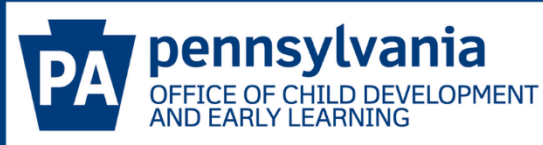


ANNOUNCEMENT ELRC 20 # 16



Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Policy and Professional Development

Issue Date: 10/08/2020

Effective Date: 09/01/2020

Subject: Internal Assessment Process (IAP) Guide

To: All Regulated Child Care Facilities; Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs); and Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) ELRC Program Representatives

From: Tracey Campanini 
Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning

PURPOSE

To provide all regulated Child Care facilities, ELRCs, and OCDEL ELRC Program Representatives with the newly developed *Keystone STARS Internal Assessment Process (IAP) Guide*.

Attachments:

- *Keystone STARS Internal Assessment Process Guide (PDF Writeable)*
- *Keystone STARS Internal Assessment Process Initial Cycle Planning Document Template (PDF Writeable)*
- *Keystone STARS Internal Assessment Consultation Summary (PDF Document)*

BACKGROUND

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, OCDEL has temporarily changed the requirement for Program Quality Assessment (PQA), in the 2020 Keystone STARS Performance Standards for all STAR 3 and 4 programs for FY 2020. The updated requirement is found in quality indicator EC 3.4.5. Previously, Keystone STARS required all programs seeking to move to a STAR 3 or 4 or renew their STAR 3 or 4 designation to have an external PQA using either Environment Rating Scales (ERS[®]) or Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS[®]) and meet the minimum threshold scores for each STAR level.

As explained in *ELRC Announcement 20 - #12 Keystone STARS Performance Standards and Program Manual*, programs will **not** be required to have an external ERS® or CLASS® assessment in order to move up to or maintain a STAR 3 or 4 designation during FY 2020. Suspending the Keystone STARS quality indicator that requires an ERS® and CLASS® external assessment for programs seeking to renew their current STAR 3 or 4 designation or move to a STAR 3 or 4 at this critical time will allow programs to focus on maintaining or reopening operations safely. Additionally, the PQA team, ELRC staff and others, will be responsive to the emergent health and safety support needs of Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs.

- ***Changes to temporarily suspend the requirement for an external PQA (ERS® or CLASS® Assessment) in the 2020-21 Keystone STARS Performance Standards are related to best practices in the mitigation of the spread of COVID-19. In future renewal cycles beginning after June 30, 2021, programs may be required to have an external program assessment and meet threshold scores to continue designation at STAR 3 or STAR 4. OCDEL will issue an announcement and revised STARS Standards when any expectations regarding the designation process changes which will align with new program years.***

DISCUSSION

IAP Guide and IAP Initial Cycle Planning Document

Program Quality Assessment (PQA) refers to the process of observing classroom practices and/or classroom environments, and program leadership and management practices. Objective observation helps early childhood and school-age professionals review their program's practices to see what they are doing well and identify areas for growth. PQA feedback is used to inform Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) goals.

For FY 2020, as programs in Keystone STARS work toward STAR 3 and 4, they are required (EC 3.4.5) to create an IAP plan. This plan outlines the key elements in successfully observing program practices and how the feedback collected will be used to inform goals for growth in classroom and leadership/management practices. Partnership with the program's Quality Coach and a Pennsylvania Key Program Quality Assessor is integrated into the IAP to support meaningful use of internal assessment for CQI goal setting.

Internal assessment is a well thought out, on-going process unique to each program's goals, culture, and priorities. The IAP plan outlines who is involved, how the process is carried out, and how the information gathered is used to inform goal setting. Internal assessment is only meaningful when those involved are familiar with the selected program observation instrument (POI), are prepared to be objective in recording observed practices, and include observed teachers in the process of establishing goals for improvement to include in a program's yearly CQI Plan.

A well-developed IAP plan created collaboratively by program leadership and teachers, along with the support of Keystone STARS partners, is an essential tool in guiding the development of CQI across all areas of the program. The *Keystone STARS IAP Guide* has been developed to support programs:

- in selecting a focus for CQI
- in selecting an approved POI(s) for use in the program's internal assessment
- in planning how to use the information collected to inform the program's CQI Plan and activities
- in the ongoing CQI cycle of developing, implementing, and evaluating.

The *Keystone STARS Internal Assessment Process Initial Cycle Planning Document*, found in the *IAP Guide, 2020 Keystone STARS Program Manual*, and also attached to this document, outlines the required elements of the IAP and highlights each of the areas necessary for IAP planning. Programs will be required to complete the *IAP Initial Cycle Planning Document* as part of meeting EC 3.4.5. at STAR 3 and 4.

The *Keystone STARS IAP Guide* is a resource for early childhood education and school age programs, ELRC staff, and the PQA team. However, its primary function is to support programs in their IAP planning. It has been designed to support programs' experience with internal assessment and using the information collected to inform the programs' CQI Plans and activities.

Internal Assessment (IA) Consultation Summary Form

Virtual consultation meetings attended by program representatives, Quality Coaches and Pennsylvania Key Program Quality Assessors support the use of the IAP Guide during the development of a program's process. The number of meetings held while creating the IAP for a program is unique to that program. An IA Consultation Summary is completed by the Assessor after every meeting and is generally sent to the program within three business days.

After a program's final consultation meeting a Consultation Summary Form with additional information including the Assessor's signature as well as indication of which quality indicators, EC 3.4.5 and/or EC 3.4.6, have been met. This signed Consultation Summary Form indicates that work on the IAP is complete for this cycle and is then available as a source of evidence for STARS Designation along with the program's Internal Assessment Initial Cycle Planning Document.

NEXT STEPS

1. Child care programs
 - a. Review the *IAP Guide* and accompanying documents with your program staff as appropriate.
 - b. Please direct any questions to your ELRC.
2. ELRC
 - a. Review and share with appropriate staff.
 - b. Please direct any questions to your ELRC Program Representative.
 - c. Connect with your Regional PQA Supervisor as needed for ongoing support and information.