Parent Aware

Parent Aware Quality Rating and Improvement System: Standards and Indicators

October 2016

Minnesota Department of **Human Services**

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), provides a common set of program standards for child care and early education programs, and is supported by a mission and principles. The program standards, combined with the Parent Aware Indicators, are also known as the Parent Aware "kindergarten readiness best practices".

Information in this report was developed in partnership with many stakeholders. The mission and principles were created with input from the Parent Aware Advisory Committee. The update of the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators was carried out by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, in coordination with the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health. These agencies worked closely with an advisory group representing early care and education advocates, directors, providers, and educators from across Minnesota. They also relied heavily on feedback gathered through a public input process.

Earlier versions of the Standards and Indicators were used during a pilot from 2007-2011, and during Parent Aware's expansion from 2011 – 2016. (See Parent Aware History for more details.)

Parent Aware Mission

Parent Aware, Minnesota's Quality Rating and Improvement System, offers tools and resources to help:

- » Families find quality child care and early education
- » Programs improve their practices
- » Children benefit from care and education that will prepare them for school and life.

Parent Aware Principles

We believe that...

- » Every child has unique gifts and abilities to celebrate and nurture
- » All families deserve equitable access to quality care and education for their children
- » Quality early learning from trained and culturally competent professionals makes a difference for children
- » Children learn through relationships and playful interactions with their families, peers, providers, teachers and environment.

We commit to...

- » Advancing inclusive practices that build on family, child, and community strengths
- » Helping care and education programs adopt best practices and serve children of all cultures, races, ethnicities, languages, beliefs and abilities
- » Offering services and supports from people who reflect our diverse community
- » Supporting practices that will lead to closing the achievement gap for young children.

We will...

- » Promote the importance of high-quality inclusive care and education programs and practices to all Minnesotans
- » Offer professional growth for child care and early education professionals through cutting-edge, culturally responsive training, education, and coaching
- » Always improve Parent Aware services through evaluation, listening to parents and providers, and use of the latest methods, models and research.

Minnesota's Parent Aware Principles were inspired and strongly informed by those developed by New Mexico and found in *New Mexico FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality for Center-Based Early Care and Education Programs, January 2015.*

Goal:
Individualized Teaching and Learning for Every Child

Coaching, training and financial supports.

Professionalism

Teaching and Relationships with Children

Relationships with Families

Assessment and Planning for Each Individual Child

Professionalism

Health and Well-being
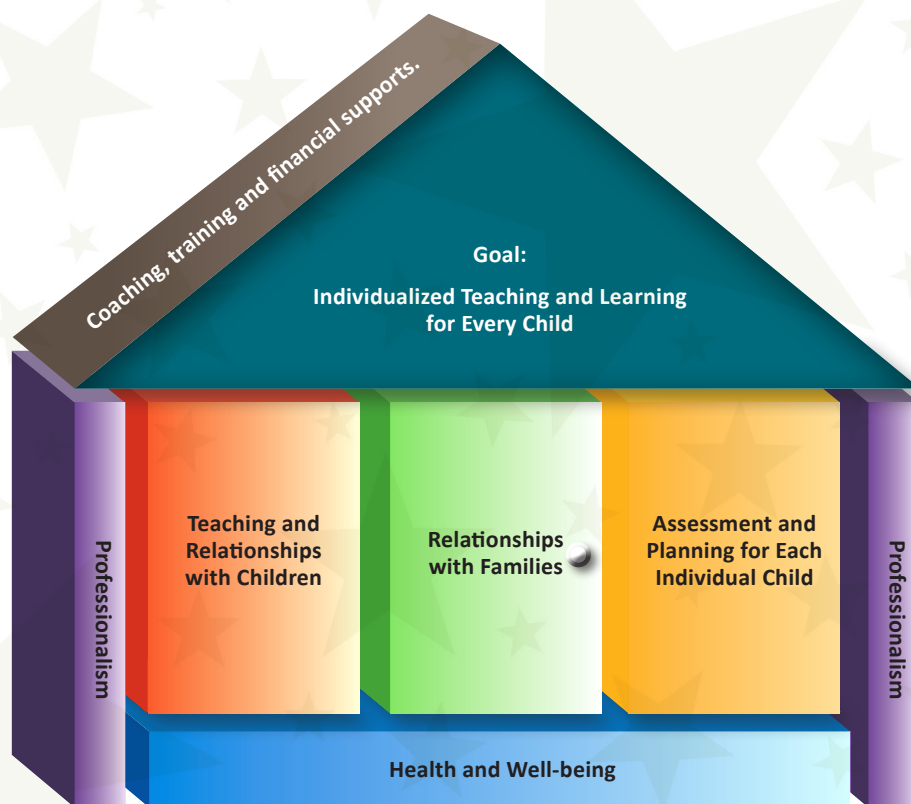
The Parent Aware House was adapted from the National Center of Quality Teaching and Learning Framework for Effective Practices, and the Washington Early Achiever's House.

THE PARENT AWARE HOUSE:
A Framework for School Readiness

Parent Aware uses a "house" to represent quality teaching and learning practices that support children's school readiness.

These practices are summarized in Parent Aware's five categories of program standards:

1. **Health and Well-being**

2. **Relationships with Families**

3. **Teaching and Relationships with Children**

4. **Assessment and Planning for Each Individual Child**

5. **Professionalism**

The ultimate goal of these practices is **individualized teaching and learning for every child.**

These practices are supported through coaching, training, education and financial supports.

The elements are symbolized by parts of a "house": foundation, door, pillars, siding, roof and shingles. Together, they form the structure needed to support children's success in school and in life.

The foundation: Health and Well-being

Children do better when early care and education programs are safe and healthy, provide nutritious meals and snacks, and many opportunities for active play. This foundation allows children to take full advantage of learning opportunities.

The door: Relationships with Families

Children do better when families are engaged in their children's education and development. Building two-way relationships with families helps strengthen a sense of belonging among all children in the program as they experience respect and support for their home culture and language.

The left pillar: Teaching and Relationships with Children

Children do better when early care and education providers and teachers are caring and engaging, provide quality learning environments, use a research-based curriculum, and support children's transitions to kindergarten. Providers and teachers make a *big difference* in children's lives. These practices help build relationships and give children what they need to learn and grow.

The right pillar: Assessment and Planning for Each Individual Child

Children do better when their providers and teachers know them well, understand their levels of development, and use this information to plan instruction. Assessment information is accurate and fair when it is gathered in a way that includes observation in natural settings, and a child assessment tool that is valid and reliable.

The siding: Professionalism

Children do better when their providers and teachers have professional preparation that includes higher education coursework, combined with on-going training and support. These qualifications have been found to be consistent predictors of program quality, strong child-adult interactions, quality learning environments and positive child outcomes.

Professional preparation is most effective when it:

» Allows for and encourages specialization

» Encourages participants to own their own goals and individualize their learning, making the experience meaningful and relevant to them

» Is flexible and offers choice in content and format.

The roof: The Goal of Individualized Teaching and Learning for Every Child

Children do better when providers and teachers individualize instruction. Young children vary widely in their skills, knowledge, cultures, languages and abilities. Instruction needs to meet the needs of all children, regardless of these differences.

Teaching and learning is truly individualized when providers and teachers:

» Make adjustments to their curriculum to meet the interests and needs of the children in their program.

» Intentionally plan for the specific routines and lessons needed, grounded in their knowledge of each child's development, based on assessment information, and the skills and concepts they know they need to learn.

» Make sure children get just the right amount of help to keep on learning.

The shingles: Coaching, Training and Financial Supports

Parent Aware helps child care and early education programs adopt these practices through:

» Coaching

» Access to free or low-cost training

» Financial supports

Coaches partner with directors, teachers and providers to grow their program's ability to provide individualized teaching and learning. Through a series of meetings, coaches guide program staff through the following process:

1. Assess needs and set goals

2. Create an action plan

3. Gather information

4. Discuss and reflect on progress

5. Update the action plan

The purpose of this process is to foster a climate of on-going learning and improvement. The world of early learning is always changing, with new research, new families and children, and at times even new staff and leadership. Commitment to engaging in on-going reflection and improvement, even after a coach is no longer available, is one marker of a high quality program and allows care and education professionals to be responsive to changes and the needs of children and families they serve.

The process also connects child care and early education programs with:

» Advisors who help them access or seek out higher education, classroom or online training, and relationship-based training, which includes coaching, consultation and mentoring

» Grant specialists who support them in accessing financial supports for education, training, equipment and materials, based on needs identified in their action plans

Parent Aware Standards and Indicators: An Overview

Quality care and education can look different across settings to meet the unique needs of children and families. These settings or types of programs can be public or private, use a wide array of educational philosophies, and use materials and resources in unique and creative ways. While Parent Aware provides a common set of program Standards and Indicators for child care and early education programs, these best practices are not a checklist or a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Rather they provide a flexible framework that encourages innovation, creativity, and continuous quality improvement.

Choice is foundational to the Parent Aware approach. The standards and indicators provide the definition of quality; programs choose how they will carry them out. Also, at the highest Star-Levels, programs can choose to document the practices that work best for them.

Participation in Parent Aware is *voluntary.* All eligible programs are invited to participate. Ratings are valid for two years.

Eligible programs include:

- » Licensed child care centers
- » Licensed family child care programs
- » Public School Pre-kindergarten programs
- » Head Start programs

Earning Stars:

How programs earn Stars varies by program type and pathway.

There are three rating pathways:

1. Full-Rating Pathway
2. Accelerated Pathway to Ratings (also known as APR)
3. Automatic Rating

Full-Rating Pathway:

Programs eligible for the Full-Rating Pathway:

- » Licensed child care centers
- » Licensed family child care programs

The Full-Rating Pathway includes four Star-Levels. At Star-Levels 1 and 2, programs demonstrate they are meeting all indicators. At Star-Levels 3 and 4, programs can earn points toward the Star-Levels, providing flexibility and choice in which indicators they choose to meet.

Star-Ratings 1-2:

Programs must meet Parent Aware requirements, plus all Indicators for each Star-Rating must be met to earn One- and Two-Star Ratings.

Star-Ratings 3-4:

Programs earn points based on meeting Parent Aware Indicators. Programs have flexibility in how they earn points based on program strengths, practices and philosophy. There are some required Indicators for Three- and Four-Stars, and minimum scores for the Instructional Support Domain for the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System. All other indicators are added together to determine a program's points, and depending on the number of points received, programs receive a Three- or Four-Star Rating.

Scoring for the Full-Rating Pathway

Programs earn points in these areas:

» Teaching and Relationships with Children

» Relationships with Families

» Assessment and Planning for Each Individual Child

» Professionalism

» Health and Well-being

Programs must score at least 2 points in every category.

Four-Star Rating

Family child care: 35-50 points

Child care centers: 49-65 points

Three-Star Rating

Family child care: 25-34 points

Child care centers: 33-48 points

Two-Star Rating

All Indicators must be met to earn Two-Stars.

One-Star Rating

All Indicators must be met to earn One-Star.

Requirements

All requirements must be met to earn one or more stars.
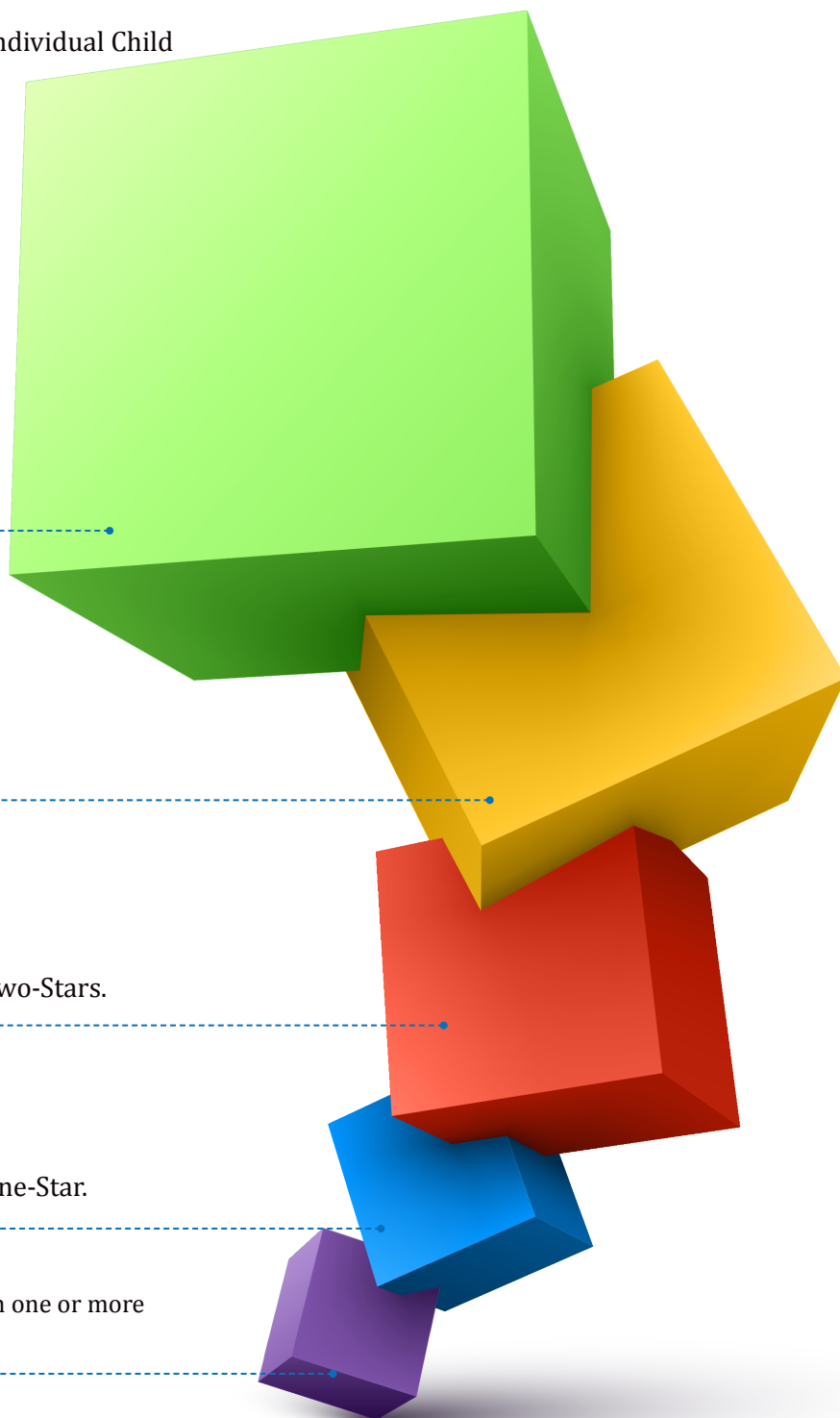
Accelerated and Automatic Rating Pathways

Accelerated Pathway to Ratings (APR):

Programs eligible for the Accelerated Rating Pathway:

» Licensed accredited child care centers

» Licensed accredited family child care programs

» Public School Pre-kindergarten programs

The Accelerated Pathway to Ratings has just one Rating Level: Four-Stars. Programs applying for this Rating Level must meet all APR indicators.

This option is available because accredited and Public School Pre-kindergarten programs meet many of the Parent Aware Indicators through national accreditation or requirements of school-based programs overseen by district school boards and the Minnesota Department of Education.

Automatic Rating:

Programs eligible for the Automatic Rating:

» Head Start center-based programs and their partners

» Early Head Start center-based programs and their partners

The Automatic Rating has just one Rating Level: Four-Stars. Programs apply to receive an Automatic Rating. No additional documentation is required to demonstrate they are meeting the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators.

This option is available because Head Start and Early Head Start programs and their partners must meet federal regulations which meet or exceed the Parent Aware Indicators. To ensure compliance with federal regulations, Head Start and Early Head Start programs are rigorously monitored on an on-going basis by the Office of Head Start.

Parent Aware Categories, Standards and Indicators

How this section is organized:

The information in this section is organized by Categories, Standards, and Indicators by Star-Level.

Sample:

Category—This is the broad category of quality.

Category: Teaching and Relationships with Children

Standard	Why is this standard important?
T.1. Curriculum. Program plans and implements developmentally appropriate learning experiences using a curriculum or bundle of curricula that cover all of the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIP) child development domains.	A curriculum is a roadmap for planning and implementing a program, which includes learning objectives for children, as well as the experiences and materials provided by the program to help children achieve them. Alignment of the curriculum to the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIP) helps ensure that all children across age groups and settings receive developmentally appropriate instruction.

Standard—this is a feature of care and education programs that, based on research, have been shown to make a difference for children.

Why is this standard important?—provides background about what the practice means, and why, based on research, this practice is important for children's outcomes.

Requirement—something all programs must do to participate in Parent Aware.

Full-Rating Requirements
Actively Serves Children. Program actively serves children ranging in ages from birth to kindergarten entry.

Star Rating
One-Star
T1.1. Routines. Program uses consistent routines to support children.

Indicators—a condition that can be observed or measured and used to show that a standard has been met.

Requirements

Full-Rating Requirements

Every program seeking a Full-Rating must complete requirements outlined in this section to receive a rating.

Licensed program in good standing. Program is currently licensed with the Minnesota Department of Human Services and does not have any one of the following licensing violations: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding.

OR

Program is currently licensed and in good standing with a tribal government.

OR

Program is legally license-exempt.

> **What is Minnesota's Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF)?**
>
> It is a set of standards, or expectations, regarding what people educating and caring for young children in Minnesota need to know and be able to do.

Actively serves children. Program actively serves children ranging in ages from birth to kindergarten entry.

Individual Develop Membership. All lead providers or lead teachers have a current Individual Develop Membership.

Ongoing professional learning. All lead providers or lead teachers must successfully complete the required number of hours of approved training, coaching, consultation or mentoring every five years for the desired Star-Rating.

Lead providers and lead teachers with a current, age-appropriate Minnesota teaching license have met all of the training requirements except those with a * below.

Training Requirements by Star-Level for Full-Rating Pathway

One-Star		Two-Stars		Three-Four Stars	
Hours	Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Content Area	Hours	Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Content Area	Hours	Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Content Area
8	I: Child Development and Learning	8	I: Child Development and Learning	10	I: Child Development and Learning
2*	IVa: Observing, Recording, and Assessing Development OR IVb: Assessing and Using Information to Plan	2	IIc: Promoting Social and Emotional Development.	10	IIa – IIe: Developmentally Appropriate Learning Experiences
		6	III: Relationships with Families	10	IIc: Promoting Social and Emotional Development.
		2*	IVa: Observing, Recording, Assessing Development; OR IVb: Assessing and Using Information to Plan.	10	III: Relationships with Families
				10*	IVa: Observing, Recording, and Assessing Development OR IVb: Assessing and Using Information to Plan

Requirements for Accelerated Ratings

Every program seeking an Accelerated Rating must complete requirements outlined in this section to receive a rating.

Licensed program in good standing. Program is currently licensed with the Minnesota Department of Human Services and does not have any of the following licensing violations: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding.

OR

Program is currently licensed and in good standing with a tribal government.

OR

Program is legally license-exempt.

Actively serves children. Program actively serves children ranging in ages from birth to kindergarten entry.

Ongoing professional learning. All lead providers or lead teachers must successfully complete the required number of hours of approved training, coaching, consultation or mentoring every five years for the desired Star-Rating.

Lead providers and lead teachers with a current, age-appropriate Minnesota teaching license have met all of the training requirements except those with a * below.

Training Requirements for Accelerated Ratings

Four Stars	
Hours	Minnesota Knowledge and Competency Framework Content Areas
10*	IVa: Observing, Recording, and Assessing Development; OR IVb: Assessing and Using Information to Plan
10	IIa – IIe: Developmentally Appropriate Learning Experiences

Category: Teaching and Relationships with Children

Standard	Why is this standard important?
T.1. Curriculum. Program plans and implements developmentally appropriate learning experiences using a curriculum or bundle of curricula that cover all of the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIP) child development domains.	A curriculum is a roadmap for planning and implementing a program, which includes learning objectives for children, as well as the experiences and materials provided by the program to help children achieve them. Alignment of the curriculum to the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIP) helps ensure that all children across age groups and settings receive developmentally appropriate instruction. Curricula are more likely to support school readiness skills if they are research-based. (Alliance for Early Success, 2013; Early Achiever's, 2013; NAEYC, 2009; National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force, 2007; NCQTl, 2014; Reynolds, 2016.)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Full-Rating
One-Star	**T1.1. Routines.** Program uses consistent routines to support children.
Two-Stars	**T1.2. Lesson plans.** Program uses lesson plans aligned with ECIP domains.
Three or Four-Stars	**T1.3a. Curriculum use.** Program uses a curriculum aligned with ECIP domains across all age groups. (Required for 3 Stars) **T1.3b. Classroom transitions.** Program keeps classroom transitions brief and uses them to extend learning experiences. (Points recorded for this indicator with T2.3. Child adult interactions.)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Accelerated Rating
Four-Stars	**T1.3a. Curriculum use.** Program uses a curriculum aligned with ECIP domains across all age groups.

Category: Teaching and Relationships with Children

Standard	Why is this standard important?
T.2. Play and interactions. Program implements learning experiences that provide purposeful play, peer and adult interaction, exploration, and skill development.	Children learn more in early learning settings with providers and teachers who thoughtfully plan play and use it to help children learn skills they will need in school and in life. Providers and teachers also use exploration to extend children's learning and problem-solving abilities, and build conversational skills. The emotional climate and classroom organization play a role by establishing a learning environment where skill development happens. (Burchinal, 2011; Heidemann, 2010; Mashburn, 2008; NCQTL, 2012; NCQTL, 2014.)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Full-Rating
One-Star	**None.**
Two-Stars	**None.**
Three or Four-Stars	**T2.3. Child-adult interactions.** Program provides instruction that is organized, challenging, and warm. (See points, below. Child care centers must score a minimum of 2.0 in the Instructional Support Domain in order to achieve 3 Stars.) Preschool and preschool/toddler classrooms in child care centers are observed using the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS). The following points are awarded based on the scores received in each of the following domains. **Emotional support:** Between 1.00 and 3.99 = 0 points Between 4.00 and 5.59 = 3 points Between 5.60 and 7.00 = 5 points **Classroom organization:** Between 1.00 and 2.59 = 0 points Between 2.60 and 3.59 = 3 points Between 3.60 and 7 = 5 points **Instructional support:** Between 1.00 and 2.49 = 0 points Between 2.50 and 2.99 = 3 points Between 3.00 and 7 = 5 points **T2.4. Child-adult interactions.** Program provides instruction that is organized, challenging, and warm. (Child care centers must score a minimum of 2.5 in the Instructional Support Domain to achieve 4 Stars.)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Accelerated Rating
Four-Stars	Meets standard through other monitoring process.

Category: Teaching and Relationships with Children

Standard	Why is this standard important?
T.3. Learning and belonging. Program creates environment that supports a sense of belonging for each child and family.	The learning environment sets the stage for everything else that happens in early care and education programs. The best environments have engaging materials and equipment, are welcoming to families, provide for the safety and comfort of all who use it, and are affirming and respectful of the children's cultures, abilities and languages. High quality environments empower providers and teachers to offer the kind of early educational experiences that prepare children for school and for life. (Burchinal et al., 2011; Halgunseth, 2009; York, 2003.)
Star-Rating	**Indicators for Full-Rating**
One-Star	**None.**
Two-Stars	**T3.2. Learning environment.** Program evaluates learning environment and sets goals using Parent Aware Environment Self-Assessment Checklist.
Three or Four-Stars	**T3.3. Cultural responsiveness.** Program evaluates its cultural responsiveness and sets goals using an approved self-assessment tool. (2 points)
Star-Rating	**Indicators for Accelerated Rating**
Four-Stars	Meets standard through other monitoring process.

Category: Teaching and Relationships with Children

Standard	Why is this standard important?
T.4. Kindergarten transition support. Program supports children and families as children transition to kindergarten.	Children transition into kindergarten more successfully when their early care and education programs, schools and families prepare for it together, and when their preschool providers and teachers, and kindergarten teachers, connect. Also, by coordinating transition efforts, child care, early education programs, and elementary school programs can help children maintain and maximize the gains they made prior to kindergarten entry. (Alliance for Early Success, 2013; Hayakawa, 2014; Head Start ECLKC, 2015; National Early Childhood Accountability Task Force, 2007; Passe, 2010; Reynolds, 2016; Reynolds, Magnuson & Ou, 2010.)
Star-Rating	**Indicators for Full-Rating**
One-Star	None.
Two-Stars	**T4.2. Kindergarten transition plan.** Program provides written guidance to families for planning their child's kindergarten transition.
Three or Four-Stars	**T4.3. Kindergarten transition activities.** Program offers a variety of activities that transition children to kindergarten. (4 points)
Star-Rating	**Indicators for Accelerated Rating**
Four-Stars	Meets standard through other monitoring process.

Category: Relationships with Families

Standard	Why is this standard important?
R.1. Respect and ongoing two-way communication. Program respects each families' strengths, choices, and goals for their children. Information about children's progress and curriculum is shared between the program and family.	Effective early learning programs form relationships with families that foster respect, support and collaboration. Developing partnerships with families that include on-going two-way communication allow teachers and providers to learn about the child's interests and routines; family traditions, religion, language and expectations; gather information that can be used to create a program that is sensitive to the child's culture; and provide a curriculum that meets the child's individual needs. Strong relationships with families are associated with positive child and parent outcomes, and more sensitive caregiving. (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2007; Hayakawa, 2013; Miedel, 2000; NAEYC, 2009; Office of Head Start, 2011; Porter, 2011)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Full-Rating
One-Star	**R1.1. Asks and listens to families.** Program has conversations to learn about each child's family's, » Routines » Ways they prefer to communicate with the program, » Backgrounds and interests » Languages spoken in the home, and » Cultures they consider most important to their identity.
Two-Stars	**R1.2. Shares information with families.** Program shares information in a way that meets the needs of all families, including those who speak languages other than English.
Three or Four-Stars	**R1.3a**. **Family involvement.** Program offers a variety of activities, based on families' interests, with at least one focused on helping families extend children's learning at home. (2 points) **R1.3b**. **Family input.** Program offers families opportunities to provide input into decisions that impact the program. (2 points)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Accelerated Rating
Four-Stars	Meets standard through other monitoring process.

Category: Relationships with Families

Standard	Why is this standard important?
R.2. Links families to services. Program provides families with links to services based on family's strengths, resources, priorities and concerns.	Providers and teachers in early care and education programs see families regularly, and know the families well. Research has shown that when early care and education programs connect families to services in their community, we see far reaching, positive outcomes for children and families. (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2007; NAECY, 2013; Office of Head Start, 2011)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Full-Rating
One-Star	**R2.1 Family support services.** Program provides families with the list of community services available on the Parent Aware website.
Two-Stars	**None.**
Three or Four-Stars	**None.**

Star-Rating	Indicators for Accelerated Rating
Four-Stars	Meets standard through other monitoring process.

Category: Assessment and Planning for Each Individual Child

Standard	Why is this standard important?
A.1. Observation and assessment. Program learns more about each child through regular observation and formal assessment.	Offering individualized instruction requires knowing and understanding children's unique needs, temperaments, and levels of development. Gathering assessment information is one important part of getting to know children, and helps teachers and providers monitor their progress. Assessment information best informs instruction when it is gathered using a valid, reliable child assessment tool and involves families. (NAEYC, 2009; NCQTl, 2014; Reynolds, 2016; Tout et al, 2011)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Full-Rating
One-Star	**A1.1. Child observation.** Program observes and documents children's growth and development.
Two-Stars	None.
Three or Four Stars	**A1.3a. Child assessment.** Program assesses all children in at least one age group using an approved assessment tool at least once a year. (Required for 3 Stars) **A1.4. Child assessment.** Program assesses all children in all age groups using an approved assessment tool at least twice a year. (Required for 4 Stars) **A1.3b. Providing assessment to families.** Program provides families with child assessment results. (2 points) **A1.3c. Asks for parent input.** Program asks families to share their own observations from home and provide input into goals. (2 points) **A1.3d. Kindergarten Entry Profile tool.** Program assesses each child using a child assessment tool included in the Kindergarten Entry Profile menu. (3 points) **A1.3e. Planning for children with special needs.** Program has a plan to partner with families and service providers of children with special needs. (2 points)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Accelerated Rating
Four-Stars	**A1.4. Child assessment.** Program assesses all children in all age groups using an approved assessment tool at least twice a year. (Required for 4 Stars)

Category: Assessment and Planning for Each Individual Child

Standard	Why is this standard important?
A.2. Assessment-based instruction. Program uses assessments to plan group and individualized instruction.	It is not enough to gather assessment information, it must also be put to use to make a difference for children. When assessment information is aggregated and well-understood by early educators, they are able to use the information to inform instructional planning, enabling them to meet the needs of each child while also planning for the needs of the group. (NAEYC, 2003)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Full-Rating
One-Star	**None.**
Two-Stars	**None.**
Three or Four-Stars	**A2.3a. Assessment-based individualized instruction.** Program uses child assessment information to design goals and guide instruction for each child. (2 points) **A2.3b. Assessment-based group instruction.** Program uses aggregated child assessment information to design group goals and guide instruction for group. (2 points)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Accelerated Rating
Four-Stars	Meets standard through other monitoring process.

Category: Professionalism

Standard	Why is this standard important?
P.1. Program leadership. Program leaders have specialized knowledge and skills to effectively lead an early care and education program.	Organizational leadership and support are needed to carry out individualized instruction for young children. When directors, providers and education coordinators have training and education credentials specific to leadership in early childhood settings, they are better prepared to foster a climate of on-going growth and learning. (Jorde Bloom, Jackson, Talan & Kelton, 2013; Klein & Knitzer, 2007).

Star-Rating	Indicators for Full-Rating
One-Star	**P1.1. Professional ethics.** Program commits to National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Code of Ethical Conduct.
Two-Stars	**None.**
Three or Four-Stars	**P1.3a. Specialized credential.** Program director or lead provider earned a credential for leading and managing an early care and education program. (3 points) **P1.3b. Education for leadership.** Program director, lead provider, or education coordinator has a four-year degree or higher with at least 24 early childhood-related, verified semester credits. (3 points) **P1.3c. Program development.** Program creates and uses a program-wide professional development plan. (3 points)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Accelerated Rating
Four-Stars	Meets standard through other monitoring process.

Category: Professionalism

Standard	Why is this standard important?
P.2. Qualifications and development. Lead providers and lead teachers pursue and document educational achievements.	Adults are best able to learn new skills when professional development scaffolds to meet their individual learning needs. Professional development plans that respond to each learner's personal and professional background and include coaching, consultation and mentoring, in addition to classroom-based training, improve teachers' and providers' ability to put knowledge into practice. (Bowman et al, 2001; De Alba-Johnson, 2004; Hawley, 2013; IOM & NRC, 2012; Jacobs, 2001; NAEYC & NACCRRA, 2011; Passe Sancho, 2015; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Yoshikawa et al., 2013; Zaslow et al., 2010.)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Full-Rating
One-Star	**None.**
Two-Stars	**P2.2. Intentional on-going learning.** Each lead provider or lead teacher creates and uses an individual professional development plan.
Three or Four-Stars	**P2.3a. Career Lattice achievements.** Career Lattice Steps achieved by lead providers or lead teachers are recognized. For each lead provider or lead teacher, points are awarded based on their Steps on the Minnesota Career Lattice (http://mncpd.org/Resource/Practitioner/Career_Lattice.pdf) as follows: 1 point for Step 1, 2 points for Step 2, and so on through 12 points awarded for Step 12, then averaged. All lead providers or lead teachers must have a Career Lattice Step of Step 1 or higher to achieve 3 Stars or higher. 1.99 or less = 0 points Between 2.00 and 2.99 = 2 points Between 3.00 and 3.99 = 3 points Between 4.00 and 4.99 = 4 points Between 5.00 and 5.99 = 5 points Between 6.00 and 7.99 = 6 points Between 8.00 and 9.99 = 7 points Between 10.00 and 10.99 = 8 points 11.00 or higher = 9 points

Three or Four-Stars	**P2.3b. Highly qualified.** All lead providers or lead teachers in program have at least one of the following: · Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or closely related field · Advanced degree (masters or doctorate) in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or closely related field · Current age-appropriate Minnesota teaching license. (2 points)
Star-Rating	**Indicators for Accelerated Rating**
Four-Stars	Meets standard through other monitoring process.

Category: Health and Well-being

Standard	Why is this standard important?
H.1. Health and safety. Program establishes and maintains environment that ensures each child's health and safety.	Ensuring compliance with licensing regulations is a critical first step in building a quality care and education program. When programs carefully monitor health and safety using licensing regulations, and other practices provided in self-assessment tools, they are able to build the foundational level of quality needed in order to successfully carry out the best practices included in Parent Aware. (Clarke-Stewart, Vandell, Burchinal, O'Brien, & McCartney, 2002; Helburn, 1995; Kontos, Howes, Shinn & Galinsky, 1995; National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education, 2011)
Star-Rating	**Indicators for Full-Rating**
One-Star	**None.**
Two-Stars	**H1.2. Health and safety practices.** Program evaluates health and safety practices using Parent Aware Environment Self-Assessment Checklist, and develops goals in areas of need.
Three or Four-Stars	**None.**
Star-Rating	**Indicators for Accelerated Rating**
Four-Stars	Meets standard through other monitoring process.

Category: Health and Well-being

Standard	Why is this standard important?
H.2. Nutrition and play. Program provides healthy meals and snacks that encourage healthy eating behaviors, and offers daily opportunities for active play.	Eating nutritious foods improves children's ability to grow, develop and achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Eating healthy foods helps children get the nutrients their bodies need to stay healthy, active and strong. Children are physical learners and require physical movement in order to achieve optimally. Early learning programs that provide structured and unstructured physical activity will be more likely to keep children engaged and learning, and can help prevent childhood obesity. (Ammerman, 2007; Head Start, 2016; Korenman, Abner, Kaestner & Gordon, 2013).

Star-Rating	Indicators for Full-Rating
One-Star	None.
Two-Stars	None.
Three or Four-Stars	**H2.3a. Healthy food.** Program offers healthy meals and snacks. (2 points) **H2.3b. Sharing information about healthy food.** Program provides families with written guidelines on the importance of providing healthy meals and snacks. (2 points) **H2.3c. Nutrition and active play.** Program evaluates its nutrition and physical activity practices using a self-assessment tool, and develops goals in areas of need. (3 points)

Star-Rating	Indicators for Accelerated Rating
Four-Stars	Meets standard through other monitoring process.

Future Directions for Standards and Indicators

Parent Aware is committed to continuing to review research, receive feedback, consider changes, and follow through by updating the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators on an on-going basis. Several policy changes that are not included in this update are likely to be included in future updates. Programs may wish to begin to prepare for these possible future changes now.

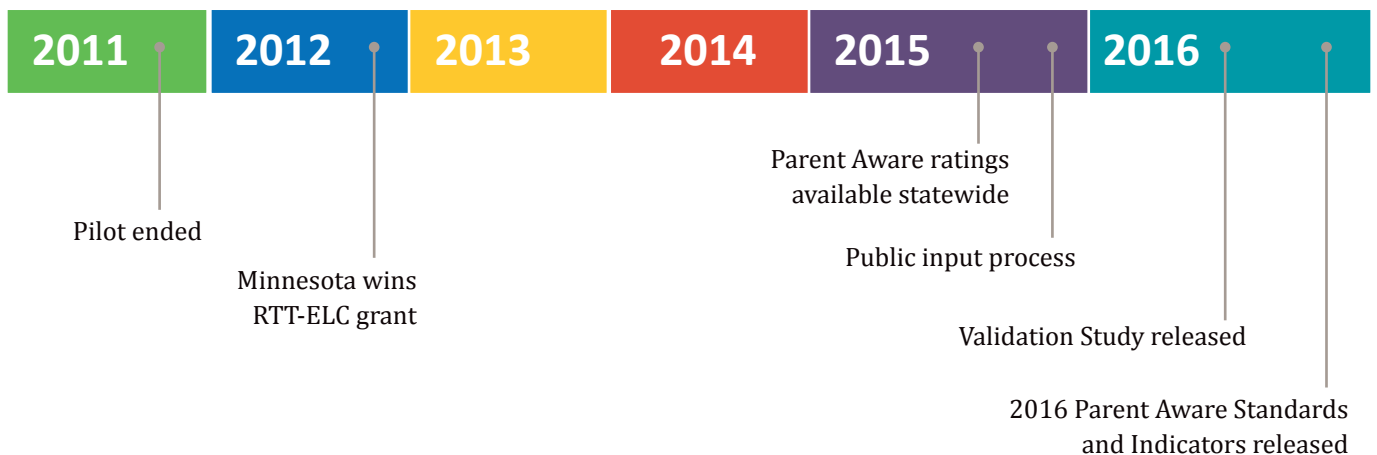| Possible future policy changes	How programs could prepare now
Use on-site observation of child-adult interactions in the Parent Aware Rating process for more program types.	Obtain training for providers and teachers on effective child-adult interactions and begin using an on-site observation tool, such as the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS), to improve your program quality.
Add an Indicator related to use of a research-based curriculum.	Review research basis of your curriculum, and if it is not strong, consider switching to a curriculum with a stronger research basis.
Add an Indicator related to use of a valid, reliable child assessment tool.	Review reliability and validity of your child assessment tool. Consider using an assessment tool that has been studied and found to be reliable and valid.
Add indicator to the Parent Aware Rating process for the Accelerated Pathway to Ratings related to use of a child assessment tool from the Kindergarten Entry Profile menu.	Look up child assessment tools on the Kindergarten Entry Profile menu. Consider using one of these tools.
Add standards and indicators related to leadership.	Build leadership skills of program staff.

Parent Aware History

Parent Aware began in 2007 as a privately funded pilot project to address the fact that in Minnesota nearly half of all children were arriving at kindergarten underprepared. The pilot ended in 2011.

The state was directed by the Minnesota Legislature to use evaluation results from the pilot to recommend program standards, and a plan to link existing and future government funding to the QRIS. The resulting report titled "An Early Childhood Quality Rating and Improvement System: A Report to the Minnesota Legislature" provided the standards included in the Parent Aware Rating Tool in 2012, and a plan for cross-agency coordination.

The cross-agency plan allowed Minnesota to apply for and win the federal Race-to-the-Top – Early Learning Challenge Grant in 2012. These funds made it possible for Minnesota to expand Parent Aware incrementally. In January 2015, Parent Aware ratings were available statewide.

Evaluation has informed every step in Parent Aware's expansion, and each update to the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators. As part of the work funded by Race-to-the-Top, Early Learning Challenge Grant, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, in coordination with the Minnesota Departments of Education and Health, undertook the following steps to update the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators:

- Met with experts to review new research on measuring best practices in child care and early education in 2014 through 2015.

- Requested feedback and ideas for changes from a diverse group of child care and early education directors, providers, teachers and families in Minnesota over summer and fall of 2015.

- Collaborated with Child Trends, Parent Aware for School Readiness, and Greater Twin Cities United Way, to complete the Parent Aware Validation Study, released in 2016.

- Reviewed best practices of national and state organizations and programs.

- Announced updates to the Standards and Indicators in August 2016, and released updates in October 2016.

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016

Pilot ended

Minnesota wins
RTT-ELC grant

Parent Aware ratings
available statewide

Public input process

Validation Study released

2016 Parent Aware Standards
and Indicators released

Glossary

Term	Definition
Accreditation	A way for institutions to evaluate and improve their programs to meet industry standards. Child care and early education programs use accreditation processes to conduct a thorough analysis of their operations and assess if they are meeting nationally recognized standards for quality care and education programs.
Assessment	A systematic, ongoing procedure that providers and teachers use to gather data about a child in order to understand the child's developmental progress and plan appropriate learning experiences and instruction.
Authentic assessments	Assessment practices that are based on everyday learning experiences, provide for actual child performance, and involve children in the evaluation process (McAfee, 2004).
Best practice	The strategies, methods, techniques and standards of high-quality, developmentally appropriate, early childhood programs and interactions that are based on current knowledge and shared beliefs and consistently show results that are superior to other methods and strategies.
Child care center	Businesses that care for and educate young children outside of a home setting: child care or development centers, full- or part-day programs.
Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS)	A reliable, valid observation tool that measures child-adult interactions and helps providers, teachers, and directors understand and plan for key processes that are fundamental to children's learning (Teachstone 2015).
Coaching	A relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized and adult learning knowledge and skills, who often serves in a different professional role than the recipient(s). Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal-setting and achievement for an individual or group. (NAEYC 2011).
Competency	Demonstration of a skill or ability. Core competency refers to capability required within an industry that is essential for a person to be accepted to work in that industry, an observable and measurable set of knowledge or skills. The knowledge and skill must distinguish between superior performers (or exemplary performance) and others.
Consultation	A collaborative, problem-solving process between an external consultant with specific expertise and adult learning knowledge and skills and an individual or group from one program or organization. Consultation facilitates the assessment and resolution of an issue-specific concern-a program-/ organizational-, staff-, or child-/family-related issue-or addresses a specific topic. (NAEYC, 2011.)
Content area	Categories used to organize and talk about a large body of information (i.e., learning). Each area has its own knowledge base and strategies for teaching.

Continuous improvement	An intentional and ongoing effort to improve strategies, skills, processes and programs.
Credit	A "credit" or unit of value for a course or training. Credit is given for the level of difficulty or time requirements of an academic course taken at an educational institution, such as two- and four-year colleges and universities.
Culture	The customary beliefs, practices, and habits of a racial, religious or social group.
Curriculum	A set of written materials that providers and teachers use to develop engaging learning experiences for young children that includes: 1) A research or philosophical basis that describes how children learn and teachers teach 2) Goals and objectives of children's learning 3) Instructional approaches used to help children achieve the goals and objectives 4) Information about the setting and environment in which learning happens and 5) Examples of learning experiences for young children.
Develop	A website that offers professional development and quality improvement tools to support early learning and school-age care programs in Minnesota. The website address is: www.developtoolmn.org.
Developmental stage	A time during a child's development when certain features or abilities generally appear, sometimes referred to as milestones.
Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP)	The use of teaching strategies that are based on knowledge of how young children develop and learn, what makes each child unique, and the child's community and family culture and home language. DAP activities are not too difficult or too easy, but just right (Growing Glossary of Early Childhood Terms).
Domain	Main areas of a child's development.
Dual language learners	Children who are learning both the language of their family as well as the language of the larger community.
Ethics	The study of right and wrong, duty and obligation.
Family child care	Care and education of a child in a residence outside a child's own home on a regular basis, for any part of a 24-hour day.
Head Start	A federally funded comprehensive child development program serving children from 0-5 years of age, pregnant women, and their families. It is a child-focused program with the goal of increasing the school readiness of young children in low-income families.
Higher education	Education attained at accredited colleges or universities.
Inclusion	Policies, procedures and beliefs that all children should be included in early childhood settings, including those with developmental delays or disabilities; children who are gifted and talented; children whose families are culturally and linguistically diverse; and children from all socioeconomic groups.

Indicator	A condition that can be observed or measured and used to show that a practice has been met.
Individual Develop membership	A membership to the website, Develop, which offers professional development and quality improvement tools to support early learning and school-age care programs in Minnesota. When child care and early education professionals become an individual member of Develop they document their professional achievements in Develop and track their progress on the Minnesota Career Lattice.
Individual Education Program (IEP)	Also known as an Individualized Education Plan, this is an annually revised plan or guide for teaching a student with disabilities, detailing present achievement level, goals and strategies, drawn up by teachers, parents, specialists and when appropriate, the student.
Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)	The written document specified in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) to guide the implementation of early intervention services for children from birth to age three and their families. It is developed through collaborative discussion between families and the professionals involved in assessment and service delivery.
Individualization	Adapting or changing an activity to respond to the interests and learning styles of a child.
Intentional instruction	Instruction that has an explicit purpose and considers the best approach to promote children's development (child-guided, adult-guided, or a combination of both).
Lead provider	Adult with lead responsibility for a group of children in a family child care setting.
Lead teacher	Adult with lead responsibility for a group of children in a center-based early care and education setting.
Lesson plan	An outline for teaching a lesson including the goal (what the teacher wants the children to learn), the procedures for reaching this goal (the format of the lesson), and how the teacher will measure that the goal has been reached (a demonstration of understanding).
Mentoring	A relationship-based process between colleagues in similar professional roles, with a more-experienced individual with adult learning knowledge and skills, the mentor, providing guidance and example to the less-experienced protege or mentee. Mentoring is intended to increase an individuals's personal or professional capacity, resulting in greater professional effectiveness. (NAEYC, 2011.)
Minnesota Career Lattice	A tool for child care and early education professionals to document professional achievements. The Minnesota Center for Professional Development awards Career Lattice Steps based on a combination of approved training hours, credentials, college credits and degrees earned.

Minnesota Center for Professional Development (MNCPD)	An agency that validates and recognizes the education, training, and experience of care and education professionals. It also supports the professional development of care and education professionals by offering the following services: trainer approval, course approval, and relationship-based professional development specialist approval.
Observation	A process used by early childhood educators to watch, listen to, and record children's actions, facial expressions, body language, sounds, words, and gestures. Educators use the information to learn about a child and his/her skills and plan ways to support and strengthen the child's skill development.
Professional development	For an individual-the educational experiences a person engages in to develop, grow or enhance their knowledge and skills, and apply the knowledge in practice. It might include educational experiences such as college coursework, conferences, training sessions, or relationship-based learning experiences like mentoring and coaching. System–the educational activities, supports and materials available to enhance skills, knowledge, and abilities for members of a field.
Professional preparation	Learning opportunities designed to qualify individuals for their professional careers.
Reflection	To think about actions in order to improve practice.
Research-based	Instructional and management strategies shown by research to have positive effects on student outcomes.
Public School Pre-kindergarten program	Early childhood programs that are operated by a school district.
Standards	A feature of care and education programs that, based on research, have been shown to make a difference for children.
Star-Level	A number of stars that indicate a program's level of quality.
Technical assistance	Technical assistance (TA) is the provision of targeted and customized supports by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills to develop or strengthen processes, knowledge application, or implementation of services by recipients (National Association for the Education of Young Children and National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies). Relationship-Based Professional Development (RBPD) is a broad term used to refer to four types of technical assistance that use relationships as a foundation: coaching, mentoring, consultation and advising (DHS).
Training	Learning opportunities designed to strengthen knowledge, skills or dispositions to improve job performance and remain current in the field, typically delivered in a classroom setting.

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