

State of Colorado

Next Generation Quality Rating & Improvement System

DRAFT



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Introduction to Colorado's Next Generation TQRIS

Colorado's Next Generation QRIS is the result of several years of collaborative design from Early Childhood stakeholders across the state and country. In 2012, Colorado engaged the support of Oldham Innovative Research to develop the design framework at the direction of the Early Childhood TQRIS Design Committee. In 2013, Colorado was awarded a \$29.9 million Race to the Top Early Childhood Learning Challenge grant to invest in early childhood strategies that improve both the quality of early childhood education and the number of children with high needs being served by quality early childhood education providers. As part of that grant, Colorado will implement the Next Generation QRIS that has been under design for the past two years.

In July 2013 the Office of Early Childhood published an initial draft of the Next Generation QRIS, and input was received from providers and early childhood leaders across Colorado. In September, Office of Early Childhood issued a Request for Information to gather additional formal feedback about the design and implementation.

Formal and informal responses to the initial draft consistently addressed two areas for the design committee to review and revise: 1) Adjusting Workforce Qualifications to recognize experience or other alternatives to a formal early childhood degree and 2) More emphasis on Learning Environment with specific focus on teacher – child interactions.

The design committee, in consultation with the Office of Early Childhood has published the following Next Generation QRIS draft version 3 in response to those concerns and to address additional concerns/opportunities identified when reviewing the design.

The Office of Early Childhood will review this version of the design with the contracted Ratings Administrator in early 2014 to determine any additional necessary revisions to ensure an efficient, research-based design is implemented. Following that review, any changes to the design will be published for implementation in July 2014. A QRIS Advisory Board will be engaged to actively review input and support the Ratings Administrator and Office of Early Childhood in making future results-based revisions as required.

STANDARDS & POINTS

I. STANDARDS & CRITERIA

Colorado’s Next Generation QRIS standards will be based on accumulation of points within five standard areas: 1) Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development; 2) Family Partnerships; 3) Leadership, Management and Administration; 4) Learning Environment; 5) Child Health. Points must be gained within each of the five areas with a specified minimum number of points. The breakdown of the points is documented within the *Standards and Points Framework* applicable to the program or provider. Additional points may be earned in optional categories: 1) Home Language; 2) Additional Professional Staff and 3) Professional Leadership. The provider may choose to apply up to two earned optional points to one of the five standard areas in order to increase the total score of that standards area. If optional points are added to a standards area, it will be noted in the ratings details on the QRIS website to ensure transparency in ratings and scoring.

Colorado’s Next Generation QRIS standards apply to all licensed childcare centers and family childcare homes including preschool programs and licensed Early Head Start and Head Start programs. There are separate *Standards and Points Framework* documents outlining the standards and indicators for family childcare homes. While the standard areas for both centers and homes are the same, the indicators and points will vary slightly in order to properly address the unique characteristics of each sector and the underlying associated program standards.

The standards and indicators within *Standards and Points Framework* are based on research-based program standards (i.e., national accreditation, Head Start Performance, and other applicable national early childhood standards) and are built off Colorado’s Child Care Licensing Rules and Regulations and Colorado’s Quality Standards for Early Childhood Care and Education.

Table 1: Child Care Centers

Categories	Total Points	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
1. Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development	39	10	14	20
2. Family Partnerships	27	12	15	22
3. Leadership, Management & Administration	36	16	20	29
4. Learning Environment	27	9	13	20
5. Child Health	16	6	8	12
Optional available points:	8			

Minimum requirement for Rating	53	70	103
Environmental Ratings Score (ITERS-R/ECERS-R)	At least 3.75 with no classroom below a 3.0	At least 4.75 with no classroom below a 4.0	At least 5.75 with no classroom below a 5.0

Table 2: Family Child Care (To be Developed)

II. LICENSING AS THE FOUNDATION FOR QRIS

The Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Early Care and Learning (DECL) Licensing Specialists will verify levels 1 and 2 of Colorado’s Next Generation QRIS. Level 1 will be automatically designated to all programs and providers who hold a license in good standing. Level 2 designations will be awarded to those programs and providers that have a license in good standing, have entered staff into the Professional Development and Information System (PDIS), meet a minimum number of core indicators in an abbreviated Environmental Ratings Scale (ERS), have engaged in the self-assessment process and have completed Colorado Next Generation QRIS-approved training opportunities¹.

Beginning with childcare licensing as the foundation for building quality, levels 3-5 on Colorado’s Next Generation QRIS will be verified by a contracted Ratings Administrator. The higher-level designations will be determined through points achieved by demonstrating quality indicators. The point system is designed to be flexible and allow programs/providers to develop and demonstrate quality in a variety of ways.

III. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF QRIS RATINGS

The standard areas included within the Colorado Next Generation QRIS will be: 1) Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development; 2) Family Partnerships; 3) Leadership, Management, and Administration; 4) Learning Environment; and 5) Child Health. The indicators within the standards are noted in the *Standards and Points Framework* (see Appendix I) applicable to the program or provider.

Table 3: Standards and Criteria of Colorado’s Next Generation QRIS

Standard Areas	Criteria
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¹ 75% of a center’s staff will be required to have completed the training. At least one staff member per classroom must have completed the training. New employees will need to have a plan to complete required training within 90 days of date of hire and this will count toward 75%.

Workforce Qualifications & Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Director Qualifications b. Early Childhood Teacher Qualifications c. Early Childhood Assistant Teacher & Aides Qualifications d. Ongoing Professional Development
Family Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Home Language b. Cultural Sensitivity c. Transitions d. Engagement of Families e. Engagement of Communities
Leadership, Management & Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Program Evaluation b. Personnel c. Benefits d. Business Administration
Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Curriculum b. Ratio, Group Size & Continuity of Care c. Observational Assessment of Program d. Child Assessment
Child Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Child Health Promotion
Optional Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Home Language b. Additional Professional Staff c. Professional Leadership

Colorado’s Next Generation QRIS will include classroom/home observations using research-based assessment tools by a trained, independent and reliable assessor for programs seeking level 3-5 designations. Research-based classroom/home assessment tools will be used and the scores determined will impact the number of points a program/provider receives. For centers, 50% of classrooms will be assessed with at least one classroom per age group represented in the assessment. Classroom assessment tools will be appropriate for the age group within the classroom being assessed.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING

The following describes documenting compliance, determination of ratings, alternative pathways, and monitoring the ratings of Colorado’s Next Generation QRIS. To better understand the nature of accountability and monitoring of a QRIS, Anne Mitchell in her 2005 publication, *Stair Steps to Quality: A Guide for States and Communities Developing Quality Rating Systems for Early Care and Education* defines these terms as follows:

- **Accountability** is the process of using valid and reliable methods of assessment to monitor compliance with a set of standards.
- **Assessment** is a systematic approach for gathering information to make a judgment about the component of quality that a standard(s) addresses to then assign a quality rating.
- **Monitoring** is keeping track of compliance with each of the standards.

I. DETERMINATION OF RATINGS AND DOCUMENTING COMPLIANCE

A level 1 QRIS rating will be determined by the by the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) Division of Early Care and Learning. If a program/provider meets all requirements of CDHS Division of Early Care and Learning licensing, the program/provider will receive a child care license that indicates a level 1 on Colorado's Next Generation QRIS.

Programs/providers that wish to move through Colorado's Next Generation QRIS levels can voluntarily apply for a higher rating (2 through 5) by providing evidence to meet the level requirements. If a program/provider chooses not to move ahead on the QRIS then they will remain at a level 1 unless licensing compliance changes.

DECL Licensing Specialists will verify a Level 2 rating at the next routine licensing inspection. To reach a level 2 rating, programs/providers must complete Colorado's Next Generation QRIS-sponsored training requirements; enroll all staff in the PDIS; conduct a self-assessment; meet an abbreviated set of core indicators on an Environmental Rating Scale (ERS); and develop a quality improvement plan. Assistance in conducting self-assessments and the development of quality improvement plans may be provided by a qualified Colorado Next Generation QRIS coach.

Programs/providers seeking a level 3-5 Colorado Next Generation QRIS rating will use the *State of Colorado's QRIS Self-Study Guide*² to determine the number of points they can provide evidence in order to reach a level 3, 4, or 5 rating. Those interested in a level 3-5 rating will submit an application to the QRIS contracted vendor who will also designate all level 3-5 ratings. Level 3 ratings require that programs/providers provide evidence to verify that a certain number of points have been achieved; meet threshold scores from the ERS based on an observation by an independent, reliable observer; and develop a quality improvement plan based on results from the ERS observation. Level 4 and 5 ratings require a higher number of

² To be developed by the QRIS vendor with input from the QRIS Advisory Board

points that can be verified by evidence; a higher threshold of scores on the ERS and other assessment tools; a second assessment using another research-based instrument conducted by a trained, independent, reliable observer; and a quality improvement plan based on assessment results.

II. ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS

Alternative pathways to meet the standards for Levels 3 and 4 are part of Colorado's Next Generation QRIS. An alternative pathway means that the program meets or exceeds the QRIS standards by being in compliance with an approved accreditation. Approved accreditation programs will be published by CDHS.

Early Head Start and Head Start programs will also be recognized as an alternative pathway along with accredited programs/providers.

Programs that are accredited by an approved accreditation system will automatically be rated at the level the accreditation is aligned to, provided they submit a copy of their accreditation certificate and annual report of continued accreditation compliance.

Programs that have a current triennial review report from the Office of Head Start (OHS) and have had no outstanding non-compliance issues will automatically be rated at a level 4 provided that they submit all documents of their most recent review, including a copy of their CLASS scores, documentation from OHS that shows no outstanding non-compliance issues, and their annual Program Information Report.

For programs that have a quality rating from an approved quality ratings administrator prior to the implementation of Colorado's Next Generation QRIS, an alternative pathway will also be honored. When that quality rating expires, then the program/provider must comply with the current Colorado Next Generation QRIS model.

III. MONITORING RATINGS

Colorado's Next Generation QRIS standards will be monitored every three years for levels 3 through 5 barring no major changes within the program. Due to levels 1 and 2 being monitored by DECL Licensing Specialists, these levels will be determined based on the Division's protocol for monitoring (typically every two years).

Situations that would indicate a major change would include:

- serious licensing violation;
- change in ownership;
- change in director;

- change in/or additional location;
- staff turnover rate of 50% or greater;
- a request for a higher rating

These changes may also warrant an additional monitoring visit or further evidence to be provided to meet compliance of the current rating.

For programs/providers rated at a level 3, 4, or 5 an annual QRIS report will be submitted to the QRIS contracted vendor verifying that there has been no major changes and that the rating is still verifiable through an annual self-assessment and a careful review of the quality (or continuous) improvement process, including the actions highlighted within the quality improvement plans. For those program/providers that have a level 1 or 2 rating, monitoring will be conducted by DECL Licensing Specialists during their scheduled visit. Level 2 programs/providers will report on their progress of meeting objectives highlighted within the quality improvement plan and will establish new goals for the next year based on their self-assessment. Any new staff will also need to complete the QRIS-sponsored training at Level 2.

For those that have received a rating through an alternative pathway, annual reports submitted to accrediting bodies or the OHS are sufficient if there is a continuous quality improvement component.

Colorado's Next Generation QRIS ratings are not stagnant. All QRIS ratings will need to be verified annually through QRIS reporting and every third year through on-site assessments. If after monitoring, a program/provider drops to a lower rating, the program/provider will have the opportunity to restore their former, higher rating if they choose. This can be done by developing a written plan for restoring compliance with measureable, timed, evidence-based action steps that can be monitored for compliance. This plan must be implemented within three months (more time can be given if negotiated with the QRIS vendor) for the higher rating to be honored and publicized. If the program/provider does not follow through with developing and implementing the restoration plan then the lower rating designation will be the new, public rating.

If a program/provider wishes to appeal their rating designation they can follow the dispute process established by CDHS for levels 1 and 2. For those programs with a level 3-5 rating, the provider/program can follow the dispute procedure established by the QRIS contracted vendor. Making the ratings public will be suspended for those programs/providers appealing their rating until a resolution is reached. All programs/providers will be made aware of the dispute process both verbally and in writing at the time of their rating.

An advisory board structure will be developed to guide the policies, procedures, and practices of Colorado's Next Generation QRIS. This advisory structure will consist of a variety of state stakeholders and other relevant agency stakeholders.

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PROVIDER SUPPORTS & INCENTIVES

I. QRIS FOR EARLY EDUCATION IN COLORADO

The organizations, agencies and other stakeholders that support the QRIS in Colorado are vast, consisting of both the private and public sector. Incentivizing Colorado's Next Generation QRIS is critical to participation rates and sending the message that quality setting, environments, and experiences for children and families are important to Colorado. CDHS is working to ensure incentives and supports will be provided to participants of Colorado's Next Generation QRIS to promote higher quality and to help offset the costs of providing high quality education and care.

Organizations, agencies, and other stakeholders who are able to foster participation in Colorado's Next Generation QRIS will be oriented as to how they can tie their support and incentives directly to QRIS participation and will be encouraged to link at least one of their supports or incentives to QRIS participation. In turn, QRIS participants will link at least one of their quality supports/incentives to their quality improvement plan.

II. Program / Provider Supports

Program/provider supports will be available to those volunteering to advance through QRIS. The supports will include professional development, technical assistance and outreach/information.

a. Professional Development

Professional development opportunities will be a support to participants of Colorado's Next Generation QRIS. Level 2 will feature accessible professional development hours of training specific to the QRIS standard areas, which will be aligned with the newly developed competencies for early educators and administrators. Professional development specific to ERS, program self-assessment, and developing a quality improvement plan will also be provided to those wanting to improve quality through advancement within the QRIS levels. All professional development related to QRIS will be directly linked to the competencies and the Professional Development Information System as well.

To ensure high quality and consistent delivery, specialized professional development as well as a credential will be required of anyone wishing to provide coaching/mentoring services to Colorado's Next Generation QRIS participants.

b. Technical Assistance (includes “Relationship-Based Professional Development”)

Technical assistance will be an integral part of Colorado’s Next Generation QRIS. Technical assistance will be available at all QRIS levels and will include support through a website with a link specific to programs/providers that will include QRIS information, forms, contact information and resources; a toll-free QRIS phone number to access staff who can answer questions related to the QRIS; an email address to access a staff person to assist with questions electronically; and QRIS orientations. Another component of available technical assistance is known as relationship-based professional development, which will include coaching from a Colorado Next Generation QRIS coach. Coaches will be trained and credentialed in order to properly support those who wish to improve quality through advancement within the QRIS levels³.

c. Outreach & Information

The contracted Ratings Administrator will be responsible for developing resources, examples, and templates that are accessible to programs/providers as they navigate through the QRIS. The guidance document and self-study guide⁴ will be reviewed and revised annually by the contracted Ratings Administrator and will be accessible in a variety of formats and will consider appropriate languages and literacy rates.

Colorado’s Next Generation QRIS web site will be developed and maintained by the contracted Ratings Administrator and will include a link specific for programs/providers, resources that can be downloaded for programs/providers, accurate QRIS ratings, information on available professional development opportunities, how to access technical assistance and how to access and qualify for financial incentives, and other relevant information for parents. Colorado’s Next Generation QRIS web site will be updated in a timely manner to ensure the most accurate information is reflected.

Benchmarks for participation rates and levels of quality will be established to determine QRIS progress over time. Annually Colorado’s Next Generation QRIS Advisory Board will receive reports of progress toward meeting these benchmarks and will support the strategic plan to meet established benchmarks.

³ Costs, if any, of relationship based coaching will be determined based on cost model analysis.

⁴ To be developed by the contracted vendor with input from the QRIS Advisory Group.

III. FINANCIAL INCENTIVES

Financial incentives (TBD) will be available to Colorado's Next Generation QRIS participants in levels 3-5 to assist in the costs to provide higher standards of quality education and care.

CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT & PUBLIC AWARENESS

I. EDUCATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVOCATES

Colorado has an array of service providers that engage with early childhood programs and providers on a regular basis. A concerted effort will be placed on educating and informing these early childhood advocates ensuring consistent messages are articulated about Colorado's Next Generation QRIS.

Written materials, presentations, and QRIS resources will be disseminated to organizations, agencies, and other stakeholders participating in Colorado's Next Generation QRIS orientation sessions throughout Colorado in order to assist programs/providers to better understand the benefits of providing high-quality experiences and environments for children by participating in Colorado's Next Generation QRIS. Colorado's Next Generation QRIS web site will be an important tool to orient organizations, agencies, and other stakeholders on up-to-date QRIS resources and information.

II. REACHING FAMILIES & CONSUMERS

One of the main reasons for developing a QRIS is to assist families in choosing and evaluating care for their children. To campaign for the success of a QRIS, messages must be designed for a variety of audiences (families, providers, stakeholders) to promote the value of the system. As noted by Anne Mitchell in her 2005 publication, *Stair Steps to Quality: A Guide for States and Communities Developing Quality Rating Systems for Early Care and Education*:

“Not everyone will see the inherent benefits of QRS. Some may oppose QRS due to ideological concerns, which frequently include the belief that child care minimizes the role of families. A strategy employed by supporters of QRS is listening to concerns, seeking common ground based on what is good for children, and responding with facts that explain why the QRS is being developed. Research on program quality is often part of the explanation, along with affirmation that families are children's first teachers and that many children are in out-of-home programs because their families work.”

Engaging and educating families is a critical component of public outreach to help families understand, choose and evaluate high-quality care and education settings that meet their family's needs. Colorado's Next Generation QRIS will design, implement and evaluate marketing strategies that are family-friendly and consider literacy rates, English-language proficiency, and adult caregivers with disabilities in order to do so effectively.

The following modalities will be part of reaching families and consumers through Colorado's Next Generation QRIS:

- **Easily recognized symbols** will be used to show the different levels within the QRIS so that families/consumers can easily see what level child care programs/providers are rated;
- **Easy, widespread access** to ratings and what they mean along with a variety of ways to obtain rating information will be available;
- **Use of local and social media** will promote QRIS efforts (i.e., public service announcements and paid advertisements through radio and television, templates for newspaper articles or press releases for those programs/providers wanting to place an announcement about their recent rating in the local paper, and social networking sites);
- **Brochures, posters, and/or flyers** will be available at local institutions, organizations, and agencies (e.g., social service agencies, doctor's offices, employment agencies, home visiting programs, and hospitals);
- **QRIS web site** with a link specific to families will be developed in order for families to retrieve information about ratings as well as tips on choosing and evaluating quality care for their children.

To ensure that Colorado's Next Generation QRIS information is available, updated and current, all public awareness and outreach information will be reviewed and revised in a timely and planned manner that is proposed by the QRIS Ratings Administrator and approved by CDHS.

III. REACHING PROGRAMS / PROVIDERS

To encourage participation of programs in Colorado's Next Generation QRIS beyond offering provider incentives and supports, participation will also be promoted using a range of marketing techniques. The following marketing techniques will be used to encourage provider participation Colorado's Next Generation QRIS:

- **Public awareness packets** will be distributed to programs/ providers once they are rated (e.g., a decal to hang in the window, a QRIS certificate that depicts what level the program has reached, a template of a press release and

- a QRIS pin to wear when attending meetings, conferences, and other public engagements that show the provider's commitment);
- **QRIS web site** with a link specific to providers/programs that will include basic QRIS information about getting involved, frequently asked questions, and resource materials;
 - **Webinars, orientations, and QRIS-specific training** will be provided to programs wanting to participate in the QRIS that will be at no or low cost to programs/providers interested;
 - **Education of licensing staff, QRIS vendor staff, and other organizations, agencies, and stakeholders** will help promote the QRIS when conducting visits with programs/providers and assure that there is continuity of messages given to programs/providers. QRIS flyers/brochures will also be handed out during licensing visits to encourage continued progression through the QRIS;
 - **Dissemination of QRIS data** in terms of participation and progression rates through the QRIS levels will offer insights as to what populations may need to be targeted to encourage future QRIS participation and support.

Strategies that will be part of building consumer support for Colorado's Next Generation QRIS will include:

- **Educating QRIS champions** to promote the QRIS throughout Colorado;
- **Developing a series of presentations** specific to the QRIS to help with the education effort with presentations geared toward legislators, schools, other early childhood advocates, community agencies, local institutions and public funders;
- **Creating talking points** to assist champions in their efforts to talk to others about the QRIS;
- **Including community groups** (i.e., Colorado's Early Childhood Councils) to raise awareness and build support for the QRIS through hosting events to engage a wide-range of audiences at the local level.

Engaging the private sector in the education and promotion of Colorado's Next Generation QRIS will be a priority to raise awareness at the community level and to engage other partners within the private sector in QRIS efforts.

APPENDIX 1:

Child Care Centers Standards and Points Framework

Levels 1 and 2 of the Colorado's Next Generation QRIS will be determined by Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), Division of Early Care and Learning (DECL) Licensing Specialists. Levels 3, 4 and 5 of Colorado's Next Generation QRIS will be verified by the Ratings Administrator and through points achieved by demonstrating quality indicators. The point system is designed to be flexible and allow providers to develop and demonstrate quality in multiple ways.

- 1. Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development (39 points)**
 - a. Director Qualifications (8 points)
 - b. Early Childhood Teacher Qualifications (10 points)
 - c. Early Childhood Assistant Teacher & Aides Qualifications (6 points)
 - d. Ongoing Professional Development (15 points)
- 2. Family Partnerships (27 points)**
 - a. Home Language (3 points)
 - b. Sensitivity to Diversity (2 points)
 - c. Transitions (4 points)
 - d. Engagement of Families (14 points)
 - e. Engagement of Communities (4 points)
- 3. Leadership, Management & Administration (36 points)**
 - a. Program Evaluation (6 points)
 - b. Personnel (6 points)
 - c. Benefits (11 points)
 - d. Business Administration (3 points)
- 4. Learning Environment (27 points + ERS scores)**
 - a. Curriculum (5 points)
 - b. Ratio, Group Size and Continuity of Care (8 points)
 - c. Observational Assessment of Program (4 points)
 - d. Child Assessment (10 points)
- 5. Child Health Promotion (16 points)**
 - a. Child Health Promotion (16 points)

Optional Point Areas (8 points)

- a. Home Language (2 points)
- b. Additional Professional Staff (4 points)
- c. Professional Leadership (2 points)

Points must be gained within each of the five areas of quality. The minimum points that a program must achieve are listed below. For example, to be at a level 3, a program must have 53 total points. Those points need to come from all five categories with the following minimum points in each category:

- 10 points from Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development
- 12 points from Family Partnerships
- 16 points from Leadership, Management & Administration
- 9 points from Learning Environment
- 6 points from Child Health

In addition, a program can also use up to 2 optional points to add to any category for which they do not have enough points. In addition to points, programs must meet minimum levels of quality as measured by the appropriate ERS. To be at a level 3, programs must have average ERS scores of 3.75 across all observed classrooms with no individual classroom with an ERS score lower than 3.0.

Categories	Total Points	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
1. Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development	39	10	14	20
2. Family Partnerships	27	12	15	22
3. Leadership, Management & Administration	36	16	20	29
4. Learning Environment	27	9	13	20
5. Child Health	16	6	8	12
Optional available points:	8			
Minimum requirement for Rating		53	70	103
Average Environmental Ratings Score (ITERS-R/ECERS-R)		At least 3.75 with no classroom below a 3.0	At least 4.75 with no classroom below a 4.0	At least 5.75 with no classroom below a 5.0

I. Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development

Director Qualifications (Select 1 Category)	Points
Meets requirements for Early Childhood Professional III Credential	2
Meets requirements for Early Childhood Professional IV Credential	4
Meets requirements for Early Childhood Professional V Credential	6
Meet requirements for Early Childhood Professional VI Credential	8

Early Childhood Teacher Qualifications (Select 1 Category)	Points
75% of early childhood teachers meet requirements for Early Childhood Professional II Credential	2
At least 50% of early childhood teachers will meet requirements for Early Childhood Professional III Credential	4
75% of early childhood teachers meet requirements for Early Childhood Professional III Credential	6
At least 50% of early childhood teachers will meet requirements for Early Childhood Professional IV Credential or higher	8
75% of early childhood teachers meet requirements for Early Childhood Professional IV Credential or higher	10

Early Childhood Assistant Teacher & Aides Qualifications (Select 1 Category)	Points
75% of early childhood assistant teachers and aides meet for Early Childhood Professional I Credential or higher	2
At least 50% of early childhood assistant teachers and aides will meet requirements for Early Childhood Professional II Credential or higher	4
75% of early childhood assistant teachers and aides meet requirements for Early Childhood Professional II Credential or higher	6

On-Going Professional Development	Points
All professionals working in a licensed early childhood program will have an individualized professional development plan based on individual goals and needs. Each year, professionals will complete a self-assessment based on Colorado's Competencies for Early Educators & Administrators. This assessment will be used to inform individualized professional development plans.	2
Directors: participate in professional growth and development activities ⁵ (1 activity=1 points; 2 activities= 2 points)	2

⁵ A professional growth and development activity is defined as, being an active participant in a local coalition, task force, or ad hoc group; presenting at a workshop or conference; being trained as a

Teachers: participate in professional growth and development activities (1 activity=1 points; 2 activities= 2 points)	2
Directors: complete annual clock hours of approved professional development based on individualized professional development plan (18-26 hours= 1 points; 27+ hours= 2 points)	2
Early Childhood Teachers, Assistant Teachers, Aides: complete annual clock hours of approved professional development based on individualized professional development plan (18-23 hours = 1 points; 24+ hours= 2 points)	2
50% of annual clock hours accrued by education staff is related to children with high needs ⁶	2
Program is involved in outside coaching/mentoring activities either by allowing mentors/coaches into the program or providing mentoring/coaching outside of the program	3

I. Family Partnerships

Home Language	Points
The program honors the child's home language and encourages home language development by greeting non-English speaking families or dual language learners (DLL) in the home language or using simple phrases from a child's home language in daily communication with the child, including sign language.	1
The program uses outside resources (e.g., interpreters, cultural brokers) for help with other languages of enrolled families	2

Sensitivity to Diversity	Points
The program provides materials and resources in a way that is accessible to all families, including non-English speaking families, family members with disabilities, and families experiencing homelessness	1
The program offers opportunities for all families, including those from different backgrounds and communities, to get to know one another and work together for the benefit of the children in the program	1

Transitions	Points
When a child transfers to or from another educational setting, the program works with families to ensure necessary records and other important information are transferred	1
The program has written policies and procedures that describe how transitions are supported among early childhood settings including the home and how	1

trainer; mentoring or coaching another professional outside of the program where employed; and attendance at a national conference.

⁶ As defined in Colorado's Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant application, children with high needs are children who: live in low-income families; have disabilities or developmental delays; are English-language learners; reside on "Indian lands"; live in migrant families; are homeless; live in foster care; or are recent immigrants.

transition information is shared with families in order to help prepare the child and family for transition and to help the child adjust to the new setting.	
The program offers information sessions and/or individual family meetings specific to child transitions (e.g., what to expect in terms of transitions from one classroom to another, from home to a classroom, to another setting, connecting families with schools for children transitioning into school)	2

Engagement of Families	Points
Program conducts an annual family survey to ask families for suggestions on how to improve the program and the results from the survey are shared with families.	2
The program conducts two annual parent/teacher conferences.	3
The program has documentation of one or more changes made as a result of the annual family survey	2
The program offers annual educational information sessions on child development and learning	2
Family members act in leadership positions on program and/or advisory boards and are provided with a training and/or orientation on their role.	2
The program completes a <i>Strengthening Families</i> self-assessment, uses results to inform the development of the quality improvement plan, implements a <i>Strengthening Families</i> action plan and annually monitors progress.	3

Engagement with Community	Points
The program provides information about community-based programs available to families in languages represented in the facility (e.g., community mental health, child nutrition, physical fitness, food banks, Child Find, medical/dental resources).	1
A plan is written and implemented describing procedures to refer and connect families to appropriate community agencies (e.g., mental health, health, developmental services, educational).	1
Coordinates and/or collaborates with community service providers, families, school district personnel, etc. in order to design learning activities that aid in meeting outcomes/goals of Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP), Individual Education Programs (IEP), School Readiness Plans, Individual Learning Plans, and/or other individual plans.	2

II. Leadership, Management and Administration

Program Evaluation	Points
The program conducts an annual self-assessment and then develops a continuous quality improvement plan based on the results.	2
The program shares the quality improvement plan with staff, families and board members.	2
The program documents actions to implement the quality improvement plan.	2

Personnel	Points
The program has a written code of professional conduct. Staff is trained annually on the code of conduct.	1
The program conducts monthly staff meetings.	2
The program implements a salary scale based on education and experience.	2
Staff has an annual performance evaluation, which includes at least one classroom observation by their supervisor and a staff self-evaluation. The staff evaluation also informs the individual professional development plan.	2
Lead teachers in each classroom are provided with a least an hour of paid planning time per week.	2
All teaching staff is provided with paid planning time per week.	2
Non-administrative personnel participate in decision-making for hiring, curriculum development, program goal-setting and/or annual planning	2
At least two staff members attend leadership professional development opportunities on an annual basis.	2
The program has a recruitment and retention plan that is reviewed and revised by the governing board on an annual basis.	1

Benefits	Points
The program offers full-time staff a compensation package with benefit options (2 points for each option up to 8 points): <input type="checkbox"/> Paid holidays <input type="checkbox"/> Paid time off (sick, vacation, personal) <input type="checkbox"/> Health insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Professional development reimbursement	8
The program offers full-time staff a compensation package with benefit options (1 point for each option up to 3 points): <input type="checkbox"/> Flex time <input type="checkbox"/> Life Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Employee Child Discount <input type="checkbox"/> Retirement Plan <input type="checkbox"/> Disability Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Dental Insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Bonuses	3

Business Administration	Points
The program has a written and posted mission/vision statement.	1
The program has an up-to-date, written and posted organizational chart.	1
The program has a current-year operating budget specific to the early care and education program that shows the revenues and expenses.	1
The program has quarterly income and expense statements, comparing actual	1

revenues and expenses to budget.	
The program undergoes an annual independent audit	1
The program is a member of a shared services group or alliance.	1

III. Learning Environment

Curriculum	Points
The program has a curriculum that has been aligned with the domains of Colorado’s Early Learning and Development Guidelines, and is age specific to the children the program serves to include: 1) physical development and health; 2) social & emotional development; 3) language and literacy development; 4) cognitive development; 5) literacy knowledge & skills; 6) logic & reasoning; 7) mathematics knowledge & skills; 8) science knowledge & skills; 9) social studies knowledge & skills; 10) creative arts expression.	2
75% of educational staff has been trained on the use of selected curriculum.	3

Ratio, Group Size and Continuity of Care	Points
Design a plan to move toward lower group size and improve adult:child ratios beyond what is required by licensing.	2
Partial implementation of a plan to lower group size and improve adult:child ratios beyond what is required by licensing is evident.	2
Group size and adult:child ratios are aligned with NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children).	2
Primary caregiving practices are part of program policies and procedures for transitions, staff assignments, group size and adult:child ratios.	1
Continuity of care practices are part of program policies and procedures for transitions, staff assignments, group size and adult:child ratios.	1

Observational Assessment of the Classroom or Program	Points
The program has conducted a self-assessment using an assessment tool in addition to the ERS and uses results to develop a quality improvement plan.	2
The program has had a reliable, independent, trained observer complete a classroom assessment (beyond an ERS assessment) in the previous 12 months in at least 50% of classrooms and uses results to develop a quality improvement plan.	2

Child Assessment	Points
Developmentally appropriate child assessments (e.g., observation data, portfolios, work samples) are conducted within 90 calendar days after enrollment and then two other times within a year.	2
Child assessment results are discussed during parent/teacher conferences. All assessment results are shared in a culturally and linguistically-appropriate manner.	2

The program has a child assessment system that has been aligned with Colorado’s Early Learning and Development Guidelines.	2
Staff has been trained on the use of an approved assessment system.	2
Assessment results are used to individualize curriculum and lesson planning.	2

V. Child Health

Child Health Promotion	Points
The program, with parental consent, provides a vision screening and shares results with families.	2
The program, with parental consent, provides a hearing screening and shares results with families.	2
The program, with parental consent, provides a dental screening and shares results with families.	2
Staff that conduct developmental screenings are trained and training is updated annually.	2
The program makes a referral or provides referral information to the family as appropriate for any child for whom a developmental concern has been identified.	2
All children are developmentally screened and results from developmental screenings are shared with families.	2
The program has a one-time certified playground inspection conducted. A playground quality improvement plan is created based on the results and progress is monitored annually.	2
The program implements a health and fitness program.	2

VI. Optional

Home Language	Points
The program honors the child’s home language and encourages home language development by having at least one caregiver/teacher in each classroom who is bilingual if there is a dominant second language ⁷ in the classroom.	2

Additional Professional Staff	Points
The program employs or maintains a daily service contract with one or more of the following program professional personnel: Child Care Health Consultant, Mental Health Consultant, Family Services Support staff, Professional Development Coordinator, Early Childhood Coordinator, program manager and/or Coach, Special Education Staff or Nutritionist.	2
The program employs or maintains a daily service contract with one or more of the following administrative professional personnel: Business Manager, Accountant, Human Resources Director.	2

⁷ The home language of 50% or more of the children is a specific language other than English.

Professional Leadership	Points
An administrative member of the program regularly participates in a community leadership role with their local early childhood council or another early childhood organization; which may include participation on a formal committee, serving as a board member, presenting at an early childhood conference, or acting in a leadership role for an early childhood association.	2

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