



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

**Group Home Performance Standards for FY 2014-2015  
REVISED**

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

## **Group Home Performance Standards for FY 2014-2015**

### **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 families that the director/primary staff person 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 outcomes 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. Good, Better, Best: Pennsylvania’s Continuous Quality Improvement Guide to Best Practices is an optional tool that can be used by STARS Specialists/Managers, STARS Designators, and practitioners to determine at what quality point in the spectrum a program is meeting a Keystone STARS standard. Additional information is available at <http://www.pakeys.org/pages/starsDocs.aspx> or by contacting your RK.





**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 by contacting the Regional Key. By enrolling in Keystone STARS it affords providers access to resources that will assist providers in working toward a STAR level.

To enroll in Keystone STARS, 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.

## 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/NECPA Accreditation are to use bold/italicized Performance Standards
<b>General</b>	Must maintain Regular Certificate of Compliance and/or meet program standards. <sup>1</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</b> <sup>2</sup>	<p><b>1. Complete professional development on the Core Knowledge Competencies<sup>1*</sup> / Big Ideas<sup>2*</sup> and Individual Professional Development Plan<sup>3*</sup> (CKC/Big Ideas and IPDP) and Foundations of the Environment Rating Scale (ERS).</b></p> <p><i>*Note: PDR will remain in effect until June 30, 2015. Copies of the PDR will no longer be available for ordering or downloading as of July 1, 2014. During 7/1/14-7/1/15 will be the transition from PDR to using Big Ideas and IPDP.</i></p> <p>2. Completes the STARS Orientation within 90 days of Enrollment in Keystone STARS.</p>	<p>1. New Staff Orientation<sup>3</sup> completed by all aides and new staff within 90 days of start of employment.</p> <p>2. Complete professional development on Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), the Big Ideas and Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP), and the Learning Standards.</p> <p><b>4. Complete professional development in the ERS scales appropriate to age groups in the facility.</b></p> <p>5. Attend child abuse mandated reporter professional development that reflects the most current laws in Pennsylvania.</p> <p>6. Current pediatric first aid certification.</p> <p>7. Level III or above on the Career Lattice.</p>	<p>1. Complete STARS Orientation Part 2.</p> <p>2. Level IV or above on the Career Lattice by 6/30/13.</p>	Level IV <sup>4</sup> or above on the Career Lattice by 6/30/13.





<sup>1</sup> Facilities must maintain DPW Regulations and/or Head Start Performance Standards according to whichever apply to the site.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to the Career Lattice on the PA Key website.

<sup>3</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 3rd ed., Section 1.4.2*. 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>4</sup> Effective 7/1/2015, the STAR 4 requirement will be "Level V or above."

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<b>Primary Staff Person as the Operator Development<sup>5</sup></b>		1. Annual professional development plan is developed based on needs identified in the Big Ideas and Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP). 2. Annually participate in 1 professional growth and development activity. 3. 12 annual clock hours of professional development based on the Big Ideas and IPDP. 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>6</sup> 6. All staff must attend at least two hours of professional development annually on child observation, inclusive practices, and/or EDC. <sup>7</sup>	1. Annually participate in 1 professional growth and development activity. 2. 18 annual clock hours of professional development based on the Big Ideas and IPDP.	<b>1. Annually participate in 2 professional growth and development activities.</b> <b>2. 24 annual clock hours of professional development based on the Big Ideas and IPDP</b> 3. Complete the PA Director's Credential by 7/1/2015.
<b>Secondary Staff Qualifications<sup>8</sup></b>		1. New Staff Orientation <sup>9</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 1 secondary staff person at Level II on the Career Lattice.	Maintain at least 1 secondary staff member at Level III on the Career Lattice.

<sup>5</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for additional information on professional growth and development activities, as well as clock hours.





<sup>6</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for courses that are acceptable.

<sup>7</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for more information on selecting appropriate professional development opportunities.

<sup>8</sup> Refer to the Career Lattice on the PA Key website.

<sup>9</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 3rd ed., Section 1.4.2*. 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/NECPA Accreditation are to use bold/italicized Performance Standards
<b>Secondary Staff Development<sup>10</sup></b>		1. Annual professional development plan is developed based on needs identified in the Individual Professional Development Record (IPDP). 2. One additional staff member must have current pediatric first aid certification. 3. 9 annual clock hours of professional development, based on the IPDP, taken by each staff member. <sup>11</sup> 4. All staff must have two hours of health and safety professional development annually. <sup>12</sup> 5. All staff must attend at least two hours of professional development annually on child observation, inclusive practices, and/or ERS. <sup>13</sup>	1. 15 annual clock hours of professional development, based on the Big Ideas and IPDP, taken by each staff member. <sup>14</sup> 2. Additional staff must attend at least two hours of professional development annually on curriculum, program or child assessment, the age-appropriate Learning Standards and/or ERS. <sup>16</sup>	1. <b>18 annual clock hours of professional development based on the Big Ideas and IPDP, taken by each staff member.<sup>15</sup></b> 2. Annually participate in 1 professional growth and development activity.

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

<sup>11</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>12</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for courses that are acceptable.

<sup>13</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheets for more information on selecting appropriate professional development opportunities.

<sup>14</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>15</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/NECPA Accreditation are to use bold/italicized Performance Standards
<b>Child Observation/ Curriculum/ Assessment</b>	Site obtains and maintains copies of the appropriate Learning Standards for all age groups in the program.	1. Learning Standards are used as a resource for staff in classroom planning and documentation of children’s learning. 2. Provider selects an OCDEL approved assessment tool. 3. A developmentally appropriate screening of the child is completed and shared with family within 45 days of program entry. <sup>16</sup> <b>4. All demographic information, including child, program and staff information, is recorded timely and accuracy is maintained in the Early Learning Network<sup>1819</sup> (ELN).<sup>17,</sup></b>	<b>1. Based on Ongoing child observations, developmentally appropriate authentic assessments of the child are completed and reported electronically into an OCDEL approved assessment tool following the tool’s specified timeframes.</b> 2. Results from the authentic assessments are used for curriculum, individual child planning, and referral to community resources. 3. Implement a learning curriculum that incorporates the Learning Standards, including a written curriculum statement.	1. Program utilizes a curriculum that has been aligned to the Learning Standards for Early Childhood. If the program’s curriculum has not been aligned, the provider must crosswalk the curriculum to the Learning Standards. <sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> For school age children, no initial screening is required however an observation is completed and shared with family within 90 days of program entry. See SACC worksheets.





<sup>17</sup> If the functionality of ELN does not allow for entry of the assessment information, demographic information should be collected and child assessments should be completed on paper until the program is able to enter the information online. Attempted compliance should be documented via a record of Help Desk call logs and copies of emails. Upon resolution of the issue, the provider will be responsible for entering all data into ELN.

<sup>18</sup> A child assessment must be completed on school-age children although it is not reported through ELN.

<sup>19</sup> Head Start State Supplemental providers are required to enter their data into ELN. Federal Head Start/Early Head Start providers may choose to submit their child enrollment data into ELN using the State Longitudinal Data (SLDS) upload process.

<sup>20</sup> A list of aligned tools can be found on the SAS page (<http://websites.pdesas.org/ocdel/default.aspx>).





## LEARNING PROGRAM

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<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/NECPA Accreditation are to use bold/italicized Performance Standards
<b>Community Resources/ Family Involvement</b>	1. At enrollment, families are provided with information regarding public, social and community services. <sup>22</sup> 2. The program collects child-centered information at enrollment to facilitate responsive care that is mindful of the needs of individual children and families. A family meeting is offered within 45 days of enrollment to encourage program-family partnerships and share initial observations and goals for the child.	1. At a minimum of 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 families and staff. 2. If applicable to the child, provider requests from families copies of child's IEP or IFSP, written plans, and/or special needs assessments completed by professionals to inform classroom practice. 3. Individual child information is shared in written form with families 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. 4. Specific group or classroom information is shared with families daily using a visual communication format. 5. A minimum of one family 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 families to appropriate social, mental health, educational, wellness, and medical services. 2. Coordinate a minimum of one annual group activity to involve families in meeting program learning goals. <sup>23</sup> 3. A minimum of two family conferences are offered per year to discuss the child's progress and behavioral, social, and physical needs. Authentic assessments of the child are shared with the family a minimum of two times per year. <sup>24</sup>	1. If applicable to the child, provider, in conjunction with families 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 families in program planning and decision-making.

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





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

<sup>24</sup> Best Practices will necessitate more frequent assessments for infants and toddlers.

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<b>Transition</b>	Program provides general information to families regarding transitioning children to another classroom or educational setting.	1. Program transfers child records, at the request of the family, when the child transitions to another educational setting. 2. Program includes age-appropriate activities for children to prepare for transition.	1. Families are offered a group meeting to provide information regarding a child's transition to another classroom or higher educational setting and to encourage families and their children to connect to the school setting by visiting. 2. Program creates, with input from families, a list of community/school stakeholders regarding child transition.	1. Program sends letter of introduction to appropriate community/school stakeholders outlining goal to partner in child transitioning efforts from child care to school setting. 2. Program participates in community/school transition activities as available. 3. Program offers families an individual meeting to share specific information regarding the child's transition to another classroom or educational setting and to give families written information about the child's developmental progress.

## 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/NECPA Accreditation are to use bold/italicized
<b>Business Practices</b>	Program develops and distributes a Family Handbook.	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>25</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.	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>26</sup> is developed and available to the staff at all times. 4. Risk management plan <sup>27</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.	1. System of site safety review including strategies for supervising children and corresponding plan of action are instituted.	<b>Provider develops and implements a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan using multiple sources<sup>28</sup>.</b>	<b>A Strategic Plan is aligned with the program's mission statement and put in place.</b>





<sup>25</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>26</sup> Manual includes personnel policies and written health policies covering topics found in *Caring for Our Children 3rd ed.*, published Model Child Care Health Policy booklet (ECELS/NAEYC/AAP) and/or other appropriate Business Practice tools.

<sup>27</sup> Risk Management Plan is reviewed at least annually and updated as deemed necessary.

<sup>28</sup> Sources of information include surveys of families, staff and/or school-aged children, ERS, LIS, audits, FPDP plan, etc.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

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<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 and annually implements a plan for sharing information about Keystone STARS, continuous quality improvement, Strategies for supervising children and professional development with staff members.	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.	1. Teachers and Assistant Teachers are provided at least two hours per month of paid curriculum and lesson planning/preparation time away from children. 2. Annually, at least two classroom observations <sup>29</sup> are conducted and feedback regarding job performance is provided to the staff member. 3. Annual performance evaluation provided in written format to employee. <sup>30</sup>	1. Teachers and Assistant Teachers are provided at least four hours per month of paid 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.
<b>Employee Compensation</b>		1. List of all staff by positions, salary, and tenure. 2. At least 1 employee benefit given to staff <sup>31</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 <sup>30</sup> and explained in the Policy and Procedure Manual.	At least 3 employee benefits given to staff <sup>30</sup> and explained in the Policy and Procedures Manual.

<sup>29</sup> At least one observation is completed by the staff member's direct supervisor.

<sup>30</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>31</sup> Refer to the STARS Worksheet for a list of acceptable employee benefits and for an explanation of prorating for part-time employees.

<sup>1\*</sup> Pennsylvania Core Knowledge Competencies for Early Childhood and School Age Professionals (CKC) replaced Core Body of Knowledge

<sup>2\*</sup> Pennsylvania Big Ideas Framework (Big Ideas) and

<sup>3\*</sup> Individual Professional Development Plan for Early Childhood and School-Age Professionals (IPDP) transition from Professional Development Record (PDR)

July 1, 2014 to July 1, 2015 at which time it will be required for Keystone STARS providers. Copies of the PDR will no longer be available for ordering or downloading