



## YoungStar

### Frequently Asked Questions: Environment Rating Scales

September 20, 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

#### Questions on YoungStar Environment Rating Scales

(These questions are excerpted from the comprehensive YoungStar FAQ, and their numbers remain the same.)

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## **Answers 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/ys-faq/ys-faq-headstart.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 required 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 payments 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 occur every other year. However, a rating change may occur between biennial on-site visits 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 3 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 Formal Ratings with Observation, visits are unannounced and occur within a known four (4) week window of time. Before receiving a Formal Rating with Observation, a provider will speak with her/his assigned Formal Rater, 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 a Formal Rating with 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.

Formal Raters complete the observation using a state-approved process. All rating 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:

Evaluation Criteria and Points Detail: <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/point-detail>

As stated in the first question in this section, the [Program Administration Scale \(PAS\)](#)<sup>1</sup> 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/>.

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, Formal Raters use the FCCERS-R. For group child care programs, Formal Raters 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.

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

If you would like to learn more about the specific items that Formal Raters 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 <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ccic> ) 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 a Formal Rater to earn a star rating. This is because YoungStar Formal Raters attend group training, reliability, and practice sessions to ensure that all YoungStar ratings 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 Formal Rater?***

Technical Consultant oversight staff at Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA), and Formal Rater oversight staff at Wisconsin Early Childhood Association (WECA) conduct trainings to increase the consistency between the consultation offered by a Technical Consultant and the rating given by a Formal Rater.

Even so, slight inconsistencies might be noted because:

- Formal Raters go through extensive training to learn how to assign ratings 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 assign YoungStar ratings.
- There are always changes in your program from day to day, and a Formal Rater might have had the chance to observe something that a Technical Consultant did not.
- The *Evaluation Criteria* might have changed slightly from one year to the next, especially when YoungStar was in its beginning stages.

### ***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 ensure continuity of Wisconsin Shares payments, programs must complete these steps when moving:

1. Request the *Program Relocation, Type of Care or Ownership Change Form* from your local YoungStar office (<https://dcf.wisconsin.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, Formal Rater, and her/his YoungStar Consortium agency (Supporting Families Together Association or Wisconsin Early Childhood Association) to determine how best to use staff time to serve the interests of the program.

YoungStar-participating programs receive 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 Formal Rater 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.

**Answers: School-Age Programs**  
*(These questions are excerpted from the comprehensive YoungStar FAQ, and their numbers remain the same.)*

***SCH\_AGE-3. Do programs receive multiple ratings, one for early childhood and one for school-age?***

No. Programs are issued one rating for each Location Number (issued by licensing or certification staff). If there are different age groups present and a Formal Rating with Observation has been requested, the Formal Rater will use the Environment Rating Scale appropriate for the groups present.

***SCH\_AGE-14. Which Environment Rating Scale is used for Formal Ratings with Observation in school-age programs?***

The School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale, Update Edition (SACERS-U) is used because it reflects the unique characteristics of school-age programs. More information about SACERS-U can be found at:

<http://www.ersi.info/sacers-u.html>

Indicators that examine the business and professional practices of the school-age program are also examined and can be found in the *YoungStar Evaluation Criteria*, at:

Evaluation Criteria and Points Detail: <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/point-detail>

***SCH\_AGE-15. Which Environment Rating Scale should a center use if that center has a classroom used by 4-year-olds during the day, with “school-agers” integrated into the room before and after school?***

If the center were to have a Formal Rating with Observation performed, the age of the majority of the children in the classroom at the time the rating is performed would determine the tool used.

Programs should consider the developmental needs of all children in the group.

***SCH\_AGE-16. Do part-day school-age programs receive points in the same way points are calculated for full-day programs?***

Yes. When a provider chooses a Technical Rating or a Formal Rating with Observation, on-site observations are completed at each individual school-age program, including programs that are part-day. Activities and indicators outlined in YoungStar (such as 60 minutes of physical activity) are prorated to fit a shorter-day schedule.

*Note:* A program must have two or more consecutive hours of care in order to be eligible for a Formal Rating with Observation.

***SCH\_AGE-17. What does “regular attendance” in school-age programs mean?***

The definition of “regular attendance” depends on the number of hours a week a program is open, as follows:

- If the program is open 40 hours per week or fewer, to be in “regular attendance” means that the child attends the program 50% or more of the hours the program is open for that child’s age group. For example, if a program is open 25 hours per week, the “child in regular attendance” would attend 12.5 hours or more per week.
- If the program is open more than 40 hours per week, to be “in regular attendance” means a child attends 20 hours per week or more. For example, if the program is open for 45 hours per week, the “child in regular attendance” definition would be 20 hours or more per week.

YoungStar recognizes that some school-age programs have different operating schedules based on the time of year, and when operating schedules change, these same rules apply. For example, if the program were to adjust its hours to being open for 40 hours per week in the summer, children considered to be in regular attendance in the summer would be those attending 20 hours or more per week.

In most cases, YoungStar quality indicators apply to the entire program and hence to all the children in the program. However, some YoungStar quality indicators may have exceptions for children who are not in regular attendance. If the quality indicator has an exception for children who are not in regular attendance, this is clearly stated.

**Answers: Day Camps**

*(These questions are excerpted from the comprehensive YoungStar FAQ, and their numbers remain the same.)*

### ***CAMP-3. How do day camps earn star ratings?***

Because the *YoungStar Evaluation Criteria for Day Camps* are for licensed day camps with an operating timeframe of 14 weeks or fewer, a Formal Rating with Observation cannot be completed. Therefore, programs going through the YoungStar rating in the Day Camp track can earn up to 3 Stars. See the *YoungStar Evaluation Criteria for Day Camps* at:

Evaluation Criteria and Points Detail: <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/providers/point-detail>

If a licensed day camp wants to earn a star level higher than 3 Stars, the camp would need to be accredited by the American Camp Association (ACA, at <http://www.acacamps.org/accreditation>). The ACA's standards are linked to quality day camp programming similar to the standards required in YoungStar. Licensed day camps are encouraged to contact their local YoungStar office (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/program/localoffice>) for more information.

### ***CAMP-13. Do day camp programs that operate for only part of the day receive points in the same way points are calculated for full-day programs?***

Yes. When a provider chooses a Technical Rating (day camps are NOT eligible for Formal Ratings with Observation), on-site observations are completed at each individual program, including programs that are part-day. Activities and indicators outlined in YoungStar (such as 60 minutes of physical activity) are prorated to fit a shorter-day schedule.

If the operating hours vary during the week, a Consultant will use the average number of hours per day to award points for items like this.

### ***CAMP-14. What does "regular attendance" in day camp programs mean?***

The definition of "regular attendance" depends on the number of hours a week a program is open, as follows:

- If the program is *open 40 hours per week or fewer*, to be in "regular attendance" means that the child attends the program 50% or more of the hours the program is open for that child's age group. For example, if a program is open 25 hours per week, the "child in regular attendance" would attend 12.5 hours or more per week.
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YoungStar recognizes that some day camp programs have different operating schedules based on the time of year, and when operating schedules change, these same rules apply. For example, if the program were to adjust its hours to being open for 40 hours per week in the summer, children considered to be in regular attendance in the summer would be those attending 20 hours or more per week.

In most cases, YoungStar quality indicators apply to the entire program and hence to all the children in the program. However, some YoungStar quality indicators may have exceptions for children who are not in regular attendance. If the quality indicator has an exception for children who are not in regular attendance, this is clearly stated.

#### **Answer: Four-Year-Old Kindergarten (4K)**

*(These questions are excerpted from the comprehensive YoungStar FAQ, and their numbers remain the same.)*

**4K-9. What if a 4K program has already had a public school district-funded Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) done on the classroom?**

The public school district-funded observation (when completed by a PDAS-approved technical consultant) may help the child care program plan quality improvement goals. However, Formal Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observations completed as a minimum requirement to reach a 4 or 5 Star YoungStar rating must be completed by a YoungStar Formal Rater assigned to the program, to ensure that the rating is valid and reliable across all classrooms and programs statewide.

**Answer: Head Start/Early Head Start**  
(These questions are excerpted from the comprehensive YoungStar FAQ, and their numbers remain the same.)

**HS/EHS-2. Are Head Start programs included in YoungStar?**

Yes. The specifics of YoungStar participation vary according to the number of hours of child care provided by the site as follows:

**Stand-Alone Head Start Sites with No Child Care (Grantees and Delegates, not Partners)**

YoungStar Participation: A stand-alone Head Start program that is in compliance with Head Start Program Performance Standards and other regulations MAY participate in YoungStar.

Star Rating: If this **stand-alone** Head Start program chooses to participate, it receives a 5 Star rating through an automated process.

Application Process: To participate, the program must submit a YoungStar Contract to to: DCF YoungStar Program at 201 East Washington Ave, E200, Madison WI, 53708

Technical Assistance and Micro-Grants: The program IS NOT eligible for technical assistance services or micro-grant funds.

**Head Start Sites That Provide or are Paid by Wisconsin Shares for an Average of Three or Fewer Hours of Child Care per Day (Grantees and Delegates, not Partners)**

YoungStar Participation: A Head Start in which three or fewer hours of child care programming are provided daily is **REQUIRED** to participate in YoungStar if it accepts *Wisconsin Shares* funding. If the program does not accept Wisconsin Shares funding, it MAY participate in YoungStar voluntarily.

Star Rating: If this type of Head Start program (with **three or fewer** hours of child care per day) participates in YoungStar, it receives a 5 Star rating through an automated process.

Application Process: To participate, these programs must submit a YoungStar Contract to the local YoungStar office (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/program/localoffice>).

*Technical Assistance and Micro-Grants:* These programs are NOT eligible for technical assistance services or micro-grant funds.

*Note:* Head Start sites that provide more than three hours of child care *in the summer or on school breaks* **may** be eligible for the automatic 5 Star rating if, *at all other times of the year*, they provide an average of three or fewer hours of child care per day.

**Head Start Sites That Provide or are Paid by Wisconsin Shares for an Average of More Than Three Hours of Child Care Per Day (Grantees and Delegates, not Partners)**

*YoungStar Participation:* A Head Start in which more than three hours of child care programming are provided daily is *REQUIRED* to participate in YoungStar if it accepts *Wisconsin Shares* funding. If the program does not accept Wisconsin Shares funding, it *MAY* participate in YoungStar voluntarily.

*Star Rating:* If this type of Head Start program (with **more than three** hours of child care per day) participates in YoungStar, it receives a rating through the normal YoungStar process, using the *YoungStar Evaluation Criteria*, or through accreditation.

*Application Process:* To participate, these programs must submit a YoungStar Contract to the local YoungStar office (<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/program/localoffice>).

*Technical Assistance and Micro-Grants:* These programs *WILL* be eligible for technical assistance and *CAN* receive micro-grant funding to support their Quality Improvement Plans.

In addition to the specific policies listed above, all other YoungStar policies must be followed.

To read more about the connections between YoungStar and Head Start, see the *Policy on Head Start Participation in YoungStar*:

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

**Answers: Accreditation**

*(These questions are excerpted from the comprehensive YoungStar FAQ, and their numbers remain the same.)*

**ACC-1. How do accredited programs earn YoungStar ratings?**

Accredited programs are awarded ratings of 4 or 5 Stars, based on the type of accreditation the program holds (and on staff educational qualifications, in some cases). The accreditation process replaces the YoungStar rating process.

YoungStar accepts the following accreditations as equivalent to a **5 Star** rating:<sup>2</sup>

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

<sup>2</sup> These accreditations require programs to meet the educational requirements of **5 Star** programs.

YoungStar accepts the following accreditations as equivalent to a **4 Star or a 5 Star** rating, depending on the educational qualifications of staff:<sup>3</sup>

- American Camp Association (ACA)
- Council on Accreditation (COA)
- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)
- Satellite Family Child Care Accreditation (in the City of Madison)
- AdvancED
- American Montessori Society (AMS)

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 DCF at [youngstar@wisconsin.gov](mailto:youngstar@wisconsin.gov), to ensure YoungStar ratings are correct.

A copy of the YoungStar Accreditation Policy may be found at:

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

### *Accredited School-Age Programs*

If a school-age program is housed inside a group-licensed location that is accredited by the Association for Early Learning Leaders (ELL), the school-age program is recognized as accredited because only one YoungStar rating can be awarded per Location Number. School-age programs at these locations are considered part of the accredited status of the larger program.

### ***ACC-2. How do we know that the accreditations mentioned in the previous question are equivalent to a 4 or 5 Star rating?***

YoungStar staff communicate regularly with staff in these accrediting bodies and are satisfied that their accreditation criteria and monitoring practices are rigorous. Currently accepted accreditation bodies require programs to submit annual self-studies and have established unannounced on-site visits. Accreditation is accepted as an alternate pathway to 4 or 5 Stars based on the intensive practices that are necessary to earn accreditation.

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<sup>3</sup> If a program is accredited by COA, NAFCC or Satellite AND the program meets the educational requirements of a 5 Star program in their respective YoungStar rating track, that program would be eligible for a 5 Star rating. If a program is accredited by NECPA, AdvancED, or AMS AND the program meets the educational requirements of a 4 Star program in their respective YoungStar rating track, that program would be eligible for a 4 Star rating. If a program is accredited by NECPA, AdvancED, or AMS AND the program meets the educational requirements of a 5 Star program in their respective YoungStar rating track, that program would be eligible for a 5 Star rating.