

The initial phase of the Look for the Stars Quality Improvement System has been completed!

The Process so far . . .



All centers and family child care providers which were assessed received a notification letter regarding their provisional

star level. Providers whose star level was a 1 or 2 were contacted to meet with a Coalition representative and providers whose level was a 3, 4 or 5 were asked to return their signed QIS Agreement signaling their full participation. After the Agreement was returned providers were mailed their detailed assessment reports from the Devereux team and the checklist used to determine the points. All providers were asked to send in any additional documentation that may have been missed initially.

A survey to give feedback on the assessment process was included with the assessment results packet. Any concerns expressed in the survey have been addressed with the Devereux team and with individual providers. While no process of this scope is perfect, especially the first time around, the great majority of providers felt the process was fair and that the assessment results were accurate.

The Devereux Florida team was selected because they are experienced in conducting assessments across the state, are highly trained in using the environment rating scale tools, maintain reliability in their scoring through regular validity checks, and as an outside agency are objective and unbiased. Although a few issues have come up, overall the assessments of over 245 individual center classrooms and 47 family child care homes have gone remarkably smoothly, and with lessons learned this year and a new report format in the works, this process will be better next year.

Communicating the results . . .

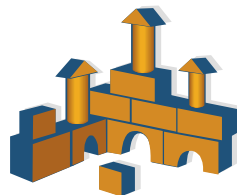


The Quality Child Care Council, which oversees the Look for the Stars Initiative, is excited to share information about the Look for the Stars program, including positive aggregate data and our community's commitment to early care and education. This includes making the providers' provisional star levels public later this year. The Coalition is working with KSC, a marketing and public relations firm, to develop a "toolkit" for providers to use when discussing the Look for the Stars Initiative with parents. This toolkit will be available in late August and is designed to help

providers communicate to parents that the initial Star levels are provisional, give suggestions on how to describe the components of the Look for the Stars program, and offer tips on how to highlight the strengths of individual programs.

KSC will also work on the media messages to the community which will be coordinated and consistent, emphasizing the following points: our community is committed to quality care for young children; this first year the Star levels are provisional; there is always room for improvement and all providers in the QIS have a plan to make their programs stronger; and that by participating in Look for the Stars a provider has already taken the first and most important step in the process and demonstrated a strong commitment to children, families and quality child care.

Next steps . . .



For a provider to participate in the Look for the Stars Initiative the Coalition must have a signed QIS Agreement. Any provider who chooses to opt out of the QIS process is asked to formally indicate that decision by signing the Opt Out Statement. Every provider, whether they sign the agreement or choose to opt out, will receive the full assessment reports, if requested.

Remember, participation in the next phase of the Look for the Stars program is voluntary. If you have reconsidered your participation please notify us. Both the QIS Agreement and the Opt Out Statement are on the Coalition website's Provider Exchange page.

The Look for the Stars Initiative is a great opportunity for child care providers in our community to get the supports needed to *attain* quality, such as coaching, training, and materials, as well as financial support to *sustain* quality. In addition, teachers at participating sites will be eligible for scholarships and retention bonuses, something teachers have been asking for and deserve! Details on those benefits and the amount of sustaining payments a provider will receive will be sent in the next few weeks. Funds will be released by October.

The Sarasota County community has placed a great deal of trust in child care providers, a trust that is demonstrated by the significant investment they have made to help providers offer quality care for young children. **We are looking forward to working together with you to reach the goal of quality care we all share!**

See back for aggregate preliminary data