



QRIS Frequently Asked Questions

What is the QRIS?

The QRIS is a voluntary quality rating and improvement system for child care facilities in Idaho. The quality of the facility is rated through a system of five stars, similar to ratings for hotels, movies, and restaurants. The QRIS includes a built-in system for improvement in each of the eight Quality Standards. In this way, the QRIS credits facilities for the quality practices already in place while simultaneously providing a roadmap to increased quality.

What are the QRIS Quality Standards?

1. **Environment:** Measures health, safety and environment through the *Environment Rating Scales*
2. **Education:** Documents current qualifications of director and education of staff
3. **Professional Development:** Documents ongoing education and training of staff
4. **Inclusion:** Documents how a facility supports children's full participation and ways staff intentionally plan for each child and family to be successful
5. **Strengthening Families:** Documents implementation of *Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education*
6. **Group Size:** Documents the number of children in each group
7. **Child-to-staff Ratio:** Documents ratio of children to staff in each group
8. **Business Practices:** Documents business practices

Why has the QRIS been developed?

The QRIS has three goals.

1. Inform Parent Choice

- Provide information to help parents seek quality in child care
- Educate parents so they know what quality care is and are encouraged to request it
- Measure quality

2. Improve the quality of child care

- Increase quality
- Prepare more programs to serve children with special needs
- Encourage child care providers to see themselves as professionals and increase their training and education
- Produce positive outcomes for children

3. Implement *Strengthening Families through Early Care and Education*

- Reduce incidents of child abuse and neglect by building family strengths
- Strengthen families and their networks in the prevention of child abuse and neglect



What is the process for getting a quality rating?

The IdahoSTARS QRIS emphasizes **quality improvement**. Facilities in the QRIS are recognized for the quality practices already in place. At the same time, facilities must intentionally plan improvements for the three years a STAR rating is valid. Funding is provided to support planned improvements as long as progress is documented along the way and funding is available.

How long will it take? There are many steps to receiving a star rating; the process from attending the QRIS Orientation to getting a rating may take 18 months or longer. Facilities operate on their own schedule.

There are only two 'deadlines' for the QRIS:

- *Application for a Facility Profile* is due 90 days after the QRIS site visit with the Regional Consultant
- *Application for a STAR Rating* is due one year after a facility receives funding for the *QRIS Improvement Plan*

STEP 1: The facility obtains a license. All facilities must be licensed to participate in the QRIS. Licensed facilities must meet the health and safety requirements of the state of Idaho, including criminal history background checks. If the facility operates in a city with licensing requirements, the facility must meet the standards set by the local governing body.

STEP 2: The facility director attends an orientation to the QRIS. The QRIS Orientation is available in each region of the state through the Child Care Resource and Referral office (CCR&R).

STEP 3: The Regional Quality Child Care Consultant visits the director who has signed the *QRIS Letter of Intent*.

STEP 4: The facility director views the *Orientation to the Environment Rating Scales* on-line and submits the homework to the Assessment Specialist.

STEP 5: Classroom(s) in the facility receive an environment assessment using the *Environment Rating Scales*.

STEP 6: The facility completes an *Application for a Facility Profile*. This is a self-study of current practices as they relate to the quality standards.

STEP 7: The director submits the *Application for a Facility Profile* to the Regional Consultant within 90 days of the QRIS site visit.

STEP 8: A *Facility Profile* is generated by the QRIS office. The *Facility Profile* verifies the quality indicators that the facility has documented. The *Facility Profile* outlines the facility's strengths and areas needing improvement. It is sent to the facility with the QRIS Agreement.

STEP 9: The facility uses the *Facility Profile* to create the QRIS Improvement Plan and Funding Request toward highest quality, using the QRIS quality indicators as a planning tool.

STEP 10: The facility submits the *IdahoSTARS QRIS Improvement Plan* and *Funding Request* to the QRIS office.

STEP 11: The facility works to implement the improvement plan (for 6 months or longer) to prepare for applying for a STAR rating. This application is due one year from the time the facility receives funds based on the improvement plan.

STEP 12: The facility applies for a STAR rating. When the information supplied is verified by a visit by an assessor, the facility receives its STAR rating. A one-time Achievement Award is awarded for this initial STAR rating.

STEP 13: The facility submits yearly reports, improvement plans, funding requests, and incentives.

STEP 14: The facility applies for a STAR rating renewal every three years.



Why should I join the QRIS?

You should join the QRIS because the QRIS will support you in your efforts to provide quality child care and higher quality child care is better for children. Research repeatedly shows that children who spend time in high quality settings have happier childhoods and more success later in life. They are more likely to graduate high school, move on to college, earn more money over the course of their lives, have a more durable family life and be engaged in civic life. They are less likely to have behavior problems in school, encounter the juvenile justice system, become a teen parent and use drugs and alcohol.

Why does the facility have to be licensed to participate?

The facility must be licensed because investing in a licensing indicates a minimal commitment to quality. It ensures a facility is operating in compliance with the law and that appropriate personnel and family members have passed criminal history background checks.

How do I get a license if my city does not require one?

Dial 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine for assistance with a child care license. Or apply on-line at <http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Children/DayCareLicensing/tabid/306/Default.aspx>

What is Technical Assistance?

Technical Assistance is target assistance for those classrooms that score below 3.0 on an *Environment Rating Scale* assessment. Technical Assistance is provided by the IdahoSTARS Assessment Specialist and is designed to help providers address issues relating to health and safety. Funding is available on an as-needed basis.

How long is a STAR rating valid?

A facility's STAR rating is valid for three years.

What happens if I am ready to move to the next STAR level before three years is up?

A facility can apply to receive a new STAR rating prior to their anniversary by submitting an application with a re-rating fee. For more information, see *Understanding the STAR Rating*, page 65.

How long does a facility get to work on the QRIS Improvement Plan?

A facility can work on their *QRIS Improvement Plan* for one year after funding is received. After one year, the facility must apply for a STAR rating. Funding is available yearly as long as *Improvement Plans* are updated and reports submitted on goals accomplished and in progress, and as long as funds are available.

Who can help me plan improvements?

Mentor/coaches are available to help plan improvements, as is your Regional Child Care Consultant.

What are the QRIS deadlines?

The entire process from attending the QRIS Orientation may take 18 months or longer. Facilities operate on their own schedule. The only 'deadline' for the QRIS is determined by when a facility receives funding for the *QRIS Improvement Plan*. Once a funding request is approved and the facility receives funds, the facility has one year to apply for a STAR rating. If a facility does not apply at the end of one year, the facility will be assigned a rating based on the *Facility Profile* and the facility will be ineligible for IdahoSTARS incentives.



Who conducts the environment assessments?

Environment assessments are conducted by *Environment Rating Scale* assessors. The assessors are trained observers of quality environments. For more information on the *Environment Rating Scales* and assessors, view the *Orientation to the Environment Rating Scales* video on-line at www.idahostars.org.

What exactly is a CDA?

A Child Development Associate (CDA) is for an individual who has successfully completed the CDA assessment process and has been awarded a CDA Credential. A CDA is given according to the CDA Competency Goals in center-based, home visitor or family child care programs.

What is the difference between a Child Development Associate (CDA) and an Associate's Degree in Child Development (AA or AAS)?

A CDA is a credential awarded to an individual from the Council for Professional Recognition in Washington DC. This credential may or may not be based on college credits and is subject to renewal every 3-5 years. An Associate's Degree is awarded from an accredited college or university, it is based entirely on college credits, and never expires or needs to be renewed.

How do I let parents know that the facility is participating in QRIS?

Announce participation to parents so they can share the excitement of the process and applaud the facility's commitment to quality. The QRIS process can help parents learn about quality and how quality positively impacts their children. The Strengthening Families Quality Indicator focuses on parent involvement. Find a template of a *QRIS Parent Letter* on page 75 of this workbook as an example of how to introduce parents to the QRIS and continuous quality improvement.