

QUALITY COUNTS

Striving for Five Star Early Learning



Center Manual

Quality Counts is a quality improvement rating system designed and funded by The Children's Trust in partnership with the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe and the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation/Ready Schools Miami.

It is administered in collaboration with Florida International University, Family Central Inc., the University of Miami Mailman Center, Devereux Florida, the Children's Forum, the United Way Center for Excellence, the National Institute for Innovative Leadership, Miami-Dade County Community Action Agency Head Start/Early Head Start Division, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and RCMA.

Table of Contents

1. Quality Counts	3
• <i>Welcome</i>	
• <i>Background and Leadership</i>	
2. Overview of Quality Counts	5
• <i>Goals</i>	
• <i>Quality Standards</i>	
• <i>Participation Process</i>	
• <i>Consumer Awareness</i>	
3. Getting Started: The Quality Counts Process	6-11
• <i>Overview Training</i>	
• <i>Application</i>	
• <i>Selection</i>	
• <i>Link to Quality Counts Specialists</i>	
• <i>Self-Study Training</i>	
• <i>Self-Study</i>	
• <i>Formal Assessment</i>	
• <i>Star Rating</i>	
• <i>Quality Improvement Plan</i>	
• <i>Accessing Supports</i>	
• <i>Continuous Quality Improvement</i>	
• <i>Renewal</i>	
APPENDIX	
Quality Standards	12-14
Frequently Asked Questions	15-16
Application Form	17-18

Welcome

Welcome to the manual for the Quality Counts initiative! There is a lot of energy around this project in Miami-Dade County and we are pleased that you are thinking about participating.

Quality Counts is the exciting new quality rating improvement system for Miami-Dade County. Many forms of support, resources and information are available to programs that participate in Quality Counts. We are eager to answer any questions you may have and assist you in any way. This manual is for centers – separate manuals tailored for family child care programs, Head Start, and the public schools are also available.

If you have any questions after reading through this manual, please contact the Quality Counts office of the Early Learning Coalition at **305-646-7242** or email us at **qualitycounts@elcmdm.org**

If you have not already attended one, we look forward to seeing you at a Quality Counts Overview training soon. More information will be shared at these meetings and questions can be answered. The schedule for these trainings can be found on our website at www.elcmdm.org/QualityCounts or by contacting the Early Learning Coalition by phone at 305-646-7242 or by e-mail at qualitycounts@elcmdm.org

Quality Counts—Background and Leadership

Why was Quality Counts created? What are its goals? Research is clear that high quality early learning programs help children develop the social, cognitive, and problem-solving skills that serve them the rest of their lives. Children who attend quality early learning programs enter school more prepared for success, repeat grades less often, have parents who are more involved in their education, graduate from high school and attend college more often, and are less involved in the criminal justice system.

Understanding the life-changing impact of quality early learning programs, The Children’s Trust, the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade County, and the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation/Ready Schools Miami have made a significant investment in a quality rating improvement system – now named Quality Counts. Quality rating improvement systems (QRIS) are becoming the best-practice model for supporting early learning programs as they improve their quality. Quality rating improvement systems are already implemented in over a dozen states and are being planned in many others. In Florida, several counties are already using a quality rating improvement system and many more are exploring the idea.

Through the leadership of The Children’s Trust, stakeholders from throughout the county were part of planning Quality Counts in 2006-2007. They adopted quality standards and identified the support services and financial incentives providers most need to improve quality. The Children’s Trust is also playing a lead role in efforts to align the several existing or emerging quality rating initiatives in Florida, working with the QRIS Multi-County Collaborative, a group of representatives from Florida’s existing and emerging initiatives. The standards for the center-based programs have been endorsed by the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) of the Florida Office of Early Learning. Miami-Dade County is the first to implement these standards, making Miami-Dade County a leader in what is projected to become a statewide QRIS system.

The Children’s Trust is the primary funder of Quality Counts. The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe was selected by The Children’s Trust to oversee Quality Counts, and is contributing significant quality improvement funds to this initiative. Quality Counts is also supported by the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation/Ready Schools.

The Early Learning Coalition and its partners will provide the following supports to assist centers that participate in Quality Counts:

Support for Your Program	Partner
Project Coordination and Oversight	Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe
Formal Assessment	Devereux Florida Inc.
Technical Assistance	Family Central Inc. (centers north of Flagler) Florida International University, College of Education (centers south of Flagler)
Career Advising, Training Registry, Scholarships, WAGE\$	Quality Counts Career Center, the Children’s Forum
Grants and Awards	Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe
Professional Development/Training	United Way Center for Excellence in Early Education

The Early Learning Coalition and its partners are looking forward to working with you. Together we can help the children of Miami-Dade County get off to the best possible start.

Overview of Quality Counts

Quality Counts is a 5 Star rating system that reviews early learning programs according to clearly defined standards and offers supports and incentives to help providers reach their goals. Quality Counts is open to any licensed and license-exempt center in Miami-Dade County that wants to participate. Quality Counts is voluntary. Early learning programs can choose to participate in this initiative and the supports are individually tailored to meet each program's needs.

GOALS OF QUALITY COUNTS

The goals of Quality Counts are to:

- 1) Ensure young children throughout Miami-Dade County are provided with the best possible early learning experiences through high quality early learning programs;
- 2) Provide information and support to early learning programs to improve and sustain the quality of their programs; and
- 3) Provide families with an easy to use tool to select the best program for their child.

QUALITY STANDARDS

Quality Counts is focused on achievement of quality standards for early care and education programs. The standards are linked to improving children's outcomes. The standards were adopted through a series of stakeholder meetings in our community, and were further refined by the QRIS Multi-County Collaborative, a group of representatives from the existing quality rating improvement initiatives in Florida. These Standards have been endorsed by the Early Learning Advisory Council of the Florida Office of Early Learning.

The component areas of the quality standards are:

- Learning Environment
- Staff Qualifications
- Ratios/Group Sizes
- Family Engagement
- Program Administration
- Curriculum

The Quality Standards are provided in the Appendix.

PARTICIPATION PROCESS

To make sure centers throughout the county can be a part of Quality Counts, programs complete an **application**. A copy of the application is available

in this manual, on the website www.elcndm.org/QualityCounts or can be accessed by calling the Early Learning Coalition at 305-646-7242 or emailing qualitycounts@elcndm.org

Self-Study and Formal Assessment

After programs are selected, the next step is to complete a **self-study** and compile a packet of information on their program. This snapshot helps the center get familiar with the quality standards.

The center is then **formally assessed** using the Environment Rating Scales (ITERS-R and ECERS-R), and documentation from the self-study is verified for the other components of the Quality Counts process.

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

Using the information gathered through the self-study and the formal assessment, the program director works with the staff to develop a **quality improvement plan**, with the help of a technical assistance specialist. This quality improvement plan will help identify the activities and supports needed for the program to meet its short and long-term quality improvement goals.

Supports for programs to improve and maintain quality
Based on the quality improvement plan, programs can apply for support for their programs:

- Grants for equipment and materials
- Scholarships for staff to complete credentials or degrees
- Training for staff to improve program quality
- Wage supplements for teachers who achieve educational credentials and are stable in their work positions, and
- Technical assistance to help programs achieve their goals.

CONSUMER AWARENESS

A long-term goal of Quality Counts is to provide parents with a trustworthy and easy way to recognize high quality programs. The first year baseline assessment of programs will not be publicly released, as this reflects a program's starting point. A program's Star Rating will only be released after the program has had at least a year to make improvements.

Getting Started: The Quality Counts Process

Quality Counts Process

STEP 1: Overview of Quality Counts

STEP 2: Application

STEP 3: Selection

**STEP 4: Link to Technical Assistance and
Career Center**

STEP 5: Self-Study Training

STEP 6: Self-Study

STEP 7: Formal Assessment

STEP 8: Baseline Assessment Score or Star Rating

STEP 9: Quality Improvement Plan

**STEP 10: Access to Supports: Grants & Awards,
Training, WAGE\$, and Scholarships**

STEP 11: Continuous Quality Improvement

STEP 12: Renewal

Quality Counts—Step by Step

STEP 1: QUALITY COUNTS OVERVIEW TRAINING

All programs that want to participate in Quality Counts must attend an Overview Training for an introduction to the program.

This training will give an overview of Quality Counts and its goals, the baseline assessment, the quality improvement process, and information on supports available for programs.

For a schedule of Quality Counts Overview Trainings, go to www.elcmdm.org/QualityCounts or call the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe at (305) 646-7242.

STEP 2: APPLICATION

All programs must complete an application. All licensed or legally license exempt early care and education (child care) programs in Miami-Dade County can apply to participate in Quality Counts. The application form is included in the Appendix of this manual or it can be downloaded at www.elcmdm.org/QualityCounts.

Applications are accepted any time. Applications may be mailed or hand-delivered to the Early Learning Coalition office at 2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd, Suite 500, Coral Gables, FL 33134. Applications also may be submitted at Overview Trainings. Faxed applications will not be accepted.

Programs will be provided with written confirmation that their application was received.

STEP 3: SELECTION

Quality Counts involves programs of all sizes serving families of all income levels from throughout the county. The selection process is designed to include a representative cross section of centers and will consider:

- a program's size: small, medium, large, very large
- geographic location: north, south, high poverty zip code
- the percentage of subsidized (School Readiness) children a program serves (if any).

The selection process is assisted by computer. Personal information on the program (such as name, address, etc.) is removed so there is no bias in the selection.

Programs that are selected will be notified by a telephone call from the Early Learning Coalition or a Quality Counts partner agency.

If a program is not selected, its application will be valid for one year; programs will be reconsidered

every selection round. The status of applications waiting to be selected will be confirmed in writing on a quarterly basis. Programs should inform the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe of any major changes on their application.

STEP 4: LINK TO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & CAREER ADVISING

Programs selected for Quality Counts will be contacted immediately by a technical assistance specialist (TA). This specialist will welcome your program to the project and offer technical assistance on the Quality Counts process.

A career advisor from the Quality Counts Career Center will help your program with the Staff Qualifications section of the self-study process.

STEP 5: SELF-STUDY TRAINING

When your program is selected, you and your staff can get started right away with the self-study. The self-study helps programs learn about the quality standards (see the Appendix) and the tools used to evaluate each area.

Every program selected for Quality Counts will take a self-study training to learn how to complete the self-study process. The training is arranged by the Quality Counts technical assistance staff. The training will include information on the quality standards, the use of the Environment Rating Scales (ITERS-R and ECERS-R), and strategies for completing the self-study forms for all the quality components.

STEP 6: SELF-STUDY

The self-study provides a snapshot of the program at the beginning of your involvement with Quality Counts. The self-study also helps the director and staff get to know the assessment process and the quality standards. This will make it easier to understand the formal assessment and develop the Quality Improvement Plan with your technical assistance specialist and career advisor.

Your self-study profile documents your achievements of the quality standards.

A **self-study packet** is provided by your technical assistance specialist. The packet can be downloaded from the Quality Counts website at www.elcmdm.org/QualityCounts. The packet includes checklists and forms to record information about the quality components:

- Learning Environment
- Staff Qualifications

- Adult to Child Ratios and Group Sizes
- Family Engagement policies and strategies
- Program Administration
- Curriculum

Notes:

The Learning Environment is evaluated using the Environment Rating Scales. Self-assessment of your classrooms is not required for the self-study. Training on using the Environment Rating Scales is available so you will be able to do self-assessments of your classrooms throughout the year.

Curriculum information will be gathered during the self-study and formal assessment but will not be included in the point calculation the first year of the Quality Counts initiative.

The self-study packet also provides instructions for gathering the required information. The self-study materials may be organized in a 3-ring binder or a hanging file-folder box, etc. Your technical assistance specialist will work with you to complete the self-study process.

To help Quality Counts schedule formal assessments, programs are asked to complete their self-study profile within 3 to 6 weeks of participating in the self-study training. The timeline depends on program size, as large programs may need additional time to gather information on all classrooms and all teachers.

STEP 7: FORMAL ASSESSMENT

Every program will receive a formal assessment approximately two to four weeks after completing the self-study. This assessment will be completed by professional early childhood program assessors and will determine your program’s score. The assessor will:

- **Verify information provided in the self-study profile.** The assessor will validate the self-study by reviewing the documentation for each item included on the self-study checklist.
- **Evaluate the learning environment using the Environment Rating Scales** on a random sample of the classrooms. The number of classrooms assessed is based on the size of the program and the number of children enrolled (see chart below).

When more than one classroom is formally assessed using the same Scale, the total scores are averaged for the overall points.

For infant-toddler classrooms the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R) is used; for preschool classrooms the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS-R) is used.

You will receive a written report of the formal assessment within 2 – 4 weeks. Your Quality Counts technical assistance specialist is available to discuss it with you.

Program Size	Ages of Children	ITERS-R (Ages 0-30 months)	ECERS-R (Ages 30 - 60 months)
1-3 classrooms	0-5	1	1
1-3 classrooms	3-5	0	1
4 or more classrooms	0-5	1/3 of all classrooms	1/3 of all classrooms
4 or more classrooms	3-5	0	1/3 of all classrooms

Publication information about the Environment Rating Scales:

Harms, T., Clifford, R., & Cryer, D. (2005). *The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales-Revised*. Teachers College Press: New York.

Harms, T., Cryer, D., & Clifford, R. (2006). *The Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scales-Revised*. Teachers College Press: New York.

STEP 8: BASELINE ASSESSMENT SCORE OR STAR RATING

The first year formal assessment gives a “baseline assessment score.” The second year and thereafter each program must complete an Update Report to decide whether to request Star Rating. A Star Rating must be completed at least every 3 years, regardless of the results of the Update Report.

The baseline assessment score or Star Rating is based on the formal assessment and the total points earned for each of the quality components:

- Learning environment
- Staff qualifications
- Ratios and group sizes
- Family engagement
- Program administration

Note: Curriculum is included in the assessment but will not be included in the point calculation the first year of Quality Counts.

To determine your program’s baseline assessment score or Star Rating:

- Each quality component is scored
- The Learning Environment score is multiplied by 2.
- Points are summed
- Bonus points are added for full-time teachers and curriculum specialists with bachelor’s degrees or higher; up to 6 bonus points possible
- Total points are determined
- Star level is determined every three years of participating in Quality Counts.
- A plus sign (+) is added to the score for programs that have current Florida Gold Seal accreditation.

Sample showing how the points are calculated:

Maximum Possible Score			
Component	Maximum Score	Weight	Maximum Possible Points
1. Learning Environment (ECERS-R)	Up to 5	X 2	10
Learning Environment (ITERS-R)	Up to 5	X 2	10
2. Staff Qualifications	Up to 5		5
3. Ratios-Group Sizes	Up to 5		5
4. Family Engagement	Up to 5		5
5. Program Administration	Up to 5		5
6. Curriculum (not included in points Year 1)			
Subtotal			40
Extra bonus points: 6 points maximum	Up to 6		6
Total baseline or Star Rating points			46

Point range per Star level				
Star 1	Star 2	Star 3	Star 4	Star 5
4-12 points	13-20 points	21-28 points	29-35 points	36-40 points

Note: If a program only serves one age group, the weight of that Environment Rating Scale would be x4. If more than one ERS is completed, the scores are averaged and the average score is weighted. Further explanation is provided in the self-study packet.

Sample showing an imaginary program's score:

EXAMPLE: ABC LEARNING CENTER			
Component	Score	Weight	Points
1. Learning Environment (ECERS-R)	4	X 2	8
Learning Environment (ITERS-R)	4	X 2	8
2. Staff Qualifications	3		3
3. Ratios-Group Sizes	2		2
4. Family Engagement	4		4
5. Program Administration	4		4
6. Curriculum (not included in points Year 1)			
Subtotal			29
Extra bonus points: 6 points maximum	3		3
Total baseline or Star Rating points			32

Point range per Star level				
Star 1	Star 2	Star 3	Star 4	Star 5
4-12 points	13-20 points	21-28 points	29-35 points	36-40 points

After the formal assessment, the verified information for all the quality components is used to generate your program's baseline assessment score or Star Rating.

Your Quality Counts technical assistance specialist will contact you to set up a meeting and discuss the score. Programs have the first year to engage in continuous program improvement and access supports while preparing for formal Star Rating.

STEP 9: QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Your program will develop a quality improvement plan (QIP) after your assessment score is compiled. Your technical assistance specialist is available to help. A Quality Counts career advisor will also be available to support career development plans with staff.

The quality improvement plan you create will help your program select goals based on the results of the self-study and formal assessment, and help identify overall training needs within your program. Your plan will also establish timelines for working on these goals.

If you do not complete a quality improvement plan, access may be limited to the grants or awards, scholarships, wage enhancements, or trainings available through Quality Counts.

Environment Rating Scales

Quality Counts recognizes the value of conscious use of the Environment Rating Scales (ECERS-R and ITERS-R) for raising program quality. The self-study profile is completed rather quickly, and does not include self-assessment of the Learning Environment

with the Rating Scales. Use of the Environment Rating Scales begins right after the formal assessment.

Your first quality improvement plan must include use of the Environment Rating Scales. Programs have access to training in use of the Environment Rating Scales for program self-assessment and quality improvement. In the first quarter of Quality Counts participation, your program must complete an Environment Rating Scale (ERS) self-assessment on at least one classroom. An ERS self-assessment must be completed on all classrooms during each year of Quality Counts participation, as an effective strategy for continuous program evaluation and improvement.

Quality Counts offers training regularly on the use of the Environment Rating Scales. For a calendar of training, call the Quality Counts office at 305-646-7242 or visit the website at www.elcmdm.org/QualityCounts.

STEP 10: ACCESSING SUPPORTS

When you complete a quality improvement plan (QIP) you can receive support to help achieve your goals. Supports may include:

- **Technical Assistance:** on-site consultation visits to support continued progress toward your goals outlined in your quality improvement plan.
- **Training:** a wide variety of training opportunities offered to Quality Counts participants.
- **Grants and Awards**
 - Support Grants are available to all programs for materials and equipment to address issues

identified in the quality improvement plan. The materials and equipment will be delivered based on meeting the goals in the QIP. Your technical assistance specialist may help you use the materials to improve the environment and enhance the experiences of the children.

- Programs that score 21 points or more (equivalent to 3, 4 and 5 Star) may apply for an Achievement Award for specific goals identified in your quality improvement plan. Programs that receive achievement awards must serve as model sites and share their expertise with the community through tours, professional development or other activities.
- The amount of support grants and achievement awards is related to program size and the number of subsidized children served (if any) and/or location in a high poverty zip code.
- Only one grant or award is awarded each year.
- **Scholarships:** funding to help staff complete trainings and credentials such as GED classes, the Florida Child Care Professional Certificate-FCCPC (formerly called the CDA-E), and associate or bachelor's degrees.
- **WAGE\$ supplements:** bi-annual stipends are provided directly to the staff person based on their education; participants must work in the center for 6 months and have achieved at least a Florida staff credential to be eligible to receive WAGE\$ incentives.

The technical assistance specialists and the career advisors will help programs complete applications for grants or awards, WAGE\$, and scholarships.

STEP 11: CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Here is the most important step! Programs in Quality Counts are asked to engage in an ongoing process of evaluating your program, reflecting on your quality enhancement goals, and working continually to make improvements.

Quality Counts works to provide programs with the information and support needed to help you improve quality. With the supports provided in Step 10, you, as the center Director, and your staff will regularly revisit the quality improvement plan to measure progress, review priorities, and plan ways to meet the specific goals and needs of your program.

STEP 12: RENEWAL

Programs will complete an Update Report each year. Based on the Update Report, programs may apply for a Star Rating if the Update Report reflects a Star 3 or higher, and/or likely movement to a higher Star (3 and above). Star Rating must be completed at least every 3 years, regardless of the results of the Update Report. In order to continue to be eligible for the supports in Step 10, programs must make annual progress on their Quality improvement plan.

Quality Counts databases

The Registry

Staff qualification documentation for every member of the teaching staff and the program director is recorded in the Training Registry. The Registry is an extensive database of information about the early childhood workforce.

- Quality Counts centers receive a center transcript to assist in staff development planning. This report summarizes the educational achievements of all teachers and the director.
- Individuals can access transcripts of their training and educational history, and use this information for career development planning.

The educational documents you gather for all your teaching staff will be verified and entered into the Registry by the Quality Counts Career Center.

WELS-Web-based Early Learning System

Information about the quality components are entered into WELS for every program participating in Quality Counts. The formal assessment information is entered into WELS and is used to generate the baseline assessment score or the Star Rating.

Devereux Florida Inc., the agency that conducts the Quality Counts formal Environment Rating Scale assessments and verifies the checklists-forms for the other quality components, will enter the information into WELS.

WELS also supports the quality improvement plans used by participating programs.

Your Quality Counts technical assistance specialist and career advisor will assist you in accessing and using these important databases.

Questions? Contact the Quality Counts office at the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe 305-646-7242.

Quality Standards for Child Care Centers

Learning Environment – Environment Rating Scales-Revised (ECERS, ITERS)

- Subscales: Space-Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language-Reasoning, Activities, Interaction, Program Structure
- Based on average scores of sample of classrooms
- Scored on 7-point scale: 1=Inadequate, 3=Minimal, 5=Good, 7=Excellent

1	2	3	4	5
ECERS-R 3.0–3.49	ECERS-R 3.5–3.99	ECERS-R 4.0–4.49	ECERS-R 4.5–5.49	ECERS-R 5.5–7.0
ITERS-R 3.0–3.49	ITERS-R 3.5–3.99	ITERS-R 4.0–4.49	ITERS-R 4.5–5.49	ITERS-R 5.5–7.0

Staff Qualifications (All of the previous levels required)

1	2	3	4	5
Same as FL Licensing: - All staff have completed 40-hour DCF training and 5-hour Early Literacy (in allowed timeframe) - 1 staff per 20 enrolled children have DCF Staff Credential* or higher - Director holds FL Director Credential	- Lead teachers: All have HS diploma-GED, and 50% have DCF Staff Credential* or higher - Assistant teachers: 25% have or are currently enrolled in DCF Staff Credential* or higher - Director holds FL Director Credential	- Lead teachers: All have DCF Staff Credential* or higher - Assistant teachers: 50% have or are currently enrolled in DCF Staff Credential* or higher - Director holds FL Director Credential	- Lead teachers: 25% have Associate degree (or 60 credits) or higher with 18 credits in ECE - Assistant teachers: 75% have HS diploma-GED, and 25% have DCF Staff Credential* or higher - Director holds FL Advanced level Director Credential	- Lead teachers: 50% have Associate degree (or 60 credits) or higher with 18 credits in ECE - Assistant teachers: All have HS diploma-GED, and 50% have DCF Staff Credential* or higher - Director holds FL Advanced level credential plus associate degree (or 60 credits) or higher with 18 credits in ECE
All teaching staff complete DCF required 10 hours annual in-service training	50% of all teaching staff complete 15 hours total annual in-service training	50% of all teaching staff complete 20 hours total annual in-service training	50% of all teaching staff complete 25 hours total annual in-service training	50% of all teaching staff complete 30 hours total annual in-service training

*DCF Staff Credential requirement includes the Birth-Five and School-Age Florida Child Care Professional Credentials (FCCPC)—formerly the FL CDA-Equivalent, the DOE Early Childhood and School-Age Professional Certificates (ECPC or SAPC) or the Child Care Apprenticeship Certificate (CCAC), national CDA or equivalent national early childhood credential, Associate degree or higher in ECE or related field, Associate degree or higher out of field with 6 credits in ECE plus 480 hrs experience. See the website of the Department of Children and Families-DCF child care training: www.myflorida.com/childcare/training

Ratios - Group Sizes

Age	1		2		3		4		5	
	Ratio	Group	Ratio	Group	Ratio	Group	Ratio	Group	Ratio	Group
Infants	1:4	n/a	1:4	12	1:4	8	1:4	8	1:4	8
Ones	1:6	n/a	1:6	12	1:6	12	1:5	10	1:4	12
Twos	1:11	n/a	1:9	18	1:8	16	1:7	14	1:6	12
Threes	1:15	n/a	1:13	26	1:12	24	1:10	20	1:9	18
Fours/ Fives	1:20	n/a	1:16	32	1:13	26	1:10	20	1:10	20

Family Engagement (All of the previous levels required)

1	2	3	4	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Family Handbook is written and includes parental rights and responsibilities - Signed acknowledgment of receipt of handbook by parent 	<p>Minimum of 3 modes of communication are used to share child and program information with families</p>	<p>At least 2 family activities per year provided</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Families are invited to scheduled family-teacher conferences to review child's progress and needs and to set goals, x2/ year - Activities provided for children and families to assist with transition to new settings within the child care program and/or to kindergarten 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Families have opportunity to evaluate the provider in writing at least annually - Resources are available to communicate with families in the family's primary language - Developmental screening and referral process is in place for 90% of all children, and results are shared with staff and families - Activity suggestions are developed with staff and families for children identified with potential delays

Program Administration (All of the previous levels required)

1	2	3	4	5
<p>Risk management plan is in place (written action plan for emergencies such as hurricanes, fire, flood, etc. including evacuation routes identified and practice drills)</p>	<p>Personnel policy manual includes written staff orientation procedures and job descriptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff meetings are held at least quarterly - Written performance evaluations are completed annually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Written operating policies & procedures include standard business and fiscal management practices - Marketing plan is in place to maximize full enrollment - Performance evaluations include classroom observation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Salary scale is in place and is differentiated by education, experience - Financial record-keeping system provides quarterly reports and analysis and 1-year projected budget - Performance evaluations include professional development plans

Curriculum (All of the previous levels required)

1	2	3	4	5
<p>Developmentally appropriate curriculum (aligned with Early Learning Coalition process of approving curriculum) has been adopted for all age groups</p>	<p>Lead teachers have received minimum 6 hours/year training on implementation of the curriculum (may be on-site and/or director-led training)</p>	<p>All teaching staff employed 6 months or longer have received minimum 6 hours/year training on implementation of the curriculum (may be on-site and/or director-led training)</p>	<p>Developmentally appropriate curriculum is fully implemented A system is in place for ongoing child observations</p>	<p>Child assessment guides individualized program planning and communicating with families</p>

Florida Early Learning Coalitions are directed by the state Office of Early Learning to establish lists of appropriate curricula and to establish a procedure for reviewing-approving other curricula.

Calculating the Star Rating

For each component, a score from 1 to 5 is compiled. This component score is multiplied by the weight to achieve total points for each component. Points are then summed, and the total point score is placed on a pre-determined range to identify the program's overall Star quality rating.

	Component	Maximum Points & Weight	Recognition and Extra Points Overall
1	Learning Environment (Environment Rating Scales) ECERS-R, ITERS-R, as applicable to age groups.	5 X 2 = 10 5 X 2 = 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs holding current Gold Seal designation earn a "plus" on the Star rating • 1 bonus point is awarded for each teacher and/or curriculum specialist with a Bachelor's degree or higher with 18 credits in ECE working full time in the program (up to 6 points)
2	Staff Qualifications	5	
3	Ratios-Group Sizes	5	
4	Family Engagement	5	
5	Program Administration	5	
6	Curriculum (not included in rating Year One)		
	TOTAL	40	

Point range per Star level

Star 1	Star 2	Star 3	Star 4	Star 5
4-12 points	13-20 points	21-28 points	29-35 points	36-40 points

The Quality Standards for center-based child care programs were developed by the "Multi-County QRIS Collaborative" and adopted for use in the Quality Counts Quality Rating Improvement System of Miami-Dade County. The Collaborative includes representatives from Early Learning Coalitions and Children's Services Councils from the following Florida communities: Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Hillsborough, Pinellas, Duval, Orange, Leon-Big Bend. Other participants: Office of Early Learning, Department of Children and Families

VISION

- Align the quality standards of the several existing and emerging Quality Rating initiatives in Florida
- Support statewide Quality Rating Improvement System activities of the Florida Office of Early Learning

The QRIS Collaborative quality standards were endorsed by the Florida Office of Early Learning's Early Learning Advisory Council-ELAC on September 28, 2007. ELAC members are the Governor-appointed chairs of the 31 Early Learning Coalitions.

Quality Counts

Quality Rating Improvement System

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Quality Counts?

Quality Counts is a quality rating improvement system (QRIS) that rates early care and education programs from 1-5 stars after one year of participation in the program and provides support, funding, and information to help them improve program quality.

Who can participate?

All licensed and license-exempt centers and family child care homes that serve children under the age of five in Miami-Dade County can participate in Quality Counts.

Do I have to have children who receive School Readiness funds to participate in Quality Counts?

No, all licensed or license-exempt programs can participate.

How do I sign up for Quality Counts?

You need to attend a Quality Counts Overview Training and complete an application. Programs will be selected to become a part of Quality Counts. For more information on the next Overview Training, please contact the Quality Counts QRIS office at 305-646-7242 or check the training calendar at www.elcmdm.org/QualityCounts.

What support will my program get if I participate in Quality Counts?

Your program will receive technical assistance, training on how to look at your program's quality, and help creating a quality improvement plan.

Depending on your needs and quality improvement plan, your program may also receive grants, scholarships to help staff complete credentials or degrees in early childhood, stipends for staff with specific qualifications, and trainings to meet staff needs.

I heard there is a selection process. How are the programs chosen?

There is a selection process and approximately 25 programs are selected up to eight times per year. A total of 35 family child care homes are also selected each year.

Programs are chosen carefully to ensure involvement of programs of all sizes, all geographic areas, and all income levels. Programs that are selected for

Quality Counts will be notified by phone and will be connected with a Quality Counts technical assistance specialist.

What happens if my program is not selected?

Your application will be automatically resubmitted for selection. Your application will remain active for one year from submission.

How are the ratings determined?

First, programs complete a self-study to become familiar with the tools used to measure program quality. The self-study helps you compile information on staff, adult to child ratios/group sizes, program management, family engagement, and curriculum. A formal assessment is then completed by professional assessors using the Environment Rating Scales on a random sample of classrooms, and verifying the documents compiled for the self-study. The results of the formal assessment and verification of the forms and checklists are used to determine a program's baseline assessment score of between 1 and 40 points, or Star Rating of 1 to 5 Stars.

If my center serves infants, toddlers and preschoolers, will these classrooms be evaluated separately?

At least one infant or toddler classroom (using the ITERS-R) and one preschool classroom (using the ECERS-R) will be assessed. If only preschoolers are served, two preschool classrooms will be evaluated. If your center serves more than 100 children, approximately 1/3 of the classrooms will have a formal assessment using the Environment Rating Scales. All classrooms will be selected randomly.

What happens after the rating is done?

One of the most exciting things about Quality Counts is that it is a tool to help you meet the priorities of your program. After the rating is done, a technical assistance provider will help you develop a quality improvement plan to address your program's needs. The results of your self-study, the formal assessment, and your overall program priorities are used to create a plan with you to help you meet your program's needs.

How often are ratings done?

Ratings may be done beginning after one year of quality improvement work (if requested) or a program has reached their 3rd year participating in Quality Counts.

What do I need to do to continue being a part of Quality Counts?

Programs will be required to develop a quality improvement plan each year and make progress on the goals to continue to receive grants, scholarships, wage stipends, and technical assistance.

What happens if I disagree with the rating?

There is a formal clarification process for disagreements. Your technical assistance provider or the Quality Counts office at the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe can help if issues arise with the rating.

Are the ratings public right away?

Ratings will be publicized when a program requests a Star Rating or on their 3rd year anniversary. This happens after one year of involvement in program improvement in Quality Counts. Programs are welcome to share their rating with parents or use their rating to market their program.

How long will this project last? Is it a pilot project that is going to go away?

Quality Counts is a priority of The Children's Trust and the Early Learning Coalition. There is also significant work happening at the state level to adopt the QRIS model being used in Miami-Dade County and make it statewide. The plan is that Quality Counts will exist for the long term.

Will this eventually be mandatory?

That is not the plan. The rating system is designed as a voluntary system.

What does Quality Counts have to do with Licensing?

Quality Counts builds upon licensing's minimum standards. Quality Counts provides standards beyond licensing, defined in 5 incremental steps at 5 "star" quality levels.

I already have a business plan. Can that fit into the quality improvement plan?

Absolutely. As you work with your technical assistance specialist to develop a quality improvement plan that meets your needs you will share information and documents to help with this plan. Your ideas and priorities – and those of your staff - for your program will be very important. You may also share any documents you have developed. These might include a business plan, paperwork toward accreditation, or other information that is important to your program.

I would like to get the Gold Seal certification. Can this project help my program get accredited?

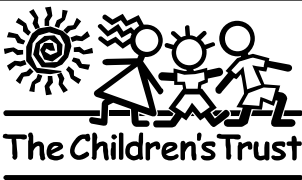
Yes. One of the goals of Quality Counts is to increase the number of accredited programs. After your formal assessment, your technical assistance provider can work with you to include achieving accreditation as part of your quality improvement plan.

Who is behind Quality Counts?

The Children's Trust, the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe, and the Early Childhood Initiative Foundation/Ready Schools Miami fund Quality Counts. The Coalition oversees the QRIS project with a team of partners. Partners in implementing the Quality Counts QRIS project include: United Way Center for Excellence, Florida International University, University of Miami Mailman Center, Family Central Inc, the Children's Forum, National Institute for Innovative Leadership, Devereux-Florida, the Miami-Dade County CAA Head Start/Early Head Start Division, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools and RCMA.

Who do I call for more information?

Contact the Quality Counts office at the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe at 305-646-7242 or www.elcmdm.org/QualityCounts. You can also email us at qualitycounts@elcmdm.org. We look forward to hearing from you!



QUALITY COUNTS

Striving for Five Star Early Learning
Center Application Form



1. CENTER INFORMATION		Date Application completed:	
Date Center Opened:		License Number:	
Center Name:			
Corporate Name:			
Director:		Owner:	
Street Address:		City:	Zip:
Center Phone #:		Fax #:	
Additional Phone #:		Center E-mail Address:	
Hours: ____ AM to ____ PM	If your program changes significantly in the summer, please describe:		
Year Around? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No			
2. ACCREDITATION STATUS			
<input type="checkbox"/> NAEYC <input type="checkbox"/> APPLE <input type="checkbox"/> ACSI <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ Gold Seal? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> No			
Date of Accreditation:		Date of Expiration:	
3. STAFF <i>(Please complete this grid about the staff at your center based on highest educational level)</i>			
	Director	Lead Teachers	Assistant Teachers
Total number employed			
Number with High School or less			
Number with FCCPC (CDA-E or CDA)			
Number with Associate degree or higher in ECE			
Number with Associate degree or higher in non-ECE field			
4. WHAT IS THE PREFERRED LANGUAGE OF YOUR STAFF?			
<input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Creole <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____			
5. TRAININGS ARE CURRENTLY OFFERED IN ENGLISH AND SPANISH.			
How many of your staff prefer: ____ English ____ Spanish ____ Other : _____			

6. CENTER DEMOGRAPHICS

Total License Capacity: _____	Total Enrolled: _____
Enter the total number of children enrolled in each age group:	
AGE GROUP	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
Infants (0-12 months)	
One year olds (12-24 months)	
Two year olds (24-30 months)	
Two year olds (31-36 months)	
Three year olds (37-48 months)	
Four & Five year olds (48 months - school entry)	
School Age in after school care program (5-12 years)	
Total number of subsidized children c/o Early Learning Coalition - County Child Development Services in the above age groups: _____	
How many classrooms for ages 0-5 do you have (not including school age)? _____	

7. ENVIRONMENT RATING SCALES EXPERIENCE

How experienced are you on the Environment Rating Scales (ITERS-R and ECERS-R)? (Check all that apply)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Never heard of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) <input type="checkbox"/> Have heard of ERS but never used them <input type="checkbox"/> An outside source has assessed center using at least one ERS <input type="checkbox"/> Center has used at least one ERS for self-assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Center has used results of ERS assessment to improve the quality of the program	
Print Name:	Title:
Signature:	Date:

The selection process is designed to bring in a representative cross-section of early care and education centers throughout the county each round. The process will consider a programs size and geographical location, and will consider the percentage of subsidized children a program serves or location in a high poverty zip code. A program's application will be considered valid for one year and programs will be automatically reconsidered for selection every selection round using the information in their application.

Send application to:

Quality Counts
 Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe
 2555 Ponce de Leon Blvd, Suite 500
 Coral Gables, FL 33134

Please keep a copy for your records!

Received by TA provider on:		Initials:	
Received by ELC on:		Initials:	
Received by NIIL on:		Initials:	