

**Star-Quality
Child Care Program**

*Is your Child Care
A Star?*

**A Parent's Guide to Choosing
Quality Child Care in Tennessee**



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Dear Parents,

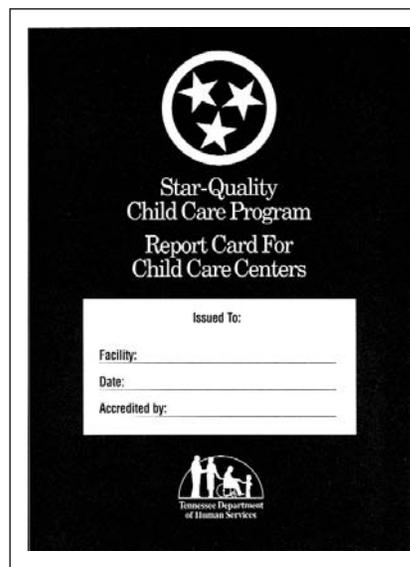
The quality of child care has a direct impact on your child's ability to learn, to build healthy relationships, and otherwise to become the best they can be. The critical decision of where to place your child, however, is often difficult and confusing. The quality of child care, and a positive future for your child, depends on having the tools necessary for making informed choices for your family.

The Department of Human Services is helping you with this very important decision through the Child Care **REPORT CARD** system. The **REPORT CARD** not only gives you the vital information you need to understand how to look for quality child care but also allows you to compare the many different child care programs available in Tennessee.

QUALITY CHILD CARE is also dependent, though, on the continuing efforts of child care providers to provide ever-increasing levels of quality. Thus, to encourage these efforts, the Department has also implemented the:

STAR-QUALITY CHILD CARE PROGRAM

When a provider goes above the minimum licensing regulations they may be eligible to receive 1, 2, or 3 stars and join the **STAR-QUALITY Program**. These **STAR-QUALITY** agencies are then given a special **STAR-QUALITY REPORT CARD** and **STAR-QUALITY** window stickers to advertise their important achievements. In addition, **STAR-QUALITY** agencies that participate in the child care certificate program can receive bonus money for their stars.



Stars mean higher quality for your child.

WHAT DOES THE REPORT CARD AND STAR-QUALITY TELL PARENTS?

According to child care experts, all children have three basic needs:

- ☺ Protection of health and safety
- ☺ Positive relationships
- ☺ Opportunities for stimulation and learning

The Department of Human Services evaluates agencies for the criteria the experts recognize as being critical to insuring that these needs are met. This criteria includes staff education and experience, the record of the program's compliance with state licensing rules, the caregiver to child ratios and group sizes, professional business practices, and opportunities for parental involvement.

In addition, an on-site observation is made by a highly trained Assessor who visits each child care program to evaluate the indoor and outdoor spaces, activities, materials, and the interactions between the children and their caregivers. During the observation, the Assessor stays to the back or side of the room and out of the caregiver's way. Assessors have been trained not to

interfere with the caregivers or your children, so they don't talk a lot while they are observing the facility.

To make sure every observer looks for the same things at the center or home, the Assessor is specially trained to use the Child Care Environment Rating Scales for this on-site observation. These scales are nationally recognized as reliable tools for assessing the quality of child care programs.

When the evaluation of these criteria are completed the Report Card is issued and parents can see how the program rated in each area. In this way, the parents have the information they need to make the critical decisions about what is important for their child.

You can learn more about child care, and receive assistance in locating child care, by contacting your local Child Care Resource and Referral Service. A listing of Child Care Resource and Referral Centers and the counties they serve can be found in your Handy Workbook.

The Child Care **REPORT CARD** shows you where your child care provider stands in each of the rated areas so that you can make an informed decision about choosing child care. You can use the information on the **REPORT CARD** to decide if your children are receiving the kind of care that you want. If you are looking for child care, you can use the **REPORT CARD** to help you choose the best program for your children.

Child care agencies receive a **REPORT CARD** each year at their licensing renewal. The **REPORT CARD** must be in a place where you can easily see it. It shows how the program is rated in each component area.

The **REPORT CARD** lists 7 major areas of evaluation for child care centers and 5 major areas for family and group child care providers. You will see check marks that show where the provider stands in each area: *Director's Qualifications, Professional Development, Developmental Learning, Adult:Child Ratios, Parent/Family Involvement, Staff Compensation, Program Assessment, and Business Management.*

Minimum standards are required by state law. The law sets the lowest standards needed to help keep children safe and healthy. Each “**STAR**” shows additional requirements that rise above state law. The more **STARS** on the **REPORT CARD**, the higher the child care program has risen above the minimum state requirements in that area.

The **STAR-QUALITY** Program is a voluntary program for providers who have gone beyond the state's basic requirements for child care. These blue and yellow **STAR-QUALITY REPORT CARDS** will have Stars at the top of each area rated. Providers can earn from 1 Star to 3 Stars in each area and on their overall rating.

The Child Care Report Card Can Help You Choose Quality Child Care

Who Gets a Report Card?

Looking at the Child Care Report Card

Higher Check Marks Indicate Higher Quality for Your Child

Tennessee STAR-QUALITY Program

Report Card Glossary

What do each of the Report Card areas tell me?

The foundation of your child's care is in caring individuals who are dedicated to the loving development of your child. But this basic foundation must be built upon to insure the very best of care for your child.

Each of these report card areas tells you critical information you need to make the informed choices of what is best for your child.

Director qualifications – This area tells you how much education and experience the director has. The director must plan the entire program and train the caregivers. Professional training and experience help the director to plan the best care for your child.

Professional development – This area tells you how much education and experience the caregivers have. Caregivers who have more experience, education, and training are more likely to understand how to meet your child's developmental needs and therefore, better prepare them for the future.

Developmental learning – This area tells you that child care providers keep copies of the Developmental Learning standards on-site and available to staff, that the director and a percentage of the staff have received training on these standards, and that the standards are used in the child care program.

Parent/family involvement – This area tells you how the provider involves parents and family in the child care program. Children receive better overall care when the provider has active partnerships with their parents and family.

Ratio and group size – This area tell you how many adults are supervising the children and how many children are grouped together. This is very important because more caregivers and smaller groups mean more personalized attention and supervision for your child.

Staff compensation – This part of the report card provides information on the center’s pay scale and benefits. A higher star-rating does *not* mean that the center staff receive higher pay. Instead, this area tells you if all staff are included in a defined pay scale, and whether the scale for the teachers is related to their experience, education and training. Staff turnover is stressful for young children, and providers can better help their staff to stay by providing a compensation package.

Program assessment – The program assessment is a 3-4 hour on-site observation in which the agency is rated on the quality of care observed. This rating gives you a very good overall picture of the program’s quality.

*Family and group homes are evaluated on three of the above components: developmental learning, parent/family involvement, and program assessment. In addition, they are evaluated on the following components:

Professional development – This area tells you how much education and experience the Primary Caregiver has. Primary Caregivers who have more experience, education, and training are more likely to understand how to meet your child’s developmental needs and therefore, better prepare them for the future.

Business management – This area tells you agency’s policies, philosophy, and business and financial management practices. This is important because good business practices lead to more stability, thus reducing the stress and unhealthy development that can happen when children must face frequent changes.



**Tennessee Department
of Human Services**

