

Reaching for the Stars

Oklahoma has a child care quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) called “Reaching for the Stars.” Programs with more stars meet standards for child care that are higher than basic licensing requirements. Three stars is the highest level.

Why does Oklahoma have Star ratings for child care?

- ★ To give parents more information to use in evaluating the quality of child care
- ★ To encourage continuous improvement of skills among caregivers
- ★ To make more quality care available to children with the greatest economic need

How do child care programs earn Stars?

The ratings are based on the things research has shown to be marks of higher quality

- ★ Compliance with licensing regulations
- ★ Increased education and training of caregivers
- ★ Enriched learning environments for children
- ★ Family Engagement
- ★ Sound administrative practices
- ★ Participation in national accreditation systems

All licensed child care programs automatically receive one star. Programs may choose whether or not to apply for higher star ratings

Star levels are like building blocks. A child care program must meet all the criteria at one level before moving up to the next level

What does each star mean?

One Star:

- ★ The program has a license or permit to operate legally
- ★ Unannounced inspections at least 3 times per year
- ★ Basic standards for health and safety
- ★ Limits on the number of children in care
- ★ Criminal background checks
- ★ Caregivers have at least a GED and 12 clock hours of training per year; 20 clock hours for center directors

One Star Plus:

- ★ Transitional level used for working on education requirements needed to reach two star status
- ★ Family child care home providers and master teacher candidates in child care centers must be actively working to achieve higher educational requirements
- ★ Actively working means enrolled in college level courses or an approved credentialing program such as the Child Development Associate (CDA)
- ★ Ongoing training increases to 20 clock hours per employment year for caregivers and 30 clock hours for center directors
- ★ Enriched learning environment with interest centers, lesson plans, active outdoor play, and reading to children daily
- ★ Family engagement activities and communication systems
- ★ Membership on a professional development registry as well as other administrative practices

Two Stars:

- ★ Meets all one star, one star plus and two star criteria:
- ★ In child care centers, one master teacher is employed for every 20 children
- ★ Family child care providers meet the same requirements as master teachers
- ★ Master teachers have 15 college credit hours in early childhood OR they have completed an approved credentialing program such as the CDA
- ★ Ongoing annual training continues at 20 clock hours for all caregivers and 30 clock hours for center directors
- ★ Learning environments are further enriched to include more interest centers
- ★ Increased family engagement activities and communication systems
- ★ Increased administrative practices
- ★ Complete a program assessment as part of the program evaluation process

OR

- ★ Accredited by an approved accrediting body
- ★ **OR** is a Head Start Program in compliance with Head Start Performance Standards

Three Stars

- ★ Meets all one star, one star plus and two star criteria
- ★ **AND** is accredited by an approved accrediting body

What is tiered reimbursement?

Reaching for the Stars offers financial incentives to child care programs that earn higher stars. Programs that accept DHS subsidy payments receive a progressively higher rate of reimbursement from the Department of Human Services as they earn more stars.