



**New York State
Office of
Children &
Family
Services**

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QUALITYstarsNY

QUALITYstarsNY is a comprehensive initiative to ensure that our young children – the 1.5 million New Yorkers under age six – have the opportunity for high quality early learning experiences. **QUALITYstarsNY** has the potential to create an efficient and effective early learning system that is accountable to investors, easy to access and good for children and families. The expectation is that **QUALITYstarsNY** will be field-tested in 2009 followed by staged implementation across the state in 2010 and beyond. Several private sector funders are ready to support the field-test phase, if the state of New York will match their investment with \$500,000 in public funds.

QUALITYstarsNY will offer parents an easy-to-understand rating system – 1 to 5 stars – to help them choose the right programs for their children. Each star level signifies higher quality, with the top level equal to rigorous national accreditation.

QUALITYstarsNY is built on the experience in 17 other states¹ which have implemented quality rating and improvement systems statewide over the past decade. Such systems recognize, encourage and reward the production and maintenance of quality in settings across the full continuum of early care and education from home-based child care to public schools. These systems are ‘carrots’ rather than ‘sticks’ designed to influence both the supply and demand sides of the marketplace. Thus our system will be voluntary, and will offer financial rewards as well as marketing and promotional opportunities to programs that choose to participate. Parents will see visible signs of quality – stars on banners, star ratings on websites – and have easy access to information about what the stars mean, and enjoy financial incentives for choosing higher quality settings.

QUALITYstarsNY graduated standards are based on the best available evidence and reflect what matters to parents. There are four major areas: the *Learning Environment* for children; *Family Engagement*; the *Qualifications and Experience* of teaching and administrative staff; and *Management and Leadership* policies and practices. For the sake of efficiency and simplicity for both programs and parents, these standards are designed to integrate into one consistent whole the many existing program standards such as those for Universal Prekindergarten and Head Start, the licensing regulations for child care and national accreditation standards.

QUALITYstarsNY will offer a framework for continuous quality improvement in all settings. The framework for improvement focuses on practitioners and the programs in which they work. Professional development will be offered to ensure that teachers and others who work with and for children are well-prepared and continue to learn the most effective and up-to-date teaching and learning strategies. Programs will have access to information to craft quality improvement plans and the mentoring, coaching and other assistance necessary to implement those plans.

QUALITYstarsNY will give policymakers and public and private funders an accountability system to assure that investments are effective and achieving their goals. Major public investments are being made in direct early learning services such as prekindergarten and child care assistance, along with indirect supports such as Education Incentive Program scholarships and regional infant-toddler specialists. In some communities across New York, the private sector invests in quality improvement through philanthropy and United Way. **QUALITYstarsNY** will provide a means for assessing the quality impact of those investments by answering questions like – are all universal prekindergarten programs of high quality? Is the investment in scholarships producing quality improvement in the programs in which the scholarship recipients work?

QUALITYstarsNY is being designed and developed by a work group of the Governor’s Children’s Cabinet and its Advisory Board. More information about **QUALITYstarsNY** is available at www.earlychildhood.org– just click on Quality Rating and Improvement System.

¹ The states and the year each was launched: Colorado (2000), District of Columbia (2000), Illinois (2007), Indiana (2007), Iowa (2006), Kentucky (2001), Louisiana (2007), Maryland (2001), Montana (2002), New Hampshire (2006), New Mexico (2005), North Carolina (1999), Ohio (2006), Oklahoma (1998), Pennsylvania (2002), Tennessee (2001), and Vermont (2003).