



**KEYSTONE STARS:  
CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT  
FOR LEARNING PROGRAMS**

**Group Home Performance Standards for FY 2009-2010**  
(Issued March 1, 2009)

# KEYSTONE STARS: CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT FOR LEARNING PROGRAMS

## Group Home Performance Standards for FY 2009-2010

### Preamble

#### Keystone STARS: Reaching Higher for Quality Early Learning

The Keystone STARS program was initiated in 2002 as a multifaceted approach to improving programs that serve young children in Pennsylvania. Research-based Performance Standards form the bedrock of this quality improvement program. The standards are guided by the principle that quality early learning is a foundation for children's success, and investment in the early care and education of Pennsylvania's children is an investment in the future. Therefore, the Keystone STARS Performance Standards reflect research-based indicators to improve outcomes for children. The standards are organized into four STAR levels that build upon each other in order to support continuous quality improvement. When a provider meets the Performance Standards for a STAR level, they receive the mark of quality, a STAR designation. A Keystone STARS designation informs parents that the director and staff are committed to enhancing quality for the children and families in their program.

#### Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality Vision and Mission

**Vision:** All Pennsylvania families will have access to high quality care and education for their children, fostering successful futures in school and in life.

**Mission:** To create a comprehensive quality improvement system in which all early learning programs and practitioners are encouraged and supported to improve child outcomes. Improvements in programming are designed to increase the capacity to support children's learning and development; increase educational attainment among practitioners; enhance professional skills and competencies in support of children's learning and development.

#### Acknowledgements

The Pennsylvania Departments of Public Welfare and Education, Office of Child Development & Early Learning, would like to thank the diverse group of programs, practitioners, Regional Keys staff and partners, and early learning stakeholders from across the State who continue to share their vision and constructive ideas in crafting an indicator based quality improvement system to improve care and education for children in Pennsylvania. Their honest discussion of how the PA Early Learning Keys to Quality is working locally and their constructive feedback to proposed improvements continues to be invaluable to this process.

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**How to Interpret the Performance Standards Grid**

Each STAR level builds on the previous level. Unless otherwise specified, each successive level includes all items in the previous level. Please note that there is important information housed in the footnotes throughout the document and in the STARS Worksheets. For copies of the STARS Worksheets, please contact your Regional Key.





**Start with STARS – Enrollment in the Keystone STARS program**

Providers that do not meet the STAR 1 Performance Standards, yet wish to begin the process of continuous quality improvement may enroll in Keystone STARS as a Start with STARS participant. Start with STARS affords access to resources to assist providers in working toward a STAR level in Keystone STARS.

To enroll as a Start with STARS participant, a provider must meet the following STARS Performance Standards:

- Facility holds and posts a current DPW Certificate of Compliance.
- Complete the Keystone STARS Site Environment Checklist.
- Director (Primary Staff Person) completes the STARS Orientation within 90 days of Start with STARS Enrollment.

## STAFF QUALIFICATIONS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR GROUP HOMES	 <b>STAR 1</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 2</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 3</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 4</b> 1. Performance Standards, or 2. NAEYC/NAA/NAFCC Accreditation <sup>1</sup>
<b>General</b>	Must maintain Regular Certificate of Compliance and/or meet program standards. <sup>2</sup>	Must meet all standards for STAR 1 and maintain Regular Certificate of Compliance.	Must meet all standards for STAR 1 and 2 and maintain Regular Certificate of Compliance.	Must meet all standards for STAR 1, 2, and 3 and maintain Regular Certificate of Compliance.
<b>Primary Staff Person as the Operator Qualifications<sup>3</sup></b>	Complete professional development on the Core Body of Knowledge/ Professional Development Record (CBK/PDR) and Foundations of the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) <sup>4</sup> .	1. Level III or above on the Career Lattice by 7/1/2012. 2. New Staff Orientation <sup>5</sup> completed by all aides and new staff within 90 days of start of employment. 3. Complete professional development on Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), the Facility Professional Development (FPD) Plan, and the Learning Standards. 4. Complete professional development in the ERS scales appropriate to age groups in the facility. 5. Attend child abuse mandated reporter professional development that reflects the most current laws in Pennsylvania. 6. Current pediatric first aid certification.	1. Level III <sup>6</sup> or above on the Career Lattice by 7/1/2010. <sup>7</sup> 2. Complete STARS Orientation Part 2.	Level IV <sup>8</sup> or above on the Career Lattice by 7/1/2012. <sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In order to be designated a STAR 4, accredited sites also need to complete the bold/italicized Performance Standards.

<sup>2</sup> Facilities must maintain DPW Regulations and/or Head Start Performance Standards according to whichever apply to the site.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to the Career Lattice in the appendix.

<sup>4</sup> To assist in *maintaining* a current STAR level, a mutually agreed upon action plan can be developed between the provider and the Regional Key.

<sup>5</sup> New Staff orientation can be provided using the OCDEL-approved Better Kid Care video series OR 15 hours of documented topics outlined by *Caring for Our Children 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Section 1.023, p. 188*. If the Better Kid Care videos offered are not utilized, documentation is required of PQAS approved professional development (including course title, hours and instructor name/signature) that has been cross-walked to the *Caring for Our Children* topic areas.





<sup>6</sup> Effective 7/1/2012, the STAR 3 requirement will be "Level IV or above."

<sup>7</sup> Until this standard becomes effective on 7/1/2010, the previous standard (Must be enrolled in a CDA/CCP or have completed 15 college credit hours in ECE or human services field) continues to be in effect. Refer to Career Lattice for a list of related fields.

<sup>8</sup> Effective 7/1/2015, the STAR 4 requirement will be "Level V or above."

<sup>9</sup> Until this standard becomes effective on 7/1/2012, the previous standard (Must have CDA/CCP, AA in ECE, or 30 college credit hours in ECE or human service field) continues to be in effect. Refer to Career Lattice for a list of related fields.

## **STAFF QUALIFICATIONS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR GROUP HOMES	 <b>STAR 1</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 2</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 3</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 4</b> 1. Performance Standards, or 2. NAEYC/NAA/NAFCC Accreditation <sup>1</sup>
<b>Primary Staff Person as the Operator Development<sup>10</sup></b>		1. Annual professional development plan is developed based on needs identified in the Professional Development Record (PDR). 2. Annually participate in 1 professional growth and development activity <sup>4</sup> . 3. 12 annual clock hours of professional development based on the PDR. 4. 3 annual clock hours in management, professionalism, supervision, leadership, and/or administration. 5. All staff must have two hours of health and safety professional development annually. <sup>11</sup> 6. All staff must attend professional development annually on child observation, inclusive practices, and/or ERS. <sup>12</sup>	1. Annually participate in 1 professional growth and development activities. 2. 18 annual clock hours of professional development based on the PDR <sup>4</sup> .	1. <b>Annually participate in 2 professional growth and development activities.</b> 2. <b>24 annual clock hours of professional development based on the PDR.</b> 3. Complete the PA Director's Credential by 7/1/2015.
<b>Secondary Staff Qualifications<sup>13</sup></b>		1. New Staff Orientation <sup>14</sup> completed by all aides and new staff within 90 days of start of employment. 2. High School Diploma or Generalized Education Development (GED) certification. 3. All staff at Level I on the Career Lattice.	Maintain at least one secondary staff person at Level II on the Career Lattice <sup>4</sup> .	Maintain at least one secondary staff member at Level III on the Career Lattice by 2012.

<sup>10</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for additional information on professional growth and development activities, as well as clock hours.





<sup>11</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for courses that are acceptable.

<sup>12</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for more information on selecting appropriate professional development opportunities.

<sup>13</sup> Refer to the Career Lattice in the appendix.

<sup>14</sup> New Staff orientation can be provided using the OCDEL-approved Better Kid Care video series OR 15 hours of documented topics outlined by *Caring for Our Children 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Section 1.023, p. 188*. If the Better Kid Care videos offered are not utilized, documentation is required of PQAS approved professional development (including course title, hours and instructor name/signature) that has been cross-walked to the *Caring for Our Children* topic areas.

## STAFF QUALIFICATIONS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR GROUP HOMES	 <b>STAR 1</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 2</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 3</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 4</b> 1. Performance Standards, or 2. NAEYC/NAA/NAFCC Accreditation <sup>1</sup>
<i>Secondary Staff Development</i> <sup>15</sup>		1. Annual professional development plan is developed based on needs identified in the Professional Development Record (PDR). 2. 9 annual clock hours of professional development, based on the PDR, taken by each staff member. <sup>4,16</sup> 3. All staff must have two hours of health and safety professional development annually. <sup>17</sup> 4. All staff must attend professional development annually on child observation, inclusive practices, and/or ERS. <sup>18</sup> 5. One additional staff member must have current pediatric first aid certification.	1. 15 annual clock hours of professional development, based on the PDR, taken by each staff member. <sup>19</sup> 2. Additional staff must attend professional development annually on curriculum, program or child assessment and/or the age-appropriate Learning Standards. <sup>18</sup>	1. <b>18 annual clock hours of professional development based on the PDR, taken by each staff member.</b> <sup>20</sup> 2. Annually participate in 1 professional growth and development activity. <sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for additional information on professional growth and development activities, as well as annual clock hours.

<sup>16</sup> Staff working less than 500 hours per year and volunteers/substitutes working more than 500 hours per year must take 3 annual clock hours.





<sup>17</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for courses that are acceptable.

<sup>18</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for more information on selecting appropriate professional development opportunities.

<sup>19</sup> Staff working less than 500 hours per year and volunteers/substitutes working more than 500 hours per year must take 6 annual clock hours.





<sup>20</sup> Staff working less than 500 hours per year and volunteers/substitutes working more than 500 hours per year must take 9 annual clock hours.

## LEARNING PROGRAM

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR GROUP HOMES	 <b>STAR 1</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 2</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 3</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 4</b> 1. Performance Standards, or 2. NAEYC/NAA/NAFCC Accreditation <sup>1</sup>
<b>Child Observation/ Curriculum/ Assessment</b>	Site obtains and maintains copies of the appropriate Learning Standards for all age groups in the program.	1. Observation of child is completed and shared with parents within 45 days of program entry and once yearly after that <sup>4</sup> . 2. Learning Standards are used as a resource for staff in classroom planning and documentation of children's learning.	1. Observation of child is completed and shared with parents within 45 days of program entry. Observation of the child must be conducted a total of three times during the year; once in the beginning, once in the middle, and once towards the end. <b>2. Children's Outcomes are reported using the online Ounce/Work Sampling System's Guidelines and Checklists. (effective 7/1/2011)</b> 3. Results from observations are used for curriculum, individual child planning, and referral to community resources <sup>4</sup> . 4. Implement a learning curriculum that incorporates the Learning Standards <sup>4</sup> .	1. Assessment of the child is completed and shared with parents twice per year utilizing appropriate observation techniques, and results are used for curriculum and individual child planning and referral to community resources. 2. Program crosswalks curriculum and assessment tools to the Learning Standards.
<b>Environment Rating</b>	Complete the Learning Environment Checklist.	1. ERS self-assessment of every classroom/age group must be completed annually by a staff member who has completed approved ERS professional development. <sup>21</sup> 2. A written Improvement Plan is developed to address any ERS subscale score below a 3.0.	1. The average facility score of all sampled classrooms/age groups assessed by a STARS ERS assessor must be 4.25. 2. Each individual sampled classroom/age group must have an ERS score no less than 3.5. 3. A written Improvement Plan is developed to address any ERS subscale score below a 3.5.	<b>1. The average facility score of all sampled classrooms/age groups assessed by a STARS ERS assessor must be a 5.25.</b> <b>2. Each individual sampled classroom/age group must have an ERS score no less than 4.25.</b> <b>3. A written Improvement Plan is developed to address any ERS subscale score below a 4.25.</b>

<sup>21</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheet for more information.





## PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILY & COMMUNITY

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR GROUP HOMES	 <b>STAR 1</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 2</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 3</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 4</b> 1. Performance Standards, or 2. NAEYC/NAA/NAFCC Accreditation <sup>1</sup>
<b>Community Resources/ Family Involvement</b>	1. At enrollment, families are provided with information regarding public, social and community services. <sup>4, 22</sup> 2. A “Getting to Know You” meeting with parents is offered within 60 days of enrollment <sup>4</sup> .	1. At least once per year, written information on topics including health and human services, wellness, nutrition and fitness, and/or child development is given and explained to parents and staff <sup>4</sup> . 2. If applicable to the child, provider requests from parents copies of child’s IEP or IFSP, written plans, and/or special needs assessments completed by professionals to inform classroom practice <sup>4</sup> . 3. Individual child information is shared in written form with parents on a daily basis for infants and toddlers, and there is a format and procedure for use on an as needed basis for other age groups <sup>4</sup> . 4. Specific group or classroom information is shared with parents daily using a visual communication format. 5. One parent conference is offered per year to discuss the child’s progress and behavioral, social, and physical needs. 6. Families are provided with information/application for publicly funded child care/health insurance programs, and tax credit information (Earned Income Tax Credit, PA TAX BACK) upon enrollment.	1. A plan is written and implemented describing procedures to refer parents to appropriate social, mental health, educational, wellness, and medical services. 2. Coordinate at least one annual group activity to involve parent in meeting program learning goals. <sup>23</sup> 3. At least two parent conferences are offered per year to discuss the child’s progress and behavioral, social, and physical needs. A written report of the child’s progress is provided during at least one of the parent conferences.	1. If applicable to the child, provider, in conjunction with parents and service providers from public social and community service organizations, implements activities appropriate to meet IEP or IFSP goals and/or special needs plans and objectives. 2. Program has policies that demonstrate engagement and partnership with parents in program planning and decision-making <sup>4</sup> .





<sup>22</sup> Organizations include Early Intervention, Children and Youth Services, Mental Health and Mental Retardation Services, County Assistance Office (CAO) and Child Care Information services (CCIS).

<sup>23</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for suggested activities.

## ***PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAMILY & COMMUNITY***

<b>PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR GROUP HOMES</b>	 <b>STAR 1</b>  <b>Performance Standards</b>	 <b>STAR 2</b>  <b>Performance Standards</b>	 <b>STAR 3</b>  <b>Performance Standards</b>	 <b>STAR 4</b>  <b>1. Performance Standards, or 2. NAEYC/NAA/NAFCC Accreditation<sup>1</sup></b>
<b><i>Transition</i></b>	Program provides general information to parents regarding transitioning children to another classroom or educational setting <sup>4</sup> .	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Program transfers child records, at the request of the parent, when the child transitions to another educational setting<sup>4</sup>.</li> <li>2. Program includes age-appropriate activities for children to prepare for transition<sup>4</sup>.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Parents are offered a group meeting to provide information regarding a child's transition to another classroom or higher educational setting and to encourage parents and their children to connect to the school setting by visiting.</li> <li>2. Program creates, with input from parents, a list of community/school stakeholders regarding child transition<sup>4</sup>.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Program sends letter of introduction to appropriate community/school stakeholders outlining goal to partner in child transitioning efforts from childcare to school setting<sup>4</sup>.</li> <li>2. Program participates in community/school transition activities as available<sup>4</sup>.</li> <li>3. Program offers parents an individual meeting to share specific information regarding the child's transition to another classroom or educational setting and to give parents written information about the child's developmental progress.</li> </ol>

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR GROUP HOMES	 <b>STAR 1</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 2</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 3</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 4</b> 1. Performance Standards, or 2. NAEYC/NAA/ NAFCC Accreditation <sup>1</sup>
<b>Business Practices</b>	Program develops and distributes a Parent Handbook <sup>4</sup> .	1. Program creates a projected one-year operating budget, including a statement of income and expenditures. 2. A financial record keeping system for revenue and expenses is in place. 3. Organizational structure and job descriptions <sup>24</sup> are included in a personnel policy manual that is shared with staff.	1. A financial system with quarterly comparisons of expenses to revenue is implemented. 2. The program creates a mission statement <sup>4</sup> .	1. Annual operational business plan to address organizational stability and to implement quarterly reconciliation. 2. Program establishes a written code for professional conduct of staff. 3. A policy and procedure manual <sup>25</sup> is developed and available to the staff at all times. 4. Risk management plan <sup>26</sup> is written and developed that identifies potential operational risks and specific ways to reduce or eliminate risk.
<b>Continuous Quality Improvement</b>	Program uses documents for tracking illnesses and injuries, including plans of action to prevent further occurrences <sup>4</sup> .	1. Complete and provide an annual Facility Professional Development (FPD) Plan (or equivalent). 2. System of site safety review and corresponding plan of action are instituted.	<b>Provider develops a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan using multiple sources<sup>27</sup>.</b>	<b>A Strategic Plan is aligned with the program's mission statement and put in place<sup>4</sup>.</b>





<sup>24</sup> An organizational chart should be accompanied by a written description of the duties and responsibilities of each staff position and the lines of authority and responsibility within the group home.

<sup>25</sup> Manual includes personnel policies and written health policies covering topics found in *Caring for Our Children 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, published Model Child Care Health Policy booklet (ECELS/NAEYC/AAP) and/or other appropriate Business Practice tools.

<sup>26</sup> Risk Management Plan is reviewed at least annually and updated as deemed necessary.

<sup>27</sup> Sources of information include surveys of parents, staff and/or school-aged children, ERS, LIS, audits, FPD plan, etc.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR GROUP HOMES	 <b>STAR 1</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 2</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 3</b> Performance Standards	 <b>STAR 4</b> 1. Performance Standards, or 2. NAEYC/NAA/ NAFCC Accreditation <sup>1</sup>
<b>Staff Communication and Support</b>	1. Program provides documentation of a staff meeting held within the last six months. 2. Director (Primary Staff Person) develops plan for sharing information about Keystone STARS, continuous quality improvement, and professional development with staff members <sup>4</sup> .	1. Each staff person must participate in a staff meeting at least once per month. Staff meeting must include discussions of quality and its impact on the Learning Program. 2. Director (Primary Staff Person) meets with each staff member using the plan developed in STAR 1. For new staff, this meeting is held within 90 days of start of employment <sup>4</sup> .	1. Teachers and Assistant Teachers are provided paid curriculum and lesson planning/preparation time away from children monthly <sup>4</sup> . 2. Annually, at least two classroom observations <sup>28</sup> are conducted and feedback regarding job performance is provided to the staff member <sup>4</sup> . 3. Annual performance evaluation provided in written format to employee. <sup>29</sup>	1. Teachers and Assistant Teachers are provided paid weekly curriculum and lesson planning/preparation time away from children. 2. Staff members are offered a minimum of 15 minutes with no program responsibilities for each 4 hour period worked <sup>4</sup> .
<b>Employee Compensation</b>		1. List of all staff by positions, salary, and tenure. 2. At least 1 employee benefits <sup>30</sup> given to staff <sup>4</sup> .	1. A salary scale based on level of education/training and years of ECE experience is documented. 2. At least 2 employee benefits given to staff and explained in the Policy and Procedure Manual <sup>4</sup> .	At least 3 employee benefits given to staff <sup>4</sup> .

<sup>28</sup> At least one observation is completed by the staff member's direct supervisor.

<sup>29</sup> Performance evaluation is based on direct supervisor's classroom observation, criteria established in advance (i.e. job description) and an employee self-assessment.

<sup>30</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheet for a list of acceptable employee benefits and for an explanation of prorating for part-time employees.

# Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality Career Lattice

								POSITIONS							
								Child Care / School Age Care	Early Head Start / Head Start	Early Intervention	Public School Districts	Private Academic Schools	TA/Consultants/ Mentors/ Trainers	Higher Ed. Faculty	
							<b>VIII</b>	Ph.D. or Ed.D including 30 ECE credits	Group Supervisor	Teachers	Director / Director / Early Interventionist / Teacher	Administrator (including Principal's Certification) / Social Worker	Director / Teacher		
							<b>VII</b>	Master's including 30 ECE credits	Group Supervisor	Coordinators / Teachers	Therapist / Case Manager / Supervisor / Early Interventionist / Teacher	Teacher (including ECE, Principal's Certification) / or EI Ed. Certification)	Administrator / Director / Teacher		
							<b>VI</b>	Bachelor's including 30 ECE credits	Lead or Teacher	Director / Coordinators / Teachers	Therapist / Case Manager / Supervisor / Early Interventionist / Teacher	Teacher (including ECE, Principal's Certification) / or EI Ed. Certification)	Administrator / Director / Teacher		
							<b>V</b>	Associate's Degree with 60 /65 credits including 18 ECE credits	Director, Lead or Teacher	Director / Coordinators / Teachers	Therapist / Case Manager / Supervisor / Early Interventionist / Teacher	Teacher (including ECE, Principal's Certification) / or EI Ed. Certification)	Assistant Teachers		
							<b>IV</b>	30 credits including 12 ECE credits	Assistant Group Supervisor	Teachers / Home Visitors	Service Coordinator	Assistant Teacher / Paraprofessional	Assistant Teachers		
							<b>III</b>	Credential, Diploma, Certificate or 6 ECE credits	Assistant Group Supervisor	Teachers / Home Visitors	Service Coordinator	Assistant Teacher / Paraprofessional	Assistant Teachers		
							<b>II</b>	45 Hours* or 3 ECE credits	Assistant Teacher or Assistant Group Supervisor	Teachers / Home Visitors	Service Coordinator	Assistant Teacher / Paraprofessional	Assistant Teachers		
							<b>I</b>	15 HOURS Orientation Training	Aides / Family Child Care Providers	Teachers / Aides	Service Coordinator	Assistant Teacher / Paraprofessional	Aides		

\* These 45 Hours may include 15 Hours of Orientation Training from Level 1.

NOTE 1: For SACC practitioners including Kindergarten, credits on the Career Lattice may be in Education (excluding Secondary Education).

NOTE 2: Degrees required for Level V and above may be in ECE or related fields. Related fields include Human Development, Psychology, Sociology, Social Work, Education, Nursing, Home Economics/Family & Consumer Science, Recreation, Child and Family Studies, and Business.