

**Announcement  
ELRC #25-01**



Pennsylvania  
**Office of Child Development  
and Early Learning**

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

**Issue Date:** July 1, 2025

**Effective Date:** July 1, 2025

**Expiration Date:** N/A

**Subject:** Changes to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation Standards and System and Implications for Keystone STARS Alternate Pathways

**To:** All Keystone STARS Providers; Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRCs); and the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Early Learning Resource Center Program Representatives

**From:**

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## **PURPOSE**

To announce how changes to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) will impact Early Care and Education providers using NAEYC Accreditation as a Keystone STARS, OCDEL-approved, Alternate Pathway to a STAR 4 designation.

## **BACKGROUND**

Providers of Early Care and Education who receive NAEYC accreditation and meet the required Keystone STARS standards have historically been able to leverage their NAEYC accreditation as an Alternate Pathway to a STAR 4 designation in the Keystone STARS Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Find additional information on OCDEL approved Alternate Pathways [here](#).

## DISCUSSION

### NAEYC's New Tiers of Accreditation:

Effective March 3, 2025, NAEYC began using a new tiered system of accreditation. The three tiers are briefly outlined below, for additional information, please visit the [NAEYC website](#).

- **Recognition**
  - According to NAEYC, 'Recognition' is the first step to high quality.
  - Requires a documentation review.
  - One-year term renewed annually.
- **Accreditation**
  - Requires a documentation review.
  - Potential for a random site visit.
  - Five-year term with annual reporting required.
- **Accreditation +**
  - Requires a documentation review and site visit.
  - Potential for a random site visit.
  - Five-year term with annual reporting required.

Access an overview of the new quality assessment and accreditation system from NAEYC [here](#).

### Impact of Accreditation Changes on STARS Designation:

Following a comprehensive internal review of NAEYC's new Accreditation Standards and Tiers, OCDEL has established that the **Accreditation +** tier will be acknowledged as an approved Alternate Pathway to a STAR 4 designation\*.

The NAEYC tiers of **Recognition** or **Accreditation** will not serve as OCDEL approved Alternate Pathways to higher STARS designations.

Programs that are currently NAEYC accredited will transition to the **Accreditation +** tier and will not see any impact on their STAR 4 Alternate Pathway designation\*. If these programs would experience a drop in their NAEYC accreditation status to one of the lower tiers of **Recognition** or **Accreditation**, they would also be designated as a STAR 1.

Moving forward:

- Programs that become newly accredited through NAEYC at the **Accreditation +** tier will be able to use their accreditation as an approved Alternate Pathway to a STAR 4 designation\*.

- Programs that become newly accredited through NAEYC at the **Recognition** or **Accreditation** tiers will not be able to use their accreditation status as an OCDEL approved Alternate Pathway to a higher STAR level. If these programs wish to move up in STAR levels, they could do so by using the Keystone STARS Performance Standards or achieving the highest NAEYC accreditation tier of **Accreditation +**.

NAEYC Accreditation Tier	Corresponding Keystone STARS Designation
Recognition	STAR 1
Accreditation	STAR 1
Accreditation +	STAR 4- Alternate Pathway *

\*Programs using an OCDEL approved Alternate Pathway to a higher STAR level must complete all requirements for Keystone STARS as explained in [ELRC Policy Announcement 21 #08](#).

OCDEL will continue to review and evaluate the new accreditation system and will issue additional guidance when appropriate.

## NEXT STEPS

**All programs** currently using or planning to use NAEYC as an Alternate Pathway to a STAR 4 Designation should:

- Review the information contained in this document.
- Complete any upcoming Keystone STARS designation renewals as required.
- Review your current Accreditation VUD to determine your NAEYC renewal status.
  - For questions regarding the new NAEYC standards, assessments and processes, contact NAEYC at [accreditation.information@naeyc.org](mailto:accreditation.information@naeyc.org) or call 1-800-424-2460.
- Programs are encouraged to discuss their Keystone STARS Designation with their Quality Coach.

### ELRCs:

- Review the information contained in this document.
- Please direct any questions to your program representative.