



YoungStar Frequently Asked Questions: On-Site Services

September 30, 2016

Note: Almost all questions have been revised since June 10, 2013; questions that have been substantially revised or added since the last update are highlighted.

YoungStar is a 5 Star quality rating and improvement system that supports child care and school-age care providers in the areas of education, learning environment & curriculum, business & professional practices and the health & well-being of children. Through this rating system the state addresses several key issues in Wisconsin's child care system. YoungStar:

- Focuses on improving outcomes for children by improving the overall quality of care
- Creates multiple pathways to professional development opportunities and better quality for child care and school-age programs
- Creates a clear, understandable tool for parents to choose quality child care
- Creates incentives and provides support for programs to improve services, particularly for low-income children
- Improves accountability for the Wisconsin Shares system

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Questions about On-Site Services: Technical Consultation and Technical & Formal Ratings

ONSITE-1. What are the different types of YoungStar ratings? Can programs decide which type of rating they get?

When a program/provider applies to participate in YoungStar, and/or renews their YoungStar participation, the program/provider chooses one of the types of ratings described below:

- **Automated Rating:** A provider who does not wish to have any visits from a Technical Consultant, and does not wish to be rated on-site by a YoungStar rater, can choose to receive an Automated Rating based upon regulatory compliance. Programs that choose this option are *not* eligible to receive micro-grants and are *not* required to create a Program Profile in The Registry. The Automated Rating results in a program being rated a 2 Star. (FYI: Programs choosing a rating based on accreditation or Head Start standing also receive an Automated Rating, but this process is described below.)
- **On-site Rating:** If a provider chooses an on-site rating, a Technical Consultant will be assigned to the program, and the program can choose to have its rating done before *or* after receiving technical consultation services. While working with the program, the Technical Consultant will verify staff education and training through The Registry and will work with the program to determine if it should complete a **Technical Rating** or a **Formal Rating with Observation**.
 - A YoungStar **Technical Rating** is performed by the Technical Consultant and can result in the program being rated either a 2 Star or 3 Star. If a Technical Consultant determines that staff education levels qualify the program for a Formal Rating with Observation, the Technical Consultant will encourage the program to consider this option and will provide guidance in regard to the next steps.
 - A YoungStar **Formal Rating with Observation** is performed by a Formal Rater and can result in the program being awarded a 3 Star, 4 Star, or 5 Star rating. A Formal Rating with Observation utilizes all of the following:

Environment Rating Scales. Information about the ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R, and SACERS-U can be found at <http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>.

Indicators of business and professional practices. Indicators in this category were informed by the Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care (BAS) and the Program Administration Scale (PAS) in the area of Business & Professional Practices (including business practices, professional development, staff benefits, and parent/family involvement). Information about the BAS and PAS can be found at <http://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/program-evaluation/>.

Indicators of health and well-being.

- **Rating Based on Accreditation or Head Start Standing:** Programs that are accredited by one of the accepted accrediting agencies can earn 4 Star or 5 Star ratings and are not required to go through the typical YoungStar rating processes explained above. See the “Accreditation” section of these FAQs for more information on accreditation.

Programs that provide Head Start services may be eligible to receive 5 Star ratings, without going through the typical YoungStar rating process. For more details, see the “Head Start and Early Head Start” section of these FAQs or the [Head Start policy](#) document:

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/policies/head-start-policy.pdf>

Every Other Year Ratings. Programs participating in YoungStar receive one rating every other year. However, there are two ways a program’s star level might change before its next annual rating:

- The educational qualifications of staff might change, and when these changes are updated in The Registry Program Profile, the program’s star level might change. See the “Application and Participation” section of these FAQs for more information.

- Achievement of accreditation during the year will also allow for a new rating. See the “Accreditation” section for more information.
- A program can choose to be rated annually by indicating that preference on a Request for Off-Year Services application. The new off-year rating may or may not change a program’s star level.
- Programs may request to change the type of rating they selected on their contract or renewal form in the following cases (which may or may not result in a change to their star rating):
 - A program received a 2 Star rating through the Automated Rating Process, and decide that they would like to try an onsite rating before their next required rating.
 - A program received a 3 Star rating through a Technical Rating process. At some point before their next required rating, the program decides they would like to receive a Formal Rating (and they are eligible to receive one at that point).

ONSITE-2. If a program has not been in business for a full year, can it receive a Formal Rating with Observation?

No. A program must be in its physical location for one full year before a Formal Rating with Observation can be performed. The program would be eligible for a Technical or Automated Rating and is eligible for technical assistance as soon as the program applies to be in YoungStar.

If a provider moves locations, this rule applies, too. Any program must be at its current physical location for a full year before receiving a Formal Rating with Observation.

Once a program has been in business for one full year at the same location, the program may be eligible for a Formal Rating with Observation. However, the program would not receive any new Technical Assistance until after its next YoungStar anniversary month. The program would be eligible for the next round of Technical Assistance when it receives its next YoungStar Renewal Contract or Request for Off-Year Services application.

If a provider is rated a 3 Star and then, after being in business for a year, the provider requests a Formal Rating with Observation and earns a higher rating, the provider does *not* receive back resulting from a YoungStar Quality Adjustment for time between the Technical Rating and the Formal Rating.

Example: Provider Sue started her business in October 2010. She signed up for YoungStar in March 2011 and was given a Technical Rating of 3 Stars in May 2011. In October 2011, she could request a Formal Rating with Observation if she meets all other formal rating requirements. If, as a result of the Formal Rating with Observation, she receives a 4 or 5 Star rating, she would be eligible for a YoungStar quality adjustment starting the month after her 4 or 5 Star rating becomes official.

ONSITE-3. What is the process for on-site ratings (Technical Ratings and Formal Ratings with Observation)?

On-site rating visits must occur every other year. However, a rating change may occur between biennial on-site ratings if:

- A program earns accreditation through one of the YoungStar-approved accrediting bodies.
- The educational qualifications of staff increase or decrease enough to change the YoungStar rating.
- The program requests to receive an optional rating on their Request for Off-Year Services application.

Technical Ratings

For Technical Ratings (and for technical consultation), the program and the program's Technical Consultant work together to schedule rating appointments.

Formal Ratings with Observation

To request a Formal Rating with Observation, child care programs must:

- Have completed a YoungStar Contract;
- Meet Business & Professional Practices, Learning Environment & Curriculum, and Child Health & Well-Being minimum requirements for at least a 4 Star rating (verified by a Technical Consultant);
- Meet educational requirements for at least 4 Stars (verified by The Registry);
- Have been in business in the current physical location for one full year; ***and***
- Believe they meet sufficient quality standards to receive 4 Stars or 5 Stars.

For ERS Observations, visits are unannounced and occur within a known four (4) week window of time. Before receiving an observation, a provider will speak with her/his assigned ERS Observer, specifying the dates or times of day that the program will not be available, such as planned holidays or professional development days.

Programs do *not* choose the classrooms/groups to be observed. Instead, they are selected at random from a pool of all eligible classrooms/groups. Because of the length of time it takes to conduct an ERS Observation, this type of rating is only available to programs that provide child care/school-age care for two or more consecutive hours on the days that they are open.

In addition to the observation of the classroom/group environment, multi-source data collection methods are used including interviews, observations, and document review to provide an overall quality rating of the child care program.

ERS Observers complete the observation using a state-approved process. All ERS Observers have completed specialized training and must consistently demonstrate reliability on the use of the observation tools. Observations will be fair, efficient, and reliable, and programs can be confident they have received a valid star rating.

Before a rating is published on the public database, local YoungStar office staff will offer to explain the rating. If a program would like its rating reviewed, there is an appeals process, described at:

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/ys-appeals.pdf>

ONSITE-4. What observation tools are used for on-site ratings (Technical Ratings and Formal Ratings with Observation)?

Observation tools that are used for YoungStar ratings (**Technical and Formal**) include the *Evaluation Criteria* documents:

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/point-detail>

As stated in the first question in this section, the [Program Administration Scale \(PAS\)](#)¹ and [Business Administration Scale for Family Child Care \(BAS\)](#) were used to *inform* the creation of the YoungStar evaluation criteria in Business and Professional Practices. However, the PAS and BAS are *not* used in their entirety during an on-site rating. Find the PAS and the BAS at <http://mccormickcenter.nl.edu/program-evaluation/>.

¹ Talan, Teri N., and Jorde Bloom, Paula. *Program Administration Scale: Measuring Early Childhood Leadership and Management*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2004.

Additional tools that will be used for YoungStar **Formal Ratings with Observation** include the Environment Rating Scales (<http://ers.fpg.unc.edu/>):

- [Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition \(ECERS-R\)](#)
- [Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition \(ITERS-R\)](#)
- [Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised Edition \(FCCERS-R\)](#)
- [School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale \(SACERS-U\)](#)

For family child care programs, ERS Observers use the FCCERS-R. For group child care programs, ERS Observers find the selected classroom/group on the day of the observation, look at the ages of the children served in that classroom/group on that day, and choose the appropriate rating scale (ECERS-R, ITERS-R, or SACERS-U) based on the ages of the majority of children in the classroom/group at the time.

If you would like to learn more about the specific items that ERS Observers are looking for, check out the Environment Rating Scale(s) relevant to your program:

- The WI Child Care Information Center (CCIC, at 1-800-362-7353 or <http://www.ccic.wi.gov>) provides a free lending library of resource materials related to early care and education and will be able to loan you copies of the Environment Rating Scales.
- You can also learn more about each of the scales by going to <http://www.ersi.info/scales.html> and clicking on the scale(s) of interest.

If a program has already been evaluated with one of the Environment Rating Scales by someone outside of YoungStar, the program still needs to be evaluated by an ERS Observer to earn a star rating. This is because YoungStar ERS Observers attend group training, reliability, and practice sessions to ensure that all YoungStar ERS observations are consistent from rater-to-rater and from program-to-program. The program can consider the original, non-YoungStar evaluation as additional information that can be used to support its Quality Improvement Plan.

ONSITE-5. How does YoungStar ensure consistency between my Technical Consultant and my ERS Observer?

Technical Consultant and ERS Observer oversight staff at Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA) conducts trainings to increase the consistency between the consultation offered by a Technical Consultant and the observation(s) completed by an ERS Observer.

Even so, slight inconsistencies might be noted because:

- ERS Observers go through extensive training to learn how to complete observations consistently and are continually monitored to ensure this consistency. Of course, Technical Consultants thoroughly understand the YoungStar *Evaluation Criteria*, but do not go through the extensive training required to complete reliable ERS Observations.
- There are always changes in your program from day to day, and an ERS Observer might have had the chance to observe something that a Technical Consultant did not.

ONSITE-6. What happens when a program moves?

Regulation

First of all, when a child care program moves its location, the program is obligated to inform its regulatory agency (certification or licensing). DCF has created guidance to help providers when they move:

<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youngstar/pdf/policies/ys-prog-relocation.pdf>

Wisconsin Shares

To continue to be eligible for Wisconsin Shares payments from families, programs must complete these steps when moving:

1. Request the *Program Relocation, Type of Care or Ownership Change Form* from your local YoungStar office (<http://dcf.wi.gov/youngstar/program/localoffice>).
2. Complete this form and send it to your local YoungStar office.
3. Your local YoungStar office will contact you to acknowledge the receipt of the *Program Relocation, Type of Care or Ownership Change Form*.
4. As soon as you are in the new location, contact your local YoungStar office again to let them know the move is complete. If the program just changes its address and nothing else changes about the program, the Provider, Location, and Facility numbers should not change. If the Location and/or Facility numbers do change, the program must notify their local YoungStar office as soon as possible.

YoungStar

A YoungStar rating of a 2 Star or 3 Star **is transferable** as long as the staff remain the same.

A YoungStar rating of 4 or 5 attained through Formal Rating with Observation **is not transferable** to a new address. If the program had a Formal Rating at the old address and earned 3 or more Stars, the program will be rated a 3 Star at the new location. Before the program can request a new Formal Rating, the program has to be in the new physical location for one year prior to the request.

The one exception to this rule for 4 and 5 Star ratings is if a program is accredited through a YoungStar-recognized accrediting body *and* the accreditation transfers to the new location:

- If the accrediting body allows the accreditation to move with the provider, YoungStar will honor the accreditation and the corresponding star rating (4 or 5 Stars). The provider/program is responsible for submitting verification from the accrediting agency that includes program name, *new address location*, and accreditation begin and end dates.
- If the accreditation does *not* transfer with the program/provider, a YoungStar rating is required, and the program can request technical consultation. Because the program will be at the new location less than one year, the program may only request a Technical Rating to earn up to a 3 Star rating or an Automated Rating to receive a 2 Star rating. A program must be in existence at its current location for at least one year to become eligible for a Formal Rating with Observation.

ONSITE-7. What is the process for programs/providers to receive technical consultation or on-site ratings (Technical Ratings or Formal Ratings with Observation) when a program is moving? Is there a cut-off date for these on-site services?

There is not a specific cut-off date identified. Instead it is up to the Technical Consultant, ERS Observer, and Supporting Families Together Association to determine how best to use staff time to serve the interests of the program.

YoungStar-participating programs are eligible for an average of 10 hours of technical assistance per year, so these hours should be used where they will have the biggest impact. YoungStar Consortium staff will make the final determination based upon the needs of the individual program and the timeframe for the move, considering the following:

- If the program has applied for YoungStar technical assistance, but will be moving ***within the targeted technical assistance timeframe*** (a 20-week window), the YoungStar Consortium staff will consider the *reason* for the technical assistance:

- If the technical consultation is for a specific building/environment problem that may not exist after the move, it may be in the best interest of the program to wait until the move is complete.
- If the technical assistance requested is related to professional development or business practices, the issue will likely remain the same at the new site, which makes it possible to proceed with the technical assistance even though the program will move.
- If there is **no definite date** for the move, technical consultation could proceed for general professional development and staff education/training needs.
- If the move is planned but is **not expected for a year or more**, any technical consultation and on-site ratings should occur at the current site.

Once at the new location, the program can request to have their former rating- up to 3 stars- transferred to the new site. A program must be in existence at its current location for at least one year to become eligible for a Formal Rating with Observation and thus a possible 4 or 5 Star rating.

ONSITE-8. When a program closes, is a withdrawal of application needed?

No, a withdrawal of application is not needed. When a program closes (after the program has notified certification or licensing of the intent to close), DCF's automated system (the Case Management System, or CMS) removes the program from the public search site.

However, it is important for the provider to alert the local YoungStar office as soon as possible that the program will be closing. To ensure efficient use of resources and time, YoungStar needs to discontinue any technical consultation or formal rating assignment in CMS so the Technical Consultant or ERS Observer does not visit a site that is closing.

In addition, programs that are closing must alert regulation.

ONSITE-9. How does YoungStar ensure that star ratings are based on a program's quality?

Technical Consultants and Formal Raters have extensive education and experience in the field of early childhood care and education and meet all Registry Professional Development Approval System (PDAS, at <http://www.the-registry.org/PDAS/Overview.aspx>) eligibility requirements. *YoungStar Evaluation Criteria* are research-based, and DCF requires that all assessments and services be culturally and linguistically responsive.

Formal Raters must complete training and demonstrate reliability in the use of the observation tool protocols. The Environment Rating Scales themselves have been validated in many different settings to assure that they measure child care quality fairly, objectively, and consistently.