStar policies are met. Participating Head Start programs that deliver ***more than 3 hours*** of child care per day will be rated using the typical YoungStar rating process (Automated, Technical or Formal Rating).

****Head Start programs receiving the YoungStar automatic 5 Star rating are not eligible for YoungStar Technical Assistance or micro-grants.***

DCF compared Head Start Performance Standards to the National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation standards (NAEYC) and found the standards within Head Start to be equivalent to a 5 Star rating for the following reasons:

- Observations are taking place already in a child care/Head Start program through the accreditation/validation process.
- Verification of a high set of standards is reached with the requirements of the Head Start Performance Standards:eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Head%20Start%20Program/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/Head%20Start%20Requirements

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) have regular and ongoing communication as necessary to facilitate the process of determining which Head Start programs are eligible for the 5 Star automatic rating.

ACF Deficiencies

If the granting agency of a Head Start program that is receiving the YoungStar automatic 5 Star rating receives a deficiency on its Aligned Monitoring System review, the grantee, delegates, and partnering agencies that have received the automatic 5 Star rating will no longer be eligible for the automatic 5 Star rating in YoungStar. If the program has any child care hours, they can opt to go through the typical YoungStar rating process or be rated at an automated 2 Star. A Change Form is required for either action and will be sent to the program upon request.

---

[9] Uttal, David H. quoted in *Families, Schools, and Communities: Building Partnerships for Educating Children*. C. Barbour & N. H. Barbour & P.A. Scully, 2008 edition, p. 130-134.

If the deficiency is lifted and DCF is provided written notification by ACF of this, the Head Start program(s) affected by the deficiency can immediately move back to the automated 5 Star rating as long as they still deliver 3 or fewer hours of child care per day and still meet all other criteria outlined in YoungStar Head Start participation policies.

If a Head Start program's licensed group center is found to be out of regulatory compliance with DCF child care licensing, that center would be rated a 1 Star. If the provider subsequently becomes reinstated, the provider's rating will be changed to a 2 Star. The rating will be confirmed by the local YoungStar office, which will then contact the provider and explain next steps available for the program.

Head Start YoungStar Participation Procedures

Head Start programs with no child care ("stand-alone Head Starts")

1. Program turns in YoungStar Contract directly to DCF (see contact information below)
2. Program is rated a 5 Star automatically in YoungStar.
3. If a program receives a deficiency in its Aligned Monitoring System review, it is removed from YoungStar.
4. If the Department of Children and Families (DCF) receives written verification that the deficiency is lifted, the program(s) previously impacted by the deficiency can be reinstated to a 5 Star as of the week the deficiency is lifted by ACF.

Head Start programs that deliver *3 or fewer hours* of child care per day

1. Program turns in YoungStar Contract to local YoungStar office. The local YoungStar office will send the YoungStar Contract to DCF.
2. Program is rated a 5 Star automatically in YoungStar.
3. If DCF receives a deficiency notice from ACF related to a Head Start grantee, delegate, or child care partner that had previously received the automatic 5 Star rating, the program will be dropped immediately to a 2 Star. Its Wisconsin Shares subsidies will be paid at -5%.
4. A letter and a YoungStar Change Request form will be sent to the impacted program(s), indicating that the deficiency has been received. The program will have 45 days to return the Change Request back to DCF.[1]
   a. If the Change Request is not received within the specified time frame, the program will remain a 2 Star for the remainder of its YoungStar Contract or until DCF is provided written verification that the deficiency has been lifted by ACF.
   b. If the Change Request is received within that time frame, the program can be rated through the typical YoungStar rating process of either a Technical Rating or Formal Rating. If the program is then rated higher than a 2 Star, it will receive back-payment to the date the YoungStar Change Request was entered into automation.
5. If DCF receives written notification from ACF that the ACF deficiency is subsequently corrected, the Head Start program may move back up to the automatic 5 Star rating.

[1] Send completed documents to erin.gernetzke@wisconsin.gov or to:

Erin Gernetzke, YoungStar
201 E Washington Ave Room E200, PO Box 8916
Madison, WI 53708-8916

Public School Board-Managed Program Participation

Public schools are created or provided for by the legislature as required in the state constitution, controlled by a unit of government (most often a locally elected school board), and funded with public money. Other characteristics of public (and private) schools maybe be found at:
https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sms/pdf/oe_school_types_2013_06.pdf

Child care programs operated by public schools do ***not*** need to be licensed. Under s. 48.65, Wis. Stats., public or private schools are exempt from licensure. Child care programs operated by public schools are, however, required to meet the child care licensing rules established by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families under s. 120.13(14), Wis. Stats., which says in pertinent part that a school board may…

> *(14) Child care Programs. Establish and provide or contract for the provision of child care programs for children. The school board may receive federal or state funds for this purpose…. Child care programs established under this subsection shall meet the standards for licensed child care centers established by the Department of Children and Families.*

Programs in which the child attends a regulated child care facility in the a.m. or p.m. – family or group center – and transitions to a wrap-around program at a 3K/4K in a school district building or in a 3K/4K collaboration partner site must participate in YoungStar if the program receives Wisconsin Shares for any of the children in care. YoungStar will not provide assessment or technical consultation services for publicly funded 3K/4K classrooms; however, assessments and technical consultation services will be provided for the child care portion of these programs.

Child Care Programs Operated by Private Schools

Private schools are created by private entities, such as corporations, individuals, or for-profit or non-profit businesses or organizations (including churches), rather than by the government. An institution is a private school *only if* its educational program meets *all* of the criteria under Section 118.165(1), Wis. Stats. For a plain-language explanation of these criteria, see:

https://dpi.wi.gov/sms/private-schools, and
https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sms/pdf/oe_school_types_2013_06.pdf

Private schools do not need to be licensed to operate a child care center except as it applies to Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy payments. Private school child care programs are eligible to receive subsidies from the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy program ***only if*** the child care program is licensed by the Department of Children and Families or, if the program cares for three or fewer children under age 7, certified by the county in which the care is provided.

School-Age Program Participation

For YoungStar purposes, school-age child care programs are defined as programs that provide care primarily to children ages 5-12, usually during the hours before and after school or during holiday and vacation breaks. In some limited circumstances, younger children may be enrolled. School-age providers are required to participate in YoungStar if they accept Wisconsin Shares. School-age applications are to be returned to the local YoungStar office.

Day Camp Participation

Beginning March 1, 2014, licensed Day Camps enrolling children for 14 weeks or fewer (per year) are eligible to participate in YoungStar. (Licensed Day Camps that have children enrolled for more than 14 weeks are rated using the YoungStar School-Age Evaluation Criteria.)

Licensed Day Camps that take Wisconsin Shares are *required* to participate in YoungStar effective June 1, 2014. If licensed Day Camps do not submit a YoungStar contract to the local YoungStar office, they will not be eligible for Wisconsin Shares payments or authorizations.

Out-of-State Provider Participation

Out-of-state providers are defined by DCF Administrative Rule 201 as ***"Providers who are located outside Wisconsin (MN, IL, IA, MI)."*** These providers serve children who *reside in Wisconsin*, but receive child care in a bordering state.

Out-of-state providers who care for children, at either a full-time or part-time level, and receive Wisconsin Shares subsidy payments are NOT eligible to receive YoungStar services and will NOT be listed in the YoungStar public website. This is because YoungStar was designed and funded to provide assistance for Wisconsin licensed and certified child care providers. However, out-of-state providers are still eligible to receive Wisconsin Shares payments for the Wisconsin children in their care.

In order to maintain their subsidies, out-of-state providers must submit to DCF a signed Wisconsin Shares contract. Information from this contract is entered into the Child Care Statewide Administration on Web (CSAW) program. Once entered, the out-of-state provider will be eligible for Wisconsin Shares payments. However, the program will not be visible on the YoungStar public website.

In-Home Provider Participation

An "in-home provider" is defined by DCF Administrative Rule 201 as ***"a regulated child care provider caring for the child in the child's own home."*** In-home providers do not serve children from the general public and therefore are not eligible to receive YoungStar services, as YoungStar was designed and funded to provide assistance for Wisconsin licensed and certified child care providers serving children *outside* of the child's home.

While not eligible to receive YoungStar services such as technical consultation, in-home providers who accept Wisconsin Shares payments must maintain their eligibility to receive Wisconsin Shares payments for children in their care. In order to receive Wisconsin Shares subsidies, in-home providers must submit to DCF a signed Wisconsin Shares Contract. Information from this contract is entered into the Child Care Statewide Administration on Web (CSAW) program. Once entered (*and* if the provider is certified), the in-home provider will be eligible to receive Wisconsin Shares payments. Wisconsin Shares payment rates for in-home providers will be provided at DCF pre-determined levels, and the in-home program will not be visible on the YoungStar public website.

The Wisconsin Shares Contract can be found on the DCF website:
https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/forms/pdf/2587.pdf.
The Wisconsin Shares contract must be mailed to:
Wisconsin Department of Children and Families
Bureau of Early Learning and Policy - YoungStar
201 E Washington Ave, Room E200
Madison, WI 53708

Staff in YoungStar Programs

YoungStar Supervisory/Administrative Staff

The table below shows the titles and responsibilities of Supervisory/Administrative Staff in the four different types of programs, or *tracks*, represented in YoungStar. Programs would use these titles when completing *The Registry Program Profile*.

Type of Program	Titles Used in *The Registry Program Profile* for Assigning YoungStar Staff	Responsibilities
Family	Primary Family Provider	Responsibilities include the overall direction and daily operation of the program. Therefore, this position: • Develops program mission, philosophy, goals, and policies • Is responsible for: ○ Program planning and evaluation ○ Administration (including fiscal management) ○ Organizational development (including management of human resources) ○ The recruitment, hiring, and guidance of teaching staff and – when necessary – for firing or dismissal of staff For ***Group, School-Age, and Day Camp*** programs participating in YoungStar, this person *typically* has the following responsibilities: 1. Supervision of the planning and implementation of the programming for children 2. Supervision of the staff at the site 3. Staff meetings and orientation 4. Continuing education for the staff Two *variations* to these typical requirements will be explained in the "Variations to typical YoungStar staffing requirements for Directors/Site Supervisors" section.
Group	Director of Record	
School-Age	Director of Record or Site Supervisor	
Day Camp	Director of Record	

In addition to these responsibilities, supervisory/administrative staff in Group, School-Age, and Day Camp programs may step in to help out with Lead Teacher/Group Leader responsibilities if a staff member is ill, during staff break/meal times, when special programming or activities require more adults to be present, or for emergencies.

YoungStar titles might be different from the titles used in a specific program. For example, in a particular program, a Camp Director might be called simply "Director." In other programs, this person might be known as a "Coordinator" or an "Administrator."

When completing a Registry Program Profile (see the "YoungStar Quality Indicators: Provider Training and Educational Qualifications" section), YoungStar titles are used. The person listed as the "Director of Record" will have her/his educational and training qualifications counted for YoungStar points and star rating.

For consistency in the rest of this document, this person will be referred to as the:
Director/Site Supervisor
(This title will include the YoungStar Family Child Care Licensee/Owner.)

YoungStar Lead Teaching Staff

The table below shows the titles and responsibilities of Lead Teaching Staff in the four different types of programs, or *tracks*, represented in YoungStar. Programs would use these titles when completing *The Registry Program Profile*.

Type of Program	Titles Used in *The Registry Program Profile* for Assigning YoungStar Staff	Responsibilities
Family	YoungStar Lead Teacher/ Primary Family Provider	Plans, implements, and supervises the daily activities for a group of children, engages in program planning, communicates with families, and builds relations with the community. ***Note:*** The role of Lead Teaching Staff and Supervisory/ Administrative Staff is typically filled by the same person in Family Child Care. If that is the case, then that person should be listed in ***both*** roles in the Program Profile.
Group	YoungStar Lead Teacher/ Primary Family Provider	Plans, implements, and supervises the daily activities for a designated group of children, under the direction of a Director/Site Supervisor, and assists in program planning, communication with families, and relations with the community.
School-Age	YoungStar Lead Group Leader	
Day Camp	Lead YoungStar Day Camp Counselor	

The YoungStar definitions of these roles might be different from the definitions used in a specific program. For example, in a particular program, a Lead Teacher might be called simply "Teacher."

When completing a Program Profile at The Registry (see the "YoungStar Quality Indicators: Provider Training and Educational Qualifications" section), YoungStar titles are used. The person listed as the YoungStar Lead Teacher/Primary Family Provider will have her/his educational and training qualifications counted for YoungStar points and star rating.

Beginning January 1, 2016, if a program has more than one individual listed in their Program Profile for a classroom, the training (but not the education) of either individual will be counted when awarding YoungStar points for the following indicators: Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards Training/School Age Curricular Framework (B.2.1), Social Emotional/WI Pyramid Model/Inclusion Training/Guiding Children's Behaviors in School-Age Program (D.1.3), and Strengthening Families/Darkness to Light Training (D.1.4).

To be qualified to be listed in the Program Profile, the individual needs to be in the assigned classroom for at least 50% of the time that the classroom is open (up to 40 hours per week). The individual could be listed as any of the following in the Program Profile: Other Teacher, Teacher, Assistant Teacher or Assistant School-Age Teacher. The educational level of these individuals that are listed as something other than the Lead Teacher

will not be counted for component A of YoungStar. The method of awarding points for component A will remain the same.

For example, if the Other Teacher in a classroom has taken the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS) but the Lead Teacher has not, the program would be given credit for that classroom having met the requirement for WMELS training.

For consistency in the rest of this document, this person will be referred to as the:
Lead Teacher/Group Leader
(This title will include the YoungStar Primary Family Provider.)

For a summary of the YoungStar definitions of *Lead Teacher* and *Director*, see Appendix A.

YoungStar Quality Indicators

Provider Training and Educational Qualifications

In Wisconsin, ECE providers and the organizations that serve them have long supported the principle that training, experience, and professionalism are the hallmarks of quality care. In YoungStar, these components are verified using a career-level recognition system called The Registry (http://www.the-registry.org).

The Registry, The Registry Certificate, and Career Levels

The Registry recognizes the professional achievements of early childhood and school-age educators in Wisconsin by issuing a *Registry Certificate*. The Registry Certificate acknowledges and highlights the recipient's unique training, background, and experiences in the field by detailing a provider's:

- Formal and/or credit-based education
- Number of years in the child care and education field
- All child care positions the recipient is qualified to fill in the state of Wisconsin
- CPR, First Aid, and Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) Training

For each of its members, The Registry assigns a *Career Level* from 1 to 17, which can be found on The Registry Certificate. See The Registry Career Levels in the table on the next page or at:

http://www.the-registry.org/Portals/0/Career%20Levels%209-2014.pdf

To earn education points and/or a star rating higher than a 2 Star, a program must:

1. Ensure that each staff member who will be identified for YoungStar educational and training purposes registers for an ***Individual Registry Profile*** and receives a ***Registry Career-Level Certificate*** processed on the current 17-level system, ***on or after January 1, 2009.***
2. Register the program to receive a Program Profile ID and Password. After receiving the ID/Password, the program must ***create a Program Profile***. Within the Program Profile, the program must:
   a. Assign a Director of Record or Licensee/Owner.
   b. Create a classroom/group or classrooms/groups that match the number of classrooms/groups that are open in the program at least 25% of the time the program accepts children, up to 40 hours. For example, if the program is open 40 hours per week, any classroom/group that is open for 10 hours per week would need to be on the Program Profile. Classrooms listed cannot exceed maximum group size or licensing capacity.
   c. Assign one YoungStar Lead Teacher/Group Leader to *every* classroom/group. Other teaching staff may be listed as a "Teacher" in the Program Profile and those individuals' relevant *training* (not career level) qualifications will be considered for YoungStar points.
3. ***Update the Program Profile immediately (within one business day) to reflect:***
   a. ***Staff changes.*** The provider must maintain *accurate and current* information in the Program Profile to consistently reflect staffing changes and classroom assignments. If an individual changes positions from one program to another, or changes positions within a program, that individual must be removed from her/his prior position in The Registry Program Profile before s/he can be assigned into the new position.
   b. ***Changes in the number of classrooms/groups.*** A classroom/group needs to be added to the Program Profile when it is open more than 25% of the time the program accepts children. A classroom/group needs to be removed from the Program Profile when it is open less than 25% of the time the program accepts children, or when it is no longer being used.

   Information entered into The Registry Program Profile is automatically used to update a program's star rating, so this means that programs need to update their Program Profiles with any changes to the program and/or staffing ***as soon as they happen***. If there is outdated or inaccurate information on a Program Profile, inaccurate star ratings may result, DCF's Fraud Detection and Investigation Unit (FDIU) will become involved, and inaccurate Wisconsin Shares payments will be recouped and/or adjusted when discovered. For more information, see *Maintaining Your Registry Program Profile*:

   http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/keep-program-profile-updated.pdf

Career Levels

Last Updated 9/2014

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10
		Approved Training[1]			**Non-Credit Credentials**	**Credit-Based Credentials**			
Registry Membership	Verified high school diploma or GED	80 hours tiered training (any tier)	120 hours tiered training (any tier)	160 hours tiered training (40 hours must be tier 2 or 3 training)	CDA Montessori Credential[2] Family Services Credential	Mentor and Mentor-Protégé[3] (5 credits)	Family Services Credential or equivalent[4] (6-9 credits)	Registry Credentials[5] ▪ Afterschool and Youth Development ▪ Family Child Care ▪ Inclusion ▪ Infant Toddler ▪ Leadership ▪ Program Development	Registry Credentials[6] ▪ Administrator ▪ Preschool Apprenticeship Program (18 credits)
		This includes entry-level course hours (effective after January 1, 2009)				**Credit-Based Increments[9]**			
						6 related credits	12 related credits	18 related credits	24 related credits

Level 11	Level 12	Level 13	Level 14	Level 15	Level 16	Level 17
Early Childhood and Youth Development Degrees						
1 Year Diploma[7] Any 2 Registry Credentials	Associate's Degree	Associate's Degree + Registry Credential	Bachelor's Degree Bachelor's Degree + DPI License[8]	Bachelor's Degree + Registry Credential Bachelor's Degree + Registry Credential + DPI License[8]	Master's Degree Master's Degree + DPI License[8]	Doctorate Doctorate + DPI License[8]
Credit-Based Increments[9]	**Degrees in Another Field**					
30 related credits	Bachelor's Degree Associate's Degree + 30 related credits	Bachelor's Degree + Registry Credential Bachelor's Degree + 30 related credits	Master's Degree Bachelor's Degree + 36 related credits	Doctorate Master's Degree + Registry Credential	Master's Degree + 36 related credits	Doctorate + 36 related credits

[1]Approved Training is training awarded a specific tier as approved by The Registry and taught by a Registry-approved trainer.

[2]Montessori Credential accredited by Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (MACTE) only (http://macte.org/). Other out-of-state Credentials submitted will be evaluated on an individual basis.

[3]Must be taken in the role of Mentor.

[4]Equivalent is the 9-12 credit technical diploma from Northeast Wisconsin Technical College.

[5]Each individual Registry Credential eligible for Level 9 is comprised of 4 specific courses (12 total credits) per Credential.

[6]Each individual Registry Credential eligible for Level 10 is comprised of 6 specific courses (18 total credits) per Credential.

[7]One-year diploma comprised of specific coursework from the Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) totaling 24 or more credits. Other out-of-state Credentials submitted will be evaluated on an individual basis.

[8]DPI licenses recognized are for the Professional Educator license type (https://dpi.wi.gov/tepdl/licensing). Substitute teacher and/or instructional aide are not eligible.

[9]Credits calculated as semester credits.

The Registry Individual and Program Profiles

Assigning YoungStar Staff in The Registry Program Profile: Considerations

When assigning staff as YoungStar Supervisory/Administrative Staff or YoungStar Lead Teaching Staff, YoungStar-participating programs must place the ***correct staff*** into The Registry Program Profile.

For Lead Teachers/Group Leaders, the ***correct staff member*** is the person who spends the ***greatest number of hours between 6 am and 6 pm*** in the classroom/group.

If ***two individuals act as teachers*** in a classroom/group for an ***equal number of hours*** per week, YoungStar-participating programs should take the following considerations into account:

Educational Qualifications of Staff

When assigning staff as YoungStar lead staff, programs should consider the educational qualifications of these staff. This is because programs can improve quality and gain YoungStar points by analyzing the educational qualifications of their staff and making staff assignments on the basis of this analysis.

YoungStar-participating programs should consider:

- The Career Level of each staff member, AND
- Whether each staff member has taken trainings that earn points in YoungStar, such as trainings on the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards and the Wisconsin Pyramid Model

Educational qualifications can be in the form of:

- Credentials:
  - CDA (Child Development Associate)
  - The Registry Credentials
- College credits related to early childhood or school-age care
- College degrees:
  - Associate's Degree (FYI: The YoungStar equivalent to a "related Associate's degree" is 60 credits beyond high school, with at least 30 of those credits related to early childhood or school-age care.)
  - Bachelor's Degree
  - Master's Degree
  - Doctorate
- Department of Public Instruction (DPI) licenses
- Additional training related to possible points in YoungStar:
  - Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS)
  - School-Age Curricular Framework (SACF)
  - Wisconsin Pyramid Model
  - Strengthening Families
  - Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)
  - Guiding Children's Behavior in School-Age Care
  - Tribes® TLC
  - Etc. (See the *YoungStar Evaluation Criteria* documents listed below for more trainings that can help programs improve quality, which can therefore boost YoungStar points.)

Educational Qualifications, The Registry, and YoungStar

The educational qualifications of staff are reflected in Registry Career Levels 1 – 17. The relationships among educational qualifications, Registry Career Levels, and YoungStar points are described in:

- *The Registry Career Levels*: See the table at the end of "The Registry, The Registry Certificate, and Career Levels" section," or see: http://the-registry.org/Portals/0/Career%20Levels%209-2014.pdf

- *YoungStar Point Detail* and *YoungStar Evaluation Criteria* documents:

  http://dcf.wi.gov/youngstar/point-detail.htm

Remember, these are ***YoungStar considerations*** related to educational qualifications. Of course, programs will also want to consider other factors when making staff assignments, such as years of experience and relevant trainings not listed above. In addition, any person listed as a Director/Site Supervisor or a Lead Teacher/Group Leader in The Registry Program Profile ***must meet licensing requirements*** for the position.

A Reminder About Staffing Changes

If there is a change in staffing, a program must ***immediately*** (***within one business day***) update its Registry Program Profile, so that staff educational qualifications are documented accurately, an accurate star rating is earned, and any Wisconsin Shares payments are made correctly.

Assigning Staff to Only One Program at a Time

A person can be associated with ***only one program*** at a time in The Registry Program Profile, and for YoungStar, a staff member's educational qualifications can only count toward points for one program, even if the staff member works for more than one site. This means a person who has responsibilities for more than one program must choose one Program Profile with which to be affiliated.

Assigning Staff to Only One Classroom/Group at a Time

In The Registry Program Profile, there is a one-to-one correspondence between YoungStar Lead Teachers/Group Leaders and classrooms/groups. This means:

- A YoungStar Lead Teacher/Group Leader can be associated with ***only one*** classroom/ group in The Registry Program Profile, ***and***
- A classroom/group can have ***only one*** YoungStar Lead Teacher/Group Leader identified in The Registry Program Profile.

Example

One YoungStar Lead Teacher: **Sara**	⟷	Infant Classroom
One YoungStar Lead Teacher: **Eric**	⟷	Toddler Classroom
One YoungStar Group Leader: **Marcela**	⟷	School-Age Group

When a YoungStar Lead Teacher/Group Leader works in more than one classroom/group

If a YoungStar Lead Teacher/Group Leader works in more than one classroom or group, he or she cannot be assigned to both classrooms/groups. He or she can only be assigned as a YoungStar Lead Teacher in one classroom/group at a time.

When two Lead Teachers/Group Leaders share a classroom/group

When two people ***share a classroom/group***, the Lead Teacher/Group Leader who is teaching the ***greatest number of hours between 6 am and 6 pm*** in a given classroom (or with a given group) should be listed as the YoungStar Lead Teacher/Group Leader in The Registry Program Profile.

For example, a program is open 24 hours per day. In the Bumblebee classroom, Callie works from 7 am to 3 pm, and Sarah works from 3 pm to 11 pm. Callie has to be listed as the Lead Teacher in the Program Profile because even though both she and Sarah work eight hours per day, only three of Sarah's hours are before 6 pm. Therefore, Callie has more hours between 6 am and 6 pm, and ***only hours between 6 am and 6 pm are considered***.

If two or more people ***work an equal number of hours*** between the hours of 6 am and 6 pm, ***either person can be listed*** as the Lead Teacher/Group Leader on The Registry Program Profile, and the Director/Site Supervisor may choose which teacher to assign as the Lead Teacher/Group Leader for YoungStar education points. This choice must be reflected in The Registry Program Profile.

Verification

Before approving a rating, the YoungStar Technical Consultant/Rater will visit each classroom or group at least once and must see the person who is listed as the Lead Teacher or Group Leader in The Registry Program Profile teaching in that classroom or group. If a Technical Consultant/Rater does not see each Lead Teacher/Group Leader in the classroom/group in which s/he is listed in The Registry Program Profile, a Technical Rating will not be completed, and the program will be ineligible for a Formal Rating until the information can be verified. Further proof may be required in the form of time sheets or pay stubs.

Activity Stations (Applicable only in School-Age and Group Programs)

If Lead Teachers/Group Leaders are in charge of individual activity stations in the program, with the children rotating among the stations:

- Licensing ratios must be met, ***and***
- Each group of children would constitute one "Classroom/Group" in The Registry, ***and***
- The program would need to assign one YoungStar Lead Teacher/Group Leader to each classroom/group.

Family child care programs

In most cases, the role of Lead Teaching Staff and Supervisory/Administrative Staff is filled by the *same person* in Family Child Care. If that is the case, then that person should be *listed in both roles* (Licensee/Owner and Primary Family Provider) in the Program Profile.

If these two roles are filled by *two different people*, each person should be listed only in her or his role. The person who is *with the children the majority of the time the program is open* is to be listed as the Primary Family Provider. *YoungStar will consider the educational qualifications of only the Primary Family Provider*.

If in the case of a family child care program that has a person, other than the Licensee or Owner, teaching for the greatest number of hours between the hours of 6 AM and 6 PM, that person should be listed as the Primary Family Provider on the Registry Program Profile.

Typical YoungStar Staffing Requirements for Directors/Site Supervisors

For YoungStar, the person who is designated as the Director/Site Supervisor shall be on-site for a required percentage of time that s/he works for the program. This required percentage is *based on the total number of hours* the Director/Site Supervisor works for the program and *depends on the type of program*, as shown in the following table:[10]

Type of Program	Minimum Percentage of Time the Director/Site Supervisor is Required to be On-Site *(as a percentage of the total number of hours s/he works for the program)*
Family	Not Applicable
Group	At least ***25%***
School-Age	At least ***25%***
Day Camp	At least ***50%***

For YoungStar, the person who is designated as the Director/Site Supervisor shall typically have the following responsibilities:

1. Supervision of the planning and implementation of the programming for children
2. Supervision of the staff at the site
3. Staff meetings and orientation
4. Continuing education for the staff

Typical YoungStar staffing requirements expect each program to have a Director/Site Supervisor who is dedicated solely to the performance of all four of these responsibilities.

Variations to YoungStar Staffing Requirements for Directors/Site Supervisors

If a program does not have a Director/Site Supervisor position dedicated solely to the performance of the four responsibilities listed above, the program may ask for a variation from typical YoungStar staffing requirements. The two allowable variations are explained below:

Variation 1: Centralized Administration (for programs with multiple sites)

If the program has multiple sites and is administrated outside the center, the program may ask for a variation from the typical YoungStar staffing patterns:

- ***Responsibilities 1 and 2*** must be performed by a person who is ***on-site*** at a ***Group or School-Age*** program for at least ***25%*** of the total number of hours s/he works for the program. (*Note:* For a ***Day Camp*** program, responsibilities 1 and 2 must be performed by a person who is ***on-site*** for at least ***50%*** of the total number of hours s/he works for the program.)
- ***Responsibilities 3 and 4*** may be performed by a person or persons who are located ***off-site***.

In the Centralized Administration variation, the program has two options:

- **Option 1:** List a person from the administrative office who is responsible for 3 and/or 4 as the Director/Site Supervisor.
- **Option 2:** List the person who is on-site performing responsibilities 1 and 2 as the Director/Site Supervisor. **If the program wants to choose this option and the person listed as the Director/Site Supervisor is also a Lead Teacher/Group Leader, the rules for Dual-Role (below) must be followed.**

Variation 2: Dual-Role

[10] Licensing requirements regarding the role of the Director/Site Supervisor are different from YoungStar and can be found here: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cclicensing/rules. Licensing is meant to be a base level for health and safety, and YoungStar is meant to be a step higher toward quality. So, while a program may be following licensing requirements for the role of a Director/Site Supervisor, the requirements outlined in this document will be used for YoungStar.

Whether or not a program is eligible to use the dual-role option depends on the number of children the program is licensed to serve.

- ***Group*** programs licensed for ***31 or more children*** and ***School-Age and Day Camp*** programs licensed for ***51 or more children*** (regardless of the full- or part-time nature of the program) *cannot* have a Director/Site Supervisor listed as a YoungStar Lead Teacher/Group Leader in addition to being listed as a Director/Site Supervisor in the Program Profile. The educational qualifications will only count for one role or the other, not both.

- ***Group*** programs licensed for ***30 or fewer children*** and ***School-Age and Day Camp*** programs licensed for ***50 or fewer children*** *may* have a Director/Site Supervisor who is listed as a YoungStar Lead Teacher/Group Leader for a classroom in the following *limited* circumstances:

  - To be eligible to earn ***3 Stars***:

    - For ***Group and School-Age*** programs, the person in the dual-role has ***25%*** of the time the program is open devoted to the responsibilities of the Director/Site Supervisor. For example, if the program is open 40 hours per week, the person in the dual-role would have to be in the Director/Site Supervisor role for 10 hours per week.
    - (*Note:* For ***Day Camp*** programs, the person in the dual-role has ***50%*** of the time the program is open devoted to the responsibilities of the Camp Director.)
    - Child-to-staff ***ratios*** must follow licensing requirements.
    - The dual-role Director/Site Supervisor must also meet the ***educational qualifications*** for a 3 Star rating.

  - To be eligible to earn ***4 Stars***:

    - For ***Group and School-Age*** programs, the person in the dual-role has ***37.5%*** of the time the program is open devoted to the responsibilities of the Director/Site Supervisor. For example, if the program is open 40 hours per week, the person in the dual-role would have to be in the Director/Site Supervisor role for 15 hours per week.
    - (*Note:* To be eligible to earn 4 or 5 Stars, ***Day Camp*** programs must be accredited by the American Camp Association - http://www.acacamps.org/accreditation.)
    - Child-to-staff ***ratios*** must follow licensing requirements.
    - The dual-role Director/Site Supervisor must also meet the **educational qualifications** for a 4 Star rating.

  - To be eligible to earn ***5 Stars***:

    - For Group and School-Age programs, a ***full-time*** dedicated Director/Site Supervisor must be in place, who meets the ***educational qualifications*** for a 5 Star rating.
    - (*Note:* To be eligible to earn 4 or 5 Stars, ***Day Camp*** programs must be accredited by the American Camp Association: http://www.acacamps.org/accreditation)

Verification of the Variations

YoungStar Technical Consultants will confirm that the program's budget, job descriptions, and timesheets and/or schedule matches the requirements of the variations that a program wishes to use.

"Grace Period" for Staffing Changes

DCF allows **one** 90-day "grace period" each calendar year for providers whose star rating drops due to staff turnover. During this time, it is expected that the provider will actively be pursuing staff to replace the departed staff member at the same or higher educational attainment (Career Level and YoungStar-specific trainings). If during the 90 day grace period a staff member of equal or higher educational level is hired and a complete application is submitted to The Registry, the pending lesser rating will not be acted upon. Rather, the previous, higher rating will remain activate.

If after 90 days the position has not been filled, a completed application has not been submitted to The Registry, or the position has been filled by an employee that does not meet the current star level's qualifications, then the lower rating will be activated by local YoungStar staff, and Wisconsin Shares payments will be adjusted to match the lower star rating dating *back to the date the staffing changes occurred*.

Remember: Information from The Registry is automatically used to update star ratings! So, if an employee leaves, the program needs to **immediately** update their Program Profile to reflect that change. Staff changes can sometimes cause a program's star rating to go up or down.

- If staff changes cause a rating to go **up**: As soon as the information is entered correctly in The Registry by the program, YoungStar will receive it and the star level will become pending on the Friday following the change. The local YoungStar office will approve the pending rating.
- If staff changes cause a rating to go **down**: **One time per calendar year**, the program is allowed a **90 day grace period** from the date the rating drops to fill the vacant slot. YoungStar staff at the local YoungStar office will notify any program in this situation. The grace period begins the date the lower rating is calculated for the first time and ends 90 calendar days later. If an employee leaves a program and the program does not immediately update their Program Profile, the rating drop would not occur. In this case, the grace period would be calculated from the date the employee departs the program. This is because it is the program's responsibility to ***immediately*** update the Program Profile when an employee departs. If, within 90 calendar days, the program has hired a similarly-qualified or more-qualified employee and has updated this information in the Registry, the star rating and payment will stay the same or be increased accordingly. If a program hires a new employee who does not meet the same qualifications or does not hire within the 90 days, the star rating and Wisconsin Shares quality incentive payments to the program may be recouped to the date the past employee left the program. The verification of staffing rules apply in grace period situations as well.

Further Information about the Grace Period

Grace Period Waivers
The grace period is given once per calendar year and is 90 calendar days in length. The grace period is typically given the first time a rating drops in a calendar year. Programs can choose to "save" their grace periods to use at a later date if they anticipate a drop in rating later in the calendar year. However, if a program waives a grace period, it cannot be reclaimed. For example, if a program has a short rating drop in January, but they anticipate a longer rating drop in June when two of their highly-qualified teachers are leaving, they would sign a Grace Period Waiver form when the rating drops in January. Then, if the rating drops again in June, they could use their grace period at that time. However, if they sign a grace period waiver in January and the rating never drops again during that calendar year, they will not be allowed to retroactively "claim" their January grace period at the end of the year.

Registry Career Level Processing Delay
If, within the 90 day grace period, a program hires a similarly-qualified or more-qualified employee and has a ***completed*** application for a Registry Career Level, but the new employee is not in the program's Program Profile because the Career Level has not been processed, the local YoungStar office will wait for the Program Profile to be completed before activating the rating. **A completed application means that all materials for a Registry Career Level have been received by The Registry and all necessary fees have been**

paid. YoungStar staff will verify that the application was complete before the 90 day grace period expired by contacting The Registry.

Moving Employees Within a Program or Hiring Within 14 Calendar Days

Prior to a rating drop caused by a highly-qualified employee leaving, if a program has an employee on staff without a Registry Career Level who is similarly-qualified or more-qualified than the employee who is leaving and the program moves that second employee into the classroom to replace the departing employee as soon as the first employee departs, this does not count as a staff change that would use a grace period as long as a ***completed*** application for a Registry Career Level is submitted to The Registry within 14 days of the rating drop.

If the program submits a ***completed*** application for a Registry Career Level to The Registry within 14 days of the rating drop, the local YoungStar office will verify with The Registry that a completed application was received within 14 days of the rating dropping.

Alternatively, if a program is able to immediately replace a departing employee with a new employee who is similarly or more qualified than the departing employee **AND** the program moves that second employee into the classroom to replace the departing employee as soon as the first employee departs, this does not count as a staff change that would use a grace period as long as:

- The new employee has a Registry level that can be verified as meeting the requirements of the former employee within 14 days of the rating drop, **OR**
- The new employee does not have a Registry level but has submitted a ***completed*** application for a Registry Career Level within 14 days of the rating drop. The new employee's education will be verified once the Registry processes the application.

After verification of the submission of a ***completed*** application for a Career Level to The Registry, the local YoungStar office will hold off activating the lower rating. After the Registry processes the Career Level, the employee should immediately be placed into the Program Profile by the program. Then, the program should notify the local YoungStar office. If the rating goes up after the Program Profile was updated, the local YoungStar office will activate the higher rating. If the rating remains at the lower level after the Program Profile is updated, the local YoungStar office will activate the lower rating. In either case, the rating will be effective the date of the original rating drop.

Example: ABC Child Care is rated 3 Stars. One of their teachers, Jane Smith (Registry Level 12), is leaving. Cathy Jones, who has an associate's degree in early childhood but has not been given a Registry Career Level yet because she was not in a lead teaching role, is currently working in the same classroom as Jane as an assistant teacher:

1. Jane takes another job and ABC promotes Cathy to be the lead teacher in that classroom. However, because Cathy doesn't have a Registry Career Level, she cannot be put into ABC's Program Profile.
2. ABC's rating calculation changes from 3 Star to 2 Star because there is no one in that classroom.
3. The local YoungStar office sees this lower pending rating calculation and contacts the program to understand the situation.
4. ABC submits Cathy Jones' ***completed*** application for a Registry Career Level to The Registry within 14 days of the rating drop.
5. After 14 days, the local YoungStar office verifies with The Registry that Cathy's completed application was received within 14 days of the rating dropping.
6. After the Registry processes the Career Level, Cathy is immediately placed into the Program Profile by ABC. ABC notifies the local YoungStar office.
7. ABC's rating calculation goes back up and the local YoungStar office withdraws the pending 2 Star rating.

Banking Grace Period Days
Programs cannot "bank" grace period days to use later in the year. For example, a program's rating drops from a 3 Star to a 2 Star on March 1, and the program chooses to use a grace period. Then, the rating goes back up on April 15. The program has used the grace period for that calendar year and does not get the unused 60 days.

Timing of Grace Periods
A grace period begins the first day the lower rating is calculated. If a rating is calculated at the end of one calendar year and extends into another calendar year, the following rules will apply:

- If a program has not used their grace period for the calendar year that is ending, they may use it and it would range into the new calendar year for a total of 90 calendar days. If the program still hasn't hired a similarly or more qualified employee after 90 days, the local YoungStar office would follow the normal procedure to activate the lower rating. For example, a program goes from 4 Star to 3 Star on December 13, 2016 and they have not used their grace period for 2016. They may use it then and it would extend through March 13, 2017. The program MAY NOT stack multiple years' grace periods to extend the grace period beyond 90 days. So, in this example, they cannot use the 2016 grace period from December 13, 2016 until March 13, 2017 and then add the 2017 grace period on so that it is extended to June 13, 2017.
- If a program's rating drops in one calendar year and the program has already used their grace period for that calendar year, once the new calendar year begins, they **may not** use the grace period for the new calendar year because the rating drop happened in the previous calendar year. The grace period for the new year would start the first time the program had a rating drop in the new calendar year. For example, a program goes from 4 Star to 3 Star on December 15, 2015 but they have already used their grace period for 2015 so the local YoungStar office follows the normal procedure to activate the lower rating. The rating batch runs again on January 15, 2016 and the program is still at 3 Star. The program cannot use their 2016 grace period because the original drop occurred in 2015. If the program then goes back up to 4 Star on January 15, 2015 and then drops again to 3 Star on February 15, 2016, they could use their 2016 grace period then because the rating drop occurred in 2016.

Staff Changes during a Formal Rating

When a program requests a Formal Rating (FR), the program's Technical Consultant (TC) will verify that the program is eligible for a FR. The TC does this by verifying that the program meets:

- Staff educational requirements for 4 and/or 5 Stars, ***and***
- All of the other requirements for 3 Stars (with some exceptions detailed at the URL below).

See a list of tips for preparing for a FR, at:

http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/fro-intro-letter.pdf

Staff educational qualifications must meet the 4 or 5 Star minimum requirements within The Registry at the time the FR is requested. If there is turnover of a Lead Teacher/Group Leader between the time that the FR is requested and the time that the FR is to take place, the program *may or may not* still be eligible for a FR. ***FR eligibility depends on whether there is another classroom/group in the same age group*** that can be observed by the ERS Observer ["same age group" means the same Environment Rating Scale (ERS) can be used with both classrooms/groups (the ECERS-R, the ITERS-R, or the SACERS-U)]:

- If there ***is another classroom/group*** that can be observed in the ***same age group*** (ITERS-R, ECERS-R, or SACERS-U) as the one the Lead Teacher/Group Leader has left, then the ***FR can take place***.
    - Any grace period that might arise from the staff change will be handled by the Technical Consultation (TC) office and will not impact the program's FR eligibility.[11] A program will still be eligible for a FR whether or not the program can replace the staff person within the grace period.
- If there ***is NOT another classroom/group*** to observe in the ***same age group*** (ITERS-R, ECERS-R, or SACERS-U), the program ***may or may not still be eligible*** for a FR, depending on whether the program uses a ***grace period***:
    - If the program is ***eligible for, and uses, a grace period***, the program will remain eligible for a FR in a "pending" status during the 90-day grace period (no observations or evaluation criteria review will be completed during that time). The grace period will be handled by the TC office.[11]
        - If a Lead Teacher/Group Leader who meets the FR educational requirements is hired before the 90-day period expires, the FR will be completed as soon as possible.
        - If the 90-day period expires without hiring a Lead Teacher/Group Leader who meets the FR educational requirements, the program will lose eligibility for a FR, and a Technical Rating will be completed instead.
    - If the program is ***not eligible for a grace period*** (the grace period has already been used, or the change does not trigger a grace period), then the program will lose eligibility for a FR, and a Technical Rating will be completed instead.

[11]This means that all the contact made with the program (to tell the program it is in a grace period and to verify that someone else has been put into the Program Profile in time) will be done by the TC office, not the FR.

Environment and Curriculum

The child care environment affects the way children behave, develop, and learn. It also affects the quantity and quality of interactions between adults and children. It includes tangible aspects, such as appropriate curriculum, materials and equipment, and intangible aspects, such as the physical and human qualities that together create an atmosphere that promotes self-esteem, social interaction, rich language, and the joy of learning.

YoungStar utilizes a variety of assessment tools to evaluate and measure quality within the child care setting. Providers interested in attaining the highest star ratings available in YoungStar will have several aspects of their learning environment and curriculum observed and rated. Focus will be centered on:

- Program alignment with the *Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards* (WMELS) - collaboratingpartners.com/wmels-about.php. WMELS has been nationally recognized as a useful tool to improve practices in early childhood settings. WMELS establishes a connection between developmentally appropriate practice and early care settings in key areas.
- Likewise, alignment with the *Wisconsin Afterschool Network School-age Curricular Framework* https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/sa-curricularframework-info.pdf can be used in programs with school-age children.
- Use of a valid self-assessment tool which leads to a Quality Improvement Plan. https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/samplebqipgeneral.pdf
- Verified tool used for assessment
- Targeted lesson plans and tracking of individual child outcomes

YoungStar-Developed Self-Assessment Tools

Programs can demonstrate efforts made to self-assess the elements of their program that are linked to higher quality care by utilizing a *YoungStar Self-Assessment tool*. The YoungStar Self-Assessment tools are designed to assist providers in identifying which areas they could focus on when developing their written Quality Improvement Plans.

The YoungStar Self-Assessment Tool assists child care providers in identifying and measuring important indicators of quality. This instrument (provided for free on the YoungStar website) is designed to help providers assess space and furnishings, personal care routines, literacy and language components, indoor and outdoor activities, interactions of staff, children and adults, program structure and provision for children with disabilities, and promotion of diversity. The instrument also helps the provider assess contract and program policies, program practices, professional development, and community supports.

Links to YoungStar-Developed Self-Assessment Tools

Group: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-self-assessment/ys-self-assessment-gcc.pdf

Family: http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-self-assessment/ys-self-assessment-fcc.pdf

Age: http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-self-assessment/schoolageselfassessment.pdf

Day Camp: http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-self-assessment/daycampselfassessment.pdf

Other Optional Self-Assessment Tools

YoungStar has compiled a list of additional Self-Assessment tools that Wisconsin child care providers can preview for free on two-week loan from the Wisconsin Child Care Information Center. To borrow materials, email CCIC at ccic@dpi.wi.gov or phone them toll-free at 1-800-362-7353.

1. Grow in Quality Self-Assessment Tool

A two-part tool designed to assist providers with the development of meaningful plans for program improvement.

Part 1

Materials and Practices Assessment Tool:

M = Materials - the number of materials accessible to the children, the quality of the space available in which to use the materials, and the adequacy of the amount of time that the materials are accessible to children
A = Age-appropriateness - developmentally appropriate materials in a range of complexity to meet the needs of all children
P = Plan - observation of the classroom, examination of the lesson plans, and a teacher self-assessment of whether there is evidence of alignment between classroom materials and daily activities.

Part 2

Professional Practices Assessment Tool:

Measures considerations of global practices in staff development, business management, and family involvement.

GROUP PROVIDER

https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-self-assessment/mapselfassessment.pdf

FAMILY PROVIDER

https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-self-assessment/mapfamilyassessment.pdf

2. The *Creative Curriculum* and *Teaching Strategies Gold* Tools

A. *The Fidelity Tool Teacher Checklist* has been designed for use by teachers, administrators, and supervisors. Teachers can use the checklist in an ongoing manner to inform their work, help set up the classroom environment, and as the year progresses, help evaluate and assess their work with children. Administrators can use *The Fidelity Tool for Administrators* to gain information as part of the program's ongoing self-assessment and continuous improvement process. The tool covers physical environment, structure, teacher-child interactions, assessment, and family involvement.

- *The Fidelity Tool Teacher Checklist, Preschool Edition*
- *The Fidelity Tool for Administrators, Preschool Edition*

The Fidelity Tool Teacher Checklist and *The Fidelity Tool for Administrators* have replaced the *Implementation Checklist: The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* (which is still available).

The Fidelity Tools can be found at:

http://teachingstrategies.com/professional-development/coaching-fidelity/

B. The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos, 2nd Ed. Rev.

This tool is designed to guide the individual professional development of teachers who work with children under age three. Teachers can use it to reflect on their teaching practices and make suggestions about the design and delivery of professional development services. The tool can help administrators identify each teacher's level of curriculum implementation, areas of strength, and areas where professional development is

recommended. It can be used as part of the program's ongoing self-assessment and continuous improvement process. Sections of the tool cover overall physical environment, materials and equipment, and building partnerships with each family. This tool also helps teachers reflect on how they are guiding children's learning and behavior, how they observe, the experiences they provide, and the routines that are conducted.

The Implementation and Planning Tool for the Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos is still available.

The Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers & Twos can be found at:

http://shop.teachingstrategies.com/page/74258-creative-curriculum-infants-toddlers.cfm

3. HighScope Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA) for Group Providers

The Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA) is a rating instrument designed to evaluate the quality of early childhood programs and identify staff training needs. The Preschool PQA is reliable and valid and is appropriate for use in all center-based early childhood settings, including but not limited to those using the HighScope educational approach.

- *Preschool Program Quality Assessment (PQA) for Group Providers* - highscope.org/Content.asp?ContentId=116

4. Environment Rating Scales

The scales define environment in a broad sense and guide the program to assess the arrangement of space both indoors and outdoors, the materials and activities offered to the children, the supervision and interactions (including language) that occur in the classroom or family child care home, and the schedule of the day, including routines and activities. The support offered to parents and staff is also included. [12]

- *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R):* http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/node/324
- *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R)*: http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/node/84
- *Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised (FCCERS-R):* ers.fpg.unc.edu/node/111
- *School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale-Updated (SACERS-U):* http://www.ersi.info/sacers-u.html

NOTE:
Wisconsin providers may preview many of these tools for free by borrowing them on two-week loan from the Child Care Information Center.
E-mail CCIC at ccic@dpi.wi.gov or phone them toll-free at 1-800-362-7353.

5. Other Self-Assessment Tools for School-Age/Day Camp Programs

- California After-School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool
- City of Madison Self-Assessment
- Council on Accreditation Afterschool Self-Assessment
- National Afterschool Association Standards for Quality School Age Care Self-Assessment
- Association for Early Learning Leaders (with accrediting agency National Accreditation Commission, or NAC) *Tools of the Trade*™
- National Institute on Out-of-School Time: Afterschool Program Assessment System (APAS)
- New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN) Quality Self-Assessment Tool
- School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS-U)

[12] *Environment Rating Scales: About Environment Rating Scales*. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, FPG Child Development Institute, ERS project, accessed 26 June 2014. ers.fpg.unc.edu/about-environment-rating-scales

- Wisconsin After-School Continuous Improvement Process (WASCIP) Self-Assessment Guide – for 21st Century Community Learning Centers
- YMCA School-Age Care Program Guidelines (available for YMCAs only)
- YMCA Day Camp Program Guidelines (available for YMCAs only)
- Program Quality Assessment (PQA) – for use as a Youth PQA (YPQA), School-Age PQA, and Camp PQA

Business and Professional Practices

YoungStar considers the administration and management of early childhood and school-age programs as an integral factor that affects the quality of children's experiences in an indirect way by ensuring that the infrastructure and supports are in place to promote optimal experiences and interactions.

The administration and management of programs can be evaluated against the following YoungStar quality indicators for Business and Professional Practices:

- Ongoing Yearly Budget/Budget Review/Record-Keeping/Accurate Taxes
- Employment Policies and Procedures
- Use of staff-focused Strategic Planning
- Professional Development Practices
- Staff Benefits
- Family Engagement Practices

To evaluate the business and professional practices within Wisconsin's child care environments, YoungStar draws from the *Program Administration Scale* (PAS), the *Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care* (BAS). These tools help evaluate the child care environment through data collection from many sources including interviews, financial document review and observation. Additionally, the tools help measure the overall quality of business practices of early care and education programs and serve as useful guides to evaluate and improve programs by providing a focused look at best practices at the classroom level as well as a broad view of program quality from an organizational perspective.

NOTE: These tools are not used in their original formats.
YoungStar uses them as a guide for evaluating business practices.

1. Program Administration Scale (PAS) (for Group Providers)

The PAS is designed to measure and improve the overall quality of business practices in center-based programs. Administrators can set goals for incrementally improving administrative practices of early care and education programs. This instrument provides a focused look at best practice in the broad view of program quality from an organizational perspective.

- *Program Administration Scale (PAS)* - cecl.nl.edu/evaluation/pas.htm

2. Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care (BAS)

The BAS is designed to measure and improve the overall quality of business practices in family child care settings. Providers can easily set goals to improve business practices for their family child care business. This instrument provides a picture of the quality of business practices that support the program.

- *Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care (BAS)* cecl.nl.edu/evaluation/bas.htm

NOTE:
Wisconsin providers may preview all of these tools for free by borrowing them on two-week loan from the Child Care Information Center.
Email CCIC at ccic@dpi.wi.gov or phone them toll-free at 1-800-362-7353.

Health and Well-Being

Early childhood and school-age providers play a crucial role in promoting early learning about the health, safety, and nutrition of every child in their care as well as ensuring the development of young children's self-esteem, social competence, and pro-social behaviors. When children have caregivers who model healthy choices and behaviors and teach children to take active roles in caring for their bodies, making appropriate food choices, and participating in physical activity, they naturally acquire a sense of pride and accomplishment in their independence and develop a sound foundation for healthy growth in all other areas of development.

YoungStar will measure health and well-being by evaluating nutrition, health, safety, and physical activity levels in addition to educational training levels in the topics of social and emotional foundations, inclusion practices, and child abuse and neglect awareness.

Nutritional Practices

YoungStar promotes sound nutritional practices in early childhood, giving recognition to the importance of establishing healthy eating patterns early.

YoungStar will measure nutritional practices by verifying:

a) The program participates in the *Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)* http://dpi.wi.gov/community-nutrition/cacfp (confirmed by DPI) including mandatory participation in CACFP-related training opportunities, ***or*** the program can demonstrate that it provides well-balanced meals and snacks daily by providing three months of menus.
b) The program must have policies and procedures to address children's allergies and accommodate dietary restrictions. This requirement applies even if there are no children in care with allergies or dietary restrictions.

Physical Activity

YoungStar asserts that physical activity is a daily routine necessary to promote wellness and prevent obesity in children. To earn the point in this category, a program must provide at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day for children 2 and older. Documented and verifiable daily schedule, and lesson plans must exist demonstrating a familiar pattern of regular physical activity to promote physical well-being. The program must also provide physical activities for children birth to 24 months of age, allowing opportunity for infants to explore and one-year-olds to have active free play.

WI Pyramid Model/Social and Emotional Foundations/Inclusion Training

YoungStar maintains that strong social and emotional foundations in early childhood are a determinant in a child's future success and readiness for school. Programs that provide inclusive child care settings, offer trained social-emotional support, and support children's optimal development can receive optional points in this category when staff have training verified through their Registry Career Levels.

YoungStar verifies whether a program staff member, listed in their Program Profile, has one or more of the following:

a) Three credits of inclusion and/or social-emotional training
b) Completion of the Wisconsin Pyramid Model Training collaboratingpartners.com/social-emotional-competence-sefel-training-opportunities.php
c) Registry-verified equivalency of 15 or more hours of YoungStar-approved non-credit training on inclusive practices, serving children with disabilities, and children with special health needs.
d) Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) Training
e) Guiding Children's Behavior Training
f) Tribes TLC Training

Strengthening Families/Darkness to Light Training

Child care providers have a critical role in ensuring that children are safe in their child care setting. Providers can be an important resource for families in detecting early signs of stress, neglect, and abuse.

Automated linkage with The Registry will verify that providers are trained in protective factors around working with families and/or have completed the Darkness to Light Training.

Below is a list of courses that are accepted for this Strengthening Families/Darkness to Light Training indicator:

- Strengthening Families Program: http://www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org/training.html
- Family Services Credential: https://sites.google.com/a/cesa5.org/portage-project/home/trainings/family-service-credential/fsc-training
- A Registry-approved equivalent that demonstrates knowledge of protective factors.
- Darkness to Light, if administered by a PDAS-approved trainer (PDAS = The Registry's Professional Development Approval System)
- 10-307-167 ECE: Health, Safety, and Nutrition
- Touchpoints Birth to Three: Your Child's Emotional and Behavioral Development
- Other trainings may be submitted to the Department for evaluation to see if they meet the intent of the indicator.

Wisconsin Mandated Reporter Online Training

At this time, the Wisconsin Mandated Reporter Online Training is available for programs to take online at http://wcwpds.wisc.edu/related-training/mandated-reporter/ . This training may be used to meet licensing requirements for training in child abuse and neglect prevention, however, it will not be counted in YoungStar beginning January 1, 2016.

It will be counted as a registered training if entered by the program into The Registry. For information on how to do this, contact The Registry: http://www.the-registry.org

Accreditation and YoungStar

Definition

Accreditation is a voluntary process designed to improve the quality of early and school-age care programs. Accreditation systems require programs to meet standards that exceed minimum state regulatory requirements. Achieving accreditation involves extensive self-study and validation by professionals outside the program to verify that quality standards are met.[13]

YoungStar-Recognized Accrediting Agencies

YoungStar accepts the following accreditations as equivalent to a ***5 Star*** rating:

- Association for Early Learning Leaders (formerly the National Association of Child Care Professionals), through the National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Programs (NAC)
- City of Madison Group and School-Age Accreditation
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

YoungStar accepts the following accreditations as equivalent to a 4 Star rating:

- Council on Accreditation (COA)
- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
- Satellite Family Child Care Accreditation (in the greater Madison area)
- American Camp Association (ACA)

YoungStar accepts the following accreditations as equivalent to a 4 Star or a 5 Star rating:

- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)
- AdvancED
- American Montessori Society (AMS)

NOTE: This list is updated periodically and the most updated version can be found on the YoungStar website at: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/policy

When a program becomes accredited or extends/renews its accreditation, it is the responsibility of the program to send its certificate of accreditation/re-accreditation to the Department of Children and Families via:

Fax: 608-224-6178 or E-mail: youngstar@wisconsin.gov
YoungStar cannot recognize a program as accredited until the certificate of accreditation/re-accreditation is received.

The valid dates of the accreditation will be entered into the YoungStar system, and the YoungStar rating and Wisconsin Shares adjustments will reflect the accredited status from the first of the month following the accreditation designation to the first of the month following the accreditation expiration date. Should the program experience an involuntary lapse of accreditation status, the program's accredited status in YoungStar will be removed the first of the month following the involuntary lapse.

Contact Information for the Accrediting Agencies

- American Camp Association (ACA): http://www.acacamps.org/accreditation
- American Montessori Society (AMS): http://amshq.org/
- City of Madison Group and School-Age Accreditation: www.cityofmadison.com/commserv/CommunityCenters.html
- Council on Accreditation (COA): http://coanet.org/
- National Accreditation Commission (NAC) for Early Care and Education Programs (the accrediting agency

[13] *National Accreditation Organizations for Early Childhood Programs*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, accessed 7 July 2011. http://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/acf-801-online-help-35

for the Association for Early Learning Leaders): http://www.earlylearningleaders.org/

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): www.naeyc.org/accreditation
  - National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC): https://www.nafcc.org/Accreditation
- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA): www.necpa.net/index.php
- Satellite Family Child Care Accreditation (in the City of Madison): www.satellitefcc.com/joining.html

YoungStar cannot recognize a program as accredited until the certificate of accreditation/re-accreditation is received. The valid dates of the accreditation will be entered into the YoungStar system and the YoungStar rating and corresponding YoungStar Adjustments will reflect the accredited status effective the first of the month following the date the accreditation begins.

Lapses in Accreditation and YoungStar

Voluntary Lapse

If a program is accredited and the accreditation lapses or expires, upon notification from the provider or the accrediting body that the accreditation has lapsed or expired, the provider's rating will drop to a 2 Star rating effective the first of the month following the date the accreditation lapses or expires. If the program accepts Wisconsin Shares payments from families, the drop in star rating will negatively affect families' Wisconsin Shares subsidy amounts and the program's YoungStar Adjustment.

In anticipation of an accreditation expiring, a program may complete a YoungStar Change Form and request a technical or formal rating to replace a rating based upon accreditation. Programs are eligible for Technical Assistance if they have not used their annual allotment of Technical Assistance already that year. The program will be placed into the normal queue for YoungStar services with other programs who are applying for YoungStar for the first time and renewing programs.[3]

YoungStar services for these programs have the same timeframe as new applicants:

Technical Assistance = 20 weeks

Formal Rating with Technical Assistance = within 4 weeks of the conclusion of Technical Assistance

Formal Rating without Technical Assistance = 8 weeks

It is in the best interest of the program to allow plenty of time for a replacement rating to be given in order to avoid the negative effect on Wisconsin Shares payments. If a program knows they will be allowing their accreditation to lapse or expire, we recommend programs submit a YoungStar Change Form **at least six months in advance** of the accreditation expiring if possible. If the accreditation lapses before a program has been given a Technical or Formal rating, the program's rating will move to a 2 Star on the first of the month following the date the accreditation lapsed/expired until the Technical or Formal rating is completed.

Involuntary Lapse

If a program is accredited and the accreditation is revoked by the accrediting body for any reason, upon notification from the program or the accrediting body that the accreditation has been revoked, the program's rating will drop to a 2 Star rating effective the first of the month following the date the accreditation was revoked. If the program is accepting Wisconsin Shares payments from families at the time of the rating change, the drop in star rating will negatively affect the families' Wisconsin Shares subsidy amounts and the program's YoungStar Adjustment.

A program may complete a YoungStar Change Form and request a Technical or Formal Rating at any time to replace a rating based upon accreditation. Programs are eligible for Technical Assistance if they have not used their annual allotment of Technical Assistance already that rating year. The program will be placed into the normal queue for YoungStar services with other programs that are applying for YoungStar for the first time and renewing programs.[4] Timeframes for YoungStar services for these programs are the same as for new applicants (see timeframes above).

NOTE: DCF will consider accepting additional accreditations through a process of reviewing and comparing the accreditations' demonstrated competencies to those of the NAEYC standards. Policies have been established that provide the opportunity for additional accreditation agencies to submit an alignment of their quality standards to the NAEYC standards for review by DCF. If an organization submits an application for review to DCF and DCF has clarifying questions that, with additional information, would allow the accreditation to be accepted as equivalent to a YoungStar rating DCF will allow the organization to provide clarification and additional information to support their application.

However, if the accrediting body is found to not meet the threshold, they must wait one calendar year from the original submission prior to resubmitting an application for reconsideration. If an organization resubmits their accreditation after making modifications to their actual standards to meet the NAEYC standards, DCF will not accept as valid programs currently accredited by that body until the accrediting body provides DCF with a written verification that they have reviewed the currently accredited programs under the new standards.

Contact DCF for materials to begin this alignment process.

YoungStar Application Process

Step 1 - Complete a YoungStar Contract

Providers who want to participate in YoungStar must agree to accept children enrolled in the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program. Providers must complete a YoungStar Contract for each individual child care site, even if the sites are owned or operated by the same person or organization. The YoungStar Contract is available on the *For Providers* webpage of the YoungStar website https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers.

YoungStar applicants decide which YoungStar Contract to complete by first determining which "track" their programs belong to:

- Track 1: Licensed and/or Certified Family Child Care Provider
- Track 2: Licensed Group Center
- Track 3: School-Age Program – a program that cares for school-age children before and/or after-school as well as school breaks and/or summer break
- Track 4: Day Camp – Licensed Day Camps enroll children 14 or fewer weeks per year. Licensed Day Camps that have children enrolled for more than 14 weeks per year are rating using Track 3 (School-Age Program).

Step-by-step instructions for filling out the contract form are also available on the *For Providers* webpage. These instructions will help providers decide if they want to participate in the technical consultation process or receive an Automated Rating. If a provider would like assistance in choosing the type of rating to request, the Child Care Information Center (CCIC) or the local YoungStar office can help.

Once the provider has completed the YoungStar Contract, s/he will need to send the form to the local YoungStar office. To find a local YoungStar office, go to the local YoungStar offices webpage http://dcf.wi.gov/program/localoffice.

Step 2 - YoungStar Contracts Processed at Local YoungStar Offices

To ensure efficiency, all YoungStar services are expected to be delivered within a predetermined time frame. When a local YoungStar office receives a completed YoungStar Contract, the date is entered into the YoungStar case management system and the YoungStar timeline begins for that program. Local YoungStar office staff will contact the provider to let the provider know that the form has been received within one week of receipt of the form.

Step 3 - YoungStar Ratings Assigned

Programs can choose from among three types of YoungStar ratings: Automated Ratings, on-site ratings *without* technical consultation (Technical Ratings and Formal Ratings), and on-site ratings *with* technical consultation (Technical Ratings and Formal Ratings).

YoungStar Automated Rating

A program that is in regulatory compliance or managed by a public school board and does not want to participate in training or technical consultation services can receive an *Automated Rating*. **Programs that choose this option cannot be rated above a 2 Star and will not be eligible to receive a micro-grant.**

If a provider requests an *Automated Rating*, upon receipt of the completed YoungStar Contract the local YoungStar office will enter the required information into YoungStar case management and a 2 Star Automated Rating is generated. *Providers electing to receive an Automated Rating are not required to be on The Registry*.

YoungStar Ratings *without* Technical Consultation

Technical Rating *without* technical consultation
If the provider is in regulatory compliance, and has chosen a *Technical Rating* but is *not* interested in technical consultation services, the rating will be done using the information supplied by the provider, and that data will be entered into YoungStar case management. A rating will be generated based upon the documentation provided by the local YoungStar office and the Registry- verified education and training level. YoungStar case management will post the rating on the YoungStar public search. This choice allows the provider a star rating up to a **3 Star.**

Formal Rating *without* technical consultation
If the provider is in regulatory compliance or managed by a public school board and has requested a *Formal Rating (FR) without technical consultation*, the local YoungStar office will send a staff member to the program to score all rating indicators except the ERS Observation. At that time, the Technical Consultant will also verify that the program meets all minimum requirements for becoming a 4 Star.[14] If the program qualifies, it will be given a *Formal Rating Request Form*. This form is designed to help providers ensure they are ready for the FR.

The provider must complete the form and return it to the local YoungStar office. Once received, Formal Rating staff will send a letter or e-mail to the provider outlining specific items that will be reviewed during the FR, encouraging the provider to prepare/gather these items for verification.

The Formal Rating Coordinator will assign an ERS Observer to the program and within eight weeks of the request date, an ERS Observer will select a four-week rating window in which he/she will make an unannounced visit(s) to the program to do a FR using the Environment Rating Scales (ERS). The provider is given the opportunity to identify any dates (up to five) on which a FR *cannot* take place within this window.

Formal Ratings will be based upon interviews and selected classroom observations using the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute materials, developed by Thelma Harms, Richard M. Clifford, and Debby Cryer, including but not limited to the following:

** Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R)

** Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R)

** Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised (FCCERS-R)

** School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale - Updated (SACERS-U)

[14] For guidance on FRs during a staff change that results in a change in educational qualifications, see the section titled "Staff Changes During a Formal Rating (FR)."

http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/

Results of the FR are reviewed in a face-to-face meeting with the child care provider within two weeks of the conclusion of the onsite observation(s) by the ERS Observer. Information will be shared with the Director/Site Supervisor (or family child care provider) *and* whenever possible with the lead teaching staff from all rooms observed.

In general, the *maximum* time frame from the date of the FR to the date of sharing the score findings with a child care program is two weeks. Up to four weeks are allowed for the largest programs to accommodate the increased number of classrooms needing to be observed.

Once the ERS Observer reviews the results of the FR with the provider,[15] DCF will post the rating on the YoungStar public search website. Providers choosing this option can earn a **3, 4, or 5 Star** rating**.**

The ERS Observer is responsible for entering into case management all Environment Rating Scale (ERS) scores and information, copies of the score sheets, the ERS report, and all other verified point information within one week of the conclusion of the FR.

YoungStar Ratings *with* Technical Consultation

Technical Rating *with* technical consultation

If a provider is in regulatory compliance and has requested a Technical Rating *with* technical consultation, staff from the local YoungStar office will contact the provider within one week of receipt of the YoungStar contract to let the provider know that the form has been received. Local YoungStar office staff will then enter the form completion dates into YoungStar case management in order to establish a timeline and assign a Technical Consultant to the child care program.

Technical consultation services are not available to programs that have no children enrolled.

Technical Consultation for 1 Star rated programs

If a program is out of regulatory compliance, its request for technical consultation or other YoungStar services is added to a DCF waiting list. These providers are not eligible for YoungStar services until support has been provided to all other programs that requested services and are in regulatory compliance.

YoungStar concentrates on providing services to providers rated at the 2 Star level, or higher, who express an interest in improving the quality of their programs. Funds and efforts are first made available to providers who meet regulatory compliance standards. If all providers who are operating within regulatory compliance have been served, DCF will then allow the 1 Star providers to be served.

Once a Technical Consultant has been assigned to a program, the Technical Consultant will verify education and training through The Registry, and the program will be given the choice to have a Technical Rating done *before or after* technical consultation services are delivered.

If a provider chooses to have the Technical Rating *before* technical consultation, a Technical Consultant/Rater will arrange to visit the program to complete a rating within eight weeks of receiving the completed YoungStar Contract. The Technical Consultant/Rater is responsible for sharing the results of the Technical Rating with the Director/Site Supervisor (or Family Provider) within one week of the conclusion of the Technical Rating. Once findings have been shared, DCF will post the rating on the YoungStar public child care search website.

If a provider chooses to have the Technical Rating *after* technical consultation services have been administered, the Technical Consultant/Rater assigned to the program will coordinate with the child care program to establish on-site technical consultation appointments to begin within four weeks of receiving the

[15] For information on the appeals process, see the section entitled "Star Rating Appeals Process."

YoungStar Contract. *Technical consultation will be available throughout a 20-week window beginning from the date the completed YoungStar Contract was entered into case management*. The Technical Rating may take an additional 4 weeks. The total time allotted for a Technical Rating with technical consultation should not exceed 24 weeks.

Following the administration of the requested technical consultation, the Technical Consultant/Rater will verify information and/or observe the environment and subsequently enter the data gathered into the YoungStar case management system. The Technical Consultant/Rater will review the Technical Rating with the provider, and DCF will post the Technical Rating on the YoungStar public child care search website. A Technical Rating of **2 or 3 Stars** will be generated for the provider.

If a provider chooses to have a Formal Rating *after* a Technical Rating has been administered, the provider must submit a Formal Rating request to their local YoungStar office. A Formal Rating request can be made as long as the provider is not within the 120 calendar days of their anniversary date. If the request is received within 90 calendar days of the completion of the Technical Rating, only the required ERS observation(s) will need to be completed. When a Formal Rating request is submitted after the 90 calendar days, the ERS Observer will re-verify information from the Technical Rating and perform observations. The ERS Observer will enter the data gathered into the YoungStar case management system.

Formal Rating *with* technical consultation

If a provider is in regulatory compliance or managed by a public school board and qualifies for a Formal Rating, a Technical Consultant from the local YoungStar office will provide technical consultation services to the program and score all rating indicators except the ERS Observation. At that time, the Technical Consultant will also verify that the program meets all minimum requirements for becoming a 4 Star.[16]

The Technical Consultant will then give the provider a *Formal Rating Request*. This form is designed to assist providers in preparing for the Formal Rating. The provider needs to complete the form and send it back to their local YoungStar office before the Technical Consultant's last visit.

Once received, Formal Rating staff will send a letter or e-mail to the provider outlining specific items that will be reviewed during the FR, encouraging the provider to prepare/gather these items for verification. The Formal Rating Coordinator will assign an ERS Observer to the program and he/she will contact the program to set up the four-week time frame for delivery of the FR. Within the four-week time frame, an ERS Observer will make an unannounced visit(s) to the program to do a Formal Rating. The provider is given the opportunity to identify any dates (up to five) on which a FR *cannot* take place within this window.

Findings from the Formal Rating must be offered as a face-to-face meeting with the child care provider within two weeks of the conclusion of the onsite observation(s) by the ERS Observer. Information should be shared with the Program Director/Site Supervisor *and* whenever possible with the lead teaching staff from rooms/groups observed or with the family child care provider.

In general, the *maximum* time frame from the date of the Formal Rating to the date of sharing the score findings with a child care program is *two weeks*. Up to *four weeks* are allowed for the *largest programs* to accommodate the increased number of classrooms needing to be observed.

Once the ERS Observer reviews the Formal Rating with the provider, DCF will post the rating on the YoungStar public child care search website. Providers choosing this option can earn **3, 4, or 5 Stars.**

The ERS Observer is responsible for entering into case management all Environment Rating Scale (ERS) scores and information, copies of the score sheets, the ERS report, and all other verified point information within one week of the completed Formal Rating. The total time allotted for a Formal Rating with technical consultation

[16] For guidance on FRs during a staff change that results in a change in educational qualifications, see the section titled "Staff Changes During a Formal Rating (FR)."

should not exceed 28 weeks.

YoungStar Technical Consultation: Process Details

YoungStar technical consultation is a process in which a YoungStar Technical Consultant meets with a program at its site to support development or refinement of a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The Technical Consultant also provides support with implementation of the plan. While the movement forward in any QIP plan is ultimately the choice of a program, YoungStar Technical Consultants can bring many strategies and resources to assist with achieving program goals.

YoungStar services are available 6 AM to 6 PM. If a program only has children enrolled after 6 PM and before 6 AM, it would be eligible for an Automated Rating or Technical Rating with consultation. If the program requests consultation, the consultation and rating would be delivered between the hours of 6 AM and 6 PM, and the program would need to make appropriate staff available to receive the consultation during those hours.

Programs with children enrolled only after 6 PM or before 6 AM are not eligible for a Formal Rating because the Environment Rating Scale, which is used for a Formal Rating, is not meant to be used for night-time care. Also, the YoungStar quality indicator around physical activity (D.1.2) requires observation of children. Thus, if a Rater never observes children present, the program cannot earn that point.

During on-sight technical consultation visits, a YoungStar Technical Consultant and the Program Director/Site Supervisor/Family Provider will identify opportunities for growth. The technical consulting activities will be based on the program's Self-Assessment, Quality Improvement Plan, ideas, and visions for enhancing the quality of the program.

The Technical Consultant will then work with the provider to make a plan for using the time they have together and follow through on these plans over the course of 20 weeks. During this time, the provider and Technical Consultant will decide what the provider's micro-grant will be used for based on the goals identified in the Quality Improvement Plan. The Technical Consultant will also bring skills, knowledge of early care and education, experience supporting change, and resources based on research and best practice. Together the program and Technical Consultant will monitor progress toward the quality improvement goals.

Failure to respond to YoungStar communications and cancellation of or habitual absenteeism from scheduled YoungStar appointments prevents quality improvements, assessment, and ratings from being completed in a timely manner. Poor follow-through on application or re-application timelines and agreed-upon quality improvement efforts has the same effect.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) and YoungStar staff want to maintain a consistent, ethical way to set professional expectations and boundaries related to following agreed-upon plans and following through with scheduled visits. These positive behaviors allow consulting and assessment time to be spent on consultation and coaching rather than follow-up and re-scheduling. The more on-site time spent focused on quality improvement efforts, the greater the program's success in its quality improvement efforts.

To accomplish this, each participant in YoungStar who would like any form of onsite technical assistance (technical consultation, Technical Rating, or Formal Rating) is required to complete a YoungStar Contract and sign a Technical Consultation Participation Agreement before beginning on-site services. The Technical Consultation Participation Agreement (outlined in Appendix B of this document) explains the rules around positive participation in YoungStar services.

After the provider has received the desired technical consultation, the program will then complete a Technical Rating or a Formal Rating. Following the rating, the Rater/Observer will discuss the results with the provider to present accurate and timely clarification of how the YoungStar quality indicators were assessed. The goal of this communication is to enhance the program's understanding of its YoungStar rating and provide clear direction for ongoing Quality Improvement Planning.

YoungStar Resources for Technical Consultation
Wisconsin child care providers and programs requesting technical consultation services can prepare for their first Technical Consultation visit by: 1. Completing the activities found on the ***YoungStar Child Care Provider Tip Sheet*** 2. Accessing and reviewing materials designed to help providers prepare for YoungStar, such as the optional *Quality Improvement Plan* and *Self-Assessment*, both of which can be found on the YoungStar website at the ***Resources for Providers page*** - https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/resources

Step 4 - Maintenance and/or Changes to a Star Rating

When a program receives its initial YoungStar rating, this date establishes its YoungStar Anniversary Date. The program will subsequently receive an Automated YoungStar Renewal from DCF a minimum of 120 days prior to its Anniversary Date.

Basic Maintenance of a Rating (No Significant Changes to Program Details)

- *Once per year*, the provider will be responsible for submitting a YoungStar Contract Renewal Form.

Circumstances *Requiring* a New Rating *before* the Annual Observation

- Program is determined to be out of regulatory compliance
- Program has its accreditation revoked
- Licensee or Owner changes
- Program is moved to a different location (see below)

Provider Location Change

Regulatory Compliance and Location Changes
For the purposes of State of Wisconsin regulation requirements, a program may not move to a new location or change ownership without first initiating contact with DCF. Specific language detailing the process of location changes within regulatory compliance can be found here:

Licensed Family Programs
Amending a License DCF 250.11(6)
https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/203.pdf

Licensed Group Programs: Group and School-Age
Amending a License DCF 251.11(5)
https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/0205.pdf

Licensed Group Programs: Day Camps
Amendment to License DCF 252.05(2)
https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/publications/pdf/2532.pdf

Certified Programs
Reporting Changes DCF 202.08 (1) (C) 8
https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cclicensing/commentary

YoungStar Rating Process and Location Changes

A YoungStar rating may not be transferable from one location to another. The program must apply for separate YoungStar services each time it receives a new license or certification.

A program receiving Wisconsin Shares subsidies must participate in YoungStar by receiving, at a minimum, an Automated Rating. This would rate the program at a 2 Star level. Providers interested in a higher star rating can request a Technical Rating for consideration to receive *up to* a 3 Star rating.

In order to earn a 4 or 5 Star rating, providers must have a Formal Rating (FR) performed. Providers cannot receive a FR until they have been in business at their current location for one year.

If a program was accredited prior to the move to a new location, and if the accreditation is transferred to the new site, as verified by the approved accrediting agency, the program can receive a 4 or 5 Star rating once the new YoungStar Contract is submitted and verification of the accreditation to DCF is complete.

YoungStar Technical Consultation Services and Location Changes

If a program is planning on changing locations in the near future, technical consultation should usually be delayed until the provider is at the new site. However, the Technical Consultant, in collaboration with the program Director/Site Supervisor/Family Provider, may determine that the quality improvement planning may be beneficial regardless of the location of the site (e.g., if the Quality Improvement Plan is related to staff professional development).

If the Quality Improvement Plan is instead related to an issue specific to the environment, such as the environment in a specific learning center, this type of technical consultation should be postponed until the program moves to the new location. If the move is planned but is not expected for a year or more, the technical consultation and rating should occur at the current site.

Accredited Providers and Location Changes

For accredited providers, a YoungStar rating is not necessarily transferable from one location to another. Providers who have received a 4 Star or 5 Star rating in relation to a Certificate of Accreditation will have three options:

1. If the accrediting agency allows the accreditation to move with the provider, YoungStar will honor the accreditation and corresponding star rating (4 or 5 Stars). The provider is responsible for submitting verification from the accrediting agency that includes program name, new address location, and accreditation begin and end dates.

2. If accreditation does not transfer with the program, within the first year following the move the provider can request a Technical Rating for consideration to receive up to a 3 Star rating. A program must be in existence at its current location for at least one year in order to receive the Formal Rating necessary to reach a 4 Star or 5 Star level.

3. Centers can receive recognition of accreditation through the National Accreditation Commission (NAC) after 6 months. YoungStar does not affect NAC accreditation criteria; therefore if a program becomes NAC-accredited prior to becoming eligible for a YoungStar Formal Rating, the NAC accreditation would be accepted, and the program would be given a 5 Star rating.

Rating Changes

When Education Levels Change Enough to Affect Star Levels

Providers are responsible for immediately updating their Registry Program Profiles:

- To reflect any new education or training levels of staff
- Anytime they acquire new staff members
- When staff members leave

On the 15th of every month, an automated process rates providers in the YoungStar Case Management System and, if the education/training details of a program have changed enough to move the program up or down a star level, the program's new rating will show as "pending" in case management. The local YoungStar office will follow up with the program to let the program know that its rating is pending a new star level.

Timeline for Rating *Decreases*:

The Technical Consultant is responsible for making contact with the provider within two business days of the date the rating appears as "pending." If the provider does not respond to the contact, the Technical Consultant will attempt to contact the provider three additional times (for a total of four attempts) over the next two weeks by varied means, documenting each attempt in the case notes.

The fourth attempt to contact is a registered letter to the provider explaining that the educational qualifications of the program have decreased enough to affect the program's star rating. The provider can contact the local YoungStar office to discuss this or if the provider believes there has been an error. If the provider does not respond to the registered letter, DCF and the YoungStar Contracted Vendor hold no responsibility for loss of Wisconsin Shares payments due to a decrease in YoungStar rating.

Providers Requesting a Change to the *Type* of Rating They Receive

Providers who have chosen one type of rating (Automated or On-Site) and would like to change the type of rating they receive (from Automated to On-Site, On-Site to Automated) must complete a YoungStar Change Request.

If a program completes a Technical Rating and then the program's educational qualifications increase to a level that now qualifies for a Formal Rating, but it is not yet time for its annual rating, the program may submit a Formal Rating Request to their local YoungStar office. These requests are placed at the end of the queue of providers who are waiting for Formal Ratings, and the provider would only be re-rated if staffing allows for this. Programs are not entitled to this additional rating, as providers are only granted one assured rating per year.

All providers are entitled to one rating per year. **If a provider's training or education increases between annual YoungStar ratings, a change to the provider's YoungStar rating *may* be made as a courtesy to the provider. *It is not a right* of the provider to have his or her YoungStar rating changed outside of the annual rating, even if education or training levels change.**

Example 1
Changes in YoungStar Evaluation Criteria: Educational Qualifications

Sue is a family child care provider in Dane County who has 9 credits and is working toward an Infant/Toddler Credential, but she is not there yet. Therefore, she has earned 3 YoungStar points for her educational qualifications. She worked with Gina from 4-C in Madison to do a Self-Assessment with a Quality Improvement Plan, and because she has a budget and is on CACFP, she has earned 4 YoungStar points for her Business and Health Practices. She also earned 4 other optional points. She receives her 2 Star rating in June with a total of (3 + 4 + 4 =) 11 points.

In December, she finishes her Infant/Toddler Credential and sends proof of her completed education to be verified by The Registry. Case management pulls information from The Registry on the 15th of the month. The case management system sees Sue has the Infant/Toddler Credential, which bumps her Educational Qualifications points from 3 to 4. So, she has met the minimum education level for 3 Star plus she has earned (4 + 4 + 4 =) 12 total points in YS. Case management generates a new "pending" rating for Sue.

The following day, Amy at 4-C Madison reviews case management and sees that Sue has a pending rating and that Gina was Sue's original Technical Consultant/Rater. Amy assigns the case to Gina, who activates the new rating and then contacts Sue to explain that her rating is changing in YoungStar and that her Wisconsin Shares will now be at the 3 Star rate.

Example 2
Changes in YoungStar Evaluation Criteria:
Learning Environment & Curriculum, Business & Professional Practices, and/or Health & Well-Being

Tina is a group child care center Director with four Lead Teachers. They were assigned a 2 Star rating in August 2013 because they met all the education and training qualifications to be a 3 Star, they participate in CACFP, and they have a budget, but they only earned 9 total points—not enough to move to the 3 Star level. Then, in December 2013, they integrated 60 minutes of physical activity, and all classrooms aligned their curriculum and programming with the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. This would earn them the two additional points they need to become a 3 Star provider. However, the center's rating WILL NOT change until their next annual rating in August 2014 because the Technical Consultant/Rater will only come back to the program to verify these points on an annual basis. At the August 2014 annual rating, the Technical Consultant/Rater will verify the new points, and the center would likely move to a 3 Star rating.

Rating Changes for Providers who Attain Accreditation

If a program completes the accreditation process, but is not yet due for an annual rating, the program may submit the Certificate of Accreditation to DCF directly, and its YoungStar rating will be updated accordingly. The program is also responsible for submitting its accreditation certificate each time the accreditation is renewed. The program can e-mail or fax its Accreditation Certification to:

Fax: 608-224-6178
Email: youngstar@wisconsin.gov

Rating Changes for Suspended and/or Revoked Providers

If a program has been suspended by Wisconsin Shares or has had its regulatory agency revoke its license or certification, the child care program will immediately be moved to 1 Star, once this information has been made available to DCF YoungStar staff. If the provider subsequently becomes reinstated, the provider will be changed to 2 Star. The rating will be confirmed by YoungStar Contracted Vendor staff, who will then contact the provider and explain next steps available for the program.

Wisconsin Shares payments are tied to Wisconsin Shares payment rates beginning the day the rating is published on the public website. Ratings are published on the first of every month.

Group/School-Age Provider

Director/Site Supervisor

If a center/school-age program wants to have a Technical or Formal Rating completed and its Director/Site Supervisor will be out on leave (maternity, extended sick leave, FMLA, etc.) during the window of time normally used for rating, the center/school-age program should try to have its rating completed before or after the Director/Site Supervisor is out. If this is not possible, the center/school-age program will be given the rating based upon the substitute Director/Site Supervisor's qualifications. The center/school-age program must assign this person in its Registry Program Profile.

Exception: If the rating cannot be performed before the Director/Site Supervisor goes on leave that lasts 20 weeks or fewer AND it is the first time a program will be rated, the program's rating can remain in a pending status until the Director/Site Supervisor returns from leave and a rating can be established. If the leave extends beyond 20 weeks, the program will need to enter the acting director's education into its Registry Program Profile, and the program will be rated on the acting director's education. This option should only be used on RARE occasions.

Lead Teacher/Group Leader

If a center/school-age program wants to have any type of rating completed and one of its Lead Teachers/Group Leaders will be out on leave (maternity, extended sick leave, FMLA, etc.) during the window of time normally used for observation, the center/school-age program should try to have its rating completed before or after the Lead Teacher/Group Leader is out. If this is not possible, the center/school-age program will be given the rating based upon the substitute teacher's qualifications. The center/school-age program must have this person on its Registry Program Profile. YoungStar cannot make an exception to allow the center/school-age program to put off its rating outside the YoungStar time frames because some centers/school-age programs always have at least one Lead Teacher/Group Leader on leave.

It is allowable for the Director/Site Supervisor to fill in for the Lead Teacher/Group Leader during the maternity or extended leave so long as the leave does not extend beyond 12 weeks. In this case, the program does not need to change its Registry Program Profile to list the Director/Site Supervisor as the Lead Teacher/Group Leader. If the leave extends beyond 12 weeks, the Lead Teacher/Group Leader who is on leave must be removed from the Program Profile. If a Formal Rating is performed during the time the Director/Site Supervisor is substituting for the Lead Teacher/Group Leader who is on maternity or extended leave, and the classroom/group in question is randomly selected as a classroom/group to observe for the rating, the classroom/group will be observed with the Director/Site Supervisor acting in the substitute role as the Lead Teacher/Group Leader.

Family Provider

Maternity Leave of Absence

If a family provider is on maternity[17] leave (lasting 12 weeks or fewer) during the time that she would receive a rating, and her program will stay open with a substitute provider while the provider is on maternity leave, the provider should make arrangements to have the rating performed before going on maternity leave. No technical consultation should occur while the family provider is on maternity leave. Technical consultation may resume when the provider returns from maternity leave.

The total window of time that technical consultation will be provided is 20 weeks. It is up to the discretion of the Technical Consultant to work with the provider to decide if this time is to be divided (some before maternity leave and some after maternity leave) or not. At the conclusion of the technical consultation, if the provider would like a Formal Rating (FR), this will be completed within 4 weeks.

If the rating cannot be performed before the provider goes on maternity leave, and it is the first time the provider will be rated, the provider's rating can remain in a pending status until the provider returns from maternity leave and a rating can be established.

Other Leaves of Absence

If a family provider is on leave other than maternity leave (extended sick leave, FMLA, etc.) during the time that s/he would receive a rating, and if her/his program will stay open with a substitute provider while the provider is on leave, the provider should make arrangements to have the rating performed before going on leave. No technical consultation should occur while the family provider is on leave.

Exception: If the rating cannot be performed before the provider goes on leave that spans 20 weeks or fewer AND it is the first time the provider will be rated, the provider's rating can remain in a pending status until the provider returns from leave and a rating can be established. If the leave extends beyond 20 weeks, the provider will need to enter the substitute provider's education into the Registry Program Profile, and the program will be rated on the substitute provider's education. This option should only be used on RARE occasions.

Star Rating Appeals Process

Rationale

YoungStar's rating process ensures that no one individual is responsible for assigning a score – each rating is the compilation of several criteria, with items verified by multiple entities/individuals (i.e. Technical Consultant, The Registry, Environment Rating Scale Observer). YoungStar requires that a Technical Consultant and (when applicable) Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Observer meet with the provider before the provider's rating is posted to the public website, in order to answer questions and address concerns about the rating outcome.

For formal ratings, the ERS Observer or his/her supervisor will call the provider to summarize the results of the formal rating prior to meeting with the program for a final onsite feedback meeting. Then, the meeting occurs within three weeks of the program receiving the results. For technical ratings, this onsite feedback meeting likely occurs immediately following the rating, during the final technical consultation meeting with the program.

Providers have the opportunity for an annual rating of all evaluation criteria associated with the type of rating selected, with the exception of training and education criteria, which is evaluated monthly through an automated process between The Registry and Department of Children and Families. If a program's staff

[17] The three paragraphs under "Maternity Leave of Absence" would also apply to a male provider on paternity leave.

training or education increases or decreases at any time throughout the year, a change to the provider's YoungStar rating may be made. It is not a provider's right to have his or her YoungStar rating changed outside of an annual rating, even if education or training levels change. Beginning July 1, 2012, Wisconsin Shares payments were tied to YoungStar ratings beginning the day the rating is published on the public website. Providers are not entitled to back payment of Wisconsin Shares in any case.

The full Review and Appeals Policy is available on the YoungStar website at:
http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-appeals.pdf

The YoungStar review and appeal process requires that:

- YoungStar staff explain a child care rating before it is published on the public database;
- A provider clearly document, in writing, their objections to the rating; and
- A set timeline, as outlined below, be followed for progressive review of each case.

Guidelines for best practices and other state experiences in establishing appeals processes were considered in developing the YoungStar Appeals Process. YoungStar includes:

- Clear guidelines for what provider quality criteria are rated;
- Objective criteria that are tied to research (e.g.: education and training verified by The Registry; valid and reliable observers conduct observations on learning environment, using nationally-accepted, research-based Environment Rating Scales);
- An automated process to calculate a rating that combines all of the quality measures leading to a child care rating;
- Transparent and consistent methods for evaluating providers, including consistent rater reliability; and
- Clear documentation and justification of rationale for a provider's rating.

Process Overview

YoungStar's rating process ensures that no one individual is responsible for assigning a score – each rating is the compilation of several criteria, with items verified by multiple entities/individuals (i.e. Technical Consultant, The Registry, Environment Rating Scale Observer). YoungStar requires that a Technical Consultant and (when applicable) Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Observer meet with the provider before the provider's rating is posted to the public website, in order to answer questions and address concerns about the rating outcome.

For formal ratings, the ERS Observer or his/her supervisor will call the provider to summarize the results of the formal rating prior to meeting with the program for a final onsite feedback meeting. Then, the meeting occurs within three weeks of the program receiving the results. For technical ratings, this onsite feedback meeting likely occurs immediately following the rating, during the final technical consultation meeting with the program.

Providers have the opportunity for an annual rating of all evaluation criteria associated with the type of rating selected, with the exception of training and education criteria, which is evaluated monthly through an automated process between The Registry and Department of Children and Families. If a program's staff training or education increases or decreases at any time throughout the year, a change to the provider's YoungStar rating may be made. **It is not a provider's right to have his or her YoungStar rating changed outside of an annual rating, even if education or training levels change.** Beginning July 1, 2012, Wisconsin Shares payments were tied to YoungStar ratings beginning the day the rating is published on the public website. Providers are not entitled to back payment of Wisconsin Shares in any case.

Steps in the Appeals Process

Onsite Feedback after Rating

The YoungStar Technical Consultant and/or ERS Observer explains the rating earned by each provider, while

offering clear documentation as to why a rating was assigned and what specific points led to that rating, prior to posting the rating on the public website. The provider and Technical Consultant and/or ERS Observer sign a document to confirm that all areas of their YoungStar rating were reviewed and explained. Signing the document does not mean that that provider agrees with the rating, nor does it prevent the provider from appealing the rating.

If, during this consultation, a provider tells the Technical Consultant and/or ERS Observer that they intend to appeal the rating, the Technical Consultant or ERS Observer will wait 30 calendar days before making the rating active, which publishes the rating on the public child care search website. If the appeal in writing is not received by the appropriate office (identified in the first step below) within 30 calendar days, the rating will be made active, as of the date that the rating was completed, and published to the public child care search website. If the provider does not indicate an intention to appeal during the consultation, the Technical Consultant or ERS Observer will make the rating active immediately following the onsite feedback meeting, which will publish the rating on the public child care search website. The publication of the rating does not preclude the provider from appealing the rating as long as the timelines below are followed.

If a provider declines an onsite review after rating, the Technical Consultant or ERS Observer will document the date of the decline. That date will be used in lieu of a date for onsite rating feedback session in the appeals process timeline.

If a provider is unable to complete an onsite feedback meeting within three weeks of being called regarding their rating results, the provider will have 30 days from the date the rating results are mailed to the program to complete the first step in the appeals process below.

Providers may request a review of their rating. For each step of the appeal process, the request must be in writing and provide clear documentation of what quality indicator the provider believes was inaccurately assessed and why. The request for review must be received by the appropriate office within the designated timeframe or the request for review will not be considered.

1 – Initial Request to Review Rating	*The initial request to review must be received within 30 calendar days from the date of the onsite rating feedback session, the date that the provider declined an onsite rating feedback session, or the date of contact to schedule an onsite rating feedback session if the provider cannot complete the session within three weeks.* **Technical Rating:** The initial request to review a technical rating must be submitted to the local YoungStar office that completed the technical rating process. The Director of the local YoungStar office or the supervisor of the Technical Consultant who completed the rating reviews the rating and makes a determination whether the initial rating was accurate. **Formal Rating:** The initial request to review a formal rating must be submitted to Supporting Families Together Association. The Quality Improvement Manager reviews the rating and makes a determination whether the initial rating was accurate. The reviewer may speak to individuals involved in the rating or experts in the field to make a determination if the rating was accurate or if a new rating is warranted. If the rating is determined accurate, a written response will be provided to explain the rating. If the rating is determined inaccurate, the rating may be changed and a written explanation will be given to the provider OR a second rating may be provided to the program at the discretion of the individual completing the review.

	If a provider disagrees with the determination made, the process moves to Step 2. *The initial rating review must be completed by the local YoungStar office or Supporting Families Together Association within 30 calendar days of the date that the initial request for review is received.*
2 – Second Request to Review Rating	*The second request to review must be received within 30 calendar days from the date the decision in Step 1 is mailed to the provider.* The second request to review a rating must be submitted to the Co-Director(s) of Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA). The Co-Director(s) of SFTA review documentation from the provider and the rating. They may speak to individuals involved in the rating or experts in the field to make a determination if the rating was accurate or if a new rating is warranted. If the rating is determined accurate, the Co-Director(s) and key staff will offer to meet with the provider to explain this decision. If the rating is determined inaccurate, the rating may be changed and a written explanation will be given to the provider OR a second rating may be provided to the program at the discretion of the Co-Director(s). If the Co-Director(s) determine a new rating is warranted, he or she can assign a different Technical Consultant or ERS Observer to complete the new rating. The new rating that is provided must be the same type of rating that was originally completed. For example, a provider that is appealing a technical rating would complete a second technical rating and could not request a formal rating. • If the second rating is found to be the same as the first rating, the Co-Director(s) and key staff will offer to meet with the provider to explain why the rating is not adjusted. • If the second rating results in a different rating than the first, the Co-Director(s) and key staff will offer to meet with the provider to explain. If a provider disagrees with the outcome of the second step of the appeal process, the process moves to Step 3. *The second step of the review must be completed within 30 calendar days from the date that the second request for review is received.*
3 – Third Request to Review	*The third request to review must be received within 30 calendar days from the date the decision in Step 2 is mailed to the provider.* The third request to review a rating must be submitted to the Department of Children and Families, Bureau of Early Learning Policy's Director. He or she will review all relevant information and if, in the review of the appeals process or decision, the Bureau Director identifies misinterpretations of DCF policy or YoungStar evaluation criteria, he/she can request additional information from the provider, the local YoungStar office, or Supporting Families Together Association, and can intervene in the rating decision. If the rating is determined accurate, a written response will be provided to explain the decision. If the rating is determined inaccurate, the rating may be changed and a written explanation will be given to the provider OR a new rating may be provided to the program at the discretion of the Bureau Director.

	Additionally, the Bureau Director reserves the right to intervene at any time during the appeals process if he or she identifies misinterpretations of DCF policy or YoungStar evaluation criteria. *The third step of the review must be completed within 30 calendar days from the date that the third request for review is received.*

You have a right to appeal the outcome of the third review process. Pursuant to § DCF 201.07(3), Wis. Admin Code, your written request must be sent directly to and received by the Division of Hearings and Appeals no later than thirty (30) days from the date of the response from the Department of Children and Families, Bureau of Early Learning Policy's Director. Please attach a copy of this notice to your request for a hearing.

To submit your request for an administrative hearing under s. 227.44, Wis. Stats.:

Send your request via U.S. Mail:	Hand-deliver your request:	Send your request via Facsimile:
Division of Hearings and Appeals P.O. Box 7875 Madison, WI 53707-7875	Division of Hearings and Appeals 5005 University Avenue Suite 201 Madison, WI	Division of Hearings and Appeals (608) 264-9885

Withdrawal from YoungStar

Voluntary YoungStar Participant Withdrawal

If a program no longer wishes to participate in YoungStar, it can voluntarily be removed only if it has *not* received a Wisconsin Shares Subsidy payment within 6 months of its withdrawal request. This request must be made to the local YoungStar office. Local YoungStar office staff will then inform DCF, who will confirm the program's Wisconsin Shares payment information. If the provider qualifies to withdraw, DCF will make the necessary changes. Withdrawn providers will remain on the Child Search website as "Not Participating" in YoungStar.

Wisconsin Shares Recipient Withdrawal

If a YoungStar-*rated* program has accepted a Wisconsin Shares payment at any time in the 6 months prior to the date of its withdrawal request, the local YoungStar office will not accept the request until a full 6 months has passed since the last Wisconsin Shares payment.

If a YoungStar-*participating* (i.e., not yet rated) program has received Wisconsin Shares within the six-month time frame and is in *pending* status at the time of its decision to withdraw participation (for example while receiving technical consultation services or while waiting for its rating), the program will have two options: it can either continue with its Technical Rating or change to an Automated Rating.

Example
ABC Child Care Center signed a YoungStar Contract on January 1, 2012. The program accepted Wisconsin Shares payments from January-March 2012. In July 2012, the program contacts its local YoungStar office and asks to be removed from YoungStar. Because the program accepted Wisconsin Shares payments for a portion of the 6 months prior, it must continue to participate in YoungStar until 6 months after the final Wisconsin Shares issuance.

Implementation of YoungStar: The YoungStar Contracted Vendor

YoungStar Contracted Vendor

YoungStar is administered by DCF and implemented by the YoungStar Contracted Vendor, **Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA) –** http://supportingfamiliestogether.org/

SFTA was selected to administer YoungStar in six geographic regions, utilizing the strength of Local YoungStar offices http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/program/localoffice across Wisconsin. The YoungStar Contracted Vendor is responsible for implementing the YoungStar application process, on-site technical consultation services, Formal Rating services, and micro-grant delivery, as well as regional and community training delivery. The YoungStar Contracted Vendor is also responsible for working with DCF and other key state, regional, and local partners to support child care programming.

The YoungStar Contracted Vendor leadership team and its designated personnel meet with DCF quarterly, at a minimum. Appropriate technical consultation and rating staff participate as needed in monthly conference calls to ensure that YoungStar administration of technical consultation, rating, micro-grants, and public outreach is completed with a culturally sensitive, meaningful, and comprehensive approach.

Administration of YoungStar requires technical consultation and ratings to be delivered in a valid, reliable and efficient manner that follows the protocols designed by DCF. Local YoungStar offices are required to complete accurate quarterly reports that ensure valid and reliable services are provided, by identifying services delivered and timelines for delivery of these services.

Cultural Competence

All training and technical consultation delivered by The YoungStar Contracted Vendor must be delivered in a meaningful and *culturally competent* manner.

Cultural competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or group of professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations.

- The word **culture** implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group.
- The word **competence** implies having the capacity to function effectively.
- Five essential elements contribute to a system's, institution's, or agency's ability to become more culturally competent:
  1. Valuing diversity
  2. Having the capacity for cultural self-assessment
  3. Being conscious of the dynamics inherent when cultures interact
  4. Having institutionalized cultural knowledge
  5. Having developed adaptations to service delivery reflecting an understanding of cultural diversity
- As technical consultation is delivered, this definition may be enhanced to most accurately reflect appropriate delivery of services. Additionally, the measurement of this competence will be discussed by DCF and the YoungStar Contracted Vendor over time.

YoungStar Contracted Vendor Responsibilities

YoungStar Implementation

The YoungStar Contracted Vendor will provide adequate staff to help child care programs/providers navigate the YoungStar process. Management of this process entails:

- determination of completion of application materials

- review of Quality Improvement Plans
- administration of technical consultation support
- rating delivery
- tracking of timelines
- management of micro-grant resources
- status reporting on milestones and child care and school-age program progress within YoungStar
- professional development counseling
- training facilitation and delivery

Delivery of Technical Consultation Services

Technical consultation is provided to child care programs (when requested) to work on collaborative Quality Improvement Plans and support defined steps for program enhancement. Technical consultation support is provided on-site to programs for an average of ten hours per program per year.

Local YoungStar offices are responsible for ensuring the following:

1. Technical Consultants are approved by The Registry's Professional Development Approval System (PDAS),
2. Technical Consultants have access to research-informed materials and evidence-based practices that support strategies and processes to enhance program quality and improve child outcomes, and
3. Local YoungStar office sub-contracted vendors also meet these requirements when delivering technical consultation.

Micro-Grant Administration

Micro-grants are funds that have been made available to support program quality improvement. The YoungStar Contracted Vendor will administer the tracking, eligibility determination, and distribution of micro-grants to child care programs/providers. Any provider operating within regulatory compliance, caring for a child for at least 10 hours each week, is eligible for a micro-grant with technical assistance. Any program that does not actively participate in at least 75% of offered technical consultation will lose its eligibility for a micro-grant.

The Technical Consultant assigned to the provider will assist the program in the quality improvement process, including working in partnership with the program Director/Site Supervisor/Family Provider in developing and approving a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and purchase order. Micro-grant funds are to be used to assist the provider in achieving goals specifically detailed in the program's QIP.

There are two ways that a program can access YoungStar micro-grants.

1. **If a program chooses to receive technical consultation**: A program is eligible for a micro-grant ***only if*** it has **actively** participated in the Technical Consultation process. The program must take part in reflection, work to identify strengths and goals, and then take actions to implement the identified solutions. As long as the Technical Consultant is satisfied that this is occurring, the program will have access to a Micro-Grant. However, the Technical Consultant does have the authority to postpone awarding a Micro-grant until the program completes 75% of the on-site hours allocated to each program. The program must have a Self-Assessment (SA) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) completed. All micro-grant purchases must match a goal on the program's QIP.
2. **If a program is accredited and chooses not to have technical consultation**: The program must submit an SA, QIP, and purchase plan to its local YoungStar office to have them reviewed by a Technical Consultant. If everything is in order, the Technical Consultant will then approve a micro-grant. All micro-grant purchases must match a goal on the program's QIP.

A QIP and a Purchase Plan must be submitted *simultaneously* for the Micro-Grant Program to take action. When a provider is awarded a micro-grant, an account is opened on behalf of the program, and purchases will be made and charged against the program's account until the program's account balance reaches $0. Purchases can include materials, resources, and/or professional development opportunities directly related to the program's QIP. The purchase plans are submitted to micro-grant staff, who are held responsible for

coordinating purchases on behalf of the program.

YoungStar micro-grants are provided in the following amounts:

- Licensed Group Child Care and School-Age Care Programs: $1,000
- Licensed Family Child Care Programs: $500
- Certified Family Child Care Programs: $250
- Day Camps: $200

If a provider moves to a 1 Star rating while a micro-grant is being processed, the micro-grant will be put on hold. Any reimbursements due to the provider will be processed as long as the purchase was made while the provider was not in 1 Star status. Any pending orders will be cancelled while the provider is in 1 Star status. If the provider subsequently moves to a higher star level, the micro-grant will be resumed.

Programs that are within regulatory compliance and have no children enrolled *can* participate in YoungStar at an automated 2 Star level only, but will *not* be eligible to receive YoungStar technical consultation services or micro-grant funds.

Licensed family programs that are also certified for a portion of their regulated hours will receive a micro-grant at the licensed family child care program level, which is $500. These programs will be required to complete only one set of application materials and will receive technical consultation services from the same Technical Consultant for both segments of their programs.

Examples of acceptable micro-grant purchases
• Continuing education for staff • Credit-based education for staff – costs to support staff in pursuing credit-based education, either directly or through a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Wisconsin Scholarship • Staff or substitute time to support quality improvement work • Child equipment and materials (books, toys, classroom furniture, etc.) • Adult equipment and materials (books, computer hardware/software, etc.) • Curriculum materials • Accreditation materials or fees • Services (additional technical consultation, contractors/builders for upgrades to the physical environment, etc.) • Other – a program can work with its Technical Consultant to determine how micro-grant funds can best support its Quality Improvement Plan. ***The YoungStar Micro-Grant Handbook is available at local YoungStar offices.***

Formal Rating Services

The YoungStar Formal Rating Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that ERS Observers are approved by The Registry's Professional Development Approval System, with content-based training on the administration of the Environment Rating Scales. ERS Observers will be given access to research-informed materials and evidence-based practices that support strategies and processes to enhance program quality and improve child outcomes. ERS Observers must initially and continually demonstrate valid and reliable scoring before administering the Environment Rating Scales.

Early Care and Education Partnerships

The YoungStar Contracted Vendor must develop and sustain partnerships with other training and technical consultation partners within each region, utilizing their strengths and skills and including those organizations that have the role of promoting and supporting positive relationships across community partners. These partners include:

- Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESA)
- Child care licensing and certification
- Family Resource Centers
- Institutions of higher education
- Parent advocacy organizations
- County human service/social service agencies
- County and private Wisconsin Works (W-2) Agencies
- Public school districts
- Private and parochial schools
- Birth to 3 programs
- Early childhood special education
- Local health agencies
- Local child welfare agencies
- Child care advocacy organizations
- Organizations and services that support infant mental health needs

Local YoungStar offices are expected to create partnerships with the business and philanthropic communities to leverage and access additional resources for early care and education providers and families. Partnerships must support collaborative training and technical consultation opportunities and integrate the work of multiple service partners in early care and education to support outreach to programs participating in YoungStar to achieve increased quality improvement.

The local YoungStar offices are expected to provide DCF with evidence of partnerships/subcontracts that are reflective of the diversity of the geographic area served. Local YoungStar offices must document efforts to engage minority-owned businesses as contractors and the methods by which trainings are made available in languages other than English in communities with large English-as-a-second-language (ESL) populations.

Public Outreach and Communication

A fundamental objective of YoungStar is to provide parents with concrete, easily understood, and easily accessed information on how to choose quality child care, so that key indicators of quality will become easily recognized by parents and other community members. Questions and concerns related to YoungStar will be efficiently managed by a centralized informational source via phone and/or e-mail in order to better serve the community, child care providers, and regional training and technical consultation partners. Local YoungStar offices will utilize DCF's designated media and marketing outreach with YoungStar-branded materials.

YoungStar Contracted Vendor: Timeline Management

Local YoungStar Office Administration–Timeline Management

To ensure efficiency, all YoungStar services are expected to be delivered within a time frame predetermined by DCF. The local YoungStar offices are responsible for the management of the following timelines:

a) Forms process timeline

b) Technical consultation timeline

c) Formal Rating timeline

d) Rating changes timeline

e) Rating appeals process timeline

f) Micro-grant administration timeline

Technical Consultant & ERS Observer Communications–Timeline Management

The local YoungStar office is responsible for updating the YoungStar case management system with the communication details pertinent to each provider's situation in a timely manner. This information should be documented and available in the YoungStar database to be readily available to Technical Consultant for ongoing coordination and communication with individual child care/school-age programs on current quality improvement efforts.

***Example* Timeline Scenarios**

NOTE: These are *only examples* of possible scenarios;
these are *not* actual deadlines for providers to complete these actions.

Automated Rating

Action	Date Completed (no later than)
Completed YoungStar Contract received and date-stamped (entered within 2 working days by local YoungStar office)	December 8
Automated Rating published on the YoungStar search site the Friday after the date it is entered into automation	December 13

Technical Rating with technical consultation

Action	Date completed (no later than)
Completed YoungStar Contract requesting a YoungStar Technical Rating with technical consultation received and date-stamped (entered within 2 working days by local YoungStar office)	January 10
Provider is contacted by local YoungStar office to acknowledge receipt of YoungStar Contract (within one week)	January 17
Technical Consultant contacts program to schedule first visit (within 4 weeks)	February 7
Initial visit occurs	TBD
Technical consultation end date (within 20 weeks)	May 30
Technical Rating completed[18]	June 27
YoungStar Technical Rating published on *Provider Search* website (rating batch occurs on the 15th of every month, rating is effective the 1st of the following month)	September 1

Formal Rating with technical consultation

Action	Date completed (no later than)
Completed YoungStar Contract requesting a YoungStar Formal Rating with technical consultation received and date-stamped	December 11
Provider is contacted by staff of local YoungStar office to acknowledge receipt of forms (within one week)	December 18
Technical consultation occurs and Formal Rating request paperwork is completed at conclusion	Dec 18-May 6
Technical Consultant confirms program meets educational requirements for at least a 4 Star and meets other minimum requirements for a 3 Star	May 6
Formal Rating occurs	June 17
Formal Rating is entered into case management but not published	June 20
Formal Rating is shared with provider[20]	July 4
Rating published in YoungStar (rating batch occurs on the 15th of every month, rating is effective the 1st of the following month)	August 1

[18] Programs also have the option of using any portion of their technical consultation time *after* being rated. If any technical consultation will follow the rating, accurate data stating this should be entered into the YoungStar Case Management System.

YoungStar Conflict of Interest Procedures

Conduct Statement
DCF is committed to maintaining the highest standards of conduct and ethical behavior and to promoting services that value respect, fairness, and integrity. All YoungStar Staff members shall act with honesty, integrity and openness in all their dealings as representatives of the organization.

Definition
A conflict of interest arises when an employee, contractor, or board member involved in making a decision or delivering a service is in the position to benefit, directly or indirectly, from her/his dealings with the organization or person conducting business with the YoungStar Staff. Conflicting interests can be financial, personal relationships, status, or power.

Examples
Examples of conflict of interest include, but are not limited to, situations in which an employee, contractor, or board member:

- Provides Technical Consulting, Technical Rating, or Formal Rating to a contractor or employee of the organization delivering the services;
- Provides Technical Consulting, Technical Rating, or Formal Rating to a close personal friend or business associate of the staff, contractor, or organization delivering the services;
- Serves in a regulatory function as well as a quality improvement function for regulated child care programs;
- Negotiates or approves a contract, purchase, or lease on behalf of YoungStar and has a direct or indirect interest in, or receives personal benefit from, the entity or individual providing the goods or services;
- Negotiates or approves a contract, sale, or lease on behalf of YoungStar and has a direct or indirect interest in, or receives personal benefit from, the entity or individual receiving the goods or services;
- Employs (or approves the employment of) or supervises a person who is an immediate family member of the Director or employee;
- Sells products or services in competition with YoungStar;
- Uses YoungStar resources, facilities, other assets, employees, or other resources for personal gain; and/or
- Receives a substantial gift from a vendor, if the Director or employee is responsible for initiating or approving purchases from that vendor.

Employees, contractors, and Directors are prohibited from knowingly disclosing information about YoungStar operational issues to those who do not have a need to know or whose interest may be adverse to YoungStar implementation, either inside or outside of the YoungStar. Employees, contractors, and Directors may not in any way use such information to the detriment of YoungStar.

Conflict of interest as it is related to specific roles:

- If the YoungStar staff person is a Pre-licensor, they CANNOT be a Consultant until after an 18-month period from the date of a pre-licensing sign-off occurs. Specialists who are also YoungStar Technical Consultants are able to provide YoungStar services to a program to which they have provided pre-licensing services.

- If the YoungStar staff person is a Certifier/Certification Specialist, they CANNOT be a YoungStar Technical Consultant or an ERS Observer for family providers in the county in which they are a Certifier/Certification Specialist.

- If the YoungStar staff person is a Licensing Specialist, they CANNOT be a YoungStar Technical Consultant or an ERS Observer.

DCF has a concern that a Licensing Specialist or Certifier/Certification Specialist would have a clear conflict of interest in providing support through YoungStar because of their regulatory role.

- A food program Consultant will be able to offer technical assistance in a program that they did not have a previous relationship with.

- In order for a licensed provider to work in YoungStar as a Technical Consultant they must be at least a Three Star and if they are doing any technical consultation, they need to be in another county or in a large city, outside of the zip codes in which they live.

Validation of YoungStar

To ensure the effectiveness of YoungStar, researchers from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, as well as personnel from DCF, regularly perform evaluations on YoungStar to measure the impacts of the program, focusing on indicators such as retention rates, provider response, and parent feedback, among other items.

DCF Internal Review

DCF utilizes an internal evaluation process aimed at comprehensive and constant monitoring of YoungStar activities and development. The internal review process allows DCF and The YoungStar Contracted Vendor to review the effectiveness of the YoungStar QRIS Quality Indicator Point Details and to review policies in the YoungStar program. These data also help DCF determine participation in YoungStar, the extent and benefits of technical consultation, how and to what end micro-grants are used, and to measure additional resources identified to support quality improvement efforts throughout Wisconsin.

YoungStar's internal review process includes:

1. Tracking data on regional activity to determine access to and effectiveness of services in YoungStar. Case management system monthly reports are collected and reviewed to monitor YoungStar Regional activities such as:
    - Rating levels of child care programs
    - Number of children in the Wisconsin Shares child care subsidy program participating in programs by star level
    - The number of hours and type of technical consultation provided, and the number of programs that benefit; and
    - The number and use of micro-grants by region;
2. Quarterly meetings of DCF staff to review The YoungStar Contracted Vendor's work; and
3. On-site quality assurance monitoring by DCF of the local YoungStar offices.

External State-Level Review

Analysis from the Wisconsin Early Child Care Study, also known as the YoungStar Validation study, shows YoungStar differentiates among programs of varying observed quality. Specifically, programs rated 2 Stars had lower observed levels of quality than programs at the 3-5 Star levels. The differences were statistically significant and meaningful. The data revealed that children in the study were performing in accordance with national norms and increased their child assessment scores over the course of the school year and would enter school ready to learn. However, analysis of the data did not support the conclusion that children in higher rated YoungStar programs predicted higher levels of school readiness compared with children in 2 Star programs.

Please see the Executive Summary and Reports below for more information. The executive summary and full report are available here: https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/program/media

External National-Level Alignment

Lastly, YoungStar has aligned itself with the benchmarks set forth by the Office of Child Care - acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ using a QRIS framework created by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) - hhs.gov. Within this framework, the effectiveness of each individual state's QRIS can be determined, while recognizing that each state may be at a different stage of QRIS development.

The five Benchmarks for Quality Improvement used by the Office of Child Care QRIS include:[19]

1. Program Standards
2. Supports For Programs and Providers
3. Financial Incentives and Supports
4. Quality Assurance and Monitoring
5. Consumer Education

YoungStar Websites

In addition to YoungStar websites for providers, for the media, and for fraud prevention, there are two other YoungStar websites containing distinct information:

Public DCF Child Care Finder Website

The *Regulated Child Care and YoungStar Public Search* website (childcarefinder.wisconsin.gov) allows parents to view provider/program rating information and regulatory details such as licensing violations. This website gives parents and providers the ability to:

- Search for a provider based on location
- Search for a provider based on type of care
- Search for a provider based on YoungStar quality of care
- Receive contact information regarding all regulated providers in Wisconsin
- View regulation information, including violations, about a specific provider
- View specific details about the YoungStar rating obtained by an individual provider, including star level and points earned

Secure YoungStar Case Management Website

The *YoungStar Case Management System* (*CMS*)[20] is intended for use by state and regional office staff to enter/view provider information pertaining to YoungStar. The secure site has the following modules:

- **Provider Information:** This information comes from the licensing and certification databases automatically. The information cannot be modified in the case management system.
- **Forms and Documents:** This module includes information on, as well as copies of, YoungStar forms and documents that the provider has submitted to the regional office.

[19] https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/qris_in_rtt_elc_program_aprs_508c_final.pdf
[20] dcfyoungstar.wisconsin.gov/Login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fDefault.aspx

- **Regulatory Compliance:** This module includes information indicating whether the provider is in or out of regulatory compliance. NOTE: This information can only be **updated** by certain licensing and certification staff and by DCF Bureau of Early Learning and Policy (BELP) staff.

- **Rating:** The ratings detail module includes information on YoungStar ratings. This information is received from various sources:

    - **Accreditation Information:** The YoungStar system uses accreditation information kept up-to-date by DCF staff in coordination with accrediting agencies and providers.
    - **Educational Information:** The YoungStar system automatically receives verified educational information from The Registry.
    - **Case Management Information:** This information comes from YoungStar staff and enables them to assign services such as technical consultation, Technical Ratings, and Formal Ratings with Observation to providers manually. Case Management also includes the ability to record specific activities related to service requests.

REFERENCES

Because Early Experiences Last a Lifetime: Step Up to Quality Guidance Document. Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, 2010, p. 7.
http://jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/InfantToddler.pdf

Environment Rating Scales: About Environment Rating Scales. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, FPG Child Development Institute, ERS project, accessed 21 November 2011.
ers.fpg.unc.edu/about-environment-rating-scales

QRIS and the Impact on Quality. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, accessed 1 November 2010.
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/quality_rating.pdf

QRIS Definition and Statewide Systems. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, updated April 2011.
http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/quality_rating.pdf

Uttal, David H. quoted in *Families, Schools, and Communities: Building Partnerships for Educating Children*. C. Barbour & N. H. Barbour & P.A. Scully, 2008 edition, p. 130-134.

Zellman, Gail L. and Michal Perlman. *Child care Quality Rating and Improvement Systems in five pioneer states: implementation issues and lessons learned*. RAND Corporation, 2008.
rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2008/RAND_MG795.pdf

Child Care & Early Education Glossary, Child Care & Early Education Research Connections, accessed 21 November 2011.
researchconnections.org/childcare/childcare-glossary

APPENDIX A: A Summary of the YoungStar Definitions of *Lead Teacher* and *Director*

For an in-depth explanation of the titles and responsibilities of YoungStar Lead Teaching Staff and YoungStar Supervisory/Administrative Staff, see the following two sections of this *Policy Guide*:

- **"Staff in YoungStar Programs"**
- **"YoungStar Quality Indicators: Provider Training and Educational Qualifications"**

This appendix provides a condensed summary of the YoungStar definitions of "Lead Teacher" and "Director."

YoungStar Lead Teacher

YoungStar uses the title "Lead Teacher" to refer to the individual who:

- Spends the ***greatest number of hours between 6 am and 6 pm*** in a given classroom/group.

- Is assigned in The Registry Program Profile as the ***YoungStar***:

    - Primary Family Provider (in Family Child Care programs)
    - Lead Teacher (in Group Child Care programs)
    - Lead Group Leader (in School-Age programs)
    - Lead Day Camp Counselor (in Day Camp programs)

- Has her/his educational and training qualifications counted for YoungStar points and star rating.

- Plans, implements, and supervises the daily activities for a group of children, engages in program planning, communicates with families, and builds relations with the community. (In a Group, School-Age, or Day Camp program, the YoungStar Lead Teacher performs these duties under the supervision of a Director.)

YoungStar Director

YoungStar uses the title "Director" to refer to the individual who:

- Is assigned in The Registry Program Profile as the ***YoungStar***:

    - Licensee/Owner (in Family Child Care programs)
    - Director of Record or Licensee (in Group Child Care programs)
    - Director of Record or Site Supervisor (in School-Age programs)
    - Director of Record (in Day Camp programs)

- Has her/his educational and training qualifications counted for YoungStar points and star rating.

- Is responsible for the overall direction and daily operation of the program through:

    - Developing the program mission, philosophy, goals, and policies
    - Program planning and evaluation
    - Administration of the program (including fiscal management)
    - Organizational development (including the management of human resources)
    - The recruitment, hiring, and guidance of teaching staff and – when necessary – for firing or dismissal of staff

YoungStar Directors in ***Group, School-Age, and Day Camp*** programs fulfill ***typical*** responsibilities or, in certain *limited* circumstances (explained more fully in the "Variations to YoungStar Staffing Requirements for Directors/Site Supervisors" section), a ***variation*** of these typical responsibilities:

- ***Typical*** YoungStar staffing requirements expect each program to have a Director who is:

  - Dedicated solely to the performance of all four of these responsibilities:

    1) Supervision of the planning and implementation of the programming for children
    2) Supervision of the staff at the site
    3) Staff meetings and orientation
    4) Continuing education for the staff

    (In addition to these responsibilities, supervisory/administrative staff in Group, School-Age, and Day Camp programs may step in to help out with Lead Teacher responsibilities if a staff member is ill, during staff break/meal times, when special programming or activities require more adults to be present, or for emergencies.)

  - On-site for a required percentage of time that s/he works for the program. This required percentage is *based on the total number of hours* the Director/Site Supervisor works for the program and *depends on the type of program*, as shown in the following table:[21]

Type of Program	**Minimum Percentage of Time the Director is *Typically* Required to be On-Site** ***(as a percentage of the total # of hours s/he works for the program)***
Group	At least ***25%***
School-Age	At least ***25%***
Day Camp	At least ***50%***

- ***Variations*** to these typical YoungStar staffing requirements may be requested if a program does not have a Director position dedicated solely to the performance of the four responsibilities listed above:

  - *Centralized Administration*, for programs with multiple sites.
  - *Dual-Role*, in programs licensed for smaller numbers of children (Group: 30 or fewer, School-Age/Day Camp: 50 or fewer) in which the Director also serves as a Lead Teacher/Group Leader.

  (Again, variations to the typical YoungStar staffing requirements are explained more fully in the "Variations to YoungStar Staffing Requirements for Directors/Site Supervisors" section.)

[21] Licensing requirements regarding the role of the Director are different from YoungStar and can be found at https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cclicensing/rules. Licensing is meant to be a base level for health and safety, and YoungStar is meant to be a step higher toward quality. So, while a program may be following licensing requirements for the role of a Director, the requirements outlined in this document will be used for YoungStar.

APPENDIX B: YoungStar Participation Policy

Effective 10/9/2014

English version:
http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/policies/participation-policy.pdf

Spanish version (Política de Participación en YoungStar):
http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/policies/participation-policy-spanish.pdf

Programs experience the greatest success in YoungStar in pursuit of quality improvement efforts when they are engaged, informed, and responsive. This policy addresses some of the barriers to productive participation and the process and consequences of poor participation.

Failure to respond to YoungStar communications, and cancellation of or habitual absenteeism from scheduled YoungStar appointments prevents quality improvements, assessment, and ratings from being completed in a timely manner. Poor follow-through on application or re-application timelines and agreed upon quality improvement efforts has the same affect.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) and YoungStar Staff want to maintain a consistent, ethical way to set professional boundaries and expectations related to following expectations and following through with scheduled visits. These positive behaviors allow consulting and assessment time to be spent on consultation and coaching rather than follow-up and re-scheduling. The more time spent on-site focused on quality improvement efforts, the greater the program's success is in their quality improvement efforts.

To accomplish this, every participant in YoungStar who would like any form of onsite technical assistance (technical assistance, Technical Rating or Formal Rating) is required to complete a YoungStar Contract and sign a Technical Consultation Participation Agreement before beginning on-site services. The Technical Consultation Participation Agreement, outlined in this document, explains the rules around positive participation in YoungStar services.

Participation Policies

(For definitions of key examples of poor participation that are referenced in the policies, please see the last section of this policy with the subheading Definitions.)

1.) On-site services participation policies shall be communicated to participating child care programs in the YoungStar Technical Consultation Participation Agreement which states the following:

- **Prior Notification**
    - A child care program must provide notice of at least one business day if a visit needs to be rescheduled for non-emergency reasons.
    - A provider must give a two hours' notice in the case of documentable emergency.
    - The child care program must contact their Technical Consultant/Rater within 24 hours to reschedule the visit.

- **Cancellations/No Access**

    - If a child care program fails to give notice of one business day to cancel a visit, they will lose a technical consulting visit.
    - If a program fails to give notice within a two hour timeframe for a documentable emergency, they will lose a technical consulting visit.
    - If the child care program fails to re-schedule a cancelled visit within two working days, they will be sent a certified letter letting them know that if they do not schedule their visit within two working days, they will experience the following consequences:
        - no longer be eligible for on-site consulting services for one calendar year
        - no longer be eligible for micro-grants for one calendar year
        - a YoungStar Change Form will be submitted and the program will receive an automated rating
    - If a program does not accept receipt of a certified letter regarding missed visits after two attempts in a two week period, the program will be moved to an automated rating and will not be eligible for on-site services, micro-grants, and a new rating until their next anniversary date.
    - A program is allowed to re-schedule two times within the guidelines. If the program re-schedules three times, they will lose a visit.
    - If there is a pattern of cancellation or no access, consultants and/or raters should contact local certifiers and licensors for possible follow-up. If no children are present and the Technical Consultant/Rater is suspicious of this, the fraud hot line should be called (1-877-302-FRAUD) and the program will be moved to an automated rating and will not be eligible for on-site services, micro-grants, and a new rating until their next anniversary date.
    - **A rating must be scheduled at the end of the 20 week technical consultation window if a program has not actively participated in technical consultation.** If a program comes to the end of the 20 week technical consulting service window and has 3 or more cancelled visits, the program will have the option to schedule and complete the Technical Rating in the next four weeks or be changed to an Automated Rating. No additional technical consultation will be available to the program, prior to or after the rating.

- **Micro-Grant Eligibility**

    - In most cases, programs that receive technical consultation (or programs that are accredited) are eligible to receive a micro-grant if they complete a Quality Improvement Plan, a Self- Assessment, and a Purchase Plan, and have their purchases approved by a Technical Consultant/Rater.
    - A program receiving technical consultation will **no longer be eligible** for a micro-grant if the program:
        - Cancels more than ONE technical consultation visit without appropriate prior notification (as stated above). This includes “no-show” visits.
        - Cancels more than THREE technical consultation visits total (this includes cancellations with or without appropriate prior notification, and no-show visits).

- **YoungStar Staff Cancellation or Re-scheduling**

    - YoungStar staff will make every effort to keep every appointment scheduled with a program.
    - If, for a medical or health emergency, the YoungStar staff member needs to cancel an appointment, he/she will call the program at least two hours prior to the scheduled visit to notify the program and reschedule at that time.
    - If a YoungStar staff member needs to reschedule an appointment for any other non-emergency reason, he/she will make every effort to reschedule the appointment as soon as he/she is aware of the conflict and at the program's earliest convenience. The notification of the need to reschedule will happen at least two working days before the scheduled appointment.

2.) YoungStar Application or Re-application policies require all programs receiving Wisconsin Shares to complete a YoungStar Contract. While there are choices about the level of participation a program takes, Wisconsin Shares authorizations can be jeopardized by failure to apply or reapply to YoungStar within timelines.

    a. For new Wisconsin Shares programs, completing the YoungStar Contract should happen as soon as a program applies to serve families using Wisconsin Shares. For tips on participating in YoungStar, please go to https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/apply
    b. For programs that are currently participating in YoungStar and will continue to participate in 2012 and beyond, contact will be made by the Department of Children and Families in writing at approximately 120 days prior to the anniversary dates of the initial rating. For tips on the reapplication process, please go to https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/renewal

3.) Programs that are eligible, and apply for a YoungStar formal rating, must abide by an additional set of participation polices. These policies are only in effect during the window of time that they could potentially receive a Formal Rating.

    a. If a Rating Observer arrives at the program on a non-blackout date, and the provider refuses a Formal Rating, the provider/program will be ineligible for a Formal Rating until the next rating cycle. The provider will be eligible for a Technical Rating at this point.
    b. If a Rating Observer arrives at the program and the provider is not at home, the center is closed, or the program is leaving for a field trip on a non-blackout date, the provider/program will be ineligible for a Formal Rating until the next rating cycle. The provider would be eligible for a Technical Rating at this point.
    c. If a program experiences an emergency on a non-blackout date, the provider/director should notify the assigned YoungStar ERS Observer as soon as possible when the emergency situation is under control. YoungStar Regional Offices and DCF will determine what qualifies as an emergency situation. In this situation, the ERS Observer will return on another non-blackout date to complete the rating. After one allowance for an emergency, the provider or program will be ineligible for a Formal Rating. The provider would be eligible for a Technical Rating at this point.
    d. If a Rating Observer arrives and the Director/provider indicates that there will not be more than 50% of the children in attendance for the selected classroom or family program, the Formal Rating cannot occur in that classroom or program on that day. If possible, the Rating Observer will then observe another selected classroom in a group program. If this is not possible, or if it occurs in a family program, the Formal Rating will occur on another non-blackout day. After one allowance for absence, the provider or program will be ineligible for a Formal Rating. The provider would be eligible for a Technical Rating at this point.

Definitions [of *YoungStar Participation Policy* terminology]

Anniversary Date means the annual anniversary of the date the program was given their initial rating in YoungStar.

Cancellation means the YoungStar visits does not occur for one or more reason, including but not limited to:

- program staffing levels and absenteeism;
- lack of readiness for visit;
- lack of progress on QIP;
- illness or medical emergencies; and
- inclement weather or weather emergencies.

No-shows occur when a YoungStar staff member [Technical Consultant (TC), Technical Rater (TR),[22] or ERS Observer (FR)] arrives for a scheduled visit and is not let into the program (for any reason), the program is closed, or programming is occurring at another location due to a field trip.

Poor participation is characterized by lack of engagement or follow-through on YoungStar quality improvement efforts by the provider.

[22] The TC/TR is often one person and can then be referred to as the Technical Consultant/Rater.