



Look for the Stars
Quality Improvement System (QIS)
Provider Contract Agreement
2008-2009

A. Parties

This Quality Improvement System Contract Agreement is made and entered into this _____ day of _____, 20____ by and between _____,
Name of Child Care Facility (Provider)

Address City and State

and the Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County

B. Purpose

The purpose of this agreement is to clearly communicate the commitment between the PROVIDER and the Early Learning Coalition (ELC) in an effort to enhance the program's quality of child care through the use of the Look for the Stars Quality Improvement System (QIS).

C. General Overview

All providers who receive state funds will receive a comprehensive assessment to be used to determine that a provider is meeting mandated requirements and will also be part of the QIS Star Rating system, if the provider chooses to fully participate.

The assessment will cover the following component areas that measure the quality of the child care program. The assessment is mandated and is not optional for providers receiving state funds. Private providers receiving no state funds may request to be assessed.

- Learning Environment (includes ERS scores, teacher/child ratios, and use of Curricula, Screening and Assessment)
• Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
• Administrative and Business Practices
• Family Involvement

For those providers who choose to be a part of the Look for the Stars quality improvement program, the assessment will be used to determine a 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 STAR level based on the collective results of the assessment. The participating providers will also be eligible to receive a variety of support services and benefits outlined in the "benefit to providers" section below, and in the Look for the Stars Provider Handbook.

If a provider Opts out of the QIS, they must sign the Opt out statement. A site that opts out is not eligible for the benefits as outlined in this agreement and in the Look for the Stars handbook.

D. Process

The following steps comprise the QIS:

Step 1. The ELC will arrange for the environment rating scale assessment of family child care homes or at least two randomly selected classrooms within child care programs, usually an ECERS and an ITERS. For larger sites, additional assessments will be completed. If one of the classrooms assessed does not result in a minimum score set by the ELC, an additional classroom will be assessed.

- Step 2.** A Validation Checklist is completed to assess the other components within the QIS.
- Step 3.** The PROVIDER signs the QIS agreement if they are choosing to fully participate, or they sign an “opt out” form. If a provider opts out then they will no longer be eligible for any of the Look for the Stars provider supports provided by the ELC.
- Step 4.** The participating PROVIDER and ELC staff will review the results of the assessment. The validation checklist will also be reviewed. The PROVIDER and the ELC staff will reach agreement on the results of the assessment and assigned STAR level before moving ahead in the QIS process.
- Step 5.** When the PROVIDER and the ELC have reached an agreement on the results of the assessment, the program’s baseline STAR level will be established, at STAR 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5. The star level will be effective until the next annual assessment process is completed.
- Step 6.** Based upon the results of the assessment, the PROVIDER and the ELC will develop a program improvement plan to address any programmatic weaknesses that would prevent the program from moving to the next STAR level.
- Step 7.** Once the program improvement plan is signed, the PROVIDER commits to the plan of action outlined therein.
- Step 8.** The PROVIDER will implement the plan of action outlined in the program improvement plan. The ELC will provide resources (funding permitted) and consultation to help owners, directors and teachers accomplish the tasks that are detailed in the program improvement plan, including assisting those providers who did not achieve the minimum level required by the ELC to work toward that goal within the 15 month timeframe.
In the case of unforeseen circumstances preventing the completion of the program improvement plan to reach minimum standards, the PROVIDER may request an extension of up to three (3) months. The ELC may grant an extension if warranted.
- Step 9.** Participating PROVIDERS who are eligible for sustaining support to maintain quality will begin to receive such support (funding permitted) once the PROVIDER and ELC have reached an agreement.
- Step 10.** All providers will be re-assessed the following year.

The PROVIDER and the ELC will together review all documentation to ensure that providers concur with the results of the assessment before moving ahead in the QIS process. *If an agreement cannot be reached, the ELC has a formal grievance policy available upon request.*

E. Provider Benefits

PROVIDER benefits are based on the STAR level received and are also outlined in the Look for the Stars Provider Handbook:

A PROVIDER that achieves a rating of 1, 2 or 3 STARS will have access to training, coaching support and technical assistance from the ELC, including mini grants and scholarships as appropriate to the improvement plan. Coaching/Mentoring may be offered to individual directors and/or teachers or as group trainings, depending on the need and the method determined to be most effective. Individualized improvement plans will be developed in partnership with the director and will focus on developing core competencies.

A PROVIDER that achieves a rating of 4 STARS or higher will be eligible for per-child supplemental payments to help maintain quality, as will some Level 3 providers where the enrollment of low-income children is at least 75% of total enrollment (funding permitted). If a provider currently receives a Gold Seal differential payment, that amount will be factored into any supplemental payment as will any local grants that the provider already receives from other sources that is over a determined amount. Providers must however first ensure certain minimum wage ranges for staff, determined by the Early Learning Coalition, and be prepared to ‘give back’ to our local child care community in some way such as provide training, mentoring, or technical assistance to other providers, and/or ensure low-income or at risk children have access to quality child care at the site.

Notes:

Scholarships will be available to teachers at all participating sites who work at least 20 hours per week at that site (funding permitted). Teachers at participating sites must complete a scholarship application and both the teacher and director must demonstrate commitment to meeting educational goals.

The PROVIDER hereby signs this agreement to be executed as of the date set forth in Paragraph #1 and agrees to fully participate in the Look for the Stars Quality Improvement System.

_____	_____
Name of Facility	Program License Number
_____	_____
Signature of Director/Operator/Principal or Authorized Representative	Date
_____	_____
Print Name	Title

The ELC authorized representative hereby signs this agreement to be executed as of the date set forth in Paragraph #1 and agrees to provide the supports (funding permitted) to assist participating providers in achieving and maintaining their goals related to quality care, as outlined.

_____	_____
Signature of ELC Authorized Representative	Date
_____	_____
Print Name	Title