Welcome
Your Great Start to Quality Resource Kit
Dear Program/Provider:

Welcome to Great Start to Quality and congratulations on being an important part of Michigan’s quality rating and improvement system. Your commitment to improving the quality of your program to better meet the needs of children and families is commendable. A Great Start to Quality Rating helps families find quality care for their child that best meets their needs.

Great Start to Quality is designed to support you in creating a safe, nurturing place for children to learn, explore their world and build relationships. You are setting the foundation for them to be successful in school, work and life. Part of providing an environment that allows children to learn, grow and develop is having the tools and resources available.

Each Great Start to Quality Resource Center offers a variety of services and resources to support your quality improvement efforts including:

- A lending library of books and other educational items you can borrow
- Access to coaching
- Training opportunities for you and your staff that can be found on [www.miregistry.org](http://www.miregistry.org)
- Connections to services in the community

Help from your Great Start to Quality Resource Center is just a phone call or email away. Call 1-877-614-7328 or email greatstarttoquality@ecic4kids.org with questions or comments.
Materials available to support you along the way include Great Start to Quality:

- **Program Quality Indicators** which are the measures used in Great Start to Quality
- **Indicator Guidance Documents for Family/Group Homes without Assistants** which provide the intent of each indicator
- **Indicator Guidance Documents for Family/Group Homes with Assistants** which provide the intent of each indicator
- **Indicator Guidance Documents for Centers** which provide the intent of each indicator
- **Indicator Guidance Documents for OST Centers 5-12**
- **Instruction Guides**
- **Talking Points** to help explain the system to families and others
- **Frequently Asked Questions** to help answer common questions
- **Letter to families sharing why participation is so valuable**

Please reach out to your local Great Start to Quality Resource Center if you have any questions or need more information. We are committed to making Great Start to Quality work for you.

Sincerely,

Lisa Brewer Walraven  
*Director, Child Development and Care*  
*Office of Great Start*

Kelly Kreider  
*Senior Director, Great Start to Quality*  
*Early Childhood Investment Corporation*

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[Logo: Michigan Department of Education]

[Logo: Great Start to Quality]
(Insert date)

Dear Family,

(I am/We are) proud to announce that (my program OR name of program/facility) is will take part in Great Start to Quality, Michigan’s quality rating and improvement system for child care providers and preschool programs.

Great Start to Quality rates child care and preschool programs on a scale of one-to-five Stars based on state quality standards of care, safety, professionalism and early learning.

This is great news for your child because research shows that children start learning from day one — long before kindergarten — which is why quality child care and preschool are key to helping them succeed in school, work and life.

Your child deserves the best, which is why (I’m/we’re) taking part in this important effort to help all Michigan’s children have the highest quality experience. With this letter I have provided information about the program. You can find more information regarding ratings and participation at www.greatstarttoquality.org.

You can be confident that as a Great Start to Quality program (I/we) meet Michigan’s standards for health and safety, and regularly exceed other state standards. Please ask (me/us) if you have any questions or want to learn more about our plans to make sure your child has the highest quality experience.

Thank you for entrusting (me/our program) with your child’s learning and care. (My/Our) efforts to achieve a Great Start to Quality Star ratings help ensure that your trust is well-placed.

Sincerely,

(Insert Name)

(Insert Title {if any: President, Director, Owner, etc.})

(Name of program/facility, if appropriate)
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why should providers and educators care about the Great Start to Quality rating system?

A: Research shows that high-quality child care, preschool, and out-of-school time care help children succeed in school and life. More and more families will request quality, and the Great Start to Quality ratings will help them find it. The system is focused on helping providers and educators succeed in the ratings by offering them detailed development plans and continuing supports. This includes one-on-one discussion sessions. In addition, providers and educators can use their ratings — Michigan’s first fair measure of child care and preschool quality — to promote their services.

Q: Why should families care about the rating system?

A: Families are more aware now than ever that high-quality child care and preschool can help set their child up for success. Great Start to Quality empowers families by giving them a standard — the star rating system — to use in measuring the excellence of child care and preschool programs. It is important for providers and educators to participate in Great Start to Quality, but it is even more important for families to know what ratings mean, and that ratings allow families to make more informed decisions about care for their child.

Q: What are the quality ratings based on?

A: Great Start to Quality program quality indicators, or guides for child care and preschool, were designed by early learning professionals, national experts, and families.

- Providers and educators are rated in five key areas, as briefly outlined below. More details are available at www.greatstarttoquality.org.
  - **Family and Community Partnerships:** Providers and educators help families learn more about how their children learn and grow, and meet with families to talk about their children’s development. The providers and educators let families know about the places in the community that can help them when they need support for their child’s changeover to kindergarten and other programs.
  - **Environment:** The physical space, where care is provided, is free of safety risks. Providers and educators offer healthy meals to children and nutrition education to both children and families. Providers and educators make note of children’s growth and discuss overall health with their family.
- **Curriculum and Instruction**: Providers and educators have a purpose statement for their program, they follow a flexible daily schedule, and use course programs to help them make choices about their daily procedure. Providers and educators also monitor children’s development over time and share this information with families in a one-on-one meeting.

- **Administration and Management**: Providers and educators have a written agreement that they provide to all enrolled families. There are written expectations for staff, if related, and yearly staff assessments. Staff set yearly goals for themselves, and providers offer different types of benefits for their staff.

- **Staff Qualifications and Professional Development**: Providers/Educators have a college degree, have attended and/or are taking classes, have earned a Child Development Associate or Montessori certificate and/or have participated in trainings relevant to child development and/or child care topics.

**Q**: Are the program quality indicators fair – do they consider the size/type of services I provide?

**A**: The program quality indicators reflect what diverse groups of Michigan families and child development professionals, including national experts, consider the best settings for children. The program quality indicators set the bar high to challenge child care professionals to meet high quality standards. That is why there are 10 Great Start to Quality Resource Centers across the state to help providers and educators succeed. The Resource Centers offer detailed plans for improvement and support and a lending library of education items, so that all types of child care settings can meet the program quality indicators.
Q: Do providers and educators have to be rated?

A: If providers and educators are licensed by the state, they automatically receive an “Empty Star”. The Empty Star means that the program meets basic health and safety requirements and is in good standing with the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA). An Empty Star can also show NOT being in good standing with licensing (such as programs on 2nd or 3rd provisional).

- All other star rating — from 1 to 5 — are blue. This means these programs meet licensing requirements, are participating in Great Start to Quality, and show they are meeting higher levels of program quality.
- To move beyond an Empty Star is voluntary and requires providers and educators to complete and submit a Self-Assessment Survey found on the Great Start to Quality STARS platform. The Self-Assessment Survey is based on Michigan’s Early Childhood Program Quality Indicators for Prekindergarten and Infant and Toddler Programs, and Michigan Out-of-School Time Standards of Quality (MOST).
- Providers and educators who choose to submit a Self-Assessment Survey of 1, 2, or 3 Star are issued a random validation. Providers and educators selected for this verification will be contacted by Great Start to Quality to schedule a call.
- Providers and educators, whose Self-Assessment Survey shows that they are of the highest quality — 4 or 5 Star — will receive validation. They must have an on-site classroom assessment, utilizing the Program Quality Assessment (PQA) to approve their quality before their rating becomes public. The PQA is a classroom-level observation tool designed by the HighScope Educational Research Foundation. To learn more about the PQA, please visit www.highscope.org
- Licensed Exempt Providers are enrolled through the Michigan Department of Education. These Licensed Exempt Providers receive payments from the State of Michigan for taking care of an eligible child. They are not star rated, but have access to resources to advance their quality; such as training sessions through their local Great Start to Quality Resource Center (which can increase their child development and care subsidy rate), as well as books, puzzles, and other educational items.
Q: If a provider or educator is rated at 1 Star, why should they participate?

A: Providers and educators taking part in Great Start to Quality show families that children are their priority. A 1 Star rating shows that the provider meets all health and safety licensing requirements and has committed to quality by taking part in improvement efforts. Families will be impressed that 1 Star programs are working to improve their child’s experience. As programs move up in ratings, they can share that success with families.

Q: Do families see only the star rating online, or can they see how well a provider or educator did in each category?

A: Details on a provider’s or educator’s rating are available as part of the provider’s or educator’s profile that is displayed on www.greatstarttoquality.org. This gives families even more information about how and why a provider or educator received a certain rating.

Q: How much is it going to cost to participate in Great Start to Quality? How do I pay for the improvements and still keep my rates down?

A: There is no cost to participate in Great Start to Quality. The 10 local Great Start to Quality Resource Centers are available to support providers and educators with consultation, coaching, and professional development to help providers and educators improve the quality of the care they provide. Resource Centers can also provide information on tuition scholarships and financial supports for training, including T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Michigan program. Other states have found that once a quality rating system is up and running, families start asking about the ratings. It just makes good business for providers and educators to be ready. At the end of the day, Great Start to Quality will raise the quality of child care and preschool programs, and that status of the early care and education profession. Contact your local Great Start to Quality Resource Center toll free, by calling 1-877-614-7328.
Q: Does a star rating have any impact on child care payment assistance from the state?

A: Yes. For information about the Child Development and Care Program and how changes to reimbursement rates may affect your program, please refer to [www.michigan.gov/childcare](http://www.michigan.gov/childcare).

Q: How long does the process take to get rated from start to finish?

A: The amount of time that it takes for a provider or educator to receive their rating depends on many influences, such as the size of the program. Most providers and educators obtain their published rating within 60-90 days.

Q: Once rated, how can I show I have improved the quality of my program?

A: Ratings are valid for two years. All providers and educators are able to submit an application to start a new rating case if changes have been made that would alter the rating of the program. The application can be found in the Great Start to Quality STARS platform.

Q: Why is the state so interested in establishing a quality rating and improvement system for child care and preschool?

A: The state invests in child care and preschool programs because it knows the significance of learning and care.

- Successful children grow up to be successful adults, who in turn add to the success of the state.
- High-quality child care and preschool can significantly help children—especially disadvantaged children—succeed.
- Great Start to Quality helps ensure that Michigan spends its funds wisely. It does this by making sure Michigan has a high-quality early childhood system that is accountable to taxpayers, families, providers and more importantly, the children it serves.
- To make sure it is spending taxpayer dollars wisely, the state needs this objective system to determine which child care and preschool programs are of the highest quality.
- Great Start to Quality not only provides an objective rating system, it also offers providers and educators access to ongoing supports and resources so they can continuously improve their quality and help

Funding from the Office of Great Start within the Michigan Department of Education supports the implementation of Great Start.
Michigan’s children succeed.

- Michigan is not alone in recognizing the importance of early care and learning. All but one state has a quality rating system either underway or in the works.

**Q: Who runs the rating system?**

**A:** The Office of Great Start in the Michigan Department of Education provides funding and is the lead organization for Great Start to Quality. The Early Childhood Investment Corporation is charged with implementing the quality rating and improvement system. In addition, 10 Great Start to Quality Resource Centers support the quality improvement efforts statewide. They work with providers and educators and families to make sure the system provides the best learning and care for Michigan’s children.

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Talking Points

These pieces of key information can help you share with families and others the value and benefits of Great Start to Quality.

- Your child deserves the best (child care or preschool) and I’m honored to provide it.
- Great Start to Quality makes it easy for you to identify quality child care and preschools, helping you **get the best for your child** and the most for your money.
- Programs and providers are rated on a scale of 1 to 5 Star based on state quality standards for care, safety, professionalism, and early learning.
- Research shows that quality child care and preschool can help children succeed in school, work, and life.
- Even the youngest **children need quality care** — unstructured play and planned activities with trained providers can boost a child’s development at any age.
- I’m part of Great Start to Quality because I want to provide the best care for your child.
- This (child care or preschool) program meets basic state licensing rules. **We go beyond** that by participating in Great Start to Quality to continuously improve the quality of our care, and give your child the best early learning experiences.
- Quality child care and preschool is so important to a child’s development that 49 states either have a quality rating system either underway or in the works.
- Every community has access to a Great Start to Quality Resource Center in Michigan. Families can access help in their search for quality child care and preschool, and information about **assistance to pay for care**.
- Resource Centers also have a lending library of books and other learning materials for families to use. Learn more by calling, **1-877-614-7328**.
**Early On®**

- *Early On®* Michigan offers early intervention **services for infants and toddlers**, birth to three years of age, with delay(s), and/or disabilities, and their families.
- Research has shown that by addressing delays early on —especially between birth and age 3— we can impact a child’s growth, even into adulthood.
- To determine whether a child is eligible for *Early On®,* fill out the online referral, or for more information visit [www.1800earlyon.org](http://www.1800earlyon.org).

**T.E.A.C.H.**

- T.E.A.C.H. is a **statewide scholarship program** designed to help child care center teaching staff, preschool teachers, family child care providers, group home owners, center directors, and administrators meet their professional development goals, while continuing their current employment in regulated early childhood and school age care settings.
- You may be eligible for a scholarship if you:
  - Work a minimum of 20 hours per week in a licensed child care center, group home or family home.
  - Earn no more than $17.00 per hour or $35,360 annually.
  - Work for a center or group home that agrees to sponsor you.
- You may be eligible for a Star Rated Stipend. At the time of scholarship acceptance, your program’s star rating is verified through the Great Start to Quality Star Rating System. Recipients working in Star-Rated programs are eligible for a Star-Rating Stipend. The $150 stipend is awarded at the time of tuition and book claim processing each semester.
- For additional information on scholarships visit [www.miaeyc.org/TEACH](http://www.miaeyc.org/TEACH)
## Acronyms

### Organizations and Programs

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CACFP</td>
<td>Child and Adult Care Food Program</td>
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<td>ECIC</td>
<td>Early Childhood Investment Corporation</td>
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<td>EHS</td>
<td>Early Head Start</td>
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<td>EHS-CCP</td>
<td>Early Head Start Child Care Partnership</td>
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<td>GSC</td>
<td>Great Start Collaborative</td>
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<td>GSPC</td>
<td>Great Start Parent Coalition</td>
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<td>GSRP</td>
<td>Great Start Readiness Program</td>
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<td>HS</td>
<td>Head Start</td>
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<td>MDE-OGS</td>
<td>Michigan Department of Education – Office of Great Start</td>
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<td>MDHHS</td>
<td>Michigan Department of Health and Human Services</td>
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<td>MiAEYC</td>
<td>Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children</td>
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<td>MI-AIMH</td>
<td>Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health</td>
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<td>NAEYC</td>
<td>National Association for the Education of Young Children</td>
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<td>NAFCC</td>
<td>National Association for Family Child Care</td>
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### Quality Improvement

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<th>Acronym</th>
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<tr>
<td>CCDF</td>
<td>Child Care Development Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>FCC</td>
<td>Family Child Care</td>
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<td>I/T</td>
<td>Infant/Toddler</td>
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<td>ITLC</td>
<td>Infant Toddler Learning Communities</td>
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<td>PD</td>
<td>Professional Development</td>
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<td>RC</td>
<td>Resource Center</td>
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*Funding from the Office of Great Start within the Michigan Department of Education supports the implementation of Great Start.*
Great Start to Quality Rating System

GSQ  Great Start to Quality
OST  Out-of-School Time
QIP  Quality Improvement Plan
QRIS Quality Rating and Improvement System
SAS  Self-Assessment Survey

Roles

QIC  Quality Improvement Consultant
QIS  Quality Improvement Specialist
RCD  Resource Center Director

Resources

CKCC Core Knowledge Core Competencies
EPSDT Early, Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment
ECSQ-PK Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Prekindergarten
ECSQ-IT Early Childhood Standards of Quality for Infant and Toddler Programs
MOST Michigan Out-of-School Time Standards of Quality
PQA  Program Quality Assessment
PQA-FCC Program Quality Assessment for Family Child Care
PQA-I/T Program Quality Assessment Infants/ Toddlers
PQA-PreK Program Quality Assessment Preschool
PQA-R Program Quality Assessment-Revised
SAC  Screening, Assessment, Curriculum
SA-PQA School Age Program Quality Assessment
Funding from the Office of Great Start within the Michigan Department of Education supports the implementation of Great Start.