

Quality Counts for Kids



Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS THE QUALITY COUNTS FOR KIDS PROGRAM?

The Quality Counts for Kids Program (QCFK) is a continuous quality rating and improvement system implemented in Hillsborough County for area early childhood care and education programs. QCFK offers early childhood care and education programs and their staff a way to assess, improve and communicate the quality of their programs.

Systems like Hillsborough's Quality Counts for Kids Program are growing in reputation, not only within the state of Florida, but nationwide. More and more, communities are seeking to implement systems for improving quality across the full continuum of early care and education programming in order to establish uniform sets of standards linked to a set of 'star ratings', not unlike those established for hotels and restaurants.

QCFK has sets of program standards that provide early childhood programs a long-term pathway to improve overall quality and offer parents objective information about the quality of their programs. Early childhood programs that participate in QCFK do so voluntarily and are provided various supports and resources to improve the qualifications of their program's staff including financial incentives linked to the levels of ratings.

WHY SHOULD PARENTS IN HILLSBOROUGH CARE ABOUT QUALITY COUNTS FOR KIDS?

Research tells us that children develop so many important skills from birth to the age of five that will be critical to their success in kindergarten and beyond. Research also tells us that a high quality early learning experience will ensure that children have opportunities to develop the skills that prepare them for school.

WHAT WILL MY CHILD GET OUT OF BEING ENROLLED IN A PROGRAM THAT IS PARTICIPATING IN QCFK?

The parents of children attending an early childhood program that is participating in the Quality Counts for Kids program know that their provider is committed to providing services above and beyond what is minimally required of them by licensing standards. The director and staff of programs participating in QCFK are on an ongoing, self-initiated, path of education and skill development which will ultimately benefit your child's long-term educational outcomes.

DOES IT COST MORE TO ENROLL MY CHILD IN A PROGRAM THAT IS PARTICIPATING IN QCFK?

Each program determines their individual fees for services. Achieving high quality has costs, but Quality Counts for Kids provides a system of services and grants to help programs make quality improvements.





WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A STAR LEVEL 1 AND HIGHER STAR LEVEL RATINGS?

Star Level 1 is the entry level of quality and programs at this level go beyond minimum health and safety standards and regulations of Florida and Hillsborough County Child Care Licensing. Programs with higher Star Level rating have made increased efforts toward meeting more demanding standards such as curriculum, learning environment, engagement with families, business practices and staff education.

HOW DOES QUALITY COUNTS FOR KIDS RATE A PROGRAM?

Quality Counts for Kids rates a program based on points earned in each of the Quality Counts Standards. These standards were chosen because they are important elements of child care programs. For each standard, providers may earn between 1 and 5 points. The standards are a little different in Family Child Care Homes than they are for child care centers. Both sets of standards are explained below.

In **child care centers**, the standards are:

Curriculum and Instructional Assessment - This standard addresses the curriculum being used, the training staff has received on the curriculum, lesson plans and how staff determines what children are learning from the curriculum.

Family Engagement - This standard evaluates the information that is shared with parents about the program through both the family handbook and daily communications and how the center involves parents in their child's learning experience.

Learning Environment - The program's classrooms are evaluated with the Environment Rating Scales, which are published and reliable assessment tools, that look at all aspects of the learning environment.

Program Administration - This standard considers the business aspect of the child care center and evaluates the program's risk management plans, publicity, hiring practices and staff evaluation.

Ratio and Group Size - Ratio is the number of children that one staff member is responsible for at one time and group size is the number of children in one group or classroom. Lower ratios and smaller group sizes result in more points being awarded in this standard.

Screening and Identification of Special Needs - The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) is a screening tool that measures the development of children. This standard addresses the program's administration of the ASQ, the training staff has received on working with children with special needs, and the program's plan for caring with children with special needs.

Staff Qualifications - This standard looks at staff's education and professional training hours.

For **Family Child Care Homes**, the standards are:

Business Administration - This standard looks at the business aspect of the family child care home and evaluates the program's risk management plans, advertising and record keeping.

Curriculum and Instructional Assessment - This standard addresses the curriculum being used, the training that the provider has received on the curriculum, lesson plans and how the family home provider determines what children are learning from the curriculum.



Family Engagement - This program is evaluated on how and what information is shared with parents about the program through both the family handbook and daily communications and how the provider involves parents in their child's learning experience.

Learning Environment - The Family Child Care Home is evaluated with the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, a published and reliable assessment tool that looks at all aspects of the learning environment.

Provider Qualifications - This standard looks at the provider's education and training hours as well as the training of the program's substitute.

Screening and Identification of Special Needs - The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) is a screening tool that measures the development of children. This standard addresses the provider's administration of the ASQ and the training the provider has received on working with children with special needs.

Provider as Employer (may be N/A) - This standard is only addressed in FCCH programs when the provider has an employee that works for them. This standard looks at the job description of the employee as well as tax records and documentation of meetings between the employee and provider.

CAN A PROGRAM LOSE ITS STAR LEVEL DESIGNATION?

Yes. If a program has not maintained the requirements for their current Star Level designation, for whatever reason, then they may lose their Star Level designation.

If you have additional questions or would like more information about the Quality Counts for Kids Program, please contact the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County at (813) 202-1000.




Quality Counts for Kids is administered by the Early Learning Coalition of Hillsborough County and funded by the Children's Board of Hillsborough County.