



Provider Guide





The Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida is proud to present its Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), Southwest Florida Stars. SWFL Stars is a 5-star rating system designed to highlight and enhance the quality of child care services in our service area, which includes Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties. It was developed through a great team effort, using a collaborative approach between Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida Provider Services staff members, Program Committee members, and a SWFL Stars Workgroup, which included SWFL child care providers.

VISION

The vision of SWFL Stars is to promote and recognize early learning environments of distinguished quality which will support young children to become lifelong learners.

GOALS

The SWFL Stars Workgroup has outlined the following goals of this QRIS:

- ☆ To raise the standards and accountability in early learning environments and provide a road map to quality.
- ☆ To promote positive outcomes for children.
- ☆ To identify and recognize early learning providers for the quality services they provide.
- ☆ To provide parent information and consumer education to the community.
- ☆ To build a stronger partnership between early learning providers and the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida.
- ☆ To offer early learning providers a marketing tool.



How are Child Care facilities evaluated?

Child care facilities that choose to participate in Southwest Florida Stars are evaluated based on six quality categories:

- ☆ Learning Environment and Classroom Interactions
- ☆ Health and Safety
- ☆ Professional Development and Staff Qualifications
- ☆ Learning Environment and Classroom Interactions
- ☆ Screening, Assessment and Curriculum
- ☆ Family and Community Relationships
- ☆ Professional Responsibility

Who can participate?

Child Care Providers who have been legally operating as per the Florida Department of Children and Families for at least 12 months and currently have a School Readiness and/or Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten contract with the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida can apply to participate in Southwest Florida Stars.

Benefits to Participation

- ☆ Free program quality assessments using Classroom Assessment Scoring System
- ☆ Specialized trainings for providers
- ☆ On-site, personalized support provided by ELC Quality Mentors
- ☆ Specialized trainings for Directors
- ☆ Access to educational scholarships
- ☆ Discounted CEUs
- ☆ Quality improvement resources
- ☆ Memberships to professional early childhood organizations
- ☆ Community recognition



QUALITY ENHANCEMENT SUPPORTS

Star Level 1

- ☆ 1 membership to a professional organization (NAEYC, NAFCC)
- ☆ Discounted CEUs – 25%
- ☆ Quality Improvement Resource Awards up to \$200 per year

Star Level 2

- ☆ 1 membership to a professional organization (NAEYC, NAFCC)
- ☆ Discounted CEUs – 25%
- ☆ Quality Improvement Resource Awards up to \$400 per year

Star Level 3

- ☆ 1 membership to a professional organization (NAEYC, NAFCC)
- ☆ Discounted CEUs – 50%
- ☆ Quality Improvement Resource Awards up to \$600 per year

Star Level 4

- ☆ 1 membership to a professional organization (NAEYC, NAFCC)
- ☆ Discounted CEUs – 50%
- ☆ 1 \$500 scholarship towards conference registration fees
- ☆ Quality Improvement Resource Awards up to \$800 per year

Star Level 5

- ☆ 2 memberships to a professional organization (NAEYC, NAFCC)
- ☆ Free CEUs
- ☆ 1 \$500 scholarship towards conference registration fees
- ☆ Quality Improvement Resource Awards up to \$1,000 per year

****Quality Enhancement Supports are subject to funding availability.***



Providers' Responsibility for Materials Received

Child Care Providers who receive materials as a Quality Enhancement Support are responsible for submitting all packing slips/acknowledgement of receipt of items within 10 business days of receipt of items. Any items or materials received as a result of participation of SWFL Stars must be returned to the Early Learning Coalition if the Early Learning Facility closes within 12 months of receipt of the items.

In the event that the provider is unable to fulfill the obligations listed above and unable to return the materials, they are responsible for paying the value of the items received.



Learning Environments and Classroom Interactions

Quality in child care settings varies greatly and includes a number of determining elements. These elements, referred to as “process quality” include things such as interactions between children and teachers, use of materials, the classroom and outdoor spaces, and the overall curriculum and schedule of the classroom. In order to capture information regarding all of these elements, multiple assessment tools have been created and researched to ensure their reliability and validity.

Child care providers will be assessed once per year with the applicable tools.

Assessments will be completed by a trained, reliable assessor. The assessments will include the Infant Classroom Assessment Scoring System, Toddler Classroom Assessment Scoring System, and the Pre-K Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

Family child care homes will receive a CLASS assessment. To determine the tool to be used, at least 60% of the children enrolled must be between the ages of the applicable CLASS tool.

Supporting Documents:

- ☆ All applicable CLASS reports



Health and Safety

Ensuring a healthy and safe environment for all children is essential for their learning and development. Appropriate group size, adequate supervision, health and safety training and overall health management are key elements included in creating such an environment. When children, and their caregivers, are not healthy, they cannot reach their full potential.

DCF Licensing Requirements

Child Care Provider must meet Department of Children and Families (DCF) licensing standards. DCF inspection reports for the past twelve months will be reviewed. Child Care Providers who have received more than two Class 1 violations or more than five Class 2 violations in a single area will not be considered as “meeting DCF licensing standards” in the Health and Safety Quality Standard. Therefore, they will not receive any points in that portion, but may still receive the appropriate amount of points related to their ratio and group size levels.

Vision and Hearing Screening

The Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida offers free Vision and Hearing Screening. You can schedule an appointment with our Vision and Hearing Screener at (239) 935-6180 to visit your child care facility and screen all children. A signed consent form is required from parents.

Daily Health Checks

Health checks should be completed daily for all children. ELC Early Childhood Specialist will randomly select daily health check forms from each age group to review. Provider will submit one health check form or documentation of no issues found for each age group for 4 months of the year. (i.e.: 1 form per age group for September, November, January and March.)



Safety Checks

Indoor and outdoor safety checks should be completed weekly. Checklist should be available and sign and date by staff conducting the safety check.

First Aid & CPR

It is recommended that all staff complete first-aid and CPR training. However, to meet the requirements for SWFL Stars, at least 75% of staff must complete first-aid and CPR training within the first three to six months of hire.

Physical

It is recommended that all staff complete an annual physical. To meet the requirements for SWFL Stars, at least 95% of staff should have a physical on file within 6 months of hire date and every two years thereafter.

Asthma Friendly Child Care Facility

Children with asthma need support in child care settings to keep their asthma under control. Keeping asthma under control at an early age can prevent further damage to the lungs and keep children healthier over their lifetime. For more information and to become an asthma friendly, contact the Florida Asthma Coalition (<http://floridaasthmacoalition.com>).

Supporting Documents:

- ☆ Copy of Asthma Friendly certification from the Florida Asthma Coalition

Safe Sleep Child Care Facility

The Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida partners with the Florida Department of Health and the Safe and Healthy Children's Coalition of SWFL for Safe Sleep/SIDS Certification available to child care facilities.



To be Safe Sleep/SIDS certified through the ELC of SWFL:

- ☆ All staff must independently take the SUID/SIDS Questionnaire and receive 100% on it. This must be in the staff file. All staff in the entire center, regardless of position, needs to complete and pass this questionnaire.
- ☆ The SUID Questionnaire must be given to parents of children under the age of one year who are in the child care center, and it is to be used as a learning tool if they don't know the answers.
- ☆ All staff must take a Safe Sleep/SIDS class. The ELC of SWFL offers this training. Please register on-line through the ELC website.
- ☆ You must have a policy regarding Safe Sleep/SIDS at your facility. We have one you can use. All the staff must sign the policy and procedure and it must be in the staff file.
- ☆ Any parent with a child under the age of one year must sign the policy and procedure that states they understand you are a safe sleep center and be kept in the child's file.
- ☆ If a child sleeps in any position other than their back they must have a sleep waiver completed by a physician.
- ☆ The center must have a Safe Sleep/SUIDS poster in a high visibility area and/or Safe Sleep/SUID pamphlets available. You can print these online free or order free ones from the Eunice Shriver Safe to Sleep Campaign. (800-505-2742 - <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/SIDS>).

When all of these requirements are met, you may contact Patricia Hansen at Patricia.Hansen@flhealth.gov and you will be issued a Safe Sleep Certification for your center that is valid for one year.

To receive Safe Sleep/SIDS re-certification for your child care center:

- ☆ The SUID questionnaire will need to be completed independently by each staff member who has already taken the Safe Sleep/SIDS training session. In order to pass, a score of 100% is required by each person. Note to director: *Please keep the answer test key confidential.*



- ☆ Anyone who does not score 100% is required to attend the training session again along with any new staff who have not previously received the training. Please register online through the ELC website.
- ☆ Please have each staff member turn in their test to be scored by your director or designee. Completed tests must be kept in the staff file.
- ☆ You must have and use a Safe Sleep/SIDS Policy for all children under the age of one year. All staff must sign the policy, regardless of their position at the child care center. This must be kept in the staff file.
- ☆ Parents of children less than one year old must sign the Safe Sleep/SIDS policy to indicate their understanding, and this must be kept in the child's file.
- ☆ You must have Safe Sleep posters in a highly visible area of your center and/or pamphlets for parents.

Once the above criteria has been met and the tests have been scored, if all staff members have scored 100%, please email Patricia.Hansen@flhealth.gov confirming all the above, and your center will be recertified for one year.

Supporting Documents:

- ☆ ELC Early Childhood Specialist will verify Safe Sleep poster is visible in Child Care facility.
- ☆ Pamphlets are available for parents
- ☆ Copy of Safe Sleep certification

Ratio & Group Size

Providers will report the ratio and group size they routinely follow for each classroom. Actual ratio and group size will be monitored by an ELC Early Childhood Specialist during an on-site visit. Additionally, ratio and group size observed by DCF during their annual visits will be reviewed. Ratio and group size for a mixed group will be determined by majority in the age group with the exception of Infants and Ones, where the youngest age will be used to determine the ratio and group size. The points assigned for this section will be based on the highest ratio and/or largest group size observed during



either DCF or the ELC visits.

Supporting Documents:

- ☆ DCF License
- ☆ 2 most recent DCF Inspection Reports, or applicable inspection report
- ☆ ELC Compliance Report
- ☆ SR Monitoring Report



Screening, Assessment and Curriculum

ASQs, TS Gold and other screening and assessment tools provide valuable information to both parents and teachers regarding the overall development of each child. This allows parents and teachers to ensure that each child's developmental needs are being met and assists in planning activities to ensure continued growth. Similarly, the use of the Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards, or applicable curriculum objectives, help teachers create developmentally appropriate lesson plans to keep children learning and growing on the right track.

Screening: Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)

An Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) should be completed for all children enrolled. Credit will be given if ASQ is only completed for all School Readiness (SR) children on time at Star Level One. Paper copy of ASQ is available for Non-SR children. Credit will not be given if a non-compliance was issued for not completing ASQ.

Supporting Documents:

- ☆ Early Childhood Specialist will review at least 10% of completed ASQs
- ☆ Documentation of director or teacher/parent meetings to discuss Individual Learning Plans.

Assessment aligned with OEL Approved Curriculum

There should be evidence of facility using an assessment that is aligned with OEL Approved Curriculum.

Training certificate for assessment aligned with OEL approved Curriculum

Documentation showing completion of assessment for all children

Demonstration Site

We encourage Child Care Facilities to support each other in the implementation of assessment aligned with OEL approved curriculum. To receive credit, there should be



documentation of facility providing opportunities for other providers to observe and learn how to implement assessment aligned with OEL approved curriculum.

All facilities have the opportunity to become a Demonstration Site. Facilities that meet the requirements below can submit application to become a demonstration site to the Supervisor of Assessment and Screening, (239) 935-6167.

Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) Demonstration Site Requirements.

- ☆ Site must have successfully completed use of TSG for at least 2 years assessing children in at least 3 seasons in school year.
- ☆ Director and lead teacher must have current Inter-rater Reliability Certification
- ☆ Review of checkpoints by ELC staff with director and teachers indicates alignment with progressions and demonstrates valid and reliable data.
- ☆ Director/site manager demonstrates mastery over TSG administrator tasks such as adding children, teachers, and classrooms: transferring children and teachers.
- ☆ Director and Lead teachers demonstrate use of the TSG tools to support children's learning and lesson plan by actively using Individual Child Reports, the Class Profile and Recommended Activities.
- ☆ Observations of children are documented online for each child in all classrooms in all objectives including the English Language Acquisition, when appropriate.
- ☆ At least one classroom is using the TSG Weekly Planning Form. All posted activity plans indicate a relationship to intentional planning and the Objectives for Development and Learning.

Early Intervention support

Documentation of requests for copy of IEP from family

Documentation of plan to refer families to Early Intervention services; may include use of ELC Inclusion Specialist



Curriculum

There should be evidence of Curriculum used for all applicable age groups birth to five years from the state approved curriculum list. State approved curriculum list can be found

http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/providers/provider_resources/school_readiness_curriculum.aspx

Lesson Plans (Provide sample of 4 weeks of lesson plans for each group)

Lesson plans should be completely weekly and posted in classroom. Alignment with appropriate Florida Early Learning Standards or curriculum objectives must be clearly demonstrated on plans.

There should be evidence of ongoing planning to connect the results of formal screenings/assessments or informal observations for children with concerns to the individual activities, such as a section on the lesson plan for individualized lessons or separate individualized planning form that documents this information.

Evidence of classroom documentation system (TS GOLD online portfolios, classroom portfolios, documentation boards, etc.)



Professional Development and Staff Qualifications

The ELC of SWFL recognizes the value of continuing professional development. We want to acknowledge the hard work of child care providers and encourage them to continue learning and growing, along with the children they care for. Whether through in-service training or formal education, coursework allows providers to strengthen their skill set and as a result, enhance the level of care and education provided in their classrooms.

Supporting Documents:

- ☆ Copy of training certificates
- ☆ DCF Transcript
- ☆ College Transcript



Family and Community Relationships

A good relationship between the family and the child care facility is an essential part of providing quality care and is a key element of developmentally appropriate practices. Building this relationship involves many tasks, such as ample opportunities for clear communication between families and caregivers, parental involvement in the classroom, and occasions for families and teachers to get to know one another. Often times, these practices can be facilitated by parent handbooks, family events, daily communication and more formal parent/teacher conferences.

Supporting Documents:

- ☆ Copy of Parent Handbook
- ☆ Parent fees
- ☆ Attendance policy
- ☆ Vacation policy
- ☆ Discipline policy
- ☆ Illness and exclusion policy
- ☆ Open door policy
- ☆ Copy of information provided to families regarding public, social and community services
- ☆ Family Event
- ☆ Flyer
- ☆ Sign-in sheets
- ☆ Family Newsletter
- ☆ Daily Note policy for children 3 & under; provide a blank sample note
- ☆ Parent/Teacher Conference (documentation needed for 10% of parents/families)
- ☆ Sign in sheets - or - Signed copy of report provided to parents
- ☆ Parent Survey results –or- Parent Advisory Council meeting notes
- ☆ Copy of information provided to parents regarding available community parent/



family workshops

- ☆ FCCH Substitute and assistant teacher information
 - Name and contact info
 - Schedule of availability
 - Credentials



Professional Responsibility

Professional responsibility in early childhood environments ensures that caregivers integrate existing knowledge, personal reflection and ongoing development to provide quality experiences for children. Administrators of early childhood programs set the standard for the professional tone of their facility. Under their guidance and leadership, caregivers will engage in informed support for children, families, communities and the profession.

Supporting Documents:

- ☆ Child Care Centers – Copy of Staff Handbook
- ☆ Job descriptions for each facility position
- ☆ Staff orientation procedures
- ☆ Disaster preparedness information (lockdown/evacuation policies, inclement weather, emergency closure, etc.)
- ☆ Staff Meeting
- ☆ Sign in sheets from 4 months of meetings
- ☆ Agenda from 4 months of meetings
- ☆ Copy of Director's membership certificate for professional organization
- ☆ Evidence that Director participates in a Director networking group
- ☆ Documentation of written performance evaluations, with classroom observations, for applicable staff
- ☆ Documentation of classroom observations made by directors for use in annual staff evaluations
- ☆ Documentation of director meetings with staff to create a professional development plan
- ☆ Documentation of team building event
- ☆ Sign-in sheet
- ☆ Flyer



- ☆ FCCH – copy of disaster preparedness plan
- ☆ FCCH – Copy of membership certificate for a professional organization or provider networking group and/or evidence that provider participates in a provider networking group
- ☆ FCCH – documentation of professional development plan
- ☆ Large FCCH – copy of written staff policies
- ☆ Large FCCH – documentation of written performance evaluations, with classroom observations, for applicable staff
- ☆ Large FCCH – documentation of professional development plan for assistant teacher