



# Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Family and Group Standards of Quality

**Welcome to the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Family and Group Standards. This document will guide licensed family and group programs, serving children from birth-12 years of age, through STARS to Quality. Additional information can be found on the [STARS to Quality](#) website. For more detailed information, please refer to the [STARS Guidance & Procedures](#).**


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## Instructions & Key

- ★ Criterion which require STARS approved documents only will be marked with an asterisk (\*).
- ★ Required forms are in the STARS Kit and can be found here:  
<http://dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/ChildCare/STARS/kits>
- ★ All caregiving staff in the standards means the Director, Primary Caregiver, and Aid
- ★ Acronym Key for this document
  - BAS – Business Administration Scale
  - CCR&R – Child Care Resource and Referral Agency
  - DIR – Director
  - ECT – Teacher (formerly AID)
  - ERS – Environment Rating Scale
  - FCCERS – Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale
  - QIP – Quality Improvement Plan
  - SUB – Substitute Teacher
  - TPITOS – The Pyramid Infant Toddler Observation Scale
  - TPOT – Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool

## Submitting for STARS to Quality

- ★ Required documents must be uploaded at time of submission into the STARS Site.
- ★ Programs are encouraged to use the New Staff Training Template located in the [STAR Kits](#). It is highly recommended that all new staff have a Training Plan on file within 30 days of hire.
- ★ Criteria may require evidence to be uploaded in the STARS Site, however, not all evidence requires a document to be uploaded; many just require answers to be entered into the evidence box.
- ★ To see what is required for evidence, use your mouse to hover over the green question mark in each evidence box. The green question mark looks like this: 

## STAR 1

- If a staff person works less than 500 hours annually, they are exempt from Practitioner Registry requirements.

### Education, Qualifications & Training (EQT)

#### Practitioner Registry

**EQT 1:** Director (DIR) and all Teachers (ECT) current on the [Practitioner Registry](#) at any level.

#### STAR 1 Professional Development

##### STARS to Quality Essentials (2 hours)

**EQT 2:** The Director (DIR) and all Teachers (ECT) must complete this course. It is available at [ChildCareTraining.org](http://ChildCareTraining.org).

##### Business Administration Scale (BAS) Training (2 hours)

**EQT 3:** The Director (DIR) must complete this course. It is available through the [CCR&R](#).

##### Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Training (2 hours)

**EQT 4:** The Director (DIR) must complete this course. It is available through the [CCR&R](#).

##### Food Safety Course (minimum 3 hours)

**EQT 5:** Direct food service staff attend(s) an approved Food Safety Training (offered through the County Health Dept., Sanitarian, Extension Agency if it is not a ServSafe approved course), or online at [ChildCareTraining.org](http://ChildCareTraining.org). Training must be in addition to the training required by CACFP.

## *Family/Community Partnerships (FCP)*

### *High Needs*

**FCP 1:** Programs must serve a minimum 10% high needs children, as defined in [STARS Guidance & Procedures](#). This information must be updated in the Classrooms tab within 3 months of STAR level submission.

## *High Quality Supportive Environments*

### *Daily Health Checks*

**HQSE 1:** The program must have documentation that Daily Health Checks are taking place.

### *Montana Early Learning Standards*

**HQSE 2:** All staff have access to the MT Early Learning Standards (MELS) .

### *Self-Assessment*

**HQSE 3:** The Director will complete a self-assessment using the appropriate Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS-R).

- A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)  is written to address the findings of the self-assessments, specifically addressing any subscale scores below a 3.0.


## *Leadership & Program Management (LPM)*

### *Program Management*

**LPM 1:** Programs must complete or update the Program Profile (Program Info and Classrooms Tabs) in the STARS Site. Programs must assign a minimum of one classroom in the Classrooms tab. High Needs data must be accurate and up-to-date. This must be updated within 3 months of STAR level submission.


### *Self-Assessment*

**LPM 2:** The Director will complete a self-assessment using the Business Administration Scale (BAS).

A Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)  is written to address the findings of the self-assessments, specifically addressing any subscale scores below a 3.0.

### *Licensing/Registration Regulations*

**LPM 3:** All licensed program staff shall have available a copy of the State of MT Department of Public Health and Human Services Registration Requirements for Family and Group Day Care Homes—Including Infant Regulations. These regulations are available in the [Requirements for Registration of Family and Group Child Care Homes](#).

**LPM 3:** All licensed program staff will sign off  that they have read and have access to the Licensing Requirements and these forms will be kept in each staff persons personnel file.

## **STAR 2**

If a staff person works less than 500 hours annually, they are exempt from Practitioner Registry requirements.

Must meet all criteria for STAR 1 along with the following:

## *Education, Qualifications & Training (EQT)*

### *Practitioner Registry*

**EQT 1:** Director (DIR) is current on the [Practitioner Registry](#) at Level 2 or higher.

### *Individualized Professional Development Plan*

**EQT 2:** Director (DIR) and all Teachers (ECT) have an individualized written Professional Development Plan linked to the Knowledge Base. Individualized Professional Development plans must be updated annually.

## **STAR 2 Professional Development**

### **Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence and School Readiness in Young Children (8 hours)**

**EQT 3:** Introduction to the Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence & School Readiness in Young Children (2 hours): Director (DIR) and all Teachers (ECT) must complete this course

**EQT 3.1:** Montana Blended Pyramid Module 1 (6 hours) (Prerequisite Introduction): Director (DIR) and all Teachers (ECT) must complete this course

- These courses are available through the [CCR&R](#). The Introduction is also available at [ChildCareTraining.org](#).

### **Oral Health Training (2 hours)**

**EQT 4:** The Director (DIR) and all Teachers (ECT) must complete this course. It is available online at [ChildCareTraining.org](#).

### **MT Medication Administration II (3 hours)**

**EQT 5:** This course must be completed by the Director (DIR), all Teachers (ECT), and any other staff that administers medication. The director is responsible for documentation of the licensing required form, as well as for medication being stored properly. If an employee of the program is the parent of an enrolled child and has not taken the course, they are allowed to administer medication to their own child only, following all licensing rules and regulations. This course is available through [ChildCareTraining.org](#).

### **MT Medication Administration Refresher (4 hours)**

**EQT 6:** Director (DIR) and all Teachers (ECT) must complete Medication Administration Refresher **every 3 years** after completing Medication Administration I and Medication Administration II. This course is available at [ChildCareTraining.org](#).

### **Introduction to the Montana Early Learning Standards (3 hours)**

**EQT 7:** Director (DIR) and all Teachers (ECT) must complete the Introduction to the MT Early Learning Standards Course. This course is available online at [ChildCareTraining.org](#).

### **Family/Community Partnerships (FCP)**

#### **High Needs**

**FCP 1:** must serve a minimum 10% high needs children, as defined in [STARS Guidance & Procedures](#). This information must be updated in the Classrooms tab within 3 months of STAR level submission.

#### **Enrollment Process**

**FCP 1:** A written enrollment process is in place that facilitates an exchange of information between the program and families, which works to assure strong partnerships. This process should include the following: description of the program and policies; family culture; and wishes around topics such as eating, sleeping, toileting, and discipline.

### **High Quality Supportive Environments (HQSE)**

#### **Food Service/Meal Coordination**

**HQSE 1:** All programs apply to participate in the Montana Child and Adult Care Food Program. This criteria is met if the program is currently participating in MT CACFP.

**HQSE 1:** Program must re-apply for CACFP at time of annual renewal, or submission to move up from STAR 2, *if the program was previously ineligible due to income eligibility requirements*.

**HQSE 1:** For all programs, at least 1 person is in charge of food service/meal coordination. Other staff can assist in this role.

**HQSE 1:** *If a program is not eligible for MT CACFP, the following indicators must be met:*

- **MENUS POSTED**  
Written menus must be posted for the current and future week at the entrance to the facility and visible to the public.

- ‘DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITY’ in FEEDING  
Ellyn Satter Institute ‘Division of Responsibility’ is followed in meal services to children.
- Special Dietary Needs Statement for Children and Protected Health Information form is completed for all children who require this.

### **Support for Nursing Mothers**

**HQSE 2:** Breastfeeding is encouraged and the environment and program policies are designed to support this. Programs must have policies in place whether they serve infants or not in order to support families.

### **Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence and School Readiness in Young Children**

**HQSE 3:** Program staff will work to implement Module 1 topics using an evidenced-based coaching model. The CCR&R Pyramid Model Coach and program leadership will determine the readiness and steps needed to begin implementation of the Pyramid Model.

### **Staff/Caregiver-to-Child Ratio & Group Size (RGS)**

#### **Staffing Plan**

**RGS 1:** A written staffing plan \* is in place assuring continuity of care (including a plan for substitute staff situations), appropriate adult to child ratios, appropriate group size, and that children are benefitting from having primary caregivers.

## **STAR 3**

- Professional Development and Practitioner Registry status requirements at this level are required for employees working more than 1040 hours annually or working a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- An Assessor will be visiting the facility at this level.  
Must meet all criteria for STAR 1 and STAR 2 along with the following:

### **Education, Qualifications & Training (EQT)**

#### **Practitioner Registry**

**EQT 1:** Director (DIR) current on the [Practitioner Registry](#) at Level 3 or higher.

**EQT 1:** 50% of staff (DIR, ECT) are Level 2 or higher on the [Practitioner Registry](#).

### **STAR 3 Professional Development**

#### **Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Course (CITC) (60 hours)**

**EQT 2:** Director (DIR) and teachers (ECT) caring for infants and/or toddlers must be enrolled in (which is defined as currently taking the course or beginning the course in the quarter following application for STAR 3) or have completed the 60-hour course or its equivalent. This course is available through the [CCR&R](#), UM-Western, Dawson Community College, Salish Kootenai College, or Flathead Valley Community College.

#### **Certified Preschool Teacher Course (CPTC) (60 hours)**

**EQT 3:** Director (DIR) and teachers (ECT) caring for ages 2 and up must be enrolled in (which is defined as currently taking the course or beginning the course in the quarter following application for STAR 3) or have completed the 60-hour course or its equivalent. This course is available through the [CCR&R](#).

This course can be waived if an individual is a Level 4 or higher on the Practitioner Registry. If an individual is enrolled in college courses or the MT Apprenticeship program that will result in being a Level 4 on the Registry within 2 years of application for STAR 3, this course can be waived.

- This course can be waived if the Introduction to Early Childhood college-level course has been successfully completed with the grade of a C or higher.

\*\* For Family and Group caregivers, **both courses must be taken if licensed for 0-5.**

- Consideration for which course is taken first could be based on the majority of children in care currently. Caregivers will have up to one (1) year to complete the other course in order to maintain a STAR 3. This

must be included in the individual's Professional Development Plan, and turned in to ECSB with the required documents for STAR 3. ECSB will be tracking this to ensure completion within one (1) year.

- If licensed for ages 2 and up, a program would need to consider the developmental levels of the children in their care. As a result, a program may want to consider sending some staff to the Infant Toddler course, and some staff to the Preschool course. Documentation that includes rationale for this decision must be submitted for approval prior to application for STAR 3.

### **Pyramid Model Trainings (6 hours)**

**EQT 4:** Montana Blended Pyramid Module 2 (Prerequisite Introduction and Montana Blended Module 1): Director (DIR) and teachers (ECT) must complete this course. It is available through the [CCR&R](#).

### **Family/Community Partnerships (FCP)**

#### **High Needs**

**FCP 1:** Programs must serve a minimum 10% high needs children, as defined in [STARS Guidance & Procedures](#). This information must be updated in the Classrooms tab within 3 months of STAR level submission.

#### **Community Resources**

**FCP 2:** The program provides families with information regarding community resources. Examples of community resources may include: Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies, public library, city recreation department, housing authority, parent resource center, public health clinic, hospital, public schools, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Office of Public Assistance, county health department, family support agency, early intervention organizations such as: Hi-Line Home Programs, Inc., Developmental Educational Assistance Program (DEAP), Quality Life Concepts (QLC), Support & Techniques for Empowering People (STEP), Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), Family Outreach, Child Development Center (CDC).

#### **Transitions**

**FCP 3:** The program supports children and families while transitioning children into child care and out of child care into another educational setting.

#### **Family Engagement**

**FCP 4:** The program provides families with multiple opportunities for involvement such as: open house, opportunities to volunteer, social events, potluck meals, parent/family surveys, parent resource center.

### **High Quality Supportive Environments (HQSE)**

#### **Family Style Meal Service**

**HQSE 1:** Adults, including program staff and visitors, participate in family style meal service with the children that is developmentally appropriate for the children in care. Staff always join the children for meals and encourage health and nutrition as well as positive and engaging interactions.

#### **Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Assessment**

**HQSE 2:** The program will receive a formal assessment with the appropriate ERS (FCCERS-R).

- The average facility score must be at least 3.0 overall, along with the following Subscale/Item scores:
  - Personal Care Routines: 2.0 or higher
  - Activities: 3.0 or higher
  - Listening & Talking: 3.0 or higher
  - Interactions: 3.0 or higher
  - Program Structure:
    - Free Play 3.0 or higher

The finalized report(s) will inform the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) \*. Any subscale scores below a 3.0 must be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) \*.



## **Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence and School Readiness in Young Children**

**HQSE 4:** The CCR&R Pyramid Model Coach and leadership will set goals for implementing the Pyramid Model program-wide.

- Suggested Pyramid Model tools for implementation: Benchmarks of Quality and Inventory of Practices-sections related to Modules 1 and 2 and the first two levels of the Pyramid.
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**HQSE 3:** Work with external CCR&R Pyramid Model coach to use *Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool* (TPOT for Preschool age) or *Teaching Pyramid Infant/Toddler Observation Scale* (TPITOS) as a guide for coaching and implementation. Program is encouraged to request CCR&R coach to administer TPOT and/or TPITOS.

**HQSE 4:** Director will communicate with families about the Pyramid Model using the brochure *Positive Solutions for Families*.

### **Curriculum**

**HQSE 5:** The program has a written curriculum plan that is aligned with the MT Early Learning Standards and Developmentally Appropriate Practice (2009, 3rd Ed. by Carol Copple & Sue Bredekamp, eds).

### **Observations**

**HQSE 6:** The program demonstrates that observations of the children are used to inform curriculum and environment to support the individual needs of children.

### **Leadership & Program Management (LPM)**

#### **Business Administration Scale (BAS) Assessment**

**LPM 1:** Programs will receive a formal assessment and must receive at least a 3.0 overall.

- Any subscales below a 3.0 must be addressed on the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) \*.

## **STAR 4**

- Professional Development and Practitioner Registry status requirements at this level are required for employees working more than 1040 hours annually or working a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- An Assessor will be visiting the facility at this level.  
Must meet all criteria for STAR 1, STAR 2, and STAR 3 along with the following:

### **Education, Qualifications & Training (EQT)**

#### **Practitioner Registry**

**EQT 1:** (DIR) current on the [Practitioner Registry](#) at Level 4 or higher.

**EQT 1:** 50% of staff (DIR, ECT) are Level 2 or higher AND 25% are Level 3 or higher on the [Practitioner Registry](#).

#### **STAR 4 Professional Development**

##### **Inclusion Course (15 hours)**

EQT 2: Director and teachers (ECT) must be enrolled in or have completed Inclusion 1: Foundations for Inclusion (15 hours) or its equivalent. This course is available at [ChildCareTraining.org](#). This course can be waived for individuals at Level 6 or higher on the Practitioner Registry. EDEC 340 is a 3 credit course (45 hours) and is an acceptable equivalent for Inclusion I and Inclusion II. This course is available through UM-Western. Transcripts must be provided for this course.

##### **Pyramid Model (2 hours or 8 hours)**

**EQT 4:** Module 3 Overview (**2 hours**): Any staff (ECT) **not** taking **Montana Blended Pyramid Module 3 must attend Module 3 Overview**. It is available through the [CCR&R](#).

(Prerequisite: Introduction and Montana Blended Modules 1 and 2) are required to take this course.

**EQT 4:** Montana Blended Pyramid Module 3 Course: Director must attend Montana Blended Pyramid Module 3 (**8-hours**). It is available through the [CCR&R](#).

## Family/Community Partnerships (FCP)

### High Needs

**FCP 1:** Programs must serve a minimum 10% high needs children, as defined in [STARS Guidance & Procedures](#); after 3 renewals at STAR 4 the program must be serving 15%. This information must be updated in the Classrooms tab within 3 months of STAR level submission.

### Conferences

**FCP 2:** The program offers, in addition to ongoing conversations, a meeting/conference with each child's family at least once per year. Together, the child's progress and needs are reviewed, and goals for the child are set.

### Home/School Communication

**FCP 3:** Opportunities are available to facilitate exchange of information between the program and families, such as home/school journals or notebooks, bulletin boards, newsletters, parent advisory councils, parent volunteers, parent participation.

## High Quality Supportive Environments (HQSE)

### Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Assessment

**HQSE 1:** The program will receive a formal assessment by a STARS assessor with the FCCERS-R.

The average facility score must be at least 4.0 overall, along with the following Subscale/Item scores:

- Personal Care Routines: 3.0 or higher
- Activities: 4.0 or higher
- Listening & Talking: 4.0 or higher
- Interactions: 4.0 or higher
- Program Structure:
  - Free Play 4.0 or higher

The finalized report(s) will inform the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Any subscale scores below a 4.0 must be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) \*.

### Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence and School Readiness in Young Children

**HQSE 2:** The program will continue to work toward full implementation of the Pyramid Model using Pyramid Model tools. Programs must meet a minimum 70% on TPOT/TPITOS scores.

**HQSE 2:** A 30 minute Introduction to the Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence and School Readiness in Young Children will be offered to families by the program.

## Leadership & Program Management (LPM)

### Business Administration Scale (BAS) Assessment

**LPM 1:** The program will have a formal assessment. The average score must be at least 4.0

- Any subscale scores below a 4.0 must be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) \*.

## STAR 5

- Professional Development and Practitioner Registry status requirements at this level are required for employees working more than 1040 hours annually or working a minimum of 20 hours per week.
- An Assessor will be visiting the facility at this level.  
Must meet all criteria for STAR 1, STAR 2, and STAR 3, and STAR 4 along with the following:

### NAFCC Accreditation

Programs must be NAFCC Accredited and maintaining criteria for accreditation.



## *Education, Qualifications & Training (EQT)*

### *Practitioner Registry*

**EQT 1:** Director (DIR) current on the [Practitioner Registry](#) at Level 5 or higher.

**EQT 1:** 50% of staff (DIR, ECT) are current at Level 2 or higher AND 25% are current at Level 3 or higher on the [Practitioner Registry](#).

### *STAR 5 Professional Development*

#### *Inclusion Course (30 hours)*

**EQT 2:** The Director and teachers (ECT) must be enrolled in or have completed Inclusion II: Strategies for Inclusion (30 hours) or an equivalent. This course is available through [ChildCareTraining.org](#).

This course can be waived for individuals at Level 6 or higher on the Practitioner Registry

EDEC 340: Practicing Inclusion in Preschool Programs is a 3 credit course (45 hours) and is an acceptable equivalent for Inclusion I and Inclusion II. This course is available through UM-Western. Transcripts must be provided for this course.

#### *Building Skills and Safe Places for Childcare Providers (6 hours)*

**EQT 3:** Director (DIR) and Teachers (ECT) must complete this course. This course is available through [ChildCareTraining.org](#).

### *Family/Community Partnerships (FCP)*

#### *High Needs*

**FCP 1:** Programs must serve a minimum 15% high needs children, as defined in [STARS Guidance & Procedures](#). This information must be updated in the Classrooms tab within 3 months of STAR level submission.

### *High Quality Supportive Environments (HQSE)*

#### *Health and Wellness*

**HQSE 1:** The program has established policies addressing the health and wellness of children, staff, and families.

#### *Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Assessment*

**HQSE 2:** The program will receive a formal assessment by a STARS assessor with the FCCERS-R.

The average facility score must be at least 5.0 overall, along with the following Subscale/Item scores:

- Personal Care Routines: 4.0 or higher
- Activities: 5.0 or higher
- Listening & Talking: 5.0 or higher
- Interactions: 5.0 or higher
- Program Structure:
  - Free Play 5.0 or higher

The finalized report(s) will inform Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Any subscale scores below a 5.0 must be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) \*.

#### *Pyramid Model: Promoting Social Emotional Competence and School Readiness in Young Children*

**HQSE 3:** The Pyramid Model will be fully implemented program-wide and maintained. The program must achieve 80% or higher on TPOT/TPITOS assessment scores.

### *Leadership & Program Management (LPM)*

#### *Business Administration Scale (BAS) Assessment*

**LPM 1:** The program will have a formal assessment. The average score must be at least 5.0.

Any subscale scores below a 5.0 must be addressed in the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) \*.