QUALITY℠ RATED CHILD CARE

Program Manual

Lasting Effects for Georgia's Children, Families, and Economy

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

HTTPS://QUALITYRATED.DECAL.GA.GOV| 1-855-800-QRIS (7747) |

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Policies are subject to change at the sole discretion of Quality Rated and DECAL. Changes to policies will be communicated to providers upon revision and effective dates added to this document.

1. Introduction

Thank you for your commitment to Georgia's early care and education system. By participating in Quality Rated, Georgia's quality rating and improvement system (QRIS), you are joining thousands of providers who have committed to providing quality care to children.

The Quality Rated Policy Manual provides general information about Quality Rated, guidance for each phase of the process, and information about available support.

This manual, the required Quality Rated Orientation, the Introduction to the Environment Rating Scales training, the Quality Rated Provider Help Desk, the Quality Rated website, and the hands-on support offered by local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&R), will help to provide a positive experience for every program that participates in this important effort.

2. About Quality Rated

2.1 What is Quality Rated?

An increasing number of children in the United States, including Georgia, are cared for in out of home early care and education settings. Research shows that the quality of care in these settings significantly impacts children's physical, mental and academic development. As a result, there is a growing focus on improving the quality of these services.

Quality Rated is a system designed to evaluate, improve, and communicate the quality of early care and education programs. Similar to rating systems in other industries, it assigns star ratings based on defined quality standards. Programs that participate in Quality Rated commit to continuous quality improvement. This initiative aims to enhance early care and education across Georgia, benefiting children, families, and the state's economy.

Quality Rated:

- Identifies indicators that enhance children's development and promote school readiness.
- Increases *quality* of early care and education services by supporting continuous quality improvement.
- Increases *families' understanding* and *demand* for higher quality early care and education.
- Increases *professional development* opportunities, initiatives, and recognition, for a range of early care and education providers.
- Creates a *cross-sector framework* that can link standards, technical assistance, monitoring, finance, and consumer engagement for a range of programs: family child care learning homes, large and small child care learning centers, after-school programs, Head Start programs, and others.

Quality Rated encompasses five elements:

1. ***Standards*** that are understandable, measurable, and verifiable lead to a zero-, one-, two- or three-star rating that informs families and the public about the level of quality a program provides.
2. ***Accountability*** and transparent monitoring to determine how well programs meet the quality standards, validate the assignment of ratings, and verify ongoing adherence to quality standards.
3. *Support* for programs and professionals to encourage participation and improve quality. Supports include the professional development system, training, technical assistance, and the QR Provisional and Probationary Statuses.
4. ***Financial Incentives*** are available to help programs improve learning environments, attain higher ratings, and sustain long-term quality. Commitment to Quality (C2Q) Quarterly Payments are provided to programs participating in the Childcare and Parents Service program (CAPS) who have earned a 2- or 3-star rating. Annual Work Force Bonuses (QRWB) are provided to eligible early education staff at all 1-, 2-, or 3-Star programs. Grant opportunities and initiatives are periodically available to participating programs.
5. ***Consumer Education*** to inform families and the public about the importance of quality in early and school-age care and education. Easy and widespread access to rating information is an important tool for families, businesses, and the public.

3. Navigating Quality Rated

3.1 Getting Started – Quality Rated Eligibility

Eligibility to Participate in Quality Rated

Participation allows child care programs to gain access to an online portfolio and training, technical assistance, and a wealth of resources that will help them examine and identify quality enhancements that can be made to improve their practices. All licensed child care programs are eligible to participate in Quality Rated. In addition, other child care entities operating with the oversight from another state or federal government program, are eligible to participate in Quality Rated. Examples of programs able to participate include:

- Licensed child care learning centers (including stand-alone school age programs serving children 5-12 years)
- Licensed Family child care learning homes
- Military child care and youth programs operated by the Department of Defense
- Early Head Start and Head Start programs operating under federal guidelines
- University and technical college lab schools

Eligibility to Receive a Quality Rated Star Rating

If programs fall into a CCS licensing compliance zone of Support or Deficient, a star rating cannot be issued until the program returns to Good Standing. Programs in Deficient status will be reviewed case-by-case to determine if observations will occur.

Programs in Deficient status will still have their application processed. Programs will be reviewed case-by-case to determine if scheduled observations will occur within the original 30-day window or if scheduling will be placed on hold until the return of Good Standing.

If the ERS observation has already been completed prior to the program's CCS licensing compliance zone change, the score will remain valid for 180 days from the date of the observation. If the CCS compliance zone returns to Good Standing within the 180-day window following the ERS observation, the program will be rated at that time with the existing observation and portfolio scores, but the rating may occur outside the typical cohort rating window.

If the program does not provide CAPS services and returns to Good Standing after the 180-day window expires, no rating will be issued. The program's portfolio will be returned, giving the program the opportunity to update their evidence, select another rating cohort to join, and resubmit the portfolio to attempt another ERS observation and rating opportunity. Programs that provide CAPS services but do not return to Good Standing during the 180 days following their observation will undergo a review by Quality Rated to determine the next steps for the program. Quality Rated Enforcement actions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Support is available through DECAL to help providers who are not in Good Standing with Child Care Services by providing core rules training and technical assistance. If you are interested in receiving technical assistance from Child Care Services, email CCS.TA@decal.ga.gov to request it.

Please refer to the chart for clarification of the effect CCS compliance zones may have on eligibility to earn a Quality Rated star rating.

Eligibility and Child Care Services (CCS) Compliance Zones Overview

CCS Compliance Zone	Eligible to Participate in Quality Rated	Eligible for CCRR TA	Eligible to Submit Portfolio	Eligible to have Quality Rated Classroom Observation	Eligible to receive a Quality Rated star rating	Eligible to maintain Quality Rated star rating	Eligible to renew or increase Quality Rated star rating
Good Standing	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Support	Yes	Yes, at the discretion of the CCRR	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Deficient	Yes	Yes, at the discretion of the CCRR	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, but will be in suspension status and rating removed from quaityrated.org website	No

Consistent and Reliable Enrollment Requirements

ERS observations can only be conducted in programs where the classrooms maintain consistent and reliable enrollment. Any of the following situations could potentially affect a program's eligibility to submit their portfolio and receive a Quality Rated star rating:

- A program or a classroom is not eligible to receive an assessment if the enrollment consists entirely of only drop-off children for whom care is provided on uncertain hours or days.
- A program or a classroom where most of the children leave the facility for the greater part of the day to attend another program in a different facility are not eligible to receive an assessment.
- See Section 6 for specific minimum classroom enrollment requirements to determine which classrooms can receive an observation based on enrollment numbers.
- ERS observations can only be conducted in programs that are open 15 or more hours per week, a minimum of 3 days a week, with those hours and days occurring 6:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and having a minimum window of 2.5 consecutive hours daily for an observation to occur.

3.2 Quality Rated- Participation, Rating, and Maintenance Processes

Application

Programs must complete the Quality Rated application online at https://qualityrated.decal.ga.gov**.** Only a program director, administrator, or owner can begin the application process. After the application is submitted, programs will be notified of their acceptance into Quality Rated. Programs can access Quality Rated materials, documentation, and information through their online account. Submission of the program's documentation and evidence for verification will also be completed online through the program's Quality Rated portfolio.

Orientation

At least one administrator from programs participating in Quality Rated must attend and complete a Quality Rated Orientation and the Introduction to Environment Rating Scales (ERS) training. These online courses are available through the Online Learning Library (OLLI) housed within the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS).

Technical Assistance (TA)

Once the application is submitted, programs are encouraged to contact their local CCR&R to initiate technical assistance. Contact information can be found in the Resources section. Free individualized technical assistance and other supports are provided by a TA consultant from the local Child Care Resource and Referral agency (CCR&R). It is at the discretion of each CCR&R TA region to continue to offer support if a program is Deficient or not in Good Standing with Child Care Services.

Cohort Selection

While the act of quality improvement is an ongoing and continuous effort, when a program is ready to be considered for an initial or new rating, they must determine the rating cycle they want the verification of their quality to be completed by selecting a Quality Rated Cohort. Four cohorts, each with a set number of slots for centers and family child care providers, are available each year and can be selected through the provider's online Quality Rated account. Each cohort has a designated window for portfolio submission, facility observations, and rating announcements. Programs should carefully select a cohort considering the needs of their program, staffing availability, scheduled closings and events, and the guidance of their CCR&R TA. Once a cohort has been selected, it cannot be changed unless in the case of emergency.

Structural Quality Assessment: Online Portfolio

Programs earn structural quality points toward a Quality Rated star rating by submitting evidence aligned to five standards, demonstrating that their practices go above and beyond minimum licensing requirements. While the five standards within the portfolio do not have to be completed in order, there are some time limits on certain documentation that must be adhered to. The five standards (detailed in Section 5) are:

- Standard 1 – Director and Teacher Qualifications and Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS) Verification
- Standard 2 – Child Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity
- Standard 3 – Family Engagement
- Standard 4 – Intentional Teaching Practices
- Standard 5 – Teacher: Student Ratios

REMEMBER: Keep a copy of all evidence that your program has compiled, uploaded, and submitted. Save your portfolio evidence and the online portfolio to a secure location on your computer.

Once the portfolio is completed and the program begins the submission process, they will no longer be able to make changes to their portfolio. The evidence uploaded will be frozen while the submission process is completed. Programs will be directed to fill out pre-observation information screens as part of the submission process. The portfolio is not submitted until the pre-observation screens have been completed. Once the submission process is finalized, programs will receive an email confirming that DECAL has received the portfolio. The ERS assessment will be scheduled to occur within the cohort's observation window.

If you have questions while gathering portfolio data, contact your local CCR&R, or the Quality Rated Help Desk at 1-855-800-7747 or qualityrated@decal.ga.gov.

Process Quality Assessment: Environment Rating Scales (ERS) Observation

Programs earn process quality points toward a Quality Rated star rating by participating in an on-site assessment of their program's environment by valid and reliable ERS Assessors. Once the program has been notified that the portfolio has been accepted, the observation will occur within the cohort's observation window.

The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) are assessment instruments that are universally accepted to be the Gold Standard for assessing global quality in early childhood programs. The scales are suitable for evaluating inclusive and culturally diverse programs and have been proven valid and reliable, both nationally and internationally. Quality Rated is committed to using the most up-to-date and validated versions of the scales as they become available.

The ERS instruments currently used in the observation phase of the Quality Rated process are:

- Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition (ITERS-3)
- Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition (ECERS-3)
- Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition (FCCERS-3)
- School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale – Updated (SACERS-U)

Quality Rated also utilizes the Environment Rating Scale Institute (ERSI) Notes for Clarification and Georgia Additional Notes for Clarification to further clarify the intent of several indicators in each scale. These notes can be used to help programs gain a greater understanding of the requirements to score an indicator and are located under the ERS Resources Tab on the Quality Rated website: https://qualityrated.decal.ga.gov/Shared/Help.aspx?v=ers. The Georgia-specific notes were developed by veteran and experienced assessors with input from the scales' original authors.

The ERS tools selected for a program's observation will be based on the type of site and the age groups served. For programs with more than one classroom, one-third (1/3) of each type of classroom will be randomly selected to be observed. For example, if a center has three classrooms serving infants through toddler age groups and six preschool classrooms, then one ITERS room and two ECERS rooms will be observed. A complete description of the Environment Rating Scales process and the policies governing observations are included in Section 6.

The ERS observations are not a Child Care Services (CCS) licensing study or monitoring visit, Georgia's Pre-K evaluation, or Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) review. The Assessor will focus only on the items in the observation instruments. However, should serious violations of any DECAL program pose a risk to child health or safety or be a violation of policy be identified during the assessment, the observation may be suspended pending appropriate action to address the violations based on their severity.

Scoring Notes:
All ERS instruments utilize a scoring range of 1 – 7 for each item being assessed. Classroom and facility averages are calculated to determine the process quality scores for a program.

1. **An entire program's ERS score must be at least a 3.0 average to receive a one-star rating, regardless of portfolio score.**
2. **If a program scores less than a 3.0 average on the ERS of any classroom, the program cannot be rated higher than one star.**
3. **An entire program's ERS score must be at least 4.0 average to receive a two-star rating, regardless of portfolio score.** (Effective Cohort 1 2026)
4. **To receive a two-star rating, a program must have a 4.0 average ERS score for their entire program.** (Effective Cohort 1 2026)
5. **To receive a three-star rating, a program must have a 5.0 average ERS score for their entire program.**

Notification of Star Rating

The final step of the Quality Rated process is the notification of the program's zero-, one-, two-, or three-star rating. The program's rating is determined by a point system. Points are assigned based on data collected through the portfolio and the program's average ERS score. Bonus points are awarded for certain national accreditations including but not limited to: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (AdvancED/SACS) Accreditation, National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation, and National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Accreditation. A program can earn a maximum of 4 bonus points for national accreditations. The tabulated points will then equate to a star rating. Programs will be notified of their star rating by email, within the rating notification window based on the Cohort selected. A detailed Continuous Quality Improvement Report is available for each classroom or family child care learning home observed, as well as a Facility Report and comments related to Portfolio scoring. Programs are encouraged to print and use the information contained in these reports with teachers, staff, and CCR&R Technical Assistants as a basis for their efforts to continue building quality and maintaining successful practices. For more information regarding how Quality Rated points are earned, see the Rating Rubric in the Appendices.

Guaranteeing the integrity and transparency of Quality Rated is of primary importance. To ensure there is no compromise to the system, submission of a portfolio signifies the program's agreement to complete the process and accept the star rating earned from the on-site ERS assessment and portfolio score. There is no voluntary withdrawal process following the on-site ERS assessment. After the on-site ERS assessment is conducted, voluntary withdrawal from Quality Rated is the natural expiration of the quality rating.

Star Rating Clarification Process

If a program has questions or needs an explanation after reviewing the detailed reports, they are encouraged to contact their Technical Assistant about the Clarification Process.

Clarification requests must be submitted by the CCR&R Lead TA within 60 days of the program's rating and sent in writing via email to Quality Rated at QRClarification@decal.ga.gov.

A. The subject line of the email should read: ***Program Name & License #: STAR RATING CLARIFICATION REQUEST***

B. The email must include:
    1. Program's name

2. Program's licensing number
3. Date of the rating
4. Names of the program's TA consultant and the CCR&R Lead TA
5. Business phone number of CCR&R Lead TA
6. Date(s) the provider and the TA consultant met to discuss the report

C. The email must clearly list the CCR&R Lead TA's specific question(s) for the program and include the following identifying information so that all necessary information is present to fully answer each question:
    1. Portfolio Question:
    2. Portfolio Standard Number,
    3. Criterion Number. (Ex: Portfolio Standard 1, Criterion 1.1.3).
    4. ERS Observation Question: Classroom Name, ERS Rating Scale, Scale Item, and Indicator Number. (Ex: Pre-K Classroom, ECERS-3, Item 6, Indicator 5.2)

D. Since this is not a refutation or appeal process, providers and/or CCR&R Lead TA should **NOT** send evidence, such as photos or videos. These will not be reviewed.

Programs who wish to improve their score are eligible to complete a Reassessment application.

Option for Zero Rated Programs

Programs who receive a zero rating can reapply to Quality Rated and attempt a re-rating by selecting a new slot from any remaining available cohorts. It is possible that cohort slots may not be available until the following year. Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) providers who receive a 0-rating may have the ability to enroll in the QR Probationary Status and remain eligible to receive scholarships while they work to earn a star rating. Please refer to Section 9.5: QR Probationary Status for eligibility requirements.

Three Year Required Reassessment

A Quality Rated star rating is valid for three years. The program will receive an expiration date exactly 3 years after their rating date. A program must select a cohort slot within the year that the rating is scheduled to expire. The program can select any cohort within the expiration year even if the cohort falls after the expiration date, as long as the cohort is selected prior to the expiration date. For example, if a program has an expiration date January 15, 2026, which falls in cohort 1, they could potentially select cohort 2, 3 or 4 of 2026 and their rating will not expire if the cohort was selected prior to January 15, 2026. Cohort slots become available for selection during the fall of the preceding year. Programs with an expiring rating will be notified via email of upcoming cohort availability and reminded to select a cohort when appropriate. It is the responsibility of the program to select a cohort during their expiration year to avoid rating expiration which can negatively affect their ability to participate in CAPS.

Quality Rated Programs that Fail to Maintain a Good Standing Compliance Zone with CCS

While Quality Rated programs who fall into Support or Deficient status may be able to keep their Quality Rated star rating for the remainder of the duration of the rating, they will not be able to renew their star rating upon its expiration until they return to Good Standing status. Programs must maintain Good Standing in order to renew or increase their star rating. CCS consultants will not schedule additional visits to accelerate a program's return to Good Standing just to accommodate the ability for a program to rerate prior to their expiration date.

Additional QR Enforcement actions may be applied to programs that fail to maintain Good Standing with CCS or who experience a severe health or safety incident resulting in CCS enforcement actions such as emergency closure or monitoring order, license pending revocation, license restrictions, etc.

Programs in Deficient status will receive a public suspension of their rating and their Quality Rated star rating logo will be removed from the qualityrated.org website. Quality Rated public suspension does not interrupt CAPS reimbursement, or any other benefit of the rating, and the suspension period ends when the program returns to Support or Good Standing. During this time, programs are strongly encouraged to participate in training and technical assistance provided by Child Care Services.

Note: Detailed information outlining how the CCS compliance zone may impact Quality Rated star ratings may be seen on the chart in Section 3.1.

Participation in DECAL Research Activities

Once a program has started an application to become Quality Rated, the program agrees and acknowledges that they may be contacted to participate in research for Quality Rated or other DECAL purposes. The program's participation and data collected are de-identified from the program and kept confidential to the extent allowable by Georgia law.

Assessor Complaint

If, in the unlikely event an assessor fails to uphold our high standards of professional conduct in a manner that places the integrity of the rating in question, the program director should email or call the Quality Rated Help Desk at QualityRated@decal.ga.gov or 1.855.800.7747 immediately after the observation. Grievances will be shared with a member of the Quality Rated Management team who will respond to all concerns in a timely manner. All complaints or concerns will be held in the strictest confidence and will be handled accordingly. Programs can be assured that they can share their concerns without fear of retaliation or negative consequences to their rating. Programs should notify Quality Rated of their concerns prior to receiving their rating to allow management to take corrective action, if necessary, before a rating is awarded. Concerns regarding perceived assessor misconduct during an observation that are received after a rating has been determined will be addressed; however, they will not result in overturning an awarded rating.

Declared Natural Disaster Response

For child care providers located within areas impacted by a natural disaster, the Quality Rated assessment process may be adjusted as follows:

- For Quality Rated providers working on a required reassessment, our staff may extend providers' reassessment windows until the end of the Governor's State of Emergency Declaration timeframe. Dependent on the level of damage to a provider's physical location, a provider's rating may be extended and/or the provider's portfolio may be sent back in order to have it resubmitted at a time that allows for the provider to repair structural damage, to have appropriate staff in place, or to have classrooms adequately prepared for children.
- For providers who have been sent a 30- or 90- day notice of their Quality Rated assessment window: If you have experienced a power or water outage, or significant damage to your physical location due to a natural disaster, which impacts the ability to serve children for more than 24 hours, please notify Child Care Services intake at 404-657-5562 first and then contact the Quality Rated Help Desk at 855-800-7747. A member of the Quality Rated Management team will contact you via phone and/or email to discuss your observation window options within the time frame established by the Governor's State of Emergency Declaration.

Use of the Quality Rated Logo

Use of the Quality Rated logo helps programs communicate their level of quality to parents, families, and the community. Additionally, it is a marketing tool for child care programs, and we encourage all rated programs to use Quality Rated in their marketing materials. To preserve the Quality Rated brand for families and child care programs, all Georgia child care programs must adhere to policies regarding the usage of the Quality Rated logo regardless of their participation in Quality Rated. See Section 7 for details pertaining to Quality Rated Logo usage.

Change of Program Ownership

A program's Quality Rating is not automatically transferable. When a center is sold prior to or after receiving a star rating, Change of Ownership requirements must be met as determined by DECAL. DECAL will request specific information to help determine if the program will maintain its rating under the new ownership. Rating decisions are at the discretion of DECAL. The request to transfer Quality Rated data includes star rating**,** and applicable cohort enrollment or Provisional or Probationary status.

The program must complete the Quality Rated section of the online Change of Ownership application found within their KOALA Self-Service portal. If the Change of Ownership is the result of an LLC formation or program name change, all Quality Rated data will be transferred. For questions regarding rating transfers, contact the Quality Rated Help Desk at qualityrated@decal.ga.gov or 855-800-7747.

If it is determined that the Quality Rated star rating is eligible to be transferred to the new owner, it is understood that the new owner accepts the responsibility of maintaining program quality, including adhering to any deadlines or due dates associated with a transferred cohort slot. Failure to meet portfolio submission due dates or program observation participation could put CAPS eligibility at risk.

If a program is not in Good Standing with all applicable departments within DECAL, transfer of the rating may not be considered.

Criteria for the transfer of rating includes:

- Review of licensing history
- In Good Standing with applicable departments within DECAL
- Teacher/staff retention
- Administration retention
- Information provided on the Change of Ownership application

It is the responsibility of the owner to inform Quality Rated of changes in program's ownership. No benefits of the Quality Rated star rating are guaranteed until the star rating is transferred to the new license.

Programs requesting that the Quality Rated star rating be transferred to the new ownership should not base business decisions on an assumption that DECAL will automatically approve the continuation of the Quality Rating.

If transfer is denied and you plan to enroll in the CAPS program, you are likely eligible for the QR Provisional Status. This status will allow your program to be eligible for CAPS Scholarships while working toward your initial rating under your new license number. Please refer to Section 9.3 for QR Provisional Eligibility.

Should approval of the transfer of the star rating be denied and Provisional Status is not an option, the program has 30 days from the date the Change of Ownership was finalized to remove all Quality Rated materials from the program's facility, marketing materials, and online references to Quality Rated. The Quality Rated logo may not be used until the program has completed all requirements for receiving a new Quality Rating.

Change of Location

A program's Quality Rating is not automatically transferable. When a program changes its physical location prior to or after receiving a star rating, change of location requirements must be met as determined by DECAL. Transfer of the star rating cannot be applied until the new license is open and Permission to Operate (PTO) is granted by Child Care Services (CCS).

To request transfer of Quality Rated data (including star rating and applicable Provisional or Probationary status), the program must complete the Quality Rated section of the online Change of Location application found within their KOALA Self-Service portal. For questions regarding rating transfers, contact the Quality Rated Help Desk at qualityrated@decal.ga.gov or 855-800-7747.

If a program is not in Good Standing with applicable departments within DECAL, transfer of the rating will not be considered.

Criteria for the transfer of rating includes:

- CCS licensing history must follow to the new location
- Review of licensing history
- In Good Standing with all applicable departments within DECAL
- Teacher/staff retention
- Administration retention
- Information provided on the Change of Location application

If transfer is denied and you plan to enroll in the CAPS program, you are likely eligible for the QR Provisional Status. This status will allow your program to be eligible for CAPS Scholarships while working toward your initial rating under your new license number. Please refer to Section 9.3 for QR Provisional Eligibility.

Should approval of the transfer of the star rating be denied and Provisional Status is not an option, the program has 30 days from the date that Permission to Operate (PTO) was granted to remove all Quality Rated materials from the program's facility, marketing materials, and online references to Quality Rated. The Quality Rated logo may not be used until the program has completed all requirements for receiving a new Quality Rating.

It is the responsibility of the owner to inform Quality Rated of changes in program location. No benefits of the Quality Rated star rating are guaranteed until the star rating is transferred to the new license.

4. Resources and Support Services

4.1 Training and Coaching Supports

Quality Rated Orientation

Directors or owners of licensed child care centers, family child care learning homes, and other eligible entities participating in Quality Rated must complete the Quality Rated Orientation and Introduction to ERS training. These state-approved online courses are available on OLLI within the GaPDS. The initial orientation provides critical information and support as programs work to improve quality. Schedules and registration for both trainings are available by logging in to find OLLI scheduled training sessions on the GaPDS site: https://gapds.decal.ga.gov/Trainings/Scheduled/OLLI or by contacting your local CCR&R.

Peer Support Network

The Peer Support Network (PSN) is an opportunity for child care owners and directors to encourage one another to work towards the common goal of improving outcomes for Georgia's youngest learners. The PSN was created to offer support, share ideas and success stories, and relay lessons learned during the Quality Rated experience through training and networking opportunities. Each meeting is facilitated by a Quality Rated ambassador who operates a 2- or 3- star rated program in their own community. Providers meet quarterly through virtual platforms to discuss topics chosen by PSN members. A typical meeting lasts 1.5 hours and participants have a chance to network, socialize, and learn from their peers.

The Peer Support Network is open to all Quality Rated programs as well as those who are in the process of earning or increasing their Quality Rated star rating.

Peer Support Network events are posted on the agency's Facebook pages and can be found in the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS). If you would like information about a PSN in your area, please email qualityratedpsn@decal.ga.gov.

Other Recommended Training

Quality Rated recognizes and recommends programs explore the following training options when seeking to achieve a Quality Rated star rating and to engage in on-going continuous quality improvements:

1. Watch Me! Celebrating Milestones and Sharing Concerns
   This free, state-approved online training course provides tools and best practices for monitoring the development of young children and communicating with their families. Go to www.decal.ga.gov/CCS/DevelopmentalMonitoring.aspx and follow instructions to complete the five modules.

2. Georgia's SEEDS for Success Webinars
   These six FREE webinars were created to introduce the Pyramid Model framework and early social emotional development strategies for early learning professionals (both teachers Version and administrators) working with children 3-5 years old. http://olli.decal.ga.gov/index.php/12-2/social-and-emotional-development/

3. Free Training Through The Online Cox Campus
   The Rollins Center is committed to providing their transformative training to teachers across the state, with a goal that by 2020 all teachers of children birth to 8 in Georgia will have the capacity so that all their students will be reading proficiently by third grade. To remove physical and financial barriers, the Rollins Center launched the Cox Campus portal at http://www.readrightfromthestart.org to make their research-based training available to all teachers. Funded by a generous grant from the James M. Cox Foundation, the online campus is composed of coursework featuring video footage from real-world classrooms and is available at no charge. Courses are divided into brief lessons, usually less than 15 minutes each, and are self-paced and easy to follow so educators can fit them into their busy schedules. Each lesson provides techniques teachers can apply in their classrooms the very next day to help children build crucial language and literacy skills. Training through the online campus qualifies for Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning continuing education credits for Georgia preschool and Pre-K educators.

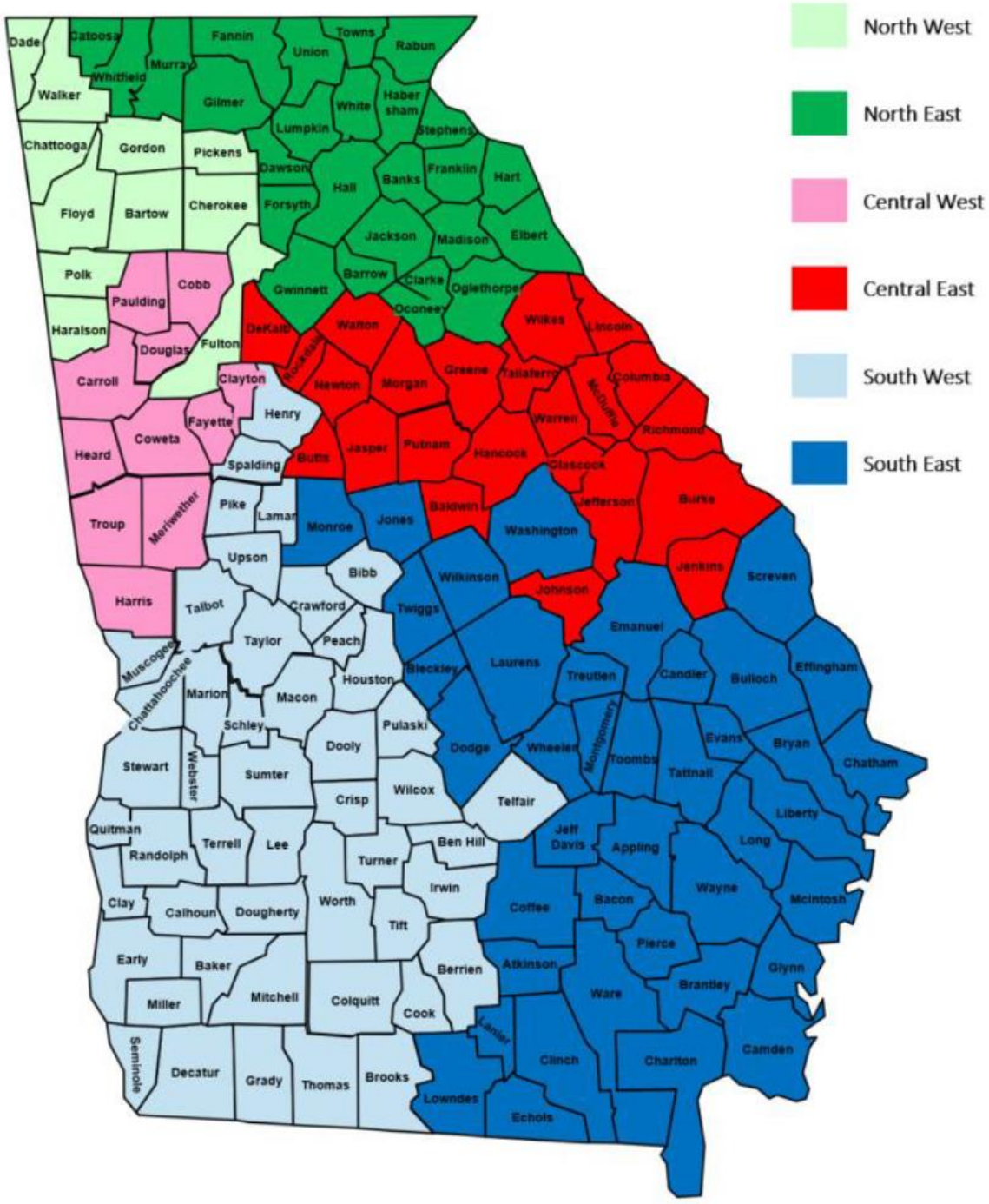
Other Quality Rated Supports

- *QR Provider Help Desk*
  Support is available to programs through the **Quality Rated Provider Help Desk**. The toll-free **Provider Help Desk** is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Programs can call 1-855-800-QRIS (7747) to

receive Quality Rated assistance. In addition, communication is available via email at qualityrated@decal.ga.gov.

- *On-Site Technical Assistance*
  DECAL funds the work of the Child Care Resource & Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) in Georgia. The CCR&Rs help DECAL fulfill its vision and mission through a network of support for families and early care and education professionals at the local level. CCR&R agencies offer free targeted technical assistance to eligible programs participating in Quality Rated. In addition to training on topics such as Environment Rating Scales, Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS), Family Engagement, Inclusion, and Cultural Competency, CCR&Rs provide individualized technical assistance and coaching that supports programs through the Quality Rated process and assists them in preparing for upcoming ERS observations. Technical assistance can be requested on the initial Quality Rated application by clicking "Request Technical Assistance" on the provider's Quality Rated homepage, or by directly contacting a regional office. The following map and chart identify the CCR&R regions and contact information for each. Contact the CCR&R in your region for additional information about upcoming, training, technical assistance opportunities, and other services.

4.2 Child Care Resource and Referral Agency Regions in Georgia



REGION	CONTACT INFORMATION	COUNTIES SERVED
North West Child Care Resource and Referral of North West Georgia – Quality Care for Children, Inc.	Director: Gloria Calhoun gloria.calhoun@qualitycareforchildren.org 913 N. Tennessee Street, Suite 202 Cartersville, GA 30120 Toll Free: 1-800-308-1825 Local: (770) 387-0828, Fax (678) 721-6676 www.qualitycareforchildren.org	Bartow, Chattooga, Cherokee, Dade, Floyd, Fulton, Gordon, Haralson, Pickens, Polk, Walker
Central West Child Care Resource and Referral of Central West Georgia – Quality Care for Children, Inc.	Director: Kristen Groover Kristen.Groover@qccga.org 3 Corporate Square Blvd. NE Suite 230 Atlanta, GA 30329 Toll Free: 1-877-722-2445, Local: (404) 479-4166 www.qualitycareforchildren.org	Carroll, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, Douglas, Fayette, Harris, Heard, Meriwether, Paulding, Troup
Central East Child Care Resource and Referral of Central East Georgia – Augusta University/ Leap Early Learning Partners	Director: Julie Phillips jphillips@gru.edu 108 SRP Drive, Suite B, Evans, GA 30809 Toll Free: 1-877-228-3566, Local: (478) 751-3000, Fax (706) 922-7180 www.gru.edu/ccrr	Baldwin, Burke, Butts, Columbia, DeKalb, Glascock, Greene, Hancock, Jasper, Jefferson, Jenkins, Johnson, Lincoln, McDuffie, Morgan, Newton, Putnam, Richmond, Rockdale, Taliaferro, Walton, Warren, Wilkes
South West Child Care Resource and Referral of South West Georgia – Albany State University	Director: Cindy Spann cindy.spann@asurams.edu 2429 Gillionville Rd. Albany, GA 31707 Toll Free: 1-866-833-3552, Local: (229) 317-6834, Fax (229) 500-4895 http://www.asurams.edu/ccrr/	Baker, Ben Hill, Berrien, Bibb, Brooks, Calhoun, Chattahoochee, Clay, Colquitt, Cook, Crawford, Crisp, Decatur, Dooly, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Henry, Houston, Irwin, Lamar, Lee, Macon, Marion, Miller, Mitchell, Muscogee, Peach, Pike, Pulaski, Quitman, Randolph, Schley, Seminole, Spalding, Stewart, Sumter, Talbot, Taylor, Telfair, Terrell, Thomas, Tift, Turner, Upson, Webster, Wilcox, Worth
South East Child Care Resource and Referral of South East Georgia – Savannah Technical College	Director: Melissa Cole mcole@savannahtech.edu 190 Crossroads Parkway Savannah, GA 31407 Toll Free: 1-877-935-7575, Local: (912) 443-3011, Fax (912) 966-6735 www.ccrrofsoutheastga.org	Appling, Atkinson, Bacon, Bleckley, Brantley, Bryan, Bulloch, Camden, Candler, Charlton, Chatham, Clinch, Coffee, Dodge, Echols, Effingham, Emanuel, Evans, Glynn, Jeff Davis, Jones, Lanier, Laurens, Liberty, Long, Lowndes, McIntosh, Monroe, Montgomery, Pierce, Screven Tattnall, Toombs, Treutlen, Twiggs, Ware, Washington, Wayne, Wheeler, Wilkinson
North East Child Care Resource and Referral of North East Georgia – Quality Care for Children, Inc.	Director: Yasmeen Diggs Yasmeen.diggs@qccga.org 3805 Crestwood Parkway, Suite 225 Duluth, GA 30096 Toll Free: 1-877-633-1461, Local: (706) 543-6177, Fax (706) 543-3077 www.qualitycareforchildren.org	Banks, Barrow, Catoosa, Clarke, Dawson, Elbert, Fannin, Forsyth, Franklin, Gilmer, Gwinnett, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Jackson, Lumpkin, Madison, Murray, Oconee, Oglethorpe, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, White, Whitfield

4.3 Additional Support Programs and Services

SCHOLARSHIPS, INCENTIVES, and COUNSELING

DECAL administers educational assistance programs (CDA SCHOLARSHIPS, INCENTIVES, EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING, and ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIPS) for Georgia's early care and education professionals. For more information about these programs and to find out how to qualify, call 1-800-227-3410 or visit www.decalscholars.com.

Quality Rated Incentives

Financial incentives to help programs improve learning environments, attain higher ratings, and sustain long-term quality are a key component of Quality Rated. However, all incentive packages, grants, and other rewards for participation or achievement of rated status are available through federal funding and from private foundations and are contingent on the availability of funds and subject to change without prior notice.

5. Program Portfolio Standards and Criteria

The Quality Rated portfolio helps organize evidence of a program's commitment to quality by electronic submission. The portfolio is composed of five sections:

Standard 1 – Director and Teacher Qualifications and Georgia Professional Development System Verification

This standard focuses on the need for programs to recruit and retain highly qualified staff and support the continuous improvement of their knowledge and skills. The Georgia Professional Development System's (GaPDS) Training History is used to measure staff qualifications and ongoing professional development. More information and instructions about the GaPDS are at https://gapds.decal.ga.gov/Default.aspx. This requires action on the part of instructional staff (lead teachers, assistant teachers) and administrative staff (family providers, directors, assistant directors and education/curriculum coordinators) to register and submit their information to the GaPDS, as well as participate in individualized professional development activities, as identified on submitted Professional Learning Plans (PLP).

All instructional staff and administrative staff must be registered with the GaPDS. To earn portfolio points in Standard 1, director(s)/family providers, and a percentage of teachers, as determined by the indicators in Standard 1, must have an active career level designated by the GaPDS. Director(s)/family providers and teachers who are only registered in the GaPDS or who are in pending status at the time of portfolio submission are included to determine the total number of teachers in the program. If a staff member in pending status at the time of submission has an assigned career level, this staff member's career level will be used in scoring.

Administrators, lead teachers, and assistant teachers that are in Incomplete status in the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission will not receive credit for a Professional Learning Plan (1.2 and 1.5) or for training hours (1.3 and 1.6).

ADM and ECE Competencies for "Other" training topics are not counted unless there is an uploaded statement on the PLP that indicates that the administrator/teacher has already taken the training topics that are listed in the indicator.

Standard 2 – Child Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity

This standard requires program staff to reflect on their current health, safety, and nutrition standards and identify areas that can be improved. It also addresses the need for programs to partner with families to provide ongoing

developmental screenings of children and refer them to community resources that can help resolve any issues that might impede a child's readiness for school.

Standard 3 – Family Engagement

This standard supports providers in partnering with families to improve child outcomes. Georgia uses the Strengthening Families Framework and Family Engagement Task Force recommendations to build a strong foundation of family partnerships and community connections. Children with supportive home learning environments show increased literacy, better peer interactions, fewer behavior problems, and more motivation and persistence. Providers play a crucial role in strengthening families' connections to the community and to early learning settings.

Standard 4 – Intentional Teaching Practices

This standard is focused on the intentional teaching practices of providers as they align curriculum with Georgia's Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) or Georgia's Afterschool and Youth Development Standards (ASYD), lesson planning, and assessment. It is critical that programs show intention and responsiveness to the holistic developmental needs of children at each age level. Planning and practice must support the five learning domains (physical development and motor skills, social and emotional development, approaches to play and learning, communication, language and literacy, and cognitive development and general knowledge) with respect to each child's home language, traditions, and culture.

Standard 5 – Teacher: Student Ratio Requirements

This standard supports research that indicates that smaller numbers of children per adult are associated with more positive outcomes and that crowded environments may interfere with learning. Programs are encouraged to consider managing group size and ratios as a key component of providing quality care for children.

> ***Documentation for Standard 5: ratios must be entered into the portfolio screens within thirty (30) calendar days of the planned portfolio submission date. For GA's Pre-K classrooms, which may not be in session at the time of portfolio submission, enter ratios from a date during the last full school week.***

Before gathering portfolio data, programs are encouraged to closely review the information regarding each standard in the Appendix. All required information in each standard must be completed, saved, and uploaded before the standard is marked as complete. Photographs and documents uploaded as evidence should be clear and legible. **Policies submitted as evidence should be copied and intended portions should be highlighted to ensure credit is given.** Uploaded files that are corrupted or are otherwise unable to be opened will not be scored. Contact the Quality Rated Provider Help Desk or your local CCR&R with any questions.

6. Quality Rated Observation Process

6.1 The Environment Rating Scales

Highly trained Assessors use the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) to evaluate process quality in early childhood programs. Measuring process quality allows programs to identify the practices that children experience on a typical day that directly impact their development. The ERS allows programs and Quality Rated to measure the quality of interactions that occur in the classroom between the staff and children and among the children themselves. Process quality, as seen in the scales, also considers children's access and ability to engage with the materials, equipment, and activities in the environment, as well as classroom features, such as space, furnishings, and schedules that support these interactions.

The Environment Rating Scales were developed under the auspices of the Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Detailed information about each scale along with current notes for clarification, definitions, frequently asked questions about the scales, score sheets for the scales, and links to online scale training are available at http://www.ersi.info/index.html.

The ERS instruments are used by Assessors to observe and evaluate the classrooms within a child care learning center or family child care learning home. The ERS scores are used in conjunction with Structural Quality scores to determine a program's Quality Rated Star Level designation. Quality Rated follows the observation and scoring procedures outlined in each instrument except as indicated below.

Georgia Scoring Exemptions - SACERS-U

The use of the SACERS-U is for stand-alone School Age programs only when no other age groups are included in the program. At this time, the following Items will be marked N/A and are not averaged in the final score: Items 10-13, Items 15-16, Items 33-35, Items 38-41, and Items 43-47.

Assessment in Inclusive Classrooms

In high-quality child care programs, support is provided to ensure that every child is able to participate in age-appropriate activities with their same-aged peers and have access to the full array of classroom materials, activities, and experiences. Because high quality inclusive classrooms provide equal access for all children, the ERS will be conducted and scored consistently for all programs.

A program's Quality Rated Star Level designation is determined by a program's average score from the classroom/s or family child care learning home's ERS observation(s), the portfolio score, and bonus points for national accreditation.

Note:

- To receive a three-star rating, a program must have a 5.0 average ERS score for their entire program.
- If a program scores less than a 3.0 on the ERS in any classroom, the program cannot be rated higher than one-star.
- A program must have an ERS average of at least 3.0 to receive a one-star rating, programs can no longer rate on portfolio scores only.

6.2 How the ERS Is Used In Quality Rated

Minimum Consistent Classroom Enrollment Requirements

To be able to submit a portfolio and receive a classroom observation, programs must have minimum consistent classroom enrollments as outlined in Section 3.1. Requirements are based on the licensed capacity and will differ for child care learning centers and for family child care learning homes.

Child Care Learning Centers

To be eligible to receive an ERS assessment, classrooms in programs serving infants and toddlers (0-35 months), preschool-aged children (36-60 months), or stand-alone school age programs serving school-aged children (5-12 years) must have a minimum enrollment of at least two (2) children per classroom. Programs are required to identify the number of children enrolled per classroom at the time of portfolio submission. If there are *no* classrooms that meet either of these minimum requirements, please contact the QR Provider Help Desk for further guidance before hitting "Submit Portfolio." If a program does not contact the QR Provider Help Desk regarding having no classrooms that meet the minimum enrollment and attempts to submit their portfolio, the portfolio will be return to "In Progress" status allowing the program to update their evidence and resubmit once the minimum enrollment requirements are met. It is important to note that a program may experience a lapse in rating and scholarship eligibility if a portfolio is returned and the previous rating has expired; the program may also forfeit the ability to be rated during the chosen cohort. Due to scheduling constraints, any classrooms that do not meet the minimum enrollment requirements for an observation at the time of portfolio submission will not be considered for an observation at any time during the 90-day window, even if on the day of the observation the enrollment has increased to meet the minimum requirements. Additionally, new classrooms added to programs after portfolio submission will not be considered for observation providing the original number of classrooms determined for assessment is met.

For an observation to be conducted on assessment day, at least 2 of the enrolled children in an ECERS room must be present. In an ITERS room, the observation can be conducted with 1 child present. If the selected primary classroom for either scale does not meet enrollment requirements AND the age requirements for the intended scale (i.e., the majority of the children in the ITERS room should be under 35 months; the majority of the children in the ECERS room should be 36-60 months), the alternate classroom (if available) will be assessed. In the event there is no alternate classroom, the program's star rating will be based on the classrooms able to be assessed. If no classrooms meet the minimum enrollment requirements, the Assessor will contact Quality Rated leadership to determine if an additional observation date should be scheduled or if the portfolio should be returned. If an additional observation is granted and at that second visit there are still no classrooms meeting the minimum enrollment requirements, Quality Rated leadership will determine the next steps for the child care program, which may include returning the portfolio and moving the program to a different cohort, expiration of a star rating, extension or suspension of observation window, rating based on portfolio only, or dismissal from the QR system.

Child Care Learning Centers with a Licensing Capacity of 18 or Fewer Children Operating in One Space

To be eligible to receive an assessment, the minimum program enrollment must be two (2) children under the age of thirteen (13) years. The FCCERS-3 scale will be used to conduct the observation. On the day of the assessment, programs are still eligible to receive an observation if only one enrolled child is present. If no children are present, then the observation will be rescheduled. On the second attempted observation visit, if children are still not present at the program, the portfolio will be returned and should only be resubmitted when regular and consistent enrollment has been achieved.

Family Child Care Learning Homes

Family child care providers must enroll one (1) or more children under the age of thirteen (13) years to be eligible to receive an observation and a Quality Rated star rating. The provider's own or related children under the age of thirteen (13) years, who are present in the learning environment during the assessment, regardless of their pay status, are considered part of the program for ERS observation scoring guidelines and will be considered in the enrollment numbers. This means that scores will be based on the materials, interactions, and activities provided to all age groups and children present. The FCCERS-3 instrument is always used during family child care learning home assessments.

On the day of the assessment, family child care providers are still eligible to receive an observation if only one enrolled child is present. If no children are present, then the observation will be rescheduled. On the second attempted observation visit, if children are still not present at the program, the portfolio will be returned and should only be resubmitted when regular and consistent enrollment has been achieved.

Exceptions for low enrollments and combined classrooms:

To be able to assess at least one (1) classroom of ITERS and ECERS age groups *typically* served throughout the calendar year for programs that serve children 0-60 months, Quality Rated reserves the right to establish an additional 30-day window to allow both an ITERS and ECERS classroom to be assessed as part of the program's overall Process Quality Points. This policy will be applied when on the day of the observation, a combined mixed age group classroom does not meet the 75% majority for either ITERS or ECERS ages to determine the most appropriate ERS instrument to be utilized and no alternate classrooms are available. Any additional 30-day window needed to complete the classroom observation(s) will be communicated to the program via email correspondence to the email on record in the program's QR account and from the Quality Rated Leadership Team.

Assessments Outside the Typical School Year (summer/winter holidays, etc.)

ERS assessments occur year-round, and Quality Rated expects that while programs may somewhat alter their structure during holiday times, programs that operate at high levels of quality do so no matter the time of year. If programs significantly alter the enrollment ages and makeup of their classrooms during the summer months or winter holidays, they should carefully consider the timing of their Cohort choice.

The policy of Quality Rated is that the most appropriate scale per classroom will be selected according to the age of the majority of the children enrolled at the time of the assessment. Programs are required to identify the number and ages of children enrolled per classroom at the time of portfolio submission. If Cohort 2 is chosen including months toward the end of a school year, typically April or May, enrollment may look significantly different during the summer when the observation will occur. Include any anticipated enrollment changes or classroom closures in the comment box at the time of portfolio submission.

Assessor Denied Access to Conduct an ERS Observation

If the Quality Rated Assessor is denied access to the program's facility to complete the ERS assessment, the program will not receive an ERS observation, they will receive a score of 0 for the program's process quality. The program will automatically receive a zero (0) rating for failure to allow all the required scoring components in Quality Rated from being completed.

Translation Services

If a program has any non-English speaking classrooms (the teachers do not speak English to the children) a translator will be provided to accompany the Assessor unless the assigned Assessor is fluent in the required

language. Programs will identify the potential need for a translator at the time of portfolio submission. In addition, a robotic camera, called a SWIVL, could be utilized to capture language used during the observation. The recordings obtained will be sent for translation from a DECAL approved translation services vendor and used in conjunction with the in-person assessor's notes to accurately score the observation. Once written documentation of the transcribed language is received, the video recordings completed using the SWIVL technology will be deleted and not used for any other purpose.

Cohort Selection and Observation Scheduling

As part of the ongoing quality improvement process, when a provider seeks to obtain an initial rating, complete a rerating prior to their expiration year, or renew their rating during their expiration year, they must choose a Quality Rated cohort. Each year, Quality Rated schedules four (4) cohort windows, each with a pre-determined number of program slots from which providers can select their preferred cohort to complete the rating process. During the Fall of each preceding year, the cohort slots are published and can be accessed through the provider's Quality Rated online account. For example, 2025 cohort slots became available for selection during the Fall of 2024. Child care programs whose rating will be expiring have priority for a limited amount of time to sign up for a cohort slot before the slots are made available to all other providers. A child care program with a rating due to expire, will receive email notification from Quality Rated reminding them to select a cohort slot during their expiration year prior to the cohort slots becoming available. Programs attempting an initial star rating, who are not participating in the QR Provisional Status, must create a Quality Rated account and select a cohort during the year they wish to complete the rating process.

Each cohort option has a defined schedule of dates for the Portfolio Submission Window, the ERS Observation Window, and the Rating Announcement Window. Child care program leadership should carefully consider any planned closures or other scheduling issues that may affect participation and availability BEFORE selecting a cohort. Once a cohort has been selected, it cannot be changed unless the program experiences a verifiable emergency situation.

Pre-Observation Information On-line Documentation

Before observations can be scheduled, the child care program must complete all standards within their Quality Rated Portfolio and submit it during their selected cohort's portfolio submission window. Portfolio submission is a two-step process. After selecting the portfolio submit button, programs have up to two (2) business days to complete the on-line pre-observation documentation screens for each classroom in their program. While in this period, the portfolio will be frozen, and no additional changes can be made to the evidence uploaded. If the pre-observation information screens for all classrooms are not completed within the two (2) day window, the portfolio will be returned to the program, and no observation assignment will be made. The program should check their account status after completing the pre-observation screens to ensure their account is labeled **"Pending Approval"** status. This status indicates that all information has been submitted completely and correctly so the program is ready to be scheduled for an observation.

As soon as the pre-observation information screens have been completed, the portfolio is fully submitted to Quality Rated. Programs will receive an email notifying them that their portfolio has been **Accepted,** and that the observation(s) will occur within the specified observation window. ERS Assessors work within a ninety (90) calendar day window to schedule all observations. This timeframe may be extended if a translator is required for programs with non-English speaking classrooms. Once the assessor team has determined a program's observation date, the program will receive an email notification of the actual thirty (30) calendar day window in which the observation is scheduled to occur.

Programs should plan to have the following information on hand when preparing to submit their portfolio to Quality Rated:

- ☐ **Black Out Days-** Know and be prepared to identify up to five (5) blackout dates the program may select during the dates of the observation window. During the pre-observation information submission process, the program will be presented with a calendar interface upon which they will be able to select their black-out days. Black-out dates are days that are not typical for the program or days the regular schedule may not be followed, such as school holidays/celebrations, field trips, picture day, etc. Programs can identify up to five (5) days that they do not wish to receive an observation, excluding state holidays. A list of state holidays can be viewed at https://georgia.gov/georgia-state-holidays-2025. If a program prefers not to be observed during a local school system holiday that is not a state holiday, they should use one of their blackout dates on this day(s). An observation will not be conducted on a day that the public school system or county state offices in which the program is located close due to inclement weather conditions.
- ☐ **Program Closure Days-** If the entire facility will be closed for a certain time frame within the observation window, i.e., summer break, spring break, winter holidays etc., know and be prepared to enter these dates into the comment box that will be available under the calendar interface. If the program operates one or more GA's Pre-K classroom(s), know and be prepared to enter into the comment box below the calendar any upcoming closure dates for GA's Pre-K within the observation window.
- ☐ **Classroom Schedules-** Have a current copy of all classroom schedules on hand. Programs will be required to upload the classroom schedules so the Assessors can determine the most appropriate time to arrive to begin the three (3) hour observation. All ITERS and ECERS observations will begin no earlier than 8:00 a.m. and no later than 9:30 a.m. The only exception to this policy is for a Georgia's Pre-K class which may have a designated start of their Pre-K day that is earlier than 8:00 a.m. SACERS observations in stand-alone school age programs will start a few minutes prior to the arrival of the children into the program. FCCERS observations will start when the majority of the enrolled children arrive at the program.
- ☐ **Translator Required**- Know if any of the classrooms will require a translator and if so, which language will be required. A translator will be required in any classroom where the teacher speaks a language other than English to the children for the majority of the observation.
- ☐ **Child Data-** Know the birth dates of the youngest and oldest child in each classroom, and if any children have any identified disabilities or special needs. Know the maximum number of children your program allows in each classroom at one time (this may or may not be the licensed capacity) and know the number of children currently enrolled in each room. Family child care learning homes must know the number of children enrolled in the following age groups: infants, toddlers, preschool, and school age (6-12 yrs.)
- ☐ **Operating Hours –** Know and be ready to enter the operating hours of the program.

Length of ERS Observation

Each type of ERS observation takes a minimum of three (3) hours to complete. Quality Rated makes every effort to have all ERS observations conducted in one day. Assessments in child care learning centers and stand-alone school age programs, depending on the size of the site and the number of classrooms to be assessed, may require an Assessor to spend multiple days at the program to observe all the required classes. Alternatively, more than one Assessor may be assigned to observe on the same day(s). Programs with multiple classrooms to be assessed may require up to seven (7) business days to be completed. This time period could increase due to circumstances outside the control of Quality Rated, such as severe weather or illness of an assigned Assessor. However, Quality

Rated will make every effort to complete all required observations at a program within a seven (7) business day timeframe.

Number of Classes Observed

The policy of Quality Rated is to ensure that each age group is assessed. In child care learning centers, one-third of the ITERS classrooms (0 – 35 months) and one-third of the ECERS classrooms (3 – 5 years), including any Georgia's Pre-K classrooms (if the center has Georgia's Pre-K in session at the time of the observation), will be observed.

Child care learning centers must have at least 1 operational ITERS room and 1 operational ECERS room, meeting the age guidelines below, available to be assessed if they typically provide care for both age groups during the school year.

Classroom Random Drawing in Child Care Learning Centers

For child care learning centers, the classroom that will be observed is decided by a computerized random selection when the portfolio is accepted, and the assessor team is assigned. This allows the Assessor to know which of the ITERS and ECERS classrooms to observe on the day of the assessment. An alternate ITERS and ECERS room will also be randomly selected by the computerized system. Quality Rated reserves the right to change random classroom selections on site when few children are present in both the primary and alternate randomly selected classrooms and other classrooms have more children present. The computerized system will randomly select one third (1/3) of classrooms for each age group required, for example:

- A child care learning center that serves children birth through age five including Georgia's Pre-K, will have a minimum of two classrooms observed – at least one ITERS classroom and at least one ECERS classroom randomly selected from all the ITERS and ECERS eligible classrooms.

For child care learning centers, (enrolling children cared for in more than 1 space) the age group selected for each classroom identified in the portfolio (Standard 1) determines the appropriate ERS assessment tool(s) to be used on the day of the observation. The ECERS-3 is intended to be used with children 3 – 5 years. If 75% of the children enrolled on the day of the observation are 36 months – 71 months, an ECERS- 3 will be conducted. If 75% of the children enrolled are under 36 months, an ITERS-3 will be conducted. It is possible that either an ITERS or ECERS observation could occur in mixed-age classrooms where both two and three-year-old children are enrolled, depending on the current roster on the day of observation if the roster has been updated since portfolio submission. Programs are advised to pay attention to children's birthdates in their classrooms caring for two-year olds to determine when during the year the three-year-old 75% threshold is met, thus switching the room to the ECERS tool. An observation **will not** be conducted in classrooms with mixed-age children that include school-age children, 72 months and older. If any mixed-age classrooms are identified on the classroom rosters submitted with the Pre-Observation forms, Quality Rated Management will determine if the identified ERS scale is the most appropriate scale to be used, or whether a classroom is eligible for assessment.

Quality Rated reserves the right to assess classrooms with the most appropriate instrument for the ages of the children enrolled in the classroom. When significant changes in enrollment in any given room drastically affect the ages of the children enrolled during the year, it may affect which instrument is used at the time of the observation.

Family child care learning homes and child care learning centers enrolling eighteen (18) or less children cared for in one space on the day of the observation will be assessed using the FCCERS-3 Instrument. There will be no random drawing to determine which classrooms to assess.

In stand-alone school age centers serving children 5 – 12 years, the SACERS-U will be used to assess the program. When children are cared for in one large space, such as an elementary school cafeteria and they move about the space in smaller grade groupings, also using the outdoor space or gym, one observation will occur, and the assessor will choose a group to follow throughout the observation. When a program uses multiple self-contained separate age group classrooms and the groups of children do not mix throughout the observation, each classroom will be counted toward the one third (1/3) requirement and the computerized random selection will take place to determine which room(s) will be assessed. For mixed age groupings or classes, on the day of observation, 50% of the children enrolled must fall within the SACERS-U age range of 5-12 years for an observation to be conducted. If the ages of the children enrolled do not meet that requirement, an alternate class meeting the 50% requirement will be selected, if available. If there is no alternate class available with at least 50% SACERS age children enrolled, an observation will not be conducted, and the portfolio will be returned, to be re-submitted at a more appropriate time.

When the Assessor Arrives

It is Quality Rated policy that Assessors arrive at the program approximately 15 minutes prior to beginning the observation to meet *briefly* with the program administrator or family child care provider to discuss expectations for the observation process. In centers, if no administrator is available, the assessor will move to begin the observation in the selected classroom to prevent a delay in starting the observation and will meet with the administrator at the end of the observation.

In child care learning centers and stand-alone school age programs that have classrooms randomly selected for an observation, the Assessor will inform program administrators which ITERS, ECERS, or SACERS classrooms were randomly selected. Assessors will also verify the pre-observation information documentation submitted online by the program. In family child care learning homes and stand-alone school age programs that do not require a randomized classroom drawing, the Assessor will verify the information on the pre-observation information documentation submitted online by the program and begin observing the combined group of multi-aged children.

- During the three-hour observation, the Assessor will take notes on everything that is observed.
- The Assessor does not take part in classroom activities or interfere with the on-going program activities.
- The Assessor may station him/herself around the perimeter of the classroom, but move often, yet discretely, to obtain better vantage points to observe interactions, routines, and materials.
- The Assessor maintains a neutral facial expression to minimize potential interactions. If a child approaches and speaks to the Assessor, the Assessor may briefly explain that s/he is "watching the children play" or "working."
- For SACERS-U observations, the Assessor will arrange a time with the teacher after the three-hour observation to ask questions about indicators that s/he was not able to observe. The teacher should be free of responsibility for the children when he or she is answering questions. *About 20 minutes will be required for questions.* ***Please note that ECERS-3, ITERS-3, and FCCERS-3 do not require a teacher interview, all indicators are scored solely with observed information.***

After the Assessment Is Completed

No technical assistance or discussion of findings is given by the Assessor(s) during or after the observation. After the assessment, an Assessor will give the program a card notifying what they can expect to happen next and a link to a survey about the observation experience. The card also provides information about valuable Georgia resources. The Assessor(s) will not share the results of the observation with the program because the observation scores must be combined with the portfolio scores to determine the star rating. Within a few days following the

assessment, the provider will receive an email with the same link to the survey in which they are asked to evaluate the experience of the observation process. The purpose of the survey, which is voluntary on the part of the provider, is to identify ways DECAL can improve the observation process and does not impact the individual program's status in Quality Rated. The feedback is combined in a cumulative group summary to determine the observation process's effectiveness.

The Assessor(s) will prepare a detailed written report based on the scores and notes taken during the observation for each classroom assessed. Every report undergoes a thorough review process by a scale-specific expert prior to being finalized. Reports are reviewed for accuracy of scoring, content, and clarity of score rationale. To ensure the validity of ERS scoring, all Assessors undergo rigorous training to verify their reliability and scoring accuracy. After initial reliability has been achieved, Assessors submit to frequent and on-going interrater reliability testing with anchor level expert assessors, to ensure the integrity of the system.

Points from the observation are combined with the points from the portfolio and bonus points assigned for national accreditations earned by the program. Final review of all assessments and documentation will be completed, and the site will be notified by email of the star rating earned within eight (8) weeks of the final assessment. A full facility report, individual classroom reports, and the comments and details of the portfolio score will be made available to child care programs on their Quality Rated homepage once the Quality Rated star rating has been determined.

7. Quality Rated Logo Usage

Usage When a Program is Participating in Quality Rated

Quality Rated is a marketing tool; only programs that have a Quality Rated star rating may use the Quality Rated logos and symbols. Programs who are participating in Quality Rated but have not yet earned a star rating *may not* use the Quality Rated logo or promote their program as participating in Quality Rated to the public and prospective parents and families. If a prospective parent or family asks if your program is Quality Rated, you may say that your program is working towards a Quality Rating, but you have not been rated and therefore are not a Quality Rated program. Programs who are participating may only use Quality Rated resources provided and approved by the Department of Early Care and Learning for participating programs.

Usage When a Program Has Not Received Enough Points to Earn a Star Rating

Programs who do not earn enough points to receive a star rating are considered to be a zero-rated program and they may not have the Quality Rated logo displayed in their program's facility, marketing materials, or online sources. If the program previously held a star rating and after reassessment fails to earn enough points to retain a star rating, the program has 30 calendar days to remove all Quality Rated logo materials from their program's facility, marketing materials, and online sources.

Usage When a Program's Star Rating Decreases in Star Level

If a reassessment results in a program's star level decreasing, but not below a one-star level, the program has 30 calendar days from receiving the lower rating to remove all Quality Rated materials with their program's previous, higher star level rating from their facility, marketing materials, and online sources. The program may still display Quality Rated materials if they remain at least a one-star program, but they may not display material with a higher star level than they are currently rated.

Usage When a Program Undergoes a Change of Program Ownership

Because a program's Quality Rating is not automatically transferable, the new program owner must request approval to transfer the star rating from the previous owner during the Change of Ownership process. Within the

KOALA Self-Service online Change of Ownership Application, the new program owner must include the reason for requesting the transfer and include relevant program data such as teachers and leadership remaining with the program and the number of CAPS scholarships that will also be transferred after CAPS enrollment has been completed. If the star rating transfer is approved by Quality Rated, the program may continue to use the Quality Rated logo in their facility, marketing materials, and online sources. If the star rating transfer is not approved, the program has 30 days to remove Quality Rated logo materials from their facility, marketing materials, and online sources.

Usage When a Program is Found Deficient with Child Care Licensing Rules

If a Quality Rated program is found Deficient with Child Care Services licensing rules and regulations and loses the public display of their Quality Rating, the program has 30 calendar days from the notification of the loss of their public display to remove all Quality Rated material from their program's facility, marketing materials, and online sources.

Usage When a Program is Not Participating in Quality Rated

If a program allows their rating to expire and is no longer actively participating in Quality Rated, the Quality Rated logo may not be displayed in the program's facility, marketing materials, or online resources. The program also may not use messages like "Our program complies with Quality Rated guidelines." The unauthorized use of the logo and promotional materials is illegal and punishable under Georgia law. To file a complaint about a program that is falsely advertising Quality Rated, contact the Quality Rated Provider Help Desk at 1-855-800-7747 or qualityrated@decal.ga.gov.

Logo Usage When a Program Has Received a Quality Rated Star Rating

Once your program has been rated, we encourage you to use the Quality Rated logo to symbolize your commitment to young children by providing quality care beyond minimum licensing standards. You can use this logo to promote your program through signs, web pages, social media, letterhead, advertising, and other materials.

We urge all Quality Rated programs to use the Quality Rated logo and related messages to create a consistent presentation by programs in communities across Georgia. This consistent message will help families and other stakeholders identify programs that have earned the distinction of quality in Georgia and gain a better understanding of why Quality Rated programs are the most beneficial choice for children.

When promoting your Quality Rated star rating, consider using these messages:

- Our program is Quality Rated through Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.
- Our program is proud to have earned the Quality Rated distinction of quality for early childhood education programs in Georgia.
- Our Quality Rated star rating indicates that our program provides quality care above and beyond minimum licensing standards to support young children.

By using the Quality Rated logo, you agree, acknowledge, and must comply with the following:

- A Quality Rated logo may not be used in any way that suggests that the State of Georgia, or the Department of Early Care and Learning approves or endorses your childcare program.
- You must make any changes to your program's use of the Quality Rated logo that are requested by DECAL (Department of Early Care and Learning).

When using the Quality Rated logo, you are required to follow the following design guidelines:

- The logo should be printed in black-and-white, its original colors, all black, or all white on a solid-colored background
- The logo and type should never be redesigned
- The logo may only be resized to scale

- The service mark (SM) of the Quality Rated logo must always be used with the Quality Rated logo
- To use the Quality Rated logo, a rated provider may access logos by selecting the Marketing Resources link on their home page. A provider may not use a Quality Rated logo that was downloaded from the internet.
- The logo uses the following colors:
  - Quality: #705e46 or RGB (112, 94, 70)
  - Rated: #ef5c46 or RGB (239, 92, 70)
  - Right-side of the peach: #f79427 or RGB (247, 148, 39)
  - Left-side of the peach: #ea6146 or RGB (234, 97, 70)
  - Leaf: #478437 or RGB (71, 132, 55)

Examples of Correct and Incorrect Design Uses of the Quality Rated Logo

8. CAPS and Quality Rated

8.1 Quality Rated Requirements for CAPS Participation

8.1.1 Licensed providers must be Quality Rated to participate in the CAPS program. For the purpose of CAPS, a Quality Rated Provider is one that is Star Rated, in Quality Rated Probationary Status, or in Quality Rated Provisional Status.

8.1.2 Providers who choose not to become Quality Rated will not be able to receive child care subsidy payments. Providers currently participating in the CAPS program who allow their rating to expire will be dismissed.

8.1.3 For additional questions, contact CAPS at 833-442-2277 or CAPSProviderSupport@decal.ga.gov.

9. Quality Rated Provisional and Probationary Statuses

9.1 Purpose

To minimize disruptions to children and families with a CAPS scholarship and to allow unrated licensed providers the opportunity to become rated while accepting CAPS scholarships, the QR Provisional and Probationary Statuses were created.

9.2 Background: CAPS/Quality Rated Goal

In 2015, based on recommendations from the Early Childhood Education Subcommittee (part of the Governors Education Reform Commission) now known as the DECAL Advisory Committee, DECAL identified the CAPS/Quality Rated goal that all providers who participate in the CAPS program be Quality Rated by December 31, 2020. The Advisory Committee is a stakeholder group of child care providers, advocates, and family representatives convened by DECAL to study ongoing policy issues. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this goal was extended to December 31, 2021.

To ensure the CAPS/Quality Rated goal was achieved and maintained, two (2) new statuses were created: Quality Rated Probationary Status and Quality Rated Provisional Status. The creation of these statuses helps minimize disruptions to children and families with a CAPS scholarship. For the purpose of CAPS, a Quality Rated Provider is one that is Star Rated, in Quality Rated Probationary Status, or in Quality Rated Provisional Status.

9.3 Eligibility for Provisional and Probationary Status

There are two categories of licensed providers who are eligible to participate in Quality Rated with the provisional or probationary designation: **Child Care Learning Centers (CCLC)** and **Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH).**

9.3.1. Child Care Learning Centers (CCLC) – A provider licensed or otherwise authorized to provide child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child in a non-residential setting for seven or more children under 13 years of age (or up to age 18 years for children with qualifying disabilities or a case plan requiring child care as part of court-ordered supervision), unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parent(s)' state-approved activity.

9.3.2 Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH) – One or more individual(s) who provide child care services for fewer than 24 hours per day per child in a private residence other than the child's residence for no more than six children under 13 years of age (or up to age 18 years for children with qualifying disabilities or a case plan requiring child care as part of court-ordered supervision) at a given time, unless care in excess of 24 hours is due to the nature of the parent(s)' state-approved activity For the purpose of the CAPS program, the parent cannot reside at, or work for, the family child care learning home that receives subsidies for the parent's children.

9.3.3 Licensed providers currently participating in the CAPS program who decide not to retain their Quality Rated status cannot be issued any new scholarships, except for type of care changes during the eligibility period through the end of calendar year. Families with existing scholarships at these providers may continue services with the provider until their annual redetermination date.

9.4 QR Provisional Status

A Quality Rated Provisional Status is granted to programs who are new to the CAPS program and new to Quality Rated. The Provisional Status allows providers to create, accept, and bill for CAPS scholarships while working toward earning an initial star rating.

Provisional Eligibility Requirements:

9.4.1 The program is new to CAPS, which is defined as a program who has not billed for CAPS scholarships in the preceding 12 months.

9.4.2 The program is in Good Standing with Child Care Services **(licensing)** and has been granted Permission to Operate (PTO), a temporary license, or permit.

9.4.3 The program has completed all required enrollment documentation with CAPS and the **QR Provisional Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** has been processed by GACAPS.

Provisional Status Enrollment:

9.4.5 The program meets all eligibility requirements and contacts CAPSProvidersupport@decal.ga.gov to request Provisional Status enrollment as part of their CAPS enrollment.

9.4.6 The program completes the CAPS/QR **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**, and other CAPS enrollment requirements during the CAPS enrollment process. If provisional status is granted, the Provisional designation will be shown in their Quality Rated account. The designation in the QR system allows GACAPS to show the program as "Scholarship Eligible."

Provisional Status Process:

9.4.7 Providers with a provisional status can accept new CAPS scholarships and retain any existing CAPS scholarships if they maintain adequate progress to obtain a star rating as reported to CAPS by Quality Rated.

9.4.8 Currently, Star-Rated providers undergoing a Change of Ownership will not typically need to be placed in Quality Rated Provisional Status to participate in the CAPS program. Quality Rated has a process whereby the new owner can request the Quality Rated data, including any star rating, be considered for transfer to the new owner and license number. If the new owner does not request the data be transferred or if the rating was not eligible to be transferred, then the new owner is eligible to be placed in Quality Rated Provisional Status if they meet all other CAPS eligibility requirements.

9.4.9 Providers will work through portfolio standards and other provisional requirements such as assigned training to meet adequate progress towards a star rating outlined in their Benchmarks of Progress Plan (BoP).

9.5 QR Probationary Status

Quality Rated Probationary Status may be granted to programs who have failed to earn enough points to achieve or maintain a star rating (0-Rated), are found to be non-compliant with QR standards or other DECAL program standards (CCS, Pre-K, Nutrition etc.), or who have been designated probationary due to other Quality Rated Enforcement Actions (rating suspension etc.) QR Probationary Status allows providers to create, accept, and bill for CAPS scholarships while working toward reinstating their rating or the earning of a new QR star rating.

Probationary Eligibility Requirements:

9.5.1 The program has failed to earn or maintain a star rating, received a 0-star rating on their most recent attempt.

9.5.2 The program is in Good Standing with Child Care Services **(licensing)**.

9.5.3 The program has completed all required enrollment documentation with GACAPS.

Probationary Status Enrollment:

9.5.4 The program meets all eligibility requirements and contacts CAPSprovidersupport@decal.ga.gov to request Probationary Status enrollment or a Quality Rated staff member offers Probationary Status as an option for providers that are eligible based on 0-star rating or enforcement actions. The program will need to complete a new application in Quality Rated.

9.5.5 The program completes the **Probationary Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** and other enrollment requirements in GACAPS. The Probationary designation will be updated in their Quality Rated account once

the application is approved in GACAPS. The designation in the QR system causes the CAPS system to show the program as "Scholarship Eligible."

Probationary Status Process:

9.5.6 Providers with a Probationary status can accept new CAPS scholarships and retain any existing CAPS scholarships if they maintain adequate progress to obtain a star rating as reported to CAPS by Quality Rated.

9.5.7 Providers will work with an assigned Quality Rated Education Specialist Coach to make program improvements and increase overall classroom quality. Quality Improvement goals will be monitored by the Coach using a Quality Indicator Rubric found within the TORSH coaching platform. The Education Specialist Coach will collaborate with the provider through on-site and virtual coaching touchpoints, as well as through online touchpoints using the TORSH coaching platform.

9.5.8 Each Probationary program will receive 6 –12 months to improve classroom quality in preparation for an on-site ERS observation. Portfolio submission will be determined in collaboration with the program administrator after 3 months of steady touchpoints.

9.5.9 After portfolio submission, Probationary status programs will receive on-site Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) observations that will factor into their scores for a star rating.

Probationary Status adequate progress not met:

9.5.10 Programs that do not meet adequate progress between Coaching Touchpoints will receive an improvement plan to be implemented by the next touchpoint. Adequate progress is defined as meeting goals that are set between QR coach and provider on the Quality Improvement Summary form.

9.5.11 Programs will be reported to CAPS for dismissal if adequate progress is not made, as outlined in the improvement plan.

9.5.12 If a Probationary (PROB) Status Removal Letter is received providers have ONE 30-day grace period to meet adequate progress if adequate progress is still not met after the 30-day grace period a dismissal from CAPS will be effective immediately.

9.6 Dismissal:

9.6.1 Programs that are dismissed from the CAPS program cannot create or accept any new CAPS scholarships.

9.6.2 Programs that have existing CAPS scholarships may keep the scholarships until their redetermination date after which the scholarships will not be able to be renewed.

9.6.3 Probationary programs that are dismissed from CAPS will have to wait one-year from their dismissal date before applying to join Probationary status again.

9.6.4 Programs removed from probationary status can elect to complete the QR process on their own and sign up of any available cohort and attempt to earn a star rating. They will remain CAPS and Scholarship ineligible during this period until they have earned a star rating.

10. Quality Rated Payments

10.1 Program Eligibility to Commitment 2 Quality (C2Q) Payments

Purpose of C2Q Payments

C2Q payments aim to incentivize quality improvements in 2- and 3-star rated childcare programs participating in Georgia's CAPS program. These payments are intended to support efforts to enhance early education quality across the state.

For current policies, frequently asked questions and additional resources please visit https://decalqrpayments.com/resources/commitment-to-quality-payments-resources/.

10.2 Program Eligibility to Quality Rated Workforce Bonus (QRWB) Payments

Purpose of QRWB Payments

The Quality Rated Workforce Bonus (QRWB) is an annual payment of $500 provided to eligible child care program staff working in eligible child care centers and family child care learning homes.

For current policies, frequently asked questions and additional resources please visit https://decalqrpayments.com/quality-rated-workforce-bonus-resources/.

11. Appendices

11.1 Registering in the Georgia Professional Development System

All administrators and teaching staff must be registered in the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS) for a program to participate in Quality Rated. Quality Rated points are based on the education and professional development criteria verified in the GaPDS at the time of your portfolio submission. For more information about the GaPDS, go to https://gapds.decal.ga.gov/Default.aspx or call locally at 1-888-92-GAPDS (42737).

11.2 History of Quality Rated

In Georgia, Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) initiated the idea of developing a tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS). The following is an outline of the evolution of today's Quality Rated program.

- From 2000-2004, the Georgia Early Learning Initiative (GELI)/Smart Start Georgia explored and piloted quality initiatives that included training, a substitute teacher program, technical assistance, and increased subsidized childcare rates (through CAPS) in select Georgia counties.
- In 2004, Governor Sonny Perdue and the Georgia General Assembly created Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning to further streamline the state's services to Georgia's children from birth to age five and their families. The department was formed by merging the Office of School Readiness with units from the Department of Human Resources, the Department of Education, and the Georgia Child Care Council.
- In 2004, Georgia Professional Standards Commission approved the Birth through Five Teacher Certification which recognized the importance of qualified early childhood educators.
- In 2006, DECAL gathered diverse stakeholder groups to discuss and design a systemic approach to enhance the quality of Georgia's early care and education system.
- Between September 2006 and April 2007, the Quality Systems Indicators (QSI) Committee developed Georgia's standards and indicators of quality.
- In 2007, the Georgia State Senate convened a committee to report on the quality of childcare in Georgia.
- In June 2007, the QSI committee recommended refinements to the standards and indicators and then identified measurement tools.
- In September 2007, national experts reviewed the standards and indicators from a systemic approach.
- Between October 2007 and March 2008, the Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Institute at University of North Carolina (UNC) – Chapel Hill studied the feasibility of using the standards and indicators to "rate" childcare programs. The FPG feasibility study revealed a need to determine the overall quality of Georgia's family day care programs, childcare learning centers, and Georgia's Pre-K programs.
- In 2008, Georgia State University and the University of Georgia completed an Economic Impact Study revealing the impact of the early childcare and education industry on Georgia's economy.
- Between September 2008 and December 2010, FPG studied the quality of care provided in Georgia's family day programs, childcare learning centers, and Georgia's Pre-K programs. The studies confirmed the need for a TQRIS in Georgia.
- In 2010, a team of DECAL staff designed a graphic representation of Georgia's Quality Rated and Georgia's process called Georgia Steps Up to Quality.
- In October 2011, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal announced the launch of Georgia's TQRIS program called Quality Rated. Quality Rated was developed through a collaborative process involving representatives from other state agencies, for-profit and nonprofit childcare providers, family day care providers, the philanthropic community, early childhood advocacy groups, school-age care advocacy groups, professional organizations, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs), and higher education.

- In January 2012, Quality Rated was launched statewide.

11.3 Portfolio Requirements/Scoring

The following sections explain information about scoring and specific standard requirements for the portfolio.

Points for Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes with More Than One Staff Member

Structural Quality (Portfolio Documentation) *Items or practices in a program that create a framework or foundation that potentially allows for children to experience high quality of care*			
Standards	Total Score Achieved for Each Standard	Portfolio Score to Structural Quality Points Conversion	
1. Director and Teacher Qualifications (Parts A & B)		Portfolio Score	Structural Quality Points
2. Child Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity		0-14	0
3. Family Engagement		15-44	5
4. Intentional Teaching Practices		45-74	10
5. Teacher: Student Ratios		75-104	15
Total Standards (Portfolio) Score			

Process Quality (On-Site ERS Observation)* *Practices, interactions, and environment directly experienced by children that can be easily observed and measured*	
ERS Score Range *Note: This is the program ERS average score*	Process Quality Points for ERS Score
0.0 – 2.99	0
3.0 – 3.99	10
4.0 – 4.99	20
5.0 – 7.00	30

*See section 3.2 in the Program Manual for full scoring details.

Accreditation Bonus Points** Accreditation	Points for Each Accreditation
NAEYC, NAFCC, AMI, AMS, COA	2
NECPA, AdvancED/SACS, NAC, National Lutheran School Accreditation, Association of Christian Schools International	1

**A program can earn a maximum of 4 bonus points. For verification of bonus points, upload your accreditation certificate to the "National Accreditation" section in Section 1 of the online portfolio.

TQRIS Components	Points Awarded
Structural Quality	
Process Quality	
Bonus Points	
Total Points	

Total Points	Star Level
0-14	No Stars
15-24	★
25-35	★★
36-45	★★★

Points for Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Providers with No Additional Staff Members

Structural Quality (Portfolio Documentation) *Items or practices in a program that create a framework or foundation that potentially allows for children to experience high quality of care*			
Standards	Total Score Achieved for Each Standard	Portfolio Score to Structural Quality Points Conversion	
1. Director and Teacher Qualifications (Part A only)		Portfolio Score	Structural Quality Points
2. Child Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity		0-14	0
3. Family Engagement		15-38	5
4. Intentional Teaching Practices		39-62	10
5. Teacher: Student Ratios		63-86	15
Total Standards (Portfolio) Score			

Process Quality (On-Site ERS Observation)* *Practices, interactions, and environment directly experienced by children that can be easily observed and measured*	
ERS Score Range	Process Quality Points for ERS Score
0.0 – 2.99	0
3.0 – 3.99	10
4.0 – 4.99	20
5.0 – 7.00	30

*See section 3.2 in the Program Manual for full scoring details.

Accreditation Bonus Points**	
Accreditation	Points for Each Accreditation
NAEYC, NAFCC, AMI, AMS, COA	2
NECPA, AdvancED/SACS, NAC, National Lutheran School Accreditation, Association of Christian Schools International	1

**A program can earn a maximum of 4 bonus points. For verification of bonus points, upload your accreditation certificate to the "National Accreditation" section in Section 1 of the online portfolio.

TQRIS Components	Points Awarded
Structural Quality	
Process Quality	
Bonus Points	
Total Points	

Total Points	Star Level
0-14	No Stars
15-24	★
25-35	★★
36-45	★★★

Portfolio Standard 1: Director(s) and Teacher Qualifications as Verified in the Georgia Professional Development System

Points awarded in meeting Standard 1 require all administrators, including co-directors and assistant directors (if any), and instructional staff (i.e., education/curriculum coordinator) to register their education and training in the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS). In this system, education and training are verified, and registrants are assigned a "Career Level." Verification may take up to 90 days. Please allow adequate time for all training and career levels to be updated before submitting the program's portfolio. Any updates to training hours and career levels made after portfolio submission will not be considered for scoring purposes. Quality Rated points are based on the education and professional development criteria listed below as verified in the GaPDS. For more information regarding the GaPDS, go to https://gapds.decal.ga.gov/Default.aspx or call 1-866-258-7737. Family child care providers with no additional staff only complete Part A of Standard 1. For Quality Rated scoring purposes, teachers must have a career level of 3 or higher designated by the GaPDS.

Standard 1, Part A: Director(s)/Program Administrator Education and Professional Development – 18 Points Possible

Read all descriptors and award points based on the highest level of criteria met for each section.

1.1 Center Director(s) or Family Provider Education Level	Points Possible
1.1.0 Criteria not met.	0
1.1.1 The director(s)/family provider meets the criteria for **Career Level 4, 5, or 6** in the Georgia Professional Development System **and** has completed a state approved 40-hour Director Course, or an equivalent course that is a minimum of 40 hours which covers *administration of early childhood programs* **and** has 5 years of experience as a program director or family child care provider.	2
1.1.2 The director(s)/family provider meets the criteria for **Career Level 7** in the Georgia Professional Development System. All Career Level designations are determined by the Professional Standards Commission's review of documents submitted by program staff.	4
1.1.3 The director(s)/family provider meets the criteria for **Career Level 8** or higher in the Georgia Professional Development System. All Career Level designations are determined by the Professional Standards Commission's review of documents submitted by program staff.	6

What to Submit for Standard 1.1

All application types:
No documentation needs to be uploaded in this section. Information for scoring career levels, the 40-hour director course, and the administrative years of experience (if applicable) will be pulled from the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission (Ready to Submit). Any academic coursework that will be evaluated to meet the semester hour requirement for 1.1.2 and 1.1.3 must be entered into the GaPDS under ECE-Related coursework.

Note: Only the 40-hour Director Course that is approved by DECAL is accepted by licensing and accepted in the GaPDS. A 40-hour Director Course certificate may be uploaded to the National Accreditation tab for scoring purposes.

- Each identified administrator must meet the criteria, as an individual, to be awarded points for this item.

1.2 Center Director(s) or Family Provider Professional Learning Plan (PLP)	Points Possible
1.2.0 Criteria not met.	0
1.2.1 The director(s)/family provider has a written Professional Learning Plan that includes administrative training in at least **one** Administrative (ADM) Competency area with a goal of completing a minimum of **two** hours of training in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, family engagement, and/or implementation of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards **(GELDS)**. These are the only accepted training topics for Quality Rated scoring purposes.	2
1.2.2 The director(s)/family provider has a written Professional Learning Plan that includes training in at least **one** ECE Competency area and **one** Administrative (ADM) Competency area with a goal of completing **four** hours of training in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, family engagement, and/or implementation of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards **(GELDS)**. These are the only accepted training topics for Quality Rated scoring purposes.	4
1.2.3 The director(s)/family provider has a written Professional Learning Plan that includes training in at least **one** ECE Competency area and **two** different Administrative (ADM) Competency areas with a goal of completing **six** hours of training in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, family engagement, and/or implementation of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards **(GELDS)**. These are the only accepted training topics for Quality Rated scoring purposes.	6
What to Submit for Standard 1.2 **All application types**: o Copy of a Professional Learning Plan for each identified administrator. o Each identified administrator must meet the criteria, as an individual, to be awarded points for this item. *Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard is marked as complete.*	

1.3 Center Director(s) or Family Provider Annual Training	Points Possible
1.3.0 Criteria not met.	0
1.3.1 The director(s)/family provider has completed **14** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	2
1.3.2 The director(s)/family provider has completed **16** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	4
1.3.3 The director(s)/family provider has completed **18** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	6
What to Submit for Standard 1.3 **All application types**: No documentation needs to be uploaded in this section. Points for completed training hours will be awarded based on training entered and verified in the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission (Ready to Submit). o Each identified administrator must meet the criteria, as an individual, to be awarded points for this item.	

Standard 1, Part B: Teacher Education and Professional Development – 18 Points Possible (36 Total Points Possible for Parts A and B of Standard 1)

Read all descriptors and award points based on the highest level of criteria met for each section. See further below for an example of how Standard 1, Part B is scored.

1.4 Teacher Education	Points Possible
1.4.0 Criteria not met.	0
1.4.1 At least **fifty percent (50%) of all lead teachers** and **fifty percent (50%) of assistant teachers** meet the criteria for **Career Level 3** or higher.	2
1.4.2 At least **fifty percent (50%) of all lead teachers** and **fifty percent (50%) of assistant teachers** meet the criteria for **Career Level 4** or higher.	4
1.4.3 At least **seventy-five percent (75%) of all lead teachers** and **fifty percent (50%) of assistant teachers** meet the criteria for **Career Level 5** or higher.	6
What to Submit for Standard 1.4 **All application types**: No documentation needs to be uploaded in this section. Information for scoring career levels will be pulled from the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission (Ready to Submit).	

1.5 Teacher Professional Learning Plan (PLP)	Points Possible
1.5.0 Criteria not met.	0
1.5.1 At least **eighty percent (80%)** of all **lead and assistant teachers** have an annual Professional Learning Plan that includes training in **one ECE Competency** in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, family engagement, and/or implementation of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards **(GELDS)**. These are the only accepted training topics for Quality Rated scoring purposes.	2
1.5.2 Has completed all of criteria 1.5.1, **and** at least **seventy-five percent (75%)** of all **lead and assistant teachers** have an annual Professional Learning Plan that includes training in **two** different **ECE Competencies** in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, family engagement, and/or implementation of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards **(GELDS)**. These are the only accepted training topics for Quality Rated scoring purposes.	4
1.5.3 Has completed all of criteria 1.5.2, **and** at least **fifty percent (50%)** of all **lead and assistant teachers** have an annual Professional Learning Plan that includes training **three** different **ECE Competencies** in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, family engagement, and/or implementation of the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards **(GELDS)**. These are the only accepted training topics for Quality Rated scoring purposes.	6
What to Submit for Standard 1.5 **All application types:** ○ Copy of each staff member's individual PLP with competency codes and training levels noted *Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard will be marked as complete.*	

1.6 Teacher Annual Training	Points Possible
1.6.0 Criteria not met.	0
1.6.1 **Twenty-five percent (25%) of all lead and assistant teachers** have completed **14** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	2
1.6.2 **Fifty percent (50%) of all lead and assistant** teachers have completed **16** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	4
1.6.3 **Seventy-five percent (75%) of all lead and assistant teachers** have completed **18** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	6
What to Submit for Standard 1.6 **All application types**: No documentation needs to be uploaded in this section. Points for completed training hours will be awarded based on training entered and verified in the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission (Ready to Submit). *Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard will be marked as complete.*	

Note: Program employees who have not met the minimum educational requirement for Child Care Licensing should be enrolled in a program of study leading to the award of a credential or degree in early childhood education.

National Accreditations:

Programs may earn up to 4 bonus points. For verification of bonus points, upload your accreditation certificate to the "National Accreditation" section in Standard 1 of the online portfolio. A list of the accepted accreditations and their assigned bonus points may be found below. **Please do not upload a copy of your personal membership to a national accreditation. Only current and valid certificates from one of the programs on the approved list will be considered for scoring purposes.**

Bonus Points Awarded	Accreditation
2	NAEYC, NAFCC, AMI, AMS, COA
1	NECPA, AdvancED/SACS, NAC, National Lutheran School Accreditation, Association of Christian Schools International

Portfolio Standard 2: Child Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity – 18 Points Possible

For this standard, program staff will reflect on their program's current health, safety, and nutrition standards and identify areas that can be improved. Points are assigned based on the completion of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment, a written improvement plan, documentation of actions taken to complete the plan, and evidence that the program has met each of the requirements listed.

2.1 Nutrition and Physical Activity Assessment and Improvement Plan	Points Possible
2.1.0 Criteria not met.	0
2.1.1 The program has conducted the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment and has developed a written improvement plan addressing **1 criterion** for **each of the two domains** (nutrition and physical activity).	2

2.1.2 The program has conducted the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment and has developed a written improvement plan addressing **2 criteria** for **each of the two domains**.	4
2.1.3 The program has conducted the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment and has developed a written improvement plan addressing **3 or more criteria** for **each of the two domains**.	6

What to Submit for Standard 2.1

All application types:

- Completed the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment
- Completed improvement plan with evidence of addressing 1, 2, or 3 criteria for each of the two domains (nutrition and physical activity)

Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard will be marked as complete.

2.2 First Aid/CPR Certification	Points Possible
2.2.0 Criteria not met.	0
2.2.1 **Sixty percent (60%)** of staff have a current First Aid/CPR certification.	2
2.2.2 **Seventy percent (70%)** of staff have a current First Aid/CPR certification.	4
2.2.3 **Eighty percent (80%)** of staff have a current First Aid/CPR certification.	6

What to Submit for Standard 2.2

All application types:

- First Aid/CPR certifications are entered into the GaPDS and are posted on the "Other Career Data" tab. Points will be awarded based on the information in the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission (Ready to Submit).

2.3 Written Health Information/Family Resources	Points Possible
2.3.0 Criteria not met.	0
2.3.1 In the past year, the program has provided culturally responsive written materials to families about the importance of **immunizations, oral hygiene, and vision and hearing screenings**.	2
2.3.2 Has completed all of criteria 2.3.1 and has established a policy to encourage families to submit vision, hearing, nutrition, and dental screenings for all four-year-old children within 90 days of enrollment or within 90 days of reaching their fourth birthday.	4
2.3.3 Has completed all of criteria 2.3.2, **and** developmental monitoring tools are used to provide early detection of health-related issues and developmental delays to support early intervention.	6

What to Submit for Standard 2.3

All application types:

2.3.1: Samples of written material shared with families

2.3.2: Sample of health screening policies for four-year-old children from your program's Parent/Family Handbook. If four-year-old children are not enrolled in your program, and none of the enrolled three-year-old children will turn four years of age while attending, upload a statement indicating this (in lieu of the policy).

2.3.3: Description and evidence of developmental monitoring tools used to detect health related issues and developmental delays. To receive credit, upload a sample of the tool you are using and a narrative detailing how the tool is used by the program (such as frequency, purpose, steps taken if the results prompt further action, etc.). The monitoring tool that is used should check milestones in a variety of domains. Links to online versions of monitoring tools will not be accepted. **Do not upload children's confidential health data.** For information about developmental monitoring, contact your Inclusion Specialist at inclusion@decal.ga.gov.

Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard will be marked as complete.

Portfolio Standard 3: Family Engagement – 18 Points Possible

Family Engagement is the shared responsibility of families, schools, and communities to actively promote, support, and sustain family wellbeing, healthy child development, strong family-child relationships and lifelong learning for all children and families. Programs can play a key role in equipping families to best support their children's early learning experiences.

For this standard, points are assigned based on the percentage of program staff that have completed Strengthening Families training, the completion of the Family Engagement Self-Assessment, a written family engagement improvement plan, documentation of actions taken to complete the plan, and evidence that the program has met each of the requirements listed.

For an Initial application and a Request for Reassessment, credit is given for Strengthening Families training that has been completed no more than five (5) years before the portfolio submission date (Ready to Submit). For a 3-year Renewal Reassessment, a different Strengthening Families course should be taken in the three-year window between the previous rating date and the date of the reassessment submission, as credit is not given for repeating the same course that was counted in the previous portfolio. A different Strengthening Families course is not required for a Re-Application or a Request for Reassessment, due to the shorter timeframe between the rating date and the submission date.

3.1 Overview of Five Protective Factors	Points Possible
3.1.0 Criteria not met.	0
3.1.1 **Fifty percent (50%)** of the staff have completed the Strengthening Families training.	2
3.1.2 **Seventy-five percent (75%)** of the staff have completed the Strengthening Families training.	4
3.1.3 **Eighty percent (80%)** of the staff have completed the Strengthening Families training.	6

What to Submit for Standard 3.1

All application types:

- Strengthening Families training will be verified for all staff in the GaPDS. Points for completed training hours will be awarded based on training entered and verified in the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission (Ready to Submit).

Any training certificates uploaded to the portfolio will not be considered for scoring purposes.

Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard will be marked as complete.

3.2 Family Engagement Self-Assessment	Points Possible
3.2.0 Criteria not met.	0
3.2.1 The program has conducted the Family Engagement Self-Assessment within the past year and has developed a written improvement plan to address one goal from one of the protective factors stated in the Family Engagement Self-Assessment.	2
3.2.2 The program has conducted the Family Engagement Self-Assessment within the past year and has developed a written improvement plan to address three goals. Each goal should be from a different protective factor stated in the Family Engagement Self-Assessment.	4

3.2.3 The program has conducted the Family Engagement Self-Assessment within the past year and has developed a written improvement plan to address four goals. Each goal should be from a different protective factor stated in the Family Engagement Self-Assessment.	6

What to Submit for Standard 3.2

Initial Application and Reassessment:

- A completed Family Engagement Self-Assessment and written improvement plan addressing either 1, 3, or 4 goals. Each goal submitted should be from a different protective factor. The self-assessment is located in Standard 3 of the online portfolio.

Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard will be marked as complete.

3.3 Family Engagement Written Evidence	Points Possible
3.3.0 Criteria not met.	0
3.3.1 The program has policies and practices in place addressing inclusion, confidentiality of child records, and family engagement.	2
3.3.2 Has completed all of criteria 3.3.1 and has policies and practices that promote healthy transitions as children transition to another room or setting **and** offers family conferences at least twice a year.	4
3.3.3 Has completed all of criteria 3.3.2 and shows evidence that the program provides a role to strengthen family connections, **and** the program receives ongoing input from families and incorporates family voice in ongoing quality improvement efforts.	6

What to Submit for Standard 3.3

All application types:

- If reassessment, evidence of implementing the prior improvement plan
- 3.3.1: Evidence of written policy on inclusion and confidentiality of children's records; Evidence of policies and practices that encourage family engagement (policy, volunteer opportunities in classrooms, translated open classroom policy)
- 3.3.2: Evidence of policies and practices that demonstrate transition activities (policy, special events, site visits, guest speaker agenda, etc.); Evidence of family conferences twice yearly (conference forms, policy, etc.)
- 3.3.3: Physical Evidence of family connection activities (family workshop or intergenerational event description and sign-in sheet, screenshot of classroom website/social media page, copies of newsletters/handouts, photo of lending library, examples of community partnerships, and/or copies of at-home educational activities given to families); Physical Evidence of ongoing family input (family advisory committee/board meeting agenda, copies of *completed* program surveys distributed to families, photo of suggestion box for families)

Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard will be marked as complete.

Portfolio Standard 4: Intentional Teaching Practices – 12 Points Possible

This standard respects the right for programs to choose the curriculum they implement. Points are earned in this area based on the program's ability to show a direct alignment between a developmentally appropriate curriculum, Georgia's Early Learning and Development Standards **(GELDS)**, lesson planning, and assessment. It is critical that programs show intention and responsiveness to the holistic developmental needs of children at each

age level. Evidence for this standard must be descriptive and address all learning domains. School-Age classrooms identified in Standard 1 must upload one week of lesson plans.

4.1 Curriculum	Points Possible
4.1.0 Criteria not met.	0
4.1.1 The program uses an age-appropriate curriculum that supports development across all five learning domains (physical development and motor skills, social and emotional development, approaches to play and learning, communication, language and literacy, and cognitive development and general knowledge) **and** is culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate.	2
4.1.2 Has completed all of criteria 4.1.1, **and** the program curriculum is aligned with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards **(GELDS)**.	4
What to Submit for Standard 4.1 **All application types**: Description of your program's curriculum used at each age level including the following: ○ Evidence of how curriculum supports the five learning domains (physical development and motor skills, social and emotional development, approaches to play and learning, communication, language and literacy, and cognitive development and general knowledge) ○ Evidence of how curriculum is culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate. ○ Statement of how the curriculum is aligned with the GELDS (narratives of how curriculum is aligned) listed in the narrative. *Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard will be marked as complete.*	

4.2 Lesson Plans and Accommodations for Every Child	Points Possible
4.2.0 Criteria not met.	0
4.2.1 Lesson plans are used for all age groups and include evidence of adaptations to meet children's individual needs.	2
4.2.2 Has completed all of criteria 4.2.1, **and** the program lesson plans are aligned with the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards **(GELDS)** for birth to five classrooms.	4
What to Submit for Standard 4.2 **All application types**: ○ One week (five full days) of lesson plans **per** age group that show adaptations to meeting a child/children's individual needs, allowing them to participate in an activity listed on the lesson plan. ○ Shows alignment, when applicable, with the GELDS (GELDS codes must be complete and used with the correct age correlations). For GELDS lesson plan templates, visit https://gelds.decal.ga.gov *Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard will be marked as complete.*	

4.3 Assessments	Points Possible
4.3.0 Criteria not met.	0
4.3.2 The program gathers instructional assessment data on at least one age group, which describes how the data is collected and how the data is used to guide planning and instruction.	4
What to Submit for Standard 4.3	

All application types:

- Submit a paragraph describing how the program uses instructional assessments (an on-going process that informs planning and instruction) with each age group to measure child outcomes. Include how instructional assessment data is collected, how often the data is collected, how the data is used, and indicate the applicable age groups.

Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard will be marked as complete.

Portfolio Standard 5: Teacher: Student Ratios and Group Size – 20 Points Possible

Early care and education research indicates that smaller numbers of children per adult are associated with more positive outcomes and that crowded environments associated with large group sizes may interfere with learning. This section requires a program to submit evidence for each classroom of ratios and group sizes throughout the entire day at the program. We recognize that individual programs must consider many variables when determining how to manage ratios and group sizes. This standard recognizes that a variance of both ratio and group size may be based on the time of day and staff schedules. *Ratios are scored based on the youngest age served in multi-age group settings and those ratios are used to determine the Level Rating.* A program is assigned points based on which ratio level they maintain for 75% or more of the classroom hours and/or program day.

5.1 Teacher: Student Ratios – Level Rating Scale			
Classroom Age Groups	Level 1 Ratios	Level 2 Ratios	Level 3 Ratios
Infants (6 weeks to 12 months)	1:6	1:5	1:4
Toddlers (12 months to 23 months)	1:7	1:5 and 1:6	1:4
Two's	1:9	1:7 and 1:8	1:6
Three's	1:14	1:9 thru 1:13	1:8
Four's	1:17	1:12 thru 1:16	1:11
Five's	1:19	1:14 thru 1:18	1:13
School Age	1:20	1:16 thru 1:19	1:15

Highest percentage for majority of the day determines overall level
Level 1 Ratios = 8 Total Points
Level 2 Ratios = 14 Total Points
Level 3 Ratios = 20 Points

Note: For programs serving children in mixed-age groups, ratios will be based on the age of the youngest age group served in the program.

What to Submit for Standard 5

Initial Application and Reassessment:

Teacher: Student ratio charts for one day for each classroom within 30 calendar days of portfolio submission.

For Pre-K classrooms only: If the portfolio is submitted during the summer, Pre-K classrooms may submit a ratio chart from the last month of school in which children were present.

Required information must be completed, saved, and uploaded before this standard will be marked as complete.

Rating Points for Stand Alone School-Age Care Programs with More Than One Staff Member

Structural Quality (Portfolio Documentation) Items or practices in a program that create a framework or foundation that potentially allows children to experience high quality of care.			
Standards	Total Score Achieved for Each Standard	Portfolio Score to Structural Quality Points Conversion	
1. Director/Administrator and Teacher Qualifications (Parts A & B)		Portfolio Score	Structural Quality Points
2. Child Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity		0-14 15-44 45-74 75-104	0 5 10 15
3. Family Engagement			
4. Intentional Teaching Practices			
5. Teacher: Student Ratios			
Total Standards (Portfolio) Score			

Process Quality (On-Site ERS Observation) * *Practices, interactions, and environment directly experienced by children that can be easily observed and measured*	
ERS Score Range *Note: This is the program ERS average score*	Process Quality Points for ERS Score
0.0 – 2.99	0
3.0 – 3.99	10
4.0 – 4.99	20
5.0 – 7.00	30
Accreditation Bonus Points**	
Accreditation	Points for Each Accreditation
NAEYC, NAFCC, AMI, AMS, COA	2
NECPA,Cognia/SACS, NAC, National Lutheran School Accreditation, Association of Christian Schools International	1

QRIS Components	Points Awarded
Structural Quality	
Process Quality	
Bonus Points	
Total Points	

Total Points	Star Level
0-14	No Stars
15-24	★
25-35	★★
36-45	★★★

11.4 School Age Only Portfolio Requirements/Scoring

Portfolio Standard 1: Director(s) and Teacher Qualifications as Verified in the Georgia Professional Development System

Points awarded in meeting Standard I require all administrators, including co-directors and assistant directors (if any), and instructional staff to register their education and training in the Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS). In the GaPDS, education and training are verified, and registrants are assigned a "Career Level." Verification may take up to 90 days. Quality Rated points are based on the education and professional development criteria listed below as verified in the GaPDS. For more information regarding the GaPDS, https://gapds.decal.ga.gov/Default.aspx or call 1-866-258-7737. For Quality Rated scoring purposes, teachers must have a career level designated by the GaPDS.

Standard 1, Part A: Director/Program Administrator(s) Education and Professional Development – 18 Points Possible

Read all descriptors and award points based on the highest level of criteria met for each section.

1.1 Program Director(s) Education Level	Points Possible
1.1.0 Criteria not met.	0
1.1.1 The director/administrator(s) meets the criteria for **Career Level 4, 5, or 6** in the Georgia Professional Development System **and** has 2 years of experience as a program director or administrator.	2
1.1.2 The director/administrator(s) meets the criteria for **Career Level 7** or higher in the Georgia Professional Development System. All Career Level designations are determined by the Professional Standards Commission's review of documents submitted by program staff.	4
1.1.3 The director/administrator(s) meets the criteria for **Career Level 8** or higher in the Georgia Professional Development System. All Career Level designations are determined by the Professional Standards Commission's review of documents submitted by program staff.	6

What to Submit for Standard 1.1

Initial Application and Reassessment:

- No documentation needs to be uploaded in this section. Information for scoring career levels and years of administrative experience will be pulled from the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission (Ready to Submit). All academic coursework will be evaluated by GaPDS to meet the semester hour requirement.
- An administrator must be identified in GAPDS to receive points for Standard 1 Part A.

1.2 Program Director/Administrator(s) Professional Learning Plan (PLP)	Points Possible
1.2.0 Criteria not met.	0
1.2.1 The director/administrator(s) has a written Professional Learning Plan that includes administrative training in at least **one Administrative (ADM) Competency** area with a goal of completing a minimum of **two** hours of training in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, and family engagement.	2
1.2.2 The director/administrator(s) has a written Professional Learning Plan that includes training in at least **one ECE Competency** and **one Administrative (ADM) Competency** area with a goal of completing **four** hours of training in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, and family engagement.	4
1.2.3 The director/administrator(s) has a written Professional Learning Plan that includes training in at least **one ECE Competency** and **two different Administrative (ADM) Competency** areas with a goal of completing **six** hours of training in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, and family engagement.	6
What to Submit for Standard 1.2 **All application types:** ○ Copy of a Professional Learning Plan with competency codes and training topics noted ○ GELDS is not an accepted training topic for school-age only portfolios. ○ Each identified administrator must meet the criteria, as an individual, to be awarded points for this item.	

1.3 Program Director/Administrator's Annual Training	Points Possible
1.3.0 Criteria not met.	0
1.3.1 The director/administrator(s) has completed **14** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	2
1.3.2 The director/administrator(s) has completed **16** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	4
1.3.3 The director/administrator(s) has completed **18** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	6
What to Submit for Standard 1.3 **Initial Application and Reassessment:** No documentation needs to be uploaded in this section. Information completed training hours will be awarded based on training entered and verified in the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission (Ready to Submit). ○ Each identified administrator must meet the criteria, as an individual, to be awarded points for this item.	

Standard 1, Part B: Teacher Education and Professional Development – 18 Points Possible (36 Total Points Possible for Parts A and B of Standard 1)

Read all descriptors and award points based on the highest level of criteria met for each section.

1.4 Teacher Education	Points Possible
1.4.0 Criteria not met.	0
1.4.1 At least **50% of all lead teachers and 50% of assistant teachers** meet the criteria for **Career Level 3** or higher.	2
1.4.2 At least **50% of all lead teachers and 50% of assistant teachers** meet the criteria for **Career Level 4** or higher.	4
1.4.3 At least **75% of all lead teachers and 50% of assistant teachers** meet the criteria for **Career Level 5** or higher.	6
What to Submit for Standard 1.4 **Initial Application and Reassessment:** No documentation needs to be uploaded in this section. Information for scoring career levels will be pulled from the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission (Ready to Submit).	

1.5 Teacher Professional Learning Plan (PLP)	Points Possible
1.5.0 Criteria not met.	0
1.5.1 At least **Eighty percent (80%)** of all **lead and assistant teachers** have an annual Professional Learning Plan that includes training in **one** ECE Competency and training in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, and family engagement.	2
1.5.2 Has completed all of criteria 1.5.1, **and** at least **Seventy-five percent (75%)** of all **lead and assistant teachers** have an annual Professional Learning Plan that includes training in **two** different ECE Competency areas and training in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, and family engagement.	4
1.5.3 Has completed all of criteria 1.5.2, **and** at least **Fifty percent (50%)** of all **lead and assistant teachers** have an annual Professional Learning Plan that includes training in **three** different ECE Competency areas and training in one or more of the following areas: inclusion, cultural responsiveness, supporting dual language learners, and family engagement.	6
What to Submit for Standard 1.5 **All Application Types:** ○ Copy of each staff member's individual PLP with competency codes and training topics noted ○ GELDS is not an accepted training topic for school-age only portfolios. ○ New PLP for each staff member for the current year	

1.6 Teacher Annual Training	Points Possible
1.6.0 Criteria not met.	0

1.6.1 **Twenty-five percent (25%) of all lead and assistant teachers** have completed **14** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	2
1.6.2 **Fifty percent (50%) of all lead and assistan**t teachers have completed **16** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	4
1.6.3 **Seventy-five percent (75%) of all lead and assistant teachers** have completed **18** hours of DECAL-approved training **during the past 12 months prior to portfolio submission** (Ready to Submit).	6
What to Submit for Standard 1.6 **All application types:** No documentation needs to be uploaded in this section. Points for completed training hours will be awarded based on training entered and verified in the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission (Ready to Submit).	

Note: Program employees who have not met the minimum educational requirement for Child Care Licensing should be enrolled in a program of study leading to the award of a credential or degree in early childhood or elementary education.

Portfolio Standard 2: Child Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity – 18 Points Possible

For this standard, program staff will reflect on their program's current health, safety, and nutrition standards and identify areas that can be improved. Points are assigned based on the completion of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment, a written improvement plan, documentation of actions taken to complete the plan, and evidence that the program has met each of the requirements listed.

2.1 Nutrition and Physical Activity Assessment and Improvement Plan	Points Possible
2.1.0 Criteria not met.	0
2.1.1 The program has conducted the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Checklist and has developed a written improvement plan addressing **1 indicator** for **each of the two domains** (nutrition and physical activity).	2
2.1.2 The program has conducted the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Checklist and has developed a written improvement plan addressing **2 indicators** for **each of the two domains**.	4
2.1.3 The program has conducted the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Checklist and has developed a written improvement plan addressing at least **3 indicators** for **each of the two domains**.	6
What to Submit for Standard 2.1 **All application types:** o Completed Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Checklist o Completed improvement plan with evidence of addressing 1, 2, or 3 indicators for each of the two domains (nutrition and physical activity)	
2.2 First Aid/CPR Certification	Points Possible

2.2.0 Criteria not met.	0
2.2.1 **60%** of staff have a current First Aid/CPR certification.	2
2.2.2 **70%** of staff have a current First Aid/CPR certification.	4
2.2.3 **80%** of staff have a current First Aid/CPR certification.	6

What to Submit for Standard 2.2

All application types:

- First Aid/CPR certifications are entered into the GaPDS and are posted on the "Other Career Data" tab. Points will be awarded based on the information in the GaPDS at the time of portfolio submission (Ready to Submit). Any First Aid/CPR certificates uploaded to the portfolio will not be considered for scoring purposes.

2.3 Written Health Information/Nutrition/Physical Activity Resources	Points Possible
2.3.0 Criteria not met.	0
2.3.1 The program administrator or director has viewed the *National Institute of Out of School Time (NIOST) Health and Safety Webinar* and completed the on-screen Webinar viewing questions.	2
2.3.2 Has completed all of criteria 2.3.1 and has established a policy to encourage healthy meals and snacks as demonstrated by an uploaded nutritious weekly menu provided to parents and families.	4
2.3.3 Has completed all of criteria 2.3.2, **and** the program has provided written materials to families about the importance of **immunizations, oral hygiene, contagious diseases/illnesses, vision and hearing screenings, and the benefits of physical activity and healthy nutrition**.	6

What to Submit for Standard 2.3

Initial Application and Reassessment:

- 2.3.1: Complete the on-screen NOIST Webinar viewing verification statement and questions. The webinar can be viewed at the following link: https://youtu.be/bnW_TXMTf5o
- 2.3.2: Submit sample weekly menu shared with families
- 2.3.3: Samples of written material shared with families relating to immunizations, oral hygiene, vision and hearing screenings, contagious diseases/illnesses, and the benefits of physical activity and healthy nutrition. Materials should be provided in a language that is responsive to the families served in the program.

Do not upload children's confidential health data.

Portfolio Standard 3: Family Engagement – 18 Points Possible

Family engagement, particularly during the early school-age years, has been proven to have a profound impact on a child's success in school and life. Programs can play a key role in equipping families to best support their children's learning experiences. For this standard, points are assigned based on program staff having completed online awareness training, the completion of the Family Engagement Assessment, a written family engagement improvement plan, documentation of actions taken to complete the plan, and evidence that the program has met each of the requirements listed.

3.1 Family Partnership Awareness	Points Possible
3.1.0 Criteria not met.	0
3.1.1 The program administrator or director has completed the interactive online survey *Assess Your Family Engagement* and has identified the number of items the program currently engages in.	2
3.1.2 In addition to 3.1.1, the program administrator or director has read the *Family Engagement Research Brief* and has completed the on-screen questions.	4
3.1.3 In addition to 3.1.2, **80%** of the staff have viewed both awareness videos online: *Communicate with Families* and *Benefits of Family Engagement*.	6

What to Submit for Standard 3.1

Initial Application and Reassessment:

- 3.1.1: Complete the on-screen *Assess Your Family Engagement* verification statement and question.

The online survey can be found at the following link:
https://y4yarchives.org/index.php/en/learn/family/family-engagement-extras/assess-your-family-engagement

- 3.1.2: Complete the on-screen *Family Engagement Research Brief* verification statement and questions.

The brief can be found at the following link:
https://dcle2-qrisdev-test.azurewebsites.net/Content/Documents/Family_Engagement_Research_Brief.pdf

- 3.1.3: Complete the on-screen Staff Video Viewing table and verification statement.

The online videos can be found by clicking the following links:
https://youtu.be/Xy7nVWjH7hE?si=YGdFgYvAGUiK6BwW
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ELDHg7ql2Gw

3.2 Family Engagement Self-Assessment and Improvement Plan	Points Possible
3.2.0 Criteria not met.	0
3.2.1 The program has conducted the Family Engagement Self-Assessment within the past year and has developed a written improvement plan to address **one goal** from one of the protective factors stated in the Family Engagement Self-Assessment.	2
3.2.2 The program has conducted the Family Engagement Self-Assessment within the past year and has developed a written improvement plan to address **three goals.** Each goal is from a different protective factor stated in the Family Engagement Self-Assessment.	4
3.2.3 The program has conducted the Family Engagement Self-Assessment within the past year and has developed a written improvement plan to address **four goals.** Each goal is from a different protective factor stated in the Family Engagement Self-Assessment.	6

What to Submit for Standard 3.2

Initial Application and Reassessment:

- Completed on-screen Family Engagement Self-Assessment and written improvement plan addressing either 1, 3, or 4 goals from the protective factors stated in the Family Engagement Self-Assessment. Each goal must be from a ***different*** protective factor.

3.3 Family Engagement/Support	Points Possible
3.3.0 Criteria not met.	0
3.3.1 The program has policies and practices in place addressing inclusion, confidentiality of child records, family engagement, and shares resources of interest to families.	2
3.3.2 Has completed all of criteria 3.3.1 and completes a plan for **three of the strategies** for *Knowing Families and Their Culture* listed on-screen.	4
3.3.3 Has completed all of criteria 3.3.2 and completes a plan for **three of the strategies** for *Supporting and Engaging Families* listed on-screen.	6

What to Submit for Standard 3.3

Initial Application and Reassessment:

- If reassessment, evidence of implementing prior improvement plan
- 3.3.1: Evidence of written policy on inclusion and confidentiality of children's records; Evidence of policies and practices that encourage family engagement (policy, volunteer opportunities in program, special events, targeted outreach activities, etc.); Evidence of family resource sharing (samples of materials distributed to families, family handbook, picture of family resource area)
- 3.3.2: Complete 3 strategy plans for Knowing Families and Their Culture (on-screen).
- 3.3.3: Complete 3 strategy plans for Supporting and Engaging Families (on-screen).

Portfolio Standard 4: Intentional Teaching Practices – 12 Points Possible

This standard respects the right for programs to choose the curriculum they implement. Points are earned in this area based on the program's ability to show a direct alignment between a developmentally appropriate curriculum, lesson planning, and assessment. It is critical that programs show intention and responsiveness to the holistic developmental needs of children at each age level. Evidence for this standard must be descriptive and address all learning domains.

4.1 Curriculum	Points Possible
4.1.0 Criteria not met.	0
4.1.1 The program uses an age-appropriate curriculum that supports development across all five learning domains (physical development and motor skills, social and emotional development, approaches to play and learning, communication, language and literacy, and cognitive development and general knowledge) **and** is culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate.	2
4.1.2 Has completed all of criteria 4.1.1, **and** the program curriculum is aligned with the *Georgia Afterschool & Youth Development Quality Standards*.	4

What to Submit for Standard 4.1

Initial Application and Reassessment:
Description of your program's curriculum used at each age level including the following:

- Results of curriculum questionnaire demonstrate how curriculum supports the five learning domains (physical development and motor skills, social and emotional development, approaches to play and learning, communication, language and literacy, and cognitive development and general knowledge)
- Curriculum narrative includes a statement regarding alignment with the *Georgia Afterschool & Youth Development Quality Standards*. These standards can be found at: http://georgiaasyd.org/quality-standards

4.2 Activity/Lesson Plans and Accommodations for Every Child	Points Possible
4.2.0 Criteria not met.	0
4.2.1 Activity/lesson plans are used for all age/grade groups.	2
4.2.2 Has completed all of criteria 4.2.1, **and** activity/lesson plans include evidence of adaptations to meet children's individual needs.	4

What to Submit for Standard 4.2

Initial Application and Reassessment:

- One week (five days) of lesson plans **per** age/grade group that show adaptation to meet a child/children's individual needs, allowing them to participate in an activity listed on the lesson plan.
- Classroom schedules are not considered as lesson plans for scoring purposes.

4.3 Assessments	Points Possible
4.3.0 Criteria not met.	0
4.3.1 Gathers program wide assessment data by completing the on-screen *Program Assessment Checklist* **and** develops **one goal** for staffing practices and **one different goal** for programming practices and operations.	2
4.3.2 Has completed all of criteria 4.3.1 and distributes family and student surveys to engage families and youth in program assessment.	4

What to Submit for Standard 4.3

Initial Application and Reassessment:

- Complete Program Assessment Checklist (on-screen)
- Complete one goal for staffing practices and one goal for programming practices and operations, based on results of Program Assessment Checklist (on-screen). The two goals should not be identical.
- Submit one copy each of a **completed** family and student survey that has been returned. Sample family and student surveys can be found in "Additional Resources" at the bottom of the Quality Rated screen: https://qualityrated.decal.ga.gov/

Portfolio Standard 5: Teacher: Student Ratios and Group Size – 20 Points Possible

Research indicates that smaller numbers of children per adult are associated with more positive outcomes and that crowded environments associated with large group sizes may interfere with learning. This section requires a program to submit evidence for each classroom or grouping of ratios and group sizes throughout the entire day at the program. We recognize that individual programs must consider many variables when determining how to manage ratios and group sizes. This standard recognizes that a variance of both ratio and group size may be based on the time of day and staff schedules. **A program is assigned points based on which ratio level they maintain for 75% or more of the classroom hours and/or program day.**

5.1 Teacher: Student Ratios – Level Rating Scale			
Classroom Age Groups	**Level 1 Ratios**	**Level 2 Ratios**	**Level 3 Ratios**
School Age	1:20	1:16 thru 1:19	1:15

Note: For programs serving children in mixed-age groups, ratios will be based on the ages of the youngest children in the group.

Highest Percentage Level Determines Overall Level
Level 1 Ratios = 8 Total Points
Level 2 Ratios = 14 Total Points
Level 3 Ratios = 20 Points

What to Submit for Standard 5

Initial Application and Reassessment:

- Teacher: Student ratio charts for one day for each classroom within 30 calendar days of portfolio submission

11.5 Portfolio Standard 1.4 Scenario

Lead Teacher 1 Career Level 7	Lead Teacher 5 Career Level 4
Lead Teacher 2 Career Level 7	Lead Teacher 6 Pending in GaPDS
Lead Teacher 3 Career Level 6	Lead Teacher 7 Pending in GaPDS
Lead Teacher 4 Career Level 5	Lead Teacher 8 Pending in GaPDS

Assistant Teacher 1 Career Level 5	Assistant Teacher 5 Pending in GaPDS
Assistant Teacher 2 Career Level 5	Assistant Teacher 6 Pending in GaPDS
Assistant Teacher 3 Career Level 4	Assistant Teacher 7 Pending in GaPDS
Assistant Teacher 4 Career Level 4	Assistant Teacher 8 Pending in GaPDS

In this scenario, *the lowest Career Level assigned by the GaPDS for both lead and assistant teachers is Career Level 4*. For the lead teachers, there are three in pending status. For the assistant teachers, there are four in pending status.

To determine the number of lead teachers who meet at least a Career Level 4, divide the number of teachers with at least a Career Level 4 by the total number of lead teachers:

5 lead teachers with an assigned Career Level of 4 or higher ÷ 8 total lead teachers = 62.5%

Therefore, 62.5% of the lead teachers meet Career Level 4 or higher.

To determine the number of assistant teachers who meet at least a Career Level 4, perform the same equation above that was done for lead teachers:

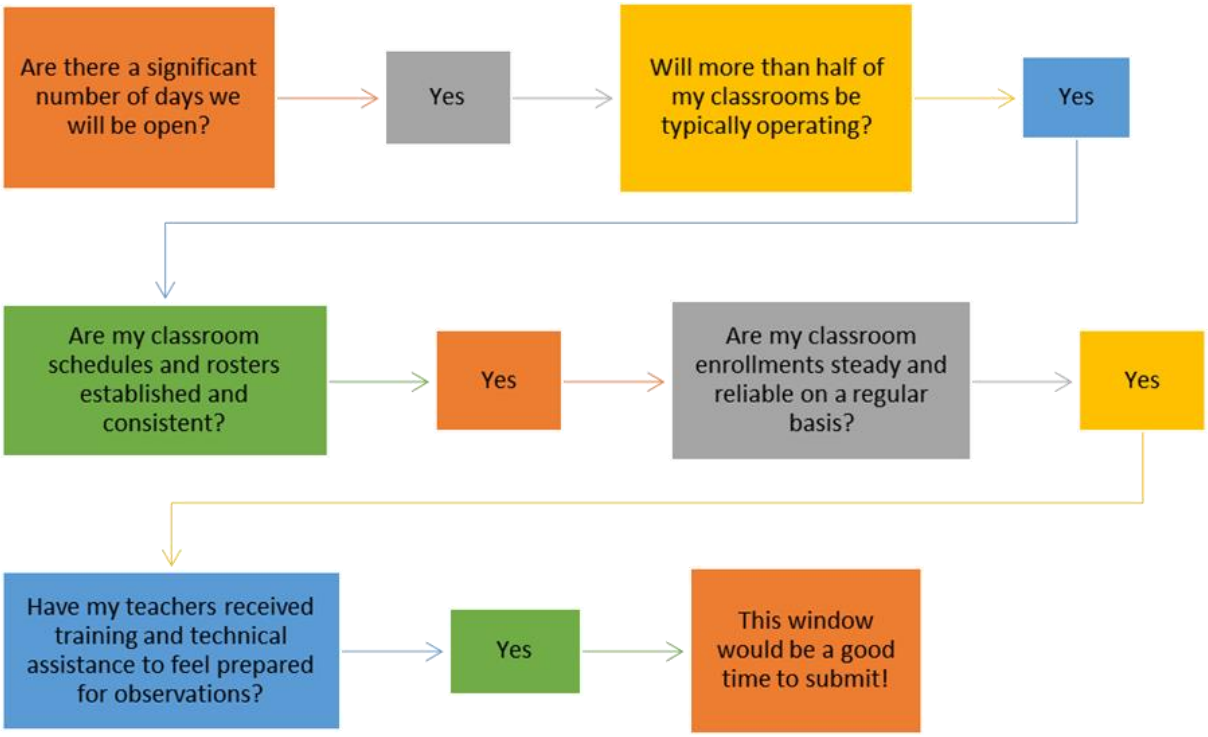
4 assistant teachers with an assigned Career Level of 4 or higher ÷ 8 total assistant teachers = 50%

Therefore, 50% of assistant teachers meet a Career Level of 4 or higher.

In this scenario, the program would receive 4 points in Standard 1.4 because at least 50% of all lead teachers and 50% of assistant teachers have an assigned Career Level 4 or higher.

11.6 Submission Planning Guides

Initial Application and Reapplication Portfolios



12. Glossary

12.1 Active scholarships

A child care scholarship provides authorization for CAPS eligibility to the parent. Active scholarships are those which are currently being billed for children enrolled and attending the childcare program.

12.2 Billing cut-off date

The last date to bill CAPS for preceding service weeks to ensure the service weeks are included in the calculation of the C2Q payment. Service weeks that are billed after a billing cut-off date will not be included in future quarterly payments.

12.3 CAPS (Childcare and Parent Services)

Georgia's childcare subsidy assistance program.

12.4 Change of Location

The current owner of a licensed child care program relocates the program to a new building location.

12.5 Change of Ownership

A new owner buys an existing child care business, building, or property that remains in continuous operation, or the current owner changes the ownership type (e.g., Inc. to LLC).

12.6 Child Care Services (CCS)

Child Care Services responsibilities include:

- Supporting licensed child care learning centers and family child care learning homes through monitoring, technical assistance and training to ensure safe and healthy environments and to improve the quality of services to children.
- Providing information to parents about Georgia child care programs through our Provider Search feature.
- Providing consumer education by making child development and early childhood education information available to parents and providers.
- Providing information and assistance to those opening child care programs.
- Investigating complaints of child care programs.
- Investigating reports of unlicensed child care operations.

12.7 Commitment to Quality Payment

C2Q payments are lump sum quarterly payments from Quality Rated made to 2- and 3-Star Rated CAPS providers. These payments are special funds designed to help providers continue focusing on high-quality care that improves children's outcomes.

12.8 Cultural

The term "cultural" refers to an individual's or group's ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and educational frame of reference as well as differences in family characteristics, language, dialect, gender, ability, values, sexual orientation, life conditions, religion, and community.

12.9 Curriculum

Curriculum is the academic content of a child's day and encompasses everything that a child learns in the classroom, including but not limited to:

- Daily activities -- circle time, song time, active play time, story time, craft time, large group, dramatic play, etc.
- The transitional period that exists between activities
- Any everyday activity and routine that the children participate in and know to expect

12.10 Deficient status

This Child Care Services (CCS) compliance zone indicates a program's performance is demonstrating a serious need for improvement in meeting rules.

12.11 Developmental Monitoring

Developmental monitoring is an ongoing process which indicates a child's health and/or developmental status over time. It also measures development based on the age of the child and can be used for referrals, if needed. Some examples: Ages and Stages and Learn the Signs Act Early Developmental Milestones.

12.12 Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale - Third Edition (ECERS-3)

The third edition of the ECERS is designed to assess the quality of care for center-based programs serving children ages 3-5.

12.13 Eligibility verification date

The date in which DECAL systems are monitored to extract and evaluate data points to determine eligibility for C2Q payments. Systems monitored include Quality Rated, Child Care Services (CCS), and Child and Parent Services (CAPS).

12.14 Enforcement Action

Steps or measures taken by Quality Rated to address non-compliance with rules, regulations, or quality standards set by Quality rated.

12.15 Environment Rating Scales (ERS)

The Environment Rating Scales (ERS) are valid and reliable observation tools used throughout the world to measure the quality of the child care environment. The tool(s) used during the observation is based on the type of child care setting and the age groups served. The Environment Rating Scales currently used in the QRIS process are:

- *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition*
- *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition*
- *Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition*
- *School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale – Updated*

12.16 Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale - Third Edition (FCCERS-3)

The third edition of the FCCERS is designed to assess the quality of care for home-based programs for children from birth through age 12.

12.17 Family Engagement Self-Assessment

Family Engagement Self-Assessment tool is a modification of the Center for Study of Social Policy's Strengthening Families Self-Assessment Tool for Center-Based Early Care and Education Programs and Family Child Care

Programs. This tool should be used to help programs identify areas where they want to grow. The three categories can be identified as follows:

Beginning *– is when a program is taking initial steps (activities) to meet a given indicator*

Progressing *– is when a program has systems in place to meet the objective.*

Innovating *– is when a program has creative, effective approaches to meet the unique needs of the program and family.*

12.18 Georgia Childcare Administrative and Payment System (GACAPS)

The information technology system used to manage child care provider participation, payments, and data related to CAPS services.

12.19 Georgia Professional Development System (GaPDS)

Georgia's online system that allows early learning professionals to create a GaPDS Profile, search for approved trainings, register for DECAL trainings, and apply to become an Approved Trainer.

12.20 Good Standing

This Child Care Services (CCS) compliance zone indicates a program is demonstrating an acceptable level of performance in meeting the rules.

12.21 Group Size

Group size refers to the maximum number of children in a particular group, who are together regularly and interact with each other, and with one or more specific staff members, in an assigned space. This definition was adapted from the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and from Ruth A. Wilson's Group Size – A Key Indicator of Quality.

12.22 Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale - Third Edition (ITERS-3)

The third edition of the ITERS is designed to assess the quality of care for center-based programs serving children birth through age 2.

12.23 Online Learning Library (OLLI)

Online training library housed within GaPDS with hundreds of approved trainings for early learning professionals.

12.24 Payment issuance date

The date Care Solutions begins processing payments to providers.

12.25 QR Probationary Status

A provider in the QR Probationary Status is a licensed child care program that has attempted the rating process but did not earn enough points for a Star Rating and is in the process of attempting to regain a Star Rating.

12.26 QR Provisional Status

A provider in the QR Provisional Status is a licensed childcare program that is new to CAPS and in the process of attempting to earn an initial Star Rating.

12.27 Quality Rated

Quality Rated is a quality rating and improvement system used to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for other service-related

industries like hotels and restaurants, Quality Rated assigns a quality rating to early and school-age care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards.

12.28 Quality Rated Workforce Bonus (QRWB)

The Quality Rated Workforce Bonus (QRWB) is an annual payment of $500 provided to eligible child care program staff working in eligible child care centers and family child care learning homes.

12.29 Ratios

Ratios refers to the number of staff at the program compared to the number of children enrolled. Low ratios ensure that there are enough staff to maintain the safety and security of the children. Appropriate ratios also help create an environment where children feel emotionally secure. When there are enough adults to supervise a given group, the staff-to-child interactions can be more meaningful. This definition was adapted from The National After-School Association (NAA) Standards for Quality School-Age Care.

12.30 School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale - Updated Edition (SACERS-U)

The updated edition of the SACERS is designed to assess the quality of programs for school-age children (ages 5-12), during out-of-school time (e.g. before/after school care).

12.31 Star Rating

A program's rating determined by the combination of their portfolio score and ERS Observation scores. A program can earn a 1,2-, or 3-Star Rating.

12.32 Support

This Child Care Services (CCS) compliance zone indicates a program's performance demonstrates a need for improvement in meeting rules.

12.33 The Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)

The GELDS outline the key concepts and skills that young children develop from birth to age five. They form the foundation for curriculum, instruction, assessment, and intervention within early care and education programs. They are culturally, linguistically, and developmentally appropriate and address the essential domains of school readiness. The GELDS are research-based and are aligned with the Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework and the Georgia Performance Standards for Kindergarten through 3rd grade. For more information, visit www.gelds.decal.ga.gov.