
What Is the Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System?

The Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System is a voluntary rating system for licensed early childhood facilities in Mississippi.

Benefits

Child care facilities that earn ratings of 2-Star through 5-Star will receive ongoing quality bonuses from the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Office for Children and Youth. An ongoing quality bonus will only be provided to child care facilities that participate in the OCY child care subsidy program.

Facilities also can advertise their ratings to help attract parents. Facilities receive certificates suitable for framing and display.

Requirements

When you enroll your facility in the Mississippi

Child Care Quality Rating System, you must decide what rating (1-Star through 5-Star) to try to earn. If you choose to apply for a rating above a 1, the facility must meet all criteria for each of the lower ratings.

You can guide your facility to earn ratings by meeting specific requirements in five areas:

1. Administrative Policy
2. Professional Development
3. Learning Environments
4. Parent Involvement
5. Evaluation

A monitor will visit your facility to review records and the facility and rate the center. If a facility does not meet its goal, such as a 3-Star rating, it may be able to earn a lower rating, such as the 2-Star rating. A facility can enroll again the next year to continue earning stars.



How to Prepare

To enroll your facility in the Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System, you will have to make two important decisions:

1. How many stars do you want your facility to earn?
2. When do you want the Quality Step System monitor to visit and rate your facility?

This workbook can guide you in making these important decisions. The workbook contains forms (in the back of the workbook) that can help you collect information and prepare it for the monitor visit. Most of the forms are optional. You can use the forms in this workbook or create your own forms.

➤ The arrow symbols in this workbook point to forms you will find in the back.

If you evaluate your skills and your teachers' knowledge and register for professional development activities that will help everyone fill gaps in their knowledge, you can plan a Quality Step System monitoring visit *after* everyone on the staff has completed the minimum required training hours.

It is *not* a good idea to put off completing training hours until just before your state licensing renewal. This could mean you don't have certificates for enough training hours in your employees' professional development files when the Quality Step System monitor visits.

The following steps are required for the 2-Star rating, but doing them *before* you enroll in the Quality Step System will help you schedule a monitoring visit at the best possible time for you.

Complete a Director's Self-Assessment

Ongoing professional development is one sign of a true early childhood professional. Parents want to know that, as director of their children's early childhood program, you have all of the necessary knowledge and skills. When you assess your own skills, you will learn which areas may need improvement.

You have three options for completing a self-assessment:

- Use the optional Child Care Director's Self-Assessment in this workbook (which is the same as the following online assessment)
- Use an online assessment. Go to: www.ncchildcare.org/admin.html and click "Begin"
- Order and complete the *Program Administration Scale: Measuring Early Childhood Leadership and Management* by Teri N. Talan and Paula Jorde Bloom (\$17.95). Go to: www.tcpress.com

Plan Your Own Professional Development

Review your performance on the self-assessment you chose to complete. Be honest with yourself about the areas where you could improve your skills and knowledge. A self-improvement plan must be on file for credit.

- The optional Child Care Director Professional Improvement Plan is a form to help you decide how to improve your skills and knowledge.

Evaluate Your Staff

Staff evaluations are for helping your employees, not for punishment. They are a time to exchange ideas and find out about concerns each employee has. At the same time, you can talk with the employee about specific ways, such as earning the Child Development Associate credential, that he or she can become more valuable to your program. The key to an effective evaluation is honest and open communication.

- The optional Child Care Employee Evaluation form is a tool for reviewing an employee's strengths and weaknesses and planning improvement steps together.

Plan Professional Development for Each Employee

When you meet with each employee to discuss his or her evaluation, you can suggest specific workshops or courses that will help him or her improve. You may also ask the employee to report on what she learns at a workshop in a future staff development meeting. You might ask the employee to read particular articles from *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, *Young Children*, or another early childhood journal.

- Use the optional Child Care Employee Professional Development Plan to record the trainings you want the employee to attend.

Plan for the Monitoring Visit

Timing is important! You and your staff members *must* complete the required training hours before your Quality Step monitor evaluates your facility. Therefore, you must begin looking early for workshops and courses that will meet your professional needs.

- The optional Child Care Center Professional Development Plan is a tool for scheduling every employee's training hours before the monitoring visit.

How to Enroll

Directors of early childhood programs located in areas where the Quality Step System operates can enroll by submitting the following *required* forms (found in the back of this workbook):

- ✓ Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System Enrollment Form
- ✓ Mississippi Child Care Registry Practitioner Profile (for each employee who has contact with children)
- ✓ Mississippi Child Care Quality Step System Enrollment Checklist