A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for Early Care and Education Settings

Virginia Star Quality Initiative
Committed to Quality Early Learning

A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for Early Care and Education Settings

SMART BEGINNINGS
www.smartbeginnings.org/QRIS
What is QRIS?

A quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) is a method to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings.

QRIS is voluntary.
Why QRIS?

- Defines standards for early childhood education
- Creates a framework for accountability
- Establishes a network of support
- Provides incentives
- Acts as a consumer education tool
Quality Matters

Early childhood experiences set the stage for all future learning.

High quality care means that children are engaging in meaningful learning and play, guided by qualified caregivers in an enriched educational environment.
Outcome

★ The acquisition of skills that children need to enter kindergarten ready to succeed and adapt to new learning and social environments.
16 states and the District of Columbia have adopted a QRIS. A majority of states are in the process of exploring, designing, or piloting a QRIS.

Source: Data compiled by the National Child Care Information Center as of January 2008.
Scope of Virginia QRIS Pilots
Virginia Star Quality Initiative

- Participation is voluntary
- Rated on a 5 star scale of increasing quality
- Documentation review and on-site observations
- Assessed on a biennial basis
- For center-based programs
- Piloted in both public and private programs in over 15 communities statewide
- Rated on 4 performance standards
Benefits & Expectations

- Observation & rating
- Feedback report
- Parent resources
- On-site mentoring
- Quality improvement plan
- Quarterly goals & incentives
- Networking opportunities
Partners

The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation and the Virginia Office of Early Childhood Development work in partnership to serve as the hub and coordinate state-level activities for the Virginia Star Quality Initiative.

Local early childhood coalitions or organizations work with the hub to coordinate local activities, like mentoring and community education.
Participants

- Private licensed child day centers (for-profit and non-profit)
- Private faith-based preschools and other preschools exempt from licensure
- Public programs, like the Virginia Preschool Initiative and Head Start
Standard 1: Education, Qualifications, & Training

- Assessed by documentation collected by programs

- Indicators include:
  - Education level and qualifications of directors, teachers, and assistants
  - Ongoing training and professional development
  - Other professional development activities,
Standard 2: Interactions

Assessed by rater observation:

- **CLASS** (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) developed by the University of Virginia

- Measured across 3 domains: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support

- Weighted more than the other standards due to the strong correlation between high quality teacher-to-child and child-to-child interactions and positive child outcomes.
Standard 3: Structure

- Assessed by documentation review
- Examines maximum class sizes and child to staff ratios
- Differentiated by the age of the children served, from infants to school-age children
Standard 4: Environment and Instructions

Assessed by rater observations

★ Environment Rating Scale
- Measured across seven subscales:
  - Space & Furnishings;
  - Personal Care Routines;
  - Language-reasoning;
  - Activities;
  - Interaction;
  - Program Structure;
  - and Parents & Staff
- Separate scales for each age group: ECERS-R or ITERS-R
- Also includes transition practices, such as parent meetings, transfer of records, related professional development, and program orientation for families
Consumer Education & Marketing

- Informational Materials
  - For the Community
  - For Parents

- Publicity
  - Star Rating Certificate
  - Use of Logo and Graphics

- Electronic information
  - Website
Consumer Education Tools

Quality Matters

We’re participating in the Virginia Star Quality Initiative because research shows that the quality of care your child receives sets the stage for all future learning. This voluntary program is a way for us to have the level of quality rated, so you know how well we’re doing, and a way for us to improve our services by learning from highly skilled mentors and professionals.

Here’s what you should know:

- We applied to participate in this continuous quality improvement program, and it is voluntary. We are going beyond what is required of us to achieve a higher level of care and learning for your child.
- You will see the results of our improvement over time. We expect to be participating in this program for several years.

One, two, three, four or five stars are awarded to programs based on achievement in four quality standards:
1. Education, qualifications, and training of teaching staff
2. Interactions between teachers and students
3. Staff to child ratios and classrooms group sizes
4. Learning environment and instructional practices

The award of one star or higher reflects that we choose to raise the bar in commitment to quality beyond expectation or requirement.

We will work with a highly trained mentor who will provide technical assistance and guidance as we implement our improvement plan. Mentors are local early childhood experts who have first-hand experience working in quality childcare settings.

Our program will be assessed every two years by trained and experienced raters. Thorough and systematic on-site visits are conducted to help determine which star level our facility will receive.

As a demonstration of our commitment to quality improvement, we’ll be displaying our star rating certificate for you to see.

Our star rating will also be posted on the Virginia Star Quality Initiative website at: www.smartbeginnings.org/QHS.

A detailed list of frequently asked questions and other information about the Virginia Star Quality Initiative can also be found at: www.smartbeginnings.org/QHS.

The Virginia Star Quality Initiative is a partnership between the Office of Early Childhood Development and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation.

The Virginia Star Quality Initiative is a way to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings that families consider for their children.

Why Does Quality Matter?

The evidence is clear—quality early education is key. With the majority of a child’s brain developing during the first five years of life, the quality of care a child receives during this time is critical. Children with access to high-quality early learning opportunities are more likely to progress in the skills they need to enter kindergarten ready to succeed and adapt to new learning and social environments.

High-quality care means that children are engaging in meaningful learning and play, guided by skilled caregivers in an enriched educational environment.

Virginia is fortunate to have many quality early childhood programs, including those served in public schools, private and faith-based centers, and home-based programs. Yet, identifying and accessing high-quality programs can be a challenge for parents.

The Virginia Star Quality Initiative was created to provide a consistent way to distinguish the level of quality in early education programs, allowing families to make more informed choices and allowing child care providers a way to improve the quality of their services.

This voluntary quality rating and improvement system guides early childhood educators toward programs who choose to participate in one of three star levels of increasing quality. Rated providers are demonstrating their commitment to quality beyond expectation or requirement.

But the rating is only the first step of the QHS process. After receiving a rating, programs are given tools to improve their quality through mentoring and other assistance.

For look for the Star Rated symbol, because a child’s brain development can’t wait.

Key Quality Features

- Education, qualifications, and training of staff: Effective early childhood professionals have a strong background in education and child development, holding specialized early childhood competencies.
- Interactions: Effective teachers have the warmth and sensitivity to engage children, fostering self-confidence and positive interactions, and encouraging questions and curiosity.
- Structure: Small class sizes and low child-to-teacher ratios that allow for individual student attention are trademarks of a high-quality program.
- Environment and Instruction: A safe, appropriate curriculum is critical. The psychological development of children is important, but the way a teacher implements curriculum is more significant. Learning environments should stimulate children’s cognitive development, with classrooms divided into smaller activity-based centers.

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Visit www.smartbeginnings.org/QHS.
Informed Parents

The Virginia Star Quality Initiative
A system to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings that families consider for their children.

Information for Parents

Finding and assessing high-quality child care can be a challenge. When selecting something as crucial as care and early education for your child, you deserve detailed and reliable information so that you can compare one program with another.

The Virginia Star Quality Initiative was created to provide a consistent way to distinguish the level of quality in early education programs, allowing you to make more informed choices.

Why QRIS?

• defines standards for early childhood education
• creates a framework for accountability
• establishes a network of support and outreach for early childhood professionals
• provides incentives linked to achieving and maintaining quality standards
• acts as a consumer education tool to improve the information available to families

The quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for early childhood providers awards programs one of five star levels of increasing quality. But the rating is only the first step of the QRIS process. After receiving a rating, programs are given tools to improve their quality through mentoring and other assistance.

Participation and the award of a one-star or higher rating reflects a program's choice to raise the bar in commitment to quality beyond expectation or requirement.

A program with a star rating:
• is on a quality improvement path
• distinguishes itself for exceeding standards required of it
• assures parents of its focus on producing a high-quality experience for children
• reflects a culture of commitment to excellence among staff

This user-friendly rating is a powerful consumer education tool informing you about quality as you consider options for your child's earliest learning experiences.

It's easy to find the Star Rate symbol to take the guess work out of finding high quality early education programs for your child.

Virginia Star Quality Initiative
Commits to early learning

The Star Quality Initiative is a partnership between the Office of Child Care Development and the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation.

Visit www.star-rating.virginia.org/QRIS
For more information contact:
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Smart Beginnings
Virginia Department of Health

ABC Child Care Center

has been rated a **3-STAR PROGRAM** in the Virginia Star Quality Initiative
by showing a commitment to continuous quality improvement.

Awarded by the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation on
**March 20, 2009**

Rating valid through March 20, 2011
Websites

Virginia's Office of Early Childhood Development

SMART Beginnings
Does One Star Matter?

A program with a one-star rating:

- Is on a quality improvement path and is committed to continued quality improvement;

- Distinguishes itself for exceeding standards and expectations required of it;

- Assures parents of its focus on producing a high quality experience for their child;

- Reflects a culture of commitment to excellence among administrators, staff and families; and

- Has a distinctive vision and articulated plan for achieving quality benchmarks.
More Information…

For more information about the Virginia Star Quality Initiative in the Greater Richmond & Petersburg area, please contact:

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