COHORT GROUP SLOTS
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

COHORT GROUP SYSTEM

What is the cohort group slot submission system?
Rather than child care providers being able to submit portfolios at any time throughout the year, Quality Rated (QR) moved to a slot-based portfolio submission system. This system has been in use since 2020 and allows child care providers, their technical assistance providers, and our QR assessor staff to plan effectively. This system applies to all providers in QR that are seeking a traditional rating.

How does this system work?
With the growth of Quality Rated, we have always anticipated the need to move to a more streamlined system that allows all users of the system to be able to plan strategically for each step in the quality improvement process. This system uses program slots to schedule when child care providers will submit their portfolios and receive their observations. Under the new system, providers can plan ahead and select one of four quarters, or roughly 90-day windows, during which their observation(s) will occur.

Why is a cohort group slot submission system necessary?
A slot-based system allows better management for the scheduling of the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observation portion of the Quality Rated process. This guarantees that we have the capacity to conduct observations in a timely manner. Observation cohort groups have been developed to allow programs to sign up for which quarter they would like to submit their portfolio and receive their observation. Using cohort groups to schedule observations allows Quality Rated to ensure we can meet the demands of all programs that need a rating.

Are cohort groups statewide or regional?
Cohort group slots are statewide, they are not limited by regional availability.

SELECTING A COHORT GROUP

How do I select my cohort group?
When you log into your QR account you will notice a message on your home screen asking if you would like to select your cohort group. This screen will continue to show until you select a cohort group. Follow the directions on the screen to select your desired cohort group, based on the number of slots available.

When I decide that I am ready to select the cohort group, how will I know if there are slots available?
When you are ready to proceed with selecting your cohort group click the YES button from the screen on your home page. This will take you to the cohort selection grid in which you will choose your cohort group. You will see the number of slots remaining in each cohort. The number will count down as programs continue to select a cohort group. If you know the cohort group you really want, we suggest that you sign up early to reserve your slot before they are all taken.

What happens if the cohort group I want has no available slots?
Because there are only a set number of slots available per cohort group, you will have to select a group that has slots remaining. Slots are available on a first come first served basis.

I see that there is a box for me to write scheduling comments. What information should I add there?
This box is available for you to share any information that is relevant to your program that will assist DECAL when making assessor assignments. For example, you may want to add if your program will be closed at any time during the cohort you selected, such as "We will be closed for spring break March 23-27," or "Majority of students arrive by 9 a.m.," and "Georgia Pre-K will not be in session on March 13."

Will my QR account notify me of the cohort group I selected?
YES. In addition to the email you will receive, the home screen on your QR dashboard will continue to show you a message reminding you of the cohort group you signed up for. This will include the portfolio submission window dates, the observation window, and the rating announcement window. This reminder will remain on your home screen until you submit your portfolio during your submission window.

Can I still choose a cohort group if I do not have a QR application?
NO. You must first create your Quality Rated account and complete and submit your QR application. Once your application is approved, follow the guidelines on the screen to select the cohort group of your choice.

Can I select a cohort group prior to finishing my portfolio?
YES. The cohort group slot system guarantees that programs in a cohort group will receive their observation during that group's designated time window. Your cohort group selection is essentially your reservation for when you would like to be considered for an observation and is linked to when you will submit your portfolio.

Will I still get to notify DECAL of my blackout days if I select a cohort group?
YES. Choosing a cohort group does not affect your blackout days. When you submit your portfolio during the designated portfolio submission window, you will have the ability to select up to 5 blackout days on the on-screen calendar in your QR account. Blackout days are those days when your program is open, but does not operate a typical schedule, such as school photo days, family conferences, and special events or celebration days, etc.

Will I get to choose my actual observation date within my cohort observation window?
NO. Observations will remain unannounced. Once you submit your portfolio and an assessor team is assigned, you will receive an email letting you know the 30-day time window during which the observation will take place, based on your selected cohort group.

What happens if I do not sign up for a cohort group slot?
If you are seeking a re-rating and you are not in a cohort slot on the expiration date of your rating, the rating will expire. You will not be eligible for probationary status for CAPS payments.

Can I change my cohort selection after I have made it?
NO. Cohort selections are final and cannot be changed after they are submitted.

PORTFOLIO SUBMISSION

What is a portfolio submission window?
Each cohort group is linked to a window of time during which providers will submit their portfolio. The window of time for submitting the portfolio is called the portfolio submission window. Once providers select their cohort group, they will automatically be assigned to a submission window and must submit their portfolio during this time. You cannot submit your portfolio until you are within the required submission window for the cohort group that you selected.

Will you email me my portfolio submission date so that I don't forget?
YES. At the time you pick your cohort group slot you will receive an automated email notifying you of the cohort group you signed up for. This will include the portfolio submission window dates, the observation window, and the rating announcement window. This information will also be sent to your CCR&R Technical Assistance provider.

What happens if I do not submit my portfolio during the required portfolio submission window for the cohort group I chose?
You are required to submit your portfolio during the dedicated portfolio submission window assigned to the cohort group you selected. If you do not submit your portfolio during the designated window, this will result in the loss of your observation slot. Please note that if you are not in a cohort slot on the expiration date of your rating, the rating will expire and you will not be eligible for probationary status for CAPS payments.

On the cohort grid, the portfolio submission windows are only two weeks long. Is that the actual time to work on the portfolio, or is there more time to work on it?
You will have ample time to complete the steps in the portfolio based on the cohort group you select. Your portfolio is available to you as soon as you register for a Quality Rated account, but please keep in mind that it must be submitted during the two-week submission window for the cohort group you select. If you think you will need a longer period of time to upload your evidence into the portfolio, it would be better to select cohort 3 or 4, as these portfolio submission dates are later in the year.

I understand that there is a 2-step submission process for the portfolio: the "ready to submit" status and the "pending approval" status. Do both steps need to be completed within the submission window?
NO. As long as you hit the "Ready to Submit" button within the designated portfolio submission window, you are considered to be in the submission process. Once you hit this button, you will have 10 days to complete the submission process by providing rosters, schedules, blackout days, etc. on the applicable screens. Failure to complete the submission process within 10 days will result in the portfolio being returned to you. You will have missed the designated window opening and will not be able to re-submit your portfolio. This will result in the forfeiture of your guaranteed observation slot. If you are seeking a renewal and your rating expiration date has passed, the rating will expire and your portfolio will change to re-application status. You will not be eligible for probationary status for CAPS payments.