

Keystone STARS is an initiative of the Office of Child Development & Early Learning (OCDEL) to improve, support, and recognize the continuous quality improvement efforts of early learning programs in Pennsylvania. As part of its work to continue to strengthen the Keystone STARS program, OCDEL conducted a provider survey in December 2010 that focused on provider perception of the most beneficial aspects of STARS and on ease of use of the various STARS resources. The primary purpose of the survey is to gather information about the strengths and areas of improvement for the Keystone STARS program.

Highlight of Survey Results

The leading reason that Keystone STARS Providers gave for increasing their STAR level was Grant Funds (Support Grant, Merit Award). Not meeting staff qualifications was the top barrier to not

The Sample

In December 2010, OCDEL disseminated the Keystone STARS Provider Survey via an online survey tool. Surveys were sent to all providers who had an email address in PELICAN¹. Eight hundred eighteen (818) surveys were returned

¹ Pennsylvania's Enterprise to Link Information for Children across Networks (PELICAN) tracks Keystone STARS data, including provider information.

Table 1: Number of Respondents by Provider Type and STAR Level

Provider Type	Start with STARS	STAR 1	STAR 2	STAR 3	STAR 4	No Response	Total
Center	16	139	195	134	162	4	650
Family	16	48	19	14	21	4	122
Group	4	9	11	10	0	0	34
No Provider Type	0	1	2	0	1	8	12
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>36</i>	<i>197</i>	<i>227</i>	<i>158</i>	<i>184</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>818</i>
<i>% of Respondents</i>	<i>4.4%</i>	<i>24.1%</i>	<i>27.8%</i>	<i>19.3%</i>	<i>22.5%</i>	<i>2.0%</i>	

"Keystone STARS has been an invaluable resource to our center. Without their defined standards, grants, and technical assistance we would never have been able to provide the superior level of care and education we are currently enjoying."

- STAR 3 Child Care Center, Perry County

"Overall, being involved in the STARS program has been beneficial to staff and the program. Staff have developed professionally. Their outlook and pride of providing quality programming to the children enrolled is amazing. It has made a difference between being a childcare professional instead of "just a babysitter".

- STAR 3 Child Care Center, Pike County

increasing STAR level.

The leading barrier associated with accessing professional development for teaching staff was availability in their location.

for a response rate of 27.4%. Fifty-six percent of respondents are at STAR 2 or below (Table 1). Seventy-one percent of respondents have participated in STARS for more than 3 years (Table 2).

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The Sample continued...

Table 2: Reported Length of Time in STARS by Provider Type

Provider Type	< 1 year	1-3 years	3-5 years	> 5 years	No Response	Total
Center	30	121	190	306	3	650
Family	21	32	39	25	5	122
Group	6	6	14	8	0	34
No Provider Type	1	1	0	1	9	12
Total Respondents	58	160	243	340	17	818
% of Respondents	7.1%	19.6%	29.7%	41.6%	2.1%	

Increasing STAR Level

Seventy-four respondents cited Grant Funds as the main reason for increasing their STAR level. The other leading reasons given for increasing STAR level

focused on financial support through Education and Retention Awards and support through their STARS Manager/Specialist.

Table 3: Reasons for Increasing STAR Level

Reasons	Center	Family	Group	Total*
Grant Funds (Support Grant, Merit Award)	58	12	4	74
Education and Retention Award	41	9	5	55
STARS Managers/Specialist	37	10	3	50
STARS Technical Assistance	27	8	3	38
T.E.A.C.H.	20	9	2	31
STARS Core Professional Development Series	18	9	3	30
Vouchers	15	4	0	19
Credit-Based Professional Development	13	5	0	18
Needs-Based Professional Development	10	7	1	18
Health & Safety Materials	8	5	2	15
Early Childhood Mental Health Technical Assistance	5	3	2	10
Mind in the Making	1	3	2	6

* Respondents were able to select multiple answers

One-hundred twenty-three respondents stated that not meeting Staff Qualifications was the main barrier to not increasing their STAR Level (Table 4a). Too much paperwork was the biggest challenge to participating in Keystone STARS (Table 4b).

“Biggest concern is being able to maintain highly educated staff at the salaries/benefits we can afford. These are the people we lose the quickest because they move onto better paying jobs.”

- STAR 3 Child Care Center, Lebanon County

Table 4a: Barriers to Increasing STAR Level

Barriers	Center	Family	Group	Total*
Did not meet Staff Qualifications	116	5	2	123
PD opportunities needed were not available	20	9	5	34
Environment Rating Scale scores were not achieved	12	4	1	17

* Respondents were able to select multiple answers.

Notes: The requirements for Professional Development increase with each successive STAR level. ERS assessments are only required for moving to the STAR 3 and STAR 4 levels.

Increasing STAR Level continued...

Table 4b: Challenges to Participating in Keystone STARS

Challenges	Center	Family	Group	Total*
Too much paperwork	52	21	3	76
Not enough subsidized children for grants & awards	14	7	3	24
STARS Manager/Specialist was not helpful	5	2	0	7

* Respondents were able to select multiple answers.

STARS Manager/Specialist

Sixty-one percent of survey respondents felt that their STARS Manager/Specialist was very helpful or essential to their participation in STARS. Another 19.0% indicated that their STARS Manager/Specialist was helpful, for a combined total of 79.6%.

“She is excellent and has made herself available via e-mail. Her home visits are professional but not intimidating. She has offered considerable help in the STARS process.”

- STAR 1 Family Day Care Home, Dauphin County

“She has been great in keeping me updated and informed, but most of all she's been a support person that is there with compassion and understanding when I have no one to lean on. That's special. Keep up the great work!”

- STAR 3 Family Day Care Home, Allegheny County

Table 5: Helpfulness of STARS Manager/Specialist

Provider Type	Essential	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not At All Helpful
<i>Center</i>	150	192	116	94	30
Start with STARS	4	5	4	2	0
STAR 1	30	37	28	18	10
STAR 2	46	60	32	25	7
STAR 3	33	47	23	16	8
STAR 4	37	43	29	33	5
<i>Family</i>	33	43	17	12	3
Start with STARS	4	7	1	1	0
STAR 1	10	19	7	5	2
STAR 2	7	5	4	2	1
STAR 3	4	5	2	2	0
STAR 4	8	7	3	2	0
<i>Group</i>	10	8	4	5	1
Start with STARS	1	2	0	0	0
STAR 1	1	2	1	2	0
STAR 2	4	3	3	1	0
STAR 3	4	1	0	2	1
STAR 4	0	0	0	0	0
Total Respondents	193	243	137	111	36
% of Respondents	26.8%	33.8%	19.0%	15.4%	5.0%

Grants and Awards

More than three-quarters of the survey respondents who participated in the Start with STARS Grant (Table 6) or the Support Grant (Table 7) found the grant process to be somewhat or very easy. Sixty-nine percent who participated in the Merit Award (Table 8) stated that the grant process was somewhat or very easy. Of those who participated in the Education & Retention Award (Table 9), 74.3% felt that the grant process was somewhat or very easy.

“STARS is a great benefit to our center! I think it's an awesome opportunity to give back to the children in our care when receiving grants. The staff education awards are a bonus too! Childcare doesn't pay great and the bonus is an "extra," which our staff appreciate. Thank you for all you do!”
 - STAR 2 Child Care Center, Erie County

Table 6: Ease of Start with STARS Grant Process

Provider Type	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Center	94	156	58	11
Family	25	39	11	4
Group	7	10	2	2
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>126</i>	<i>205</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>% of Respondents</i>	<i>30.1%</i>	<i>48.9%</i>	<i>16.9%</i>	<i>4.1%</i>

Table 7: Ease of Support Grant Process

Provider Type	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Center	69	221	77	17
Family	16	38	12	5
Group	4	13	3	2
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>272</i>	<i>92</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>% of Respondents</i>	<i>18.7%</i>	<i>57.0%</i>	<i>19.3%</i>	<i>5.0%</i>

Table 8: Ease of Merit Award Process

Provider Type	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Center	75	228	114	29
Family	13	26	12	3
Group	5	9	2	2
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>93</i>	<i>263</i>	<i>128</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>% of Respondents</i>	<i>18.0%</i>	<i>50.8%</i>	<i>24.7%</i>	<i>6.6%</i>

Table 9: Ease of Education & Retention Award Process

Provider Type	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Center	80	233	86	25
Family	13	21	11	0
Group	6	8	1	2
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>262</i>	<i>98</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>% of Respondents</i>	<i>20.4%</i>	<i>53.9%</i>	<i>20.0%</i>	<i>5.6%</i>

Environment Rating Scale (ERS)

Overall, 55.4% of survey respondents felt that the ERS validation visit process was somewhat or very easy (Table 10a). When looking at the percentage of responses by Provider Type (Table 10b), a higher

percentage (21.0%) of family day care homes found the ERS validation process to be very easy. Eleven percent of child care centers and 15.8% of group day care homes also felt that the process was very easy.

Table 10a: Ease of ERS Validation Visit Process (% Overall by Provider Type)

Provider Type	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Center	39	158	115	44
Family	13	21	22	6
Group	3	8	5	3
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>187</i>	<i>142</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>% of Respondents</i>	<i>12.6%</i>	<i>42.8%</i>	<i>32.5%</i>	<i>12.1%</i>

Table 10b: Ease of ERS Validation Visit Process (% by Provider Type)

Provider Type	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Center	11.0%	44.4%	32.3%	12.4%
Family	21.0%	33.9%	35.5%	9.7%
Group	15.8%	42.1%	26.3%	15.8%

STARS Enrollment Process

Overall, 85.3% of survey respondents stated that the application was somewhat easy, easy, or very easy to complete (Table 11a). When looking at responses by STAR Level (Table 11b), 24.2% of STAR 4 providers

found completing the application to be very easy, while only 12.9% of Start with STARS providers felt the application was very easy to complete.

Table 11a: Ease of Completing Application (% Overall by Provider Type)

Provider Type	Very Easy	Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Center	111	207	173	69	12
Family	21	31	38	15	4
Group	4	11	9	4	0
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>249</i>	<i>220</i>	<i>88</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>% Respondents</i>	<i>19.2%</i>	<i>35.1%</i>	<i>31.0%</i>	<i>12.4%</i>	<i>2.3%</i>

Table 11b: Ease of Completing Application (% by STAR Level)

STAR Level	Very Easy	Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Start with STARS	12.9%	22.6%	48.4%	12.9%	3.2%
STAR 1	16.9%	32.0%	35.5%	13.4%	2.3%
STAR 2	17.3%	35.6%	30.2%	15.8%	1.0%
STAR 3	21.2%	47.9%	20.5%	8.2%	2.1%
STAR 4	24.2%	29.3%	33.1%	10.2%	3.2%

STARS Enrollment Process continued...

Overall, 85.5% of survey respondents found the instructions somewhat easy, easy, or very easy to follow (Table 12a). When looking at responses by STAR Level (Table 12b), 22.9% of STAR 4 providers felt

the instructions were very easy to follow, while only 12.9% of Start with STAR providers stated that the instructions were very easy to follow.

Table 12a: Ease of Following Instructions (% Overall by Provider Type)

Provider Type	Very Easy	Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Center	102	207	184	67	11
Family	20	35	35	17	1
Group	2	11	9	5	1
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>253</i>	<i>228</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>% Respondents</i>	<i>17.5%</i>	<i>35.8%</i>	<i>32.2%</i>	<i>12.6%</i>	<i>1.8%</i>

Table 12b: Ease of Following Instructions (% by STAR Level)

STAR Level	Very Easy	Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Start with STARS	12.9%	19.4%	48.4%	19.4%	0.0%
STAR 1	16.4%	33.3%	33.9%	15.2%	1.2%
STAR 2	14.9%	34.7%	34.7%	13.4%	2.5%
STAR 3	18.6%	49.7%	22.1%	9.0%	0.7%
STAR 4	22.9%	31.2%	33.1%	10.2%	2.5%

Eighty-four percent of all survey respondents felt that completing the Site Environment Checklist was somewhat easy, easy, or very easy (Table 13a). When looking at responses by STAR Level (Table 13b), only 9.7% of Start with STAR providers found the Site

Environment Checklist to be very easy to complete. Twenty percent of STAR 4 providers stated that completing the Site Environment Checklist was very easy to complete.

Table 13a: Ease of Completing Site-Environment Checklist (% Overall by Provider Type)

Provider Type	Very Easy	Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Center	96	207	171	76	14
Family	17	36	37	14	3
Group	4	11	9	4	0
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>117</i>	<i>254</i>	<i>217</i>	<i>94</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>% Respondents</i>	<i>16.7%</i>	<i>36.3%</i>	<i>31.0%</i>	<i>13.4%</i>	<i>2.4%</i>

Table 13b: Ease of Completing Site-Environment Checklist (% by STAR Level)

STAR Level	Very Easy	Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Start with STARS	9.7%	41.9%	29.0%	19.4%	0.0%
STAR 1	17.0%	33.3%	33.3%	14.6%	1.8%
STAR 2	14.6%	35.7%	31.7%	15.1%	3.0%
STAR 3	18.3%	48.6%	25.4%	7.7%	0.0%
STAR 4	20.0%	29.0%	32.9%	13.5%	4.5%

STARS Technical Assistance (TA)

Eighty-five percent of the 416 respondents who requested STARS TA stated that it was somewhat or very easy. Only sixteen providers (3.8%) stated that requesting STARS TA was very difficult.

“Having a TA was the reason we scored so well on our ERS assessment. She was able to look at things differently than we could.”
 - STAR 4 Child Care Center, Montgomery County

Table 14: Ease of Requesting STARS TA

Provider Type	Very Easy	Somewhat Easy	Somewhat Difficult	Very Difficult
Center	154	131	32	12
Family	25	26	13	3
Group	5	11	3	1
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>184</i>	<i>168</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>% of Respondents</i>	<i>44.2%</i>	<i>40.4%</i>	<i>11.5%</i>	<i>3.8%</i>

Overall, 79.7% of survey respondents felt that STARS TA was helpful, very helpful or essential in increasing the quality in their facility (Table 15a). When looking at responses by STAR Level (Table 15b), the highest percentage of providers who felt that STARS TA was

helpful, very helpful or essential in increasing the quality in their facility was Start with STARS Providers at 92.8%. Eighty-two percent (81.8%) of STAR 3 providers, 81.1% of STAR 1 providers, and about 78% of both STAR 2 and STAR 4 providers felt this way.

Table 15a: Helpfulness of STARS TA in Increasing Quality (% Overall by Provider Type)

Provider Type	Essential	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful
Center	85	104	62	40	23
Family	17	25	8	9	5
Group	4	7	3	2	1
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>136</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>51</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>% of Respondents</i>	<i>26.8%</i>	<i>34.4%</i>	<i>18.5%</i>	<i>12.9%</i>	<i>7.3%</i>

Table 15b: Helpfulness of STARS TA in Increasing Quality (% by STAR Level)

STAR Level	Essential	Very Helpful	Helpful	Somewhat Helpful	Not Helpful
Start with STARS	21.4%	50.0%	21.4%	7.1%	0.0%
STAR 1	20.3%	39.2%	21.6%	12.2%	6.8%
STAR 2	30.2%	28.4%	19.0%	11.2%	11.2%
STAR 3	31.2%	32.3%	18.3%	12.9%	5.4%
STAR 4	25.3%	37.4%	15.2%	16.2%	6.1%

STARS Professional Development

Overall, 41.3% of survey respondents rated their satisfaction with STARS Professional Development as excellent or very good (Table 16a). When looking at satisfaction by STAR Level, 24.1% of Start with STARS providers felt that STARS Professional Development was excellent (Table 16b), while only 11-13% of STAR

1-4 providers felt the same. Another 34.5% of Start with STARS providers indicated that their STARS Professional Development experience was very good; 20.7% of STAR 4 providers also rated STARS Professional Development as very good.

STARS Professional Development continued...

Table 16a: Overall Satisfaction with STARS Professional Development (% Overall by Provider Type)

Provider Type	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Center	63	153	218	116	20
Family	20	35	31	12	2
Group	6	11	7	3	1
<i>Total Respondents</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>199</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>131</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>% of Respondents</i>	<i>12.8%</i>	<i>28.5%</i>	<i>36.7%</i>	<i>18.8%</i>	<i>3.3%</i>

Table 16b: Overall Satisfaction with STARS Professional Development (% by STAR Level)

STAR Level	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor
Start with STARS	24.1%	34.5%	31.0%	6.9%	3.4%
STAR 1	11.2%	31.1%	39.8%	16.8%	1.2%
STAR 2	12.5%	31.0%	32.0%	19.5%	5.0%
STAR 3	12.6%	31.5%	35.7%	16.1%	4.2%
STAR 4	11.6%	20.7%	40.9%	24.4%	2.4%

One-hundred ninety-five (195) respondents cited location as the main barrier to accessing professional development for teaching staff.

The other leading barriers to accessing professional development focused on time, a need for additional higher level professional development, and cost.

Table 17: Barriers Associated with Accessing Professional Development for Teaching Staff

Barrier	Center	Family	Group	<i>Total*</i>
Location	154	28	13	<i>195</i>
Times	127	36	9	<i>172</i>
Need Additional Higher Level Opportunities	103	12	0	<i>115</i>
Cost	76	14	5	<i>95</i>
Personal Issues	45	10	3	<i>58</i>
Not Interested	25	9	2	<i>36</i>

*Note: Respondents were able to cite multiple barriers

Conclusion

PA Keys to Quality (K2Q) brings together numerous organizations and programs providing quality improvement, professional development, technical assistance, as well as financial supports in a coordinated and systematic service delivery model critical to OCDEL services programs including Keystone STARS, PA Pre-K Counts, Head Start, etc. PA Keys to Quality builds bridges across the Departments of Education and Public Welfare to align funding and approach, streamline implementation and maximize resources.

Focus for the 2011-2012 program year will include exploring creative supports to assist providers to achieve staff qualifications as well as increasing accessibility via online modules to Professional Development and Technical Assistance opportunities for partnering STARS providers statewide. Regional Key STARS Specialists and Managers will focus on balancing the challenges of increasing caseloads with maintaining high quality customer service by promptly returning all phone calls and emails.

Results of the 2010-2011 Keystone STARS Provider Survey have been shared with both the PA Key and the six Regional Keys, and OCDEL is committed to practicing Continuous Quality Improvement with regard to program management.

OCDEL remains committed to empowering early care and education providers to provide high quality early learning opportunities for all of Pennsylvania’s children.