

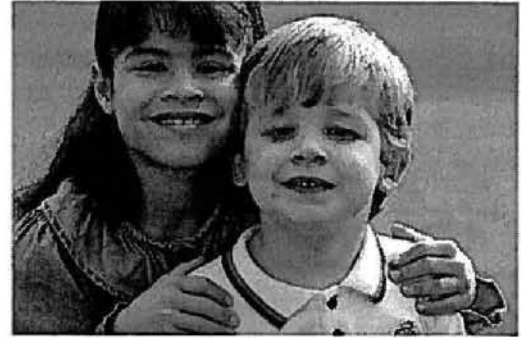
A
PENNSYLVANIA
EARLY CARE + EDUCATION QUALITY INITIATIVE



**KEYSTONE
STARS**
Reaching higher for
quality early learning

Keystone STARS: Building a better, brighter future for Pennsylvania

Child care in Pennsylvania serves more than 300,000 children, and is the largest program helping to prepare Pennsylvania's young children for school. Research shows that every moment is a learning experience for young children, and that the quality of these experiences has a great impact on the child.



Keystone STARS provides families with a tool to gauge the quality of child care programs and supports child care programs in their commitment to continuous quality improvement. Begun as a pilot program in 2002, Keystone STARS now is fully implemented and has been widely accepted by parents and early childhood programs. Programs may enter Keystone STARS at the Start with STARS level and earn a STAR 1 through STAR 4 rating based on research-based standards for staff qualifications/professional development, the early learning environment, partnerships with family/community and leadership/management. As of December 2006, nearly 4,300 child care programs serving over 152,800 children were enrolled in Keystone STARS. This includes nearly 70 percent of the child care centers in the Commonwealth.

Keystone STARS helps children, families and communities reach their promise:

- **Keystone STARS increases access to quality early learning opportunities for Pennsylvania's young children.** As early learning programs earn higher STARS ratings, they are improving the quality of the early education each child receives. Children who attend high quality early learning programs do better in school; are less likely to repeat a grade or require special education services; are more likely to graduate high school and attend college; have higher earnings; and are more productive citizens.
- **Keystone STARS helps parents make the best choices for their children and family.** When looking for quality early learning programs, parents can use the Keystone STARS rating scale as a guide. With this information, parents can select the best early learning program for their child. The Keystone STARS supports make it possible for child care programs to improve their quality without drastically increasing the cost to parents.

Keystone STARS is making a difference

An evaluation report on Keystone STARS from the University of Pittsburgh and Penn State University¹ found

- Keystone STARS is reversing the negative trend in child care quality that was evident in the late 1990's.
- Child care centers in Keystone STARS have higher quality than the Pennsylvania average for child care centers and are showing higher quality now than at the inception of the STARS program.



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Governor Rendell's FY 2007-08 investments of \$56 million will benefit more than 176,000 children and make it possible for our child care programs to continue to improve the quality of early learning experiences they provide to our young children. For more information on Keystone STARS, contact Debi Mathias at 717-346-9324.

¹ "Evaluation of Pennsylvania's Keystone STARS Quality Rating System in Child Care Settings" December 2006, available at <http://www.pakeys.org/stars/KeystoneStarsEvaluation.aspx>



Keystone STARS Award Structure 07/08

7/2/07

Guiding Principles for Recommendations of the STARS Advisory Committee and OCDEL for funding supports to Programs in Keystone STARS

Keystone STARS will encourage and support programs to develop and sustain higher levels of quality, to strengthen outcomes for children and families and improve school readiness

- a) Keep program standards stable and continue to deepen the understanding and best practice of continuous quality improvement within Pennsylvania early childhood programs.
- b) Continue funding STARS with an emphasis on moving programs to higher levels of quality
- c) Focus support on programs serving children who are vulnerable and at risk.
- d) Continue to develop and refine mechanisms to receive deliberate feedback and ideas from families, the public, and Early Childhood practitioners.

5-25% subsidy children on top, 26%+ on bottom (based on FTE child care enrollment)

SUPPORT AWARDS	Family Award	Group Award	Small Award (up to 45 children)	Medium Award (46-99 children)	Large Award (100-180 children)	Very Large Award (181+ children)
Start with STARS – 1 X Award	315 420	435 580	945 1,260	1,890 2,520	2,835 3,780	4,725 6,300
STAR 1 – 2 X Award	450 600	630 840	1,418 1,890	2,835 3,780	4,253 5,670	7,088 9,450

MERIT AWARDS	Family Award	Group Award	Small Award (up to 45 children)	Medium Award (46-99 children)	Large Award (100-180 children)	Very Large Award (181+ children)
STAR 2 – 3X Award <i>* change below</i>	788 1,050	1,575 2,100	4,725 6,300	9,450 12,600	14,175 18,900	23,625 31,500
STAR 3 – Ongoing	1,181 1,575	2,363 3,150	7,088 9,450	14,185 18,900	21,263 28,350	35,438 47,250
STAR 4 - Ongoing	1,575 2,100	3,150 4,200	9,450 12,600	18,900 25,200	28,350 37,800	47,250 63,000

** Award 2 additional years with CQI Plan and demonstrated progress*

Education and Retention Awards 07/08 – for highly qualified staff, Awards prorated for less than 35 hrs per week

ERA Awards 07/08	Director - BA in ECE	Staff - BA in ECE	Staff - AA in ECE	CDA/SA Credential
STAR 2	\$3,090	\$2,320	\$1,545	\$540
STAR 3	\$3,605	\$2,705	\$1,805	\$630
STAR 4	\$4,120	\$3,090	\$2,060	\$720

Tiered Reimbursement for children receiving subsidy – Available at STAR 2, 3 and 4 beginning September 07/08

For more specifics about standards, grant and eligibility requirements go to www.pakeys.org – Keystone STARS

WHAT DOES KEYSTONE STARS MEAN?

Keystone STARS is a continuous quality improvement program. It has four STAR levels. Each STAR designation has its own research-based performance standards. These standards measure four areas that make a difference in the quality of care your child receives:

1. **The educated and well-trained staff**
2. **The environment your child is in everyday**
3. **Leadership and Management**
4. **Family and Community Partnerships**

As a program moves from STAR 1 to STAR 4, the requirements in these areas increase.



AT A KEYSTONE STARS PROGRAM YOU SHOULD FIND:

- Department of Public Welfare Certificate of Compliance for Centers or Certificate of Registration for Family Homes.
- A comfortable place where your child can explore and learn.
- Laughing, reading, and talking which builds language skills.
- Teachers learning new ways to help your child succeed.
- A safe, healthy, and exciting place.
- Music, art, science, and play activities that increase school readiness.
- Your child feeling good about himself or herself.
- Family involvement.
- Teachers that listen to children and parents.
- Children having fun together and being respectful of each other.

A Parent Guide: Keystone STARS

*Want to Prepare Your Child for
School and Life Success?*

*What does Keystone STARS
mean for you and your child?*



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quality early learning

Child Care Information Services Agency:



www.dpw.state.pa.us

This program is made possible by the
Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare

Edward G. Rendell, *Governor*
Estelle B. Richman, *Secretary*

Keystone STARS: Questions and Answers

Q: Why should parents care about Keystone STARS?

A: Your child's Early Education is critical to his or her development and future success in school and life. Keystone STARS sets requirements for early childhood educators to promote the best learning environment and safest setting possible for your child.

Q: What are the requirements set by Keystone STARS?

A: Quality ratings are based on four areas.

1. Staff education – early childhood educators have the training and knowledge to interact properly with children.
2. Learning environment – program has appropriate materials for a variety of ages and provides opportunities for children to learn on a daily basis.
3. Leadership and management – a well-run business has policies and plans in effect to not only optimize safety, but also for parents to know what will happen in certain situations.
4. Family and community partnerships - Parents and community stakeholders are encouraged to offer ideas and feedback regarding the learning program.

Q: How does Keystone STARS rate a program?

A: A program begins Keystone STARS with a "Start with STARS" rating and can work its way to a STAR 1, STAR 2, STAR 3 until it becomes a top-rated STAR 4 program.

Q: What is the difference between a STAR 1 and higher STAR ratings?

A: Programs are rated using the four quality areas, but the requirements increase in each area for each STAR level. Please speak with your local Child Care Information Services (CCIS) for details of STAR level requirements.

Q: The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) certifies programs. Isn't that good enough?

A: A certified center does meet Pennsylvania's minimum requirements for safety. However, certification does not address Early Education. Keystone STARS programs combine these safety requirements with Early Education standards to give children a safe and an educational environment.

Q: Does it cost more to enroll my child in a Keystone STARS program?

A: Providers enroll voluntarily in the Keystone STARS program and there are no charges for the provider to enroll. Costs to parents are set only by the provider themselves.



Q: What will my child get out of being enrolled in a Keystone STARS program?

A: Many things! Individual attention, daily learning activities, a safe, friendly and respectful environment, feeling good about himself or herself, a well educated staff, parent involvement and more.

Q: What do parents get out of enrolling their children in a Keystone STARS program?

A: Knowing that your child is safe and respected, that your child is learning something new every day and the security of knowing what to expect from your provider in certain situations. Most of all, giving your child the best opportunity to succeed today and in the future.

**Call your local Child Care Information Services (CCIS)
or 1-877-4PA-KIDS
for more information.**



Keystone STARS is:

- Pennsylvania's voluntary program to promote continuous quality improvement in early learning and school age environments.
 - Keystone STARS provides professional development, targeted financial assistance and other supports to help early and school age education programs increase quality.
 - Quality environments and qualified staff support children's positive development that fosters success in school and life.
- An initiative with research-based Performance Standards as the foundation.
 - The standards are tiered in levels that range from STAR 1 to STAR 4 with requirements that are increased at each level.
 - The standards provide increasing indicators of quality that are used by programs as part of the quality improvement process.
- An important part of Pennsylvania's growing early learning system.
 - The STARS program standards, learning standards that identify how and what children should be learning and standards of education for practitioners, come together to provide a roadmap for programs to improve services for children and families.
 - By working with DPW certified programs, family providers, school-aged programs, Head Start, school districts and accrediting bodies, Keystone STARS is helping to raise the level of quality in early learning for the children of Pennsylvania.
- A valuable tool to increase parental and community awareness of the importance of quality early learning.
 - Keystone STARS is an easily recognizable indication that a program is committed to continuous quality improvement and provides an important tool for parents to use to determine program quality.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

STAR 2 ★★

- Directors and staff will meet specific education level requirements on Pennsylvania's Early Learning Career Lattice.
- Directors participate in at least one professional growth and development activity annually and attend at least 15 hours of professional development annually.
- One staff member per classroom is certified in pediatric first aid, and all staff obtain child abuse mandated reporter training. Staff attend at least 12 hours of professional development annually.

STAR 3 ★★★

- Education levels for directors and staff increase.
- Directors enroll in the Pennsylvania Director's Credential.
- Directors participate in at least two professional growth and development activities and staff participate in at least one professional growth or development activity.
- Annual clock hours of professional development increase to 21 for directors and 18 for teaching staff.

STAR 4 ★★★★★

- Staff qualifications represent best practices for the early learning field.
- Directors participate in at least three professional growth and development activities.
- Staff participate in at least two professional growth and development activities.
- Annual clock hours of professional development increase to 27 for directors and 24 for teaching staff.

Early Learning Program

STAR 1 ★

- Site obtains and maintains copies of the appropriate Learning Standards for all age groups in the program.
- Site completes a site environment checklist.

STAR 2 ★★

- Child observations are completed when a child enters the program and a minimum of once yearly after the initial observation.
- The program completes an Environment Rating Scale (ERS) self-assessment and creates an Improvement Plan to improve quality.

STAR 3 ★★★

- Child observations must be completed a minimum of three times per year, and the results of the observations are used to tailor the program to the child.
- The program develops a learning curriculum that incorporates the Pennsylvania Learning Standards.
- A professional assessor completes an ERS assessment; there is a minimum required classroom score to be a STAR 3.

STAR 4 ★★★★★

- Assessment of the child is completed and shared with parents at least twice per year.
- The program's curriculum and assessment tools are cross walked with Learning Standards.
- The ERS score requirements increase.

Partnerships with Family and Community

STAR 1 ★

- The program provides families with information about their community and transitioning their child to other educational settings.
- A "Getting to Know You" meeting is offered to parents within 60 days of the child's enrollment.

STAR 2 ★★

- If the child has special needs, the program requests information from parents to provide appropriate classroom instruction and assistance.
- The teacher shares information about the child's day at the program.
- The program offers parents at least one conference per year.

STAR 3 ★★★

- A plan is written to refer families to community resources.
- The program coordinates a group activity to include families in meeting the program's goals.
- Parents are offered at least two conferences and a group meeting about transition.
- The program sends a letter of introduction to community and school stakeholders regarding transition and participates in transition activities.

STAR 4 ★★★★★

- The program implements activities to meet IEP/IFSP goals.
- Policies regarding parent engagement and partnership in the planning and decision making for the program are implemented.
- The program offers parents an individual meeting about transition and develops and shares a plan for child transition with parents and stakeholders.

Leadership and Management

STAR 1 ★

- Program develops and distributes a Parent Handbook.
- Illnesses and injuries are tracked, and a prevention plan is enacted.
- A staff meeting is held at least every six months.

STAR 2 ★★

- Program creates an operating budget and financial record keeping system.
- A personnel policy manual is created and shared with staff.
- System of site safety review and action plan is created.
- Staff meetings are held at least monthly.
- Director meets with staff to discuss quality and professional development.
- At least two employee benefits are provided to full-time staff.

STAR 3 ★★★

- Teachers are provided paid lesson planning time monthly.
- Teachers are observed in the classroom and feedback shared.
- Performance evaluations are provided to employees.
- The program creates and shares a salary scale with staff.
- At least three benefits are provided to full-time staff.

STAR 4 ★★★★★

- Business tasks include an operational business plan, risk management plan, strategic plan and financial review by a Certified Public Accountant.
- A written code for professional staff conduct is instituted.
- Teachers are provided weekly paid lesson planning time and breaks.
- A minimum of four benefits are provided to staff.

The Keystone STARS program:

- ★ Provides **S**tandards, **T**raining/Professional Development, **A**ssistance, **R**esources, and **S**upport (**STARS**) to facilitate continuous quality improvement.
- ★ Is administered by six Early Learning Regional Keys. The Regional Key provides assistance to STARS programs with sharing resources, interpreting the STARS Performance Standards and sponsoring professional development and technical assistance opportunities.

For more information about Keystone STARS or to obtain a list of Keystone STARS participants visit www.pakeys.org or call toll-free:

- ★ Central Region Key 800 346-3020
Counties Served – Bedford, Blair, Cambria, Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lycoming, Mifflin, Montour, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, Somerset, Union
- ★ Northeast Region Key 800 528-7222
Counties Served – Berks, Bradford, Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Wayne, Wyoming
- ★ Northwest Region Key 800 860-2281
Counties Served – Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Indiana, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Potter, Venango, Warren
- ★ South Central Region Key 800 864-4925
Counties Served – Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, York
- ★ Southeast Region Key 877 660-2273
Counties Served – Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Philadelphia
- ★ Southwest Region Key 877 349-4850
Counties Served – Allegheny, Fayette, Greene, Washington, Westmoreland

Or visit www.dpw.state.pa.us.



Edward G. Rendell
Governor

Estelle B. Richman
Secretary