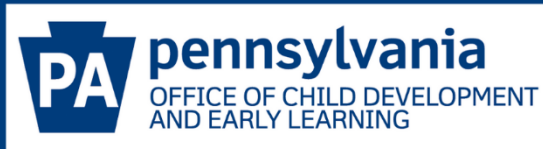Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning
Bureau of Early Learning Policy and Professional Development

Issue Date: August 31, 2023

Effective Date: October 1, 2023

End Date: N/A

Subject: 2023 Keystone STARS Performance Standards, Program Manual, and Accompanying Resources

To: All DHS Certified Child Care Providers; Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs); and The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Early Learning Resource Center Program Representatives

From: Shante' Brown
Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development & Early Learning

PURPOSE

To announce the 2023 updated Keystone STARS Performance Standards, Program Manual, and Accompanying Resources.

The policy package includes the following:
1) 2023 Keystone STARS Performance Standards (NEW)
2) 2023 Keystone STARS Program Manual – (NEW)
3) Keystone STARS Continuous Quality Improvement Plan - Instructions and Template #1 (PDF Writeable)
4) Keystone STARS Continuous Quality Improvement Plan – Template #2 (PDF Writeable)
5) Keystone STARS Internal Assessment Process (IAP) – Template (PDF Writeable) (UPDATED)
6) Professional Development Tracking Grid for STAR 3 & 4 Programs: Teaching Staff (PDF Writeable) (UPDATED)
7) Professional Development Tracking Grid for STAR 3 & 4 Programs: Non-Instructional Staff (PDF Writeable)
8) Confidential Records Sign Off Form: Children's Records (For ELRC Use, PDF Writeable)
9) Confidential Records Sign Off Form: Leadership and Management and Program Staff (For ELRC Use, PDF Writeable)

10) [Approved Curriculum and Developmental Assessment Information for Keystone STARS (updated August 2023)](#)
11) [Webinar: An Overview of the 2023 Keystone STARS Performance Standards](#) (NEW)

This announcement becomes effective October 1, 2023, and will replace in its entirety:
- *ELRC Announcement 22 #04 Keystone STARS Performance Standards and Program Manual and all accompanying documents*

BACKGROUND

On May 16, 2022, the most recent version of the Keystone STARS Performance Standards and Program Manual were released and became effective July 1, 2022. Since that time, OCDEL has received feedback from the field related to professional development in Keystone STARS Staff Qualification (SQ) indicators. OCDEL examined the feedback and used it to make edits to a limited number of quality indicators that will become effective on **October 1, 2023**.

Additionally, the 2023 Keystone STARS Program Manual features updated and additional information and resources for 2023.

DISCUSSION

All updates made in the 2023 Keystone STARS Performance Standards are in the Staff Qualifications (SQ) quality indicator with one exception. One edit was made to the Early Childhood Education (EC) quality indicator EC 2.1.

The Change made to the Early Childhood Education (EC) Quality Indicator 2.1:

A single edit was made to the EC quality indicators in the 2023 Keystone STARS Performance Standards. The STAR 2 quality indicator, EC 2.1 related to a program's continuous quality improvement (CQI) plan has been updated to remove the requirement for programs to include goals in their CQI Plan that are related to the Child Care Facility COVID-19 Health and Safety Plan. This change was made as a result of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) allowing the Public Health Emergency (PHE) for COVID-19 to expire on May 11, 2023.

The Changes made to the Staff Qualifications (SQ) Quality Indicators:

The following is a list of the SQ quality indicators that have been enhanced for 2023:
- **SQ 2.2**: The timeframe to complete the indicator has been changed from "within 60 days" of hire to "**within 90 days of hire**" to establish consistency with SQ 2.1.
- **SQ 2.3**: The timeframe of "**within 90 days of hire**" has been added to establish consistency with SQ 2.1 and SQ 2.2.
- **SQ 3.4.3, SQ 3.4.4, SQ 3.4.5, SQ 3.4.6, SQ 3.4.7, SQ 3.4.8**, and **SQ 3.4.9** – Edits to these quality indicators were made to simplify the language and ensure the following information is included in each:
  - Topic Area in which professional development (PD) should be completed
  - Timeframe in which PD is required to be taken and any ongoing expectations
  - Search tips for finding courses in the PD Registry using the PA PSCECE standard area(s)
  - Listing of possible PD courses in PD Registry which would meet each indicator

- o Any clarifications necessary for the School Age Child Care (SACC) only programs.

The Updates made in the 2023 Keystone STARS Program Manual include the following:

- Most supplemental information on Keystone STARS and the Performance Standards has been moved from the Standards document and is now included in the accompanying 2023 Keystone STARS Program Manual. The Standards document now includes only the Standards themselves, a glossary of terms, and the scoring rubric.
- Additional terms and definitions for Active Enrollment, OCDEL-approved Assessor, and Professional Development have been added to the Glossary of Terms.
- The expectations for programs when completing their Keystone STAR annual designation renewals are outlined further in Program Manual
- The chapter, *Professional Development and Registry Requirements*, includes detailed information on approved PD options to meet the STAR 3 and 4 SQ indicators.
- The chapter, *Continuous Quality Improvement and Program Observation in Keystone STARS*, has been updated to better reflect the comprehensive nature of the Internal Assessment Process (IAP) and supports programs and quality coaches in planning for the collaboration with the assessors beginning six months prior to a program's IAP effective end date.
- The *Professional Development Tracking Grid for STAR 3 and 4 Programs: Teaching Staff* has been updated to reflect the changes in the STAR 3 and 4 SQ quality indicators
- Several previously released ELRC Policy Announcements have been incorporated into the 2023 Keystone STARS Program Manual including:
  - o ELRC Policy Announcement 21 #03 *Eligibility and Process for Extending STAR 4 Reciprocity to Head Start and Early Head Start Federal Recipients*
  - o ELRC Policy Announcement 22 #01: *Systems Alignment to the Pennsylvania Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*
  - o ELRC Policy Announcement 22 #03: *Streamlined Keystone STARS Designation System*
  - o ELRC Policy Announcement 22 #07: *OCDEL approved Curricula and Developmental Assessments for Keystone STARS*
  - o ELRC Policy Announcement 22 #08: *Requirements for Programs Using an OCDEL-Approved Alternate Pathway in Keystone STARS*

Implementation of 2023 Keystone STARS Performance Standards:

The updated Keystone STARS Performance Standards will become effective **October 1, 2023**. Beginning **October 1, 2023**, all designation applications that are initiated in the Registry Designation System will automatically feature the updated 2023 Keystone STARS Performance Standards.

Programs who begin working on a full designation renewal or move up designation prior to **October 1, 2023**, using the 2022 Keystone STARS Performance Standards will be able to complete their designation using the 2022 STARS Performance Standards as long as their designation cases are completed and submitted for review in the PA PD Registry Designation

System on or before **December 31, 2023**. On **January 2, 2024**, any incomplete designations that were initiated by programs prior to **October 1, 2023**, using the 2022 STARS Standards may be denied within the Registry Designation System. After this date, these programs would then need to re-apply for a new designation using the 2023 STARS Standards within the PD Registry Designation System.

Highlighting the Document Vault Functionality in the Designation System

As a reminder, programs should use the Document Vault in the PD Registry Designation System when uploading evidence and documentation. This is especially important for programs who begin working on designation applications using the 2022 Keystone STARS Performance Standards. As mentioned above, programs who begin work on a designation application prior to **October 1, 2023**, using the 2022 Performance Standards but are unable to complete the designation by December 31, 2023, may have their cases canceled on **January 2, 2024**. After this date, programs will need to begin a new application case using the 2023 Keystone STARS Performance Standards. Programs that had previously uploaded all evidence and documentation to their Document Vault prior to attaching to the STARS Quality Indicators will be able to attach the evidence to the new 2023 Performance Standards without having to upload these documents again.

A tip sheet on the Document Vault Functionality is located here.

NEXT STEPS
1. Child care programs
   a. Review the 2023 Keystone STARS Performance Standards and Program Manual with staff.
   b. Review the information in this Policy Announcement.
   b. Please direct any questions to your ELRC.
2. ELRC
   a. Review and share with appropriate staff.
   b. Please direct any questions to your OCDEL Program Representative.