



The Rationale Behind and Process for Requesting a *Star Rating Clarification*

Overview

For Georgia's quality rating and improvement system (Quality Rated) to be effective and meaningful, Georgia's child care providers and families must have confidence that the process for determining ratings is accurate, fair, and consistent. The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) works diligently to ensure the accuracy, integrity, and transparency of the Quality Rated system.

Safeguards to Ensure Rating Accuracy

The following figure illustrates seven safeguards embedded in the Quality Rated process to ensure rating accuracy. These safeguards include the review process for Portfolios and Environment Rating Scale observations and how points are assigned. The figure also details the training process for Portfolio Assessors and ERS Assessors.



Supports for Providers with Rating Questions

If a child care provider has questions or concerns about the star rating assigned to their program, DECAL has created a process through which the provider working with their Technical Assistance Consultant (TA) can request a Star Rating Clarification. Since ratings have already been assured of accuracy, Star Rating Clarification requests will not result in a rating change. The purpose of the clarification process is to support programs' understanding of their rating so the information can be used for ongoing quality improvements. Therefore, Star Rating Clarifications should only be used for the purposes of Continuous Quality Improvement beyond the rating.

To best support the individual needs of programs and their ongoing quality improvement goals, Quality Rated has asked the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCR&R) TAs to assist with this process. Quality Rated values the role of the CCR&Rs, especially the crucial work they do to support programs seeking to earn a Quality Rated Star Rating, and Quality Rated recognizes how integral the provider-TA relationship is for programs to understand best practices and create

sustainable change. Given this, Quality Rated is committed to partnering with CCR&Rs to ensure programs receive clarifications when needed.

Answering Provider Questions

The following steps should be followed if, after reviewing their Quality Rated reports, a provider has questions about their portfolio or ERS observation scores.

1. Contact the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Technical Assistant Consultant who worked with the program prior to the rating. The provider can discuss the ERS report(s) and portfolio scoring screens to seek a better understanding of the requirements for the items in question. The TA consultant should be able to answer questions about scoring and help identify next steps for continued quality improvement.
2. If questions remain after Step 1 above, the CCR&R TA Consultant may consult with the CCR&R Lead TA at their CCR&R to assist with remaining questions that the provider does not feel were adequately answered or resolved by the discussion with the consultant.
3. If there continue to be items the provider and CCR&R team are uncertain about or have questions as to how the items received the score they did, the CCR&R Lead TA can request a Star Rating Clarification from Quality Rated within 60 days of receiving a rating, and Quality Rated will provide scale, observation, and/or portfolio related clarifications to support a program's understanding of the quality improvements needed. These requests will not result in rating changes.
4. If a provider did not receive CCR&R Technical Assistance during the Quality Rated process, they should contact the Quality Rated Help Desk at 1.855.800.7747 or by email at QualityRated@dec.al.ga.gov to request clarification assistance from the Quality Rated Clarification Team.

Requesting a Star Rating Clarification (for CCR&R Lead TA)

1. 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@dec.al.ga.gov.
 - a. The subject line of the email should read: Program Name & CCLC#: STAR RATING CLARIFICATION REQUEST.
 - b. The email must include: program's name; program's licensing number; date of the rating; names of the program's TA consultant and the CCR&R Lead TA; business phone number of CCR&R Lead TA; 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
 - i. Portfolio Question: Portfolio Standard Number, Criterion Number. *Ex: Portfolio Standard 1, Criterion 1.1.3.*
 - ii. 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's should NOT send evidence, such as photos or videos. These will not be reviewed.
2. The Quality Rated Portfolio Review Team, a Quality Rated Standardization and Evaluation Anchor, or a Quality Rated Operations Manager will respond to the CCR&R Lead TA via email to confirm that DECAL received the Star Rating Clarification request.
3. Quality Rated staff will review all necessary documentation to answer the submitted questions, and clarifications will be emailed in response. If a phone call is still needed following receipt of the emailed

clarifications, the CCR&R TA can request it, and Quality Rated will offer several dates and times to schedule a phone call with the CCR&R Lead TA to further discuss the clarifications needed.

4. During the phone call, Quality Rated staff will respond to the CCR&R Lead TA to address scoring requirements, scoring evidence, and/or scoring guidelines as needed to help the CCR&R Lead TA understand how the items in question were scored. The clarification should then be used by the CCR&R Lead TA to share the information with the child care program's assigned CCR&R TA and the program for the purposes of Continuous Quality Improvement.

The clarification will not include discussion of philosophical differences about the instruments used to assess programs in Quality Rated, a provider's dislike or disagreement with their scores, or any non-ERS or non-portfolio score related questions. The purpose of a Star Rating Clarification is to help child care providers better understand their scores to enable them to apply new understanding and potential resources for continued program improvement.

Things to Know Prior to Requesting a Star Rating Clarification:

1. Quality Rated Star Ratings encompass a structural quality score based on a portfolio submission and a process quality score based on observations utilizing one or more of the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) instruments. The latter may also include teacher interviews for school-age programs.
2. The ERS score is based only on what is observed during the three-hour observation(s) and teacher interview (when scale applicable). The Portfolio score is based only on the evidence submitted in the portfolio at the time of submission.
3. The scoring rubric used to determine a program's star rating can be found in the Quality Rated Program Manual and on the Quality Rated website www.qualityrated.decal.ga.gov. Please note that any bonus points earned are added to the Structural Quality points, not added separately when applying the rubric.
4. Branagh ERS Software is used to individually and separately record all data for each classroom. Notes, scores, and schedule information are contained in these individual records and used to prepare the reports received by programs.
5. There are seven safeguards in place prior to rating to ensure rating accuracy for all programs. See figure above on page 1.
6. As ratings have already been assured of accuracy, Star Rating Clarification requests will not result in a rating change. Information gathered during the clarification process should be used for Continuous Quality Improvement.
7. All clarification requests must be submitted within 60 days of the program's rating being issued.
8. General TA questions about the rating process, ongoing program improvement, or to determine what the program could do differently next time to achieve a higher score will continue to be addressed by the CCR&R.
9. Programs dissatisfied with their star rating who wish to improve their score are encouraged to use their CQI report to make improvements and then sign up for a new cohort when they are ready for reassessment.

For any additional questions about the Star Rating Clarification Process, please contact the Quality Rated Help Desk at 1.855.800.7747 or by email at QualityRated@decal.ga.gov.