

# PERMANENT OPERATIONAL CHANGE - COHORT GROUP SLOTS

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is the cohort group slot submission system?**

Rather than child care programs being able to submit portfolios at any time throughout the year, Quality Rated has moved to a slot-based portfolio submission system. This system will be used by programs that are seeking an initial star rating in 2020 and will allow them, their technical assistance provider, and our QR assessor staff to plan effectively. After 2020 this system will apply to all programs in Quality Rated whether they are seeking an initial or re-rating.

### **How does this new 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 new system will use program slots to schedule when child care programs will submit their portfolios and receive their observations. Under the new system, programs can plan ahead and select one of four quarters, or roughly 90-day windows, during which their observation will occur.

### **Why is a cohort group slot submission system necessary?**

Moving to a slot-based system allows better management for the scheduling of the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observation portion of the Quality Rated process. This will guarantee that we have the capacity to conduct observations in a timely manner and ensure that everyone who wishes to, can be rated each year. Observation cohort groups have been developed to allow programs to sign up for which quarter in 2020 that they would like to submit their portfolio and receive their observation. Using cohort groups to schedule observations will allow Quality Rated to ensure they can meet the demands of all programs that need or want a rating in 2020.

### **I will be seeking a re-rating in 2020, do I have to sign up for a cohort group slot too?**

NO. Programs submitting a required reassessment or request for reassessment portfolio will not be impacted by the cohort group slot submission system for 2020. Programs seeking a re-rating in 2020 will submit their portfolio by their expiration or anniversary date following the current guidelines.

### **What is a cohort group?**

The quarter, or roughly 90-day window of time during which the observation will occur is called the cohort group.

### **What is a portfolio submission window?**

Each cohort group is linked to a window of time during which programs will submit their portfolio. The window of time for submitting the portfolio is called the portfolio submission window. Once programs select their cohort group, they will automatically be assigned to a submission window and must submit their portfolio during this time.

### **After I have selected my cohort group, can I submit my portfolio at any time in 2020?**

NO. The system will only allow you to submit your portfolio during the submission window that is linked to the cohort group you selected.

### **When can my program sign up for a cohort group?**

If your program serves CAPS families you will have priority to sign up for a cohort group slot, you will be able to register for a 2020 cohort group between December 1, 2019 and January 31, 2020. Non-CAPS programs or those that accept CAPS but do not yet have any active CAPS children enrolled will be able to sign up for a slot in any available cohort group throughout 2020 beginning January 1, 2020.

### **If I accept CAPS families and have a child enroll in my program next week can I sign up before January 1, 2020?**

YES. As soon as you have a CAPS child enroll in your program you will be considered an active CAPS provider and eligible to sign up for a cohort group.

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### **How many cohort groups will there be?**

There will be four cohort groups, one for approximately each quarter in the 2020 calendar year.

### **What happens if I do not sign up for a cohort group slot prior to January 31, 2020?**

If your program receives CAPS funding, you will be contacted by DECAL staff to determine your intent to remain a CAPS provider. Any program that does not have an assigned cohort group slot by May 1, 2020 will no longer be able to accept new CAPS Scholarships.

### **I planned on submitting my portfolio prior to the end of 2019, can I still do so?**

If you have an initial or re-application portfolio, you will be required to select a cohort group. If you are planning to submit a request for reassessment or required reassessment portfolio please see the FQA documents for those situations to determine when you can submit your portfolio.

### **What will the observation windows be for each cohort group in 2020?**

The four cohort groups for 2020 have been identified as follows:

- Cohort Group 1 has an observation window of February – March 2020
- Cohort Group 2 has an observation window of April – June 2020
- Cohort Group 3 has an observation window of July – September 2020
- Cohort Group 4 has an observation window of October – December 2020

### **What are the due dates for portfolio submission for each cohort group?**

The four cohort groups for 2020 have the following portfolio submission dates:

- Cohort Group 1 portfolio submission window is December 17 – 23, 2019
- Cohort Group 2 portfolio submission window is March 17 – 23, 2020
- Cohort Group 3 portfolio submission window is June 19 – 24, 2020
- Cohort Group 4 portfolio submission window is September 16 – 21, 2020

### **How many program slots are available for each cohort group?**

Each cohort group has an initial number of slots available; the slots will count down as providers sign up for any given cohort group.

- Cohort Group 1 has 198 published slots available
- Cohort Group 2 has 365 published slots available
- Cohort Group 3 has 364 published slots available
- Cohort Group 4 has 344 published slots available

### **Can I change my cohort selection after I have made it?**

NO. Cohort selections are final and cannot be changed after they are submitted.

### **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 get to pick my actual observation date within my cohort observation window?**

NO. As with the current system, 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.

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## How will I know when to submit my portfolio?

When you make your cohort group selection, a required window for your portfolio submission will be listed. You cannot submit your portfolio until you are within the required submissions 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 90-day window, and the rating announcement window. This information will also be sent to your CCR&R region Technical Assistance consultant.

## 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 90-day window, and the rating announcement window. This reminder will remain on your home screen until you submit your portfolio within your submission window.

COHORT GROUP			
Congratulations, you have selected Quality Rated CAPS 2020 Cohort Group 3			
Cohort Group 3	Portfolio Submission Window 6/19/2020 - 6/24/2020	Observation Window July - September 2020	Rating Window August - November 2020
CAPS Provider: Yes	Slot Chosen on: 12/3/2019	By: A Owner	
Provider Comments: None at this time			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I understand that by selecting this cohort group I am required to submit my portfolio within the submission window provided, unless I selected Cohort Group 1 and am requesting a reversal of the rating process as indicated in the check box. Failure to submit my portfolio within the provided window will result in forfeiture of my observation slot and possible loss of CAPS funding.			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I have verified my program is not closed more than 15 business days during my selected observation window			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I understand my cohort group selection is final and cannot be altered.			

## 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 loss of your observation slot. Your program will not be observed and rated during 2020, which would put your CAPS funding in risk.

## 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. Then, follow the guidelines on the screen to select the cohort group of your choice.

## When can I expect to know the outcome of my rating under this new system?

Rating announcement windows are linked to the cohort group you select, the windows are as follows:

- Cohort Group 1 has an announcement window of March - May 2020
- Cohort Group 2 has an announcement window of May - August 2020
- Cohort Group 3 has an announcement window of August - November 2020
- Cohort Group 4 has an announcement window of November 2020 – February 2021

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## **If I select a cohort group 4 slot and my observation is scheduled late in 2020, will I receive my rating before the December 31, 2020 deadline?**

Due to the required review steps for the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observation and scoring of the portfolio, it is possible that your rating will not be determined until after the December 2020 deadline.

## **What happens to my CAPS funding if I have been observed before December 31, 2020, but my rating has not been determined?**

Your program will continue to receive the same CAPS rate you were receiving prior to beginning the rating process. Once the rating is issued, your program's CAPS funding will be updated according to the rating earned.

## **Is there any benefit to selecting a cohort group slot early in December 2019?**

DECAL is committed to providing additional supports and resources for programs receiving an initial rating in 2020. A signing bonus of \$500 is available to active CAPS providers who sign up for their cohort group in December. The sign-up bonus drops to \$200 for CAPS programs signing up for their cohort group in January. See the 2020 Bonus and Incentives FAQ for more information.

## **Is there any benefit in selecting the first or second cohort group?**

DECAL is committed to providing additional supports and resources for programs receiving an initial rating in 2020. Work force and program incentives are available for CAPS programs based on the cohort selected, please see the 2020 Bonus and Incentives FAQ for more information regarding the incentives available per cohort.

## **Are cohort groups statewide or regional?**

Cohort group slots are statewide, they are not limited by regional availability. Sign up will be based on a first come first served basis, with active CAPS providers having priority to begin selecting their cohort group December 1, 2019. Non-CAPS providers and CAPS providers who accept CAPS families but do not yet have any CAPS children enrolled can begin selecting their cohort group January 1, 2020.

## **How do I know if I am an Active CAPS provider?**

If you have signed an agreement with MAXIMUS to provide services to CAPS families and have at least 1 or more child enrolled that you bill MAXIMUS for, you are considered to be an active CAPS provider in the QR system.

## **How do I select my Cohort Group?**

When you log into your QR account you will notice a new 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 number of slots available.

To streamline the Quality Rated process and help programs plan for a smooth progression through the different steps, DECAL has developed a new system for portfolio submission and observation scheduling. Programs are encouraged to identify the best time during the year to receive their ERS observations.

CAPS providers have priority in scheduling for observations in 2020 and must select a cohort group between 12/1/2019 – 1/31/2020 to ensure they can complete the rating process by the December 31, 2020 deadline.

Would you like to select your cohort group now?

YES

NO

# PERMANENT OPERATIONAL CHANGE - COHORT GROUP SLOTS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What happens if I am not ready to select my cohort group yet?

If you are not ready to select your cohort group simply click the NO button on the screen as seen above. Selecting NO will give you access to your application and portfolio so that you can continue to upload your evidence and complete the online portfolio. You will be reminded to schedule your cohort group before the January 31, 2020 deadline if you are an active CAPS provider.

Don't forget to come back to schedule the cohort group slot for your program. Remember in order to continue receiving CAPS funding this request must be submitted before 1/31/2019 at 5:00 pm, slots will fill up quickly.  
[Click Here to Schedule!](#)

## When I decide 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. So 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.

Select the cohort group with your desired observation window below. Do not select a cohort group in which your program will be physically closed for more than 15 days during the designated observation window.

Please select your preferred cohort group by checking one of the boxes. **The slot will NOT be reserved until you successfully submit the request.**

Select One	Cohort Group	Number of Slots Available	Portfolio Submission Window	Observation Window	Rating Announcement Window	Please Consider
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	197	From: 12/17/2019 To: 12/23/2019	February - March 2020	March - May 2020	<b>You must select an option</b> <input type="checkbox"/> I will submit my portfolio within the designated submission window <input type="checkbox"/> I request that the rating process be reversed and I will submit my portfolio no later than March 31, 2020
<input type="checkbox"/>	2	365	From: 03/17/2020 To: 03/23/2020	April - June 2020	May - August 2020	If you have mixed age classrooms during the summer, please refer to the <a href="#">Quality Rated Program Manual</a> to ensure your classrooms can be observed
<input type="checkbox"/>	3	364	From: 06/19/2020 To: 06/24/2020	July - September 2020	August - November 2020	If you have mixed age classrooms during the summer, please refer to the <a href="#">Quality Rated Program Manual</a> to ensure your classrooms can be observed
<input type="checkbox"/>	4	344	From: 09/16/2020 To: 09/21/2020	October - December 2020	November - February 2021	Programs selecting this cohort group may not be issued a rating by 12/31/2020. Programs will retain their current CAPS status until their rating is issued.

## I want to select the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort group, but I know that I will not have my portfolio ready to submit during the portfolio submission window, what can I do?

If you do not want to wait for a later cohort group you can select cohort 1 and you will need to select the option to request that the rating process be reversed. When checking this option it means that the observation will occur first and you will have until the end of the cohort – March 31, 2020 to submit the portfolio. However, the portfolio must be submitted by this time or you will forfeit your observation score and will not be rated in 2020.

Select One	Cohort Group	Number of Slots Available	Portfolio Submission Window	Observation Window	Rating Announcement Window	Please Consider
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1	197	From: 12/17/2019 To: 12/23/2019	February - March 2020	March - May 2020	<b>You must select an option</b> <input type="checkbox"/> I will submit my portfolio within the designated submission window <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> I request that the rating process be reversed and I will submit my portfolio no later than March 31, 2020

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## **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 9am.", and "Georgia Pre-K will not be in session on February 13, 14, 17, 2020. Georgia Pre-K will not be in session on March 13, 2020".

## **On the cohort grid, the portfolio submission windows are only 7 days. Is that the actual time to work on the portfolio, or is there more time to work on it?**

NO, you will 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 7-day submission window for the cohort group you select. If you think you will need a long 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 2020.

## **Will I still get to notify DECAL of my block-out days if I select a cohort group?**

YES. Choosing a cohort group does not affect your block-out days. When you submit your portfolio during the designated portfolio submission window, you will have the ability to select up to 5 block-out days on the on-screen calendar in your QR account. Block-out days are those days when your program is open, but it does not operate a typical schedule, such as school photo days, family conferences, and special events or celebration days etc.

## **I understand that there is a 2-step submission process for the portfolio - the "ready to submit" and the pending? if so, do both steps need to be completed within the submission window?**

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. Failure to complete the submission process within the 10 days will return your portfolio to you and you will have missed the designated window opening. You will not be able to re-submit your portfolio and this will result in forfeiture of your guaranteed observation slot.