

The Importance of Early Involvement in QRIS

As IdahoSTARS approaches January 2010, the opening of the QRIS to all Idaho child care facilities, we want to explain the importance of getting started in the first several months.

Research from the National Child Care Information Center tells us that quality early care and education opportunities for children positively affect their growth and development. Child care facilities making the decision to be involved with the QRIS are making a valuable commitment to the children in their care. Positive outcomes for children and information for parents will ultimately benefit our state.

As many of you know, IdahoSTARS received money through the American Investment and Recovery Act of 2009. This money is specifically earmarked to increase professional development opportunities and to improve the quality of early care and education programs. This money is limited in its availability and is the primary source of funding for QRIS incentives through June 2011. So facilities are encouraged to join the QRIS as soon as possible.

Facilities should keep the following facts in mind when creating a time table for participation:

- IdahoSTARS believes that if a facility wishes to complete all of the steps to **receive a STAR Rating by June 2011, they would have to begin the QRIS process no later than July 1, 2010**. This gives a facility about 12 months to apply for a *Facility Profile*, get the results, create an improvement plan, request funding, implement the plan, apply for a STAR Rating, and have a STAR Rating validation visit.
- Of course, facilities can begin the QRIS process **after July 1, 2010 date and complete the process after June of 2011**, but the amount of funding available will likely decline, as may the amount of the incentives.
- Facilities will be funded on a first-come-first-served basis with stimulus dollars until funds are depleted. When the stimulus funds are expended, the awards will be modified for the normal IdahoSTARS operating budget.

So, the IMPORTANCE OF EARLY INVOLVEMENT IN THE QRIS is critical.

IdahoSTARS is in the process of creating a spreadsheet that can be used on-line to calculate the estimated amount of an Achievement Award for a specific facility. This worksheet will be posted on the IdahoSTARS website in early January and will be revised on a monthly basis to reflect the remaining funds in the QRIS incentive budget.

Awards will vary for each facility, as described below. All monetary quotes are estimates based upon the funds available on that specific date. Estimates will go up and down depending on how many facilities participate, the type of facilities, how much support they request, the star ratings, the number of ICCP children served, and so on.

12/22/2009

- 1) **QRIS Funding Grants**: Money granted in conjunction with the QRIS Improvement Plans. The QRIS Funding Grants are used to meet the goals outlined in the QRIS Improvement Plan, prior to requesting a STAR Rating. These grants are estimated at \$1,000 to \$1,500 per classroom or per family/group child care facility. An additional \$2,000 per facility may be available to specifically target business, administrative, or overall facility improvements.
- 2) **QRIS Achievement Awards**: A one-time incentive to facilities that complete the process to earn a STAR Rating. The awards are estimated to range from \$1,075 to \$15,000**depending upon the STAR Rating, the number of FTE staff, the number of staff with CDA or a degree in ECE or related field, the FTE enrollment of children, the number of FTE tuition assistance children (ICCP), and the number of FTE children with special needs.
- 3) **QRIS Continuous Quality Improvement Award**: An award based on the increase in QRIS Quality Points and other variables (the STAR Rating, the number of FTE staff, the number of staff with CDA or a degree in ECE or related field, the FTE enrollment of children, the number of FTE tuition assistance children (ICCP), and the number of FTE children with special needs) The Continuous Quality Improvement Award will be available beginning in the summer of 2011, about a year after the first facilities receive a STAR Rating. Estimated award amounts will be announced in January 2011.
- 4) In order to **ensure re-investment in quality child care**, some conditions apply to the QRIS Achievement (a one-time award) and Continuous Quality Improvement Awards (earned yearly as long as quality points increase and funds are available):
 - a. To encourage staff to work together to earn a STAR Rating, **a minimum of 25%** of the total award must be distributed to staff as a one-time bonus, based on a staff member's weekly work hours, length of time employed at the facility, and level of performance.
 - b. Remaining funds must be used to address facility needs; examples follow:
 - i. To create an emergency fund to assist parents who can't afford to pay, lose electricity, need gas cards, emergency repairs, and other concrete support in times of need
 - ii. To create a *deferred maintenance* line item in operating budget per the *Business Practices* Quality Standard
 - iii. To support teacher education (help buying books, training to become 'qualified staff' on a screening tool, pay overtime for required staff trainings)
 - iv. To create a flex time fund to support staff time for academic scholarship release, staff participation or work during SF events like community cafes, study time during finals, child care for Parent Work Group
 - v. To purchase early learning resources to provide curriculum and assessment resources to support children's early learning and school readiness and training for staff
 - vi. To purchase adequate liability and comprehensive insurance

- vii.** To purchase a computer, software, and/or printer for tracking for attendance, billing, payroll, staff files, communication with parents and staff
- viii.** To support the improvement plan created from the self-study using the *Business Administration Scale* or *Program Administration Scale*
- ix.** To create a *Strengthening Families* line item in the operating budget – food, materials, tables, speakers, classes such as resume writing, parenting, and personal finance

****NOTE:** The QRIS Achievement and Continuous Quality Improvement Award will be capped at \$15,000 for any single facility. The award will be capped to prevent expending all of the funds before 2011; spending is hard to project because of the many unknowns, including the number of facilities of each type and configuration that may apply. If stimulus funds are still available at the end of 2011, IdahoSTARS will offer grants to ECE facilities to continue their quality improvement.