

2. Training and Education of Staff

The training and education score is based on the work experience and the average level of early childhood education attained by the providers working in the home or center. Research reveals that in high performing programs providers and program directors that have more formal early childhood training and coursework generally provide higher quality learning environments and have more positive interactions with young children, because they understand how they develop and learn. Five Stars for Kids encourages providers to attain elevated levels of training for all program staff.

3. Adult-to-Child Ratio

Programs with lower adult-to-child ratios and group size are more able to facilitate stimulating learning activities, individualize children's experiences, and provide a safe environment. Children do better when they have a lot of love and attention from their providers. Lower ratios and group size also promote bonding and attachment between adults and children. Attendance is taken at different times during data collection to measure this indicator.

Five Stars encourages programs to lower ratios at all levels, especially for infants and toddlers. In order to achieve the highest score possible for this indicator, programs serving children birth to age five must meet the following ratios: 1:4 ratios must be met in classrooms serving children from birth to 12 months (infants) with a group size of 8; 1:6 ratios in 12 to 24 month classrooms (toddlers) with a group size of 12; 1:9 ratios for 2 year old classrooms with a group size of 12; and 1:13 ratios for three year old classrooms with a group size of 26; 1:16 ratios for four year old classrooms with a group size of 32; and 1:21 in five year old classrooms with a group size of 42.

4. Accreditation

Programs that are accredited through a national accrediting agency have engaged in a valuable self-study process and are following national standards of high-quality early childhood education.



FIVE STARS FOR KIDS

A PARENT'S PRIMER



Program Overview



For years the early care and education community has known that the first five years of a child's life, the period between birth and kindergarten, is a most critical time in a child's learning and emotional development. Eighty-five percent of a person's intellectual, emotional and cognitive ability is formed by the age of five, making the early years a vitally important time in life.

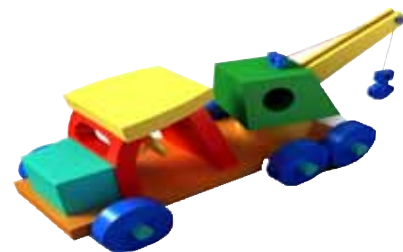
No one disputes that parents are a child's first and best teachers. But, for many families, care outside of the home is both a necessity and a reality of life today. A child's earliest out-of-home teachers must love, respect, and nurture them. For parents, selecting a provider with a high quality program is a must.

However, providing high-quality early learning programs isn't a simple task. Though most programs consistently strive to improve quality, many financial and economic burdens make it difficult for even the most dedicated providers. Programs participating in the Five Stars for Kids Quality Improvement Initiative process

have taken a most important step in their continuous quality improvement journey. As part of Five Stars for Kids, centers open themselves up to regular, objective reviews of both their program strengths and areas for improvement in order to become and remain high-quality child care programs.

The Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County and the entire childhood community salute all participating centers for joining this exciting initiative and believe they are truly pioneers, making a tremendous difference in the lives of our children.

For more information on Five Stars for Kids, contact:
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What Does It Measure?

The Five Stars for Kids Program works with child care programs that have volunteered to have their quality assessed on a five-star rating scale. An assessment of participating child care centers is performed by impartial trained observers and occurs during a full-day of normal operation on an annual basis. The programs receive a detailed, written assessment report which outlines the strengths and areas of growth of their program, and provides them with an action plan for improvement, technical assistance to implement report recommendations and a timeline for improvement.

Ultimately, participating providers may become eligible to receive a stipend to help defray the costs of providing higher quality services to children receiving school readiness program financial assistance. The program has a limited funding base and is delivered via collaboration with the Children's Board of Hillsborough County and the School District of Hillsborough County.

WHAT CRITERIA ARE USED?

Five Stars for Kids uses several criteria to measure the quality of the participating child care programs.

1. Learning Environment

Five Stars for Kids observes and documents a program's learning activities,

physical environment, health and safety, and language development. Emphasis is placed on activities that promote development of language and reasoning skills.

The Five Stars for Kids Program environmental rating scores are based on the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale - Revised (ECERS-R) © 1998, Harms, Clifford & Cryer for children in their preschool years (2 1/2 - 5 years); the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) © 1990 Harms, Clifford & Cryer for children birth to 2 years of age; and the Family Day Care Rating Scale (FDCRS) © 1989 Harms and Clifford for family child care homes. Beginning in late March 2006 Five Stars for Kids will also pilot the use of the School Age Care Environment Rating Scale (SACERS) © for school age children attending a child care program. All of the scales being used have been extensively tested, used widely, and are well respected. Providers and parents can be confident of the results of an assessment. Children are better able to solve problems, manage conflicts, and build strong relationships with other children and adults when providers encourage positive social interactions.