

IOWA QUALITY RATING SYSTEM

Choosing quality child care can be complicated. Child care quality rating systems help child care providers provide higher-quality care and give families a way to see and compare programs' quality ratings. Quality ratings are an important indicator of child care quality.

HOW DO FAMILIES BENEFIT FROM IOWA'S QUALITY RATING SYSTEM (QRS)?

- ▶ Helps families recognize quality child care. Like a rating for a hotel or restaurant, a child care quality rating rates child care providers. Providers earn higher ratings ("stars") as they meet more quality standards.
- ▶ Provides a way for families to find child care providers that meet high quality standards.
- ▶ Allows families to compare quality ratings for multiple providers.

WHAT DOES QRS TELL YOU ABOUT A CHILD CARE PROVIDER?

Registered or Licensed

- ▶ To be eligible to participate in QRS, child care provided in a family's home must be registered (Child Development Home) and a child care center or preschool must be licensed
- ▶ Besides a QRS rating, child care provider annual inspection and complaint reports publicly available on the DHS website are another resource to review

Quality Standards

- ▶ Standards are built on regulatory health and safety requirements.
- ▶ Key indicators of quality include the areas of: health and safety; environment; professional development; family and community partnership; and leadership and administration

Participation

- ▶ QRS participation is voluntary

Ratings

- ▶ There are five rating levels ("stars") in the QRS
- ▶ A QRS rating remains in effect for two years
- ▶ QRS levels 2-5 receive an achievement bonus
- ▶ Providers that participate in QRS have higher maximum Child Care Assistance (CCA) reimbursement rates; the higher the QRS level, the higher the maximum CCA reimbursement rate



THE FACTS

- ▶ Iowa implemented the QRS in 2006
- ▶ Iowa recalibrated (tweaked) the QRS in 2010
- ▶ A redesign of the QRS began in 2015
- ▶ The QRS Oversight Team includes diverse stakeholders that are part of Iowa's child care system
- ▶ Iowa Child Care Resource & Referral provides technical assistance and gathers required QRS documentation from child care providers

IOWA QUALITY FOR KIDS (IQ4K) - NEW QUALITY RATING & IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM

Why redesign Iowa's QRS?

- ▶ Iowa was one of the first states to implement a quality rating system. As quality rating systems evolved in other states, Iowa realized that our system was only a point-in-time rating system.
- ▶ Child Trends, a national leading research organization focused on children and youth, evaluated and identified possible improvements to the QRS.
 - ▶ One area of improvement identified was incorporating recognition of the provider's educational achievement in the quality rating system criteria.
 - ▶ Creating a database to manage the quality rating system for documentation tracking and evaluation.
- ▶ Regional Education Laboratories, a national organization that provides technical support, reviewed data from the QRS and connect the QRS Oversight Team with other states implementing strategies Iowa was exploring.

Design of the IQ4K System

- ▶ Based on the analysis of the current QRS, the QRS Oversight Team researched strategies in other state systems, developed criteria and expanded indicators of quality in each area which now reflects evidence-based strategies and continuous quality improvement.
- ▶ Extensive input was gathered from child care providers (homes and centers) on the proposed IQ4K system through multiple methods which included, focus groups, surveys, etc.
- ▶ Key indicators of quality include the areas of: nutrition and physical activity; environment; teaching staff qualifications; teaching and learning; professional development; family and community partnerships; leadership and administration.
- ▶ The strategies in the IQ4K system are more inclusive of the diverse environments children attend (faith-based preschool, before/after school care, etc.).
- ▶ IQ4K recognizes national models (NAEYC, Head Start, etc.) in the criteria and allows the program to complete a modified application.
- ▶ A new achievement bonus structure is under development and DHS will gather input at a later date.



Building quality environments one block at a time

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