

Descriptions of Star Levels

Delaware Stars for *Early Success* is a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). A QRIS is used to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education and school-age settings. Participation in Delaware Stars is voluntary and demonstrates a program's commitment to continuous quality improvement. Ratings for Delaware Stars are based on two key components: 1) a formal assessment of the program environment using the ERS (Environment Rating Scales) which is a reliable, independent observation of the program's classroom or home environment; and 2) a verification that the program meets high quality standards in four areas: Family and Community Partnerships, Qualifications and Professional Development, Management and Administration, and Learning Environment and Curriculum.



Delaware Stars is a five-tiered rating system. Programs begin in a "Starting with Stars" phase and then are rated from 2 to 5 Stars.

"Starting with Stars"

Programs at this first level of participation in Delaware Stars are in good standing with the Office of Child Care Licensing and are working on required steps for orientation. Program administrators complete an on-line orientation, a 6 hour professional development "Building on Quality," a program scan of the classroom or home environment, and develop an initial Quality Improvement Plan. This phase of participation in Delaware Stars is time-limited and programs must complete the required steps within one year of acceptance into the program in order to continue their participation.

Star Level 2

Programs at Star Level 2 have begun their active pursuit of continuous quality improvement for their early care and education or school age program. Programs have completed all components required in "Starting with Stars" and are implementing a Quality Improvement Plan linked to the Delaware Stars for Early Success Standards.

Star Level 3

To reach a Star Level 3, a program must achieve a minimum of a 3.0 on each of the ERS assessments for their program and earn 40-59 quality points through the verification of quality standards.

Star Level 4

To reach a Star Level 4, a program must achieve a minimum of a 4.0 on each of the ERS assessments for their program and earn 60-79 quality points through the verification of quality standards.

Star Level 5

Star Level 5 is the highest level of achievement for programs in Delaware Stars. To reach a Star Level 5, a program must achieve a minimum of a 5.0 on each of the ERS assessments for their program and earn 80-100 quality points through the verification of quality standards.

Continuous Quality Improvement

Once a program has achieved a certain star level, they may begin actively working toward the next higher level or maintain their current star level. Programs that choose to maintain their current star level must reverify at that star level every two years. For reverification, programs must demonstrate they continue to provide quality-level services through meeting the total numbers of points needed for their designated Star Level. They must also complete ERS assessments of their program and meet the minimum ERS scores for the designated Star Level. Programs choosing to actively pursue the next higher star level may receive an annual grant for up to two years to assist them in reaching the next star level.

Alternative Pathways

NAEYC accredited programs are designated SL5 programs once accepted into Delaware Stars. NAEYC accreditation is a national accreditation process that involves an extensive self-study of the program and independent, reliable observations to verify specified standards. NAEYC programs go through this process every 5 years and must submit an annual report verifying continued compliance. It has been determined that this is an equivalent pathway to Star Level 5 by the Stars Management Team. Programs must demonstrate good standing and continued NAEYC accreditation on an annual basis to continue their SL5 designation.

Head Start and stand-alone state funded ECAP (Early Childhood Assistance Program) programs are designated SL4 programs once accepted into Delaware Stars. Head Start programs are reviewed by extensive federal performance standards on a regular basis. State funded stand-alone ECAP programs also are monitored extensively for compliance with designated performance standards. These standards have been determined to be an equivalent pathway to Star Level 4 by the Stars Management Team. At this time, the performance standards for these two programs do not include an independent, reliable classroom observation, thus to move up to SL5, they must submit to formal ERS assessments and achieve a minimum of 5.0 on each of the ERS assessments done for their program. These programs must demonstrate good standing with Head Start performance standards and ECAP standards on an annual basis to continue their SL4 designation.