

FOCUS

On Young Children's Learning



January • 2015

New Mexico FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality
for Center-Based Early Care and Education Programs

Commitment Statement

New Mexico is committed to creating and sustaining an early learning system that focuses on building high-quality, comprehensive, community programs that form a continuum of integrated services. This commitment reflects the goal adopted by the **New Mexico Early Learning Advisory Council** that, *“every child in New Mexico will have an equal opportunity for success in school, based on equitable access to an aligned and high-quality early learning system.”*

Early childhood public policy reforms in New Mexico are built upon the belief that families and community must be the platform from which all efforts are launched. We believe that all work must be informed by and driven by a deep respect for the diverse values and cultures of New Mexico’s families. Although New Mexico has been at the forefront of the movement to create standards within the early childhood system, it has taken great care to ensure that these standards do not impose the standardization of practice upon individual children, their families, or the communities where they live. Rather, it is the State’s experience that these standards provide a framework within which programs are able to flourish, implementing unique and appropriate programs that are based on the strengths of each community. This way, community-specific programs are able to reflect the history, culture, language, and traditions that must be preserved and strengthened to support each and every child’s success.

New Mexico is creating an early learning “system of systems” that transforms disconnected, siloed programs that historically have labeled and segregated children because of categorical funding streams. This coordinated early learning system focuses on building high-quality, comprehensive, community programs that are able to work together when provided with a common focus – ensuring that each child has equitable access to appropriate services and supports that acknowledge their uniqueness and enable them to reach their full potential.

This acknowledgement and respect for the uniqueness of each community, each family, and each child has led to the establishment of **Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children in New Mexico’s Early Learning System**. **FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality** reflect these **Guiding Principles**.

New Mexico’s Early Learning System of Systems					
Ages					
Prenatal	Birth to One	One	Two	Three	Four to Kindergarten Entry
Home Visiting					
	IDEA Part C Early Intervention – NM FIT PROGRAM			IDEA Part B EC Special Education	
	Child Care				
Early Head Start				Head Start	
					NM PreK

Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children in New Mexico's Early Learning System

Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in his or her family's unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. Early learning programs that support the full participation of every child build on these strengths by promoting a sense of belonging, supporting positive social relationships, and enabling families and professionals to gain advocacy skills that positively impact the life of every child.

The **Guiding Principles** and all **FOCUS** documents can be found at:

www.NewMexicoKids.org

We believe that ...

- Every child has unique gifts and abilities that are to be celebrated and nurtured.
- The early years hold enormous promise for every child to reach his or her full potential.
- Every child learns within the context of relationships and through playful interactions within their environment.
- Every child and his or her family deserve equitable access to appropriate services and supports that acknowledge their uniqueness and enable them to reach their full potential.

Therefore, we are committed to ...

- Valuing and embracing all children and their families.
- Involving families and communities as partners and decision-makers.
- Overcoming biases to build trust and establish collaborative partnerships that benefit children, their families, and the professionals who work with them.
- Providing choice, flexibility, and continuity of services and supports for families within communities.
- Making a variety of services and support available so all children have access to and can participate in opportunities that are both respectful of and responsive to their family experiences, culture, beliefs, abilities, and circumstances.
- Advancing advocacy efforts for inclusive practices that build upon unique child, family, and community strengths and are accountable to all children and their families.

We will ...

- Promote every New Mexico citizen's understanding of the importance of high-quality, inclusive early childhood programs and practices.
- Support interactions and relationships that foster self-reflection.
- Utilize information about the growth, development, and experiences of individual children and families for program and curriculum development and improvement.
- Continuously improve services and supports by evaluating current practices and incorporating effective methods, models, and research in our work with children and families.
- Promote the establishment of aligned services and supports that build on both the unique assets of each child and acknowledge the strengths of children's and families' heritage, language, and culture.
- Ensure that services and supports are provided by people who reflect the diversity of the community, are well educated, and are well compensated .
- Establish an integrated, multidisciplinary system of professional development, training, and technical assistance that supports the design, implementation, and evaluation of practices that are respectful of and responsive to each child and family.

What is **FOCUS** On Young Children's Learning?



FOCUS On Young Children's Learning, New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS), provides early childhood program personnel with the criteria, tools, and resources they need to improve the quality of their programs. These quality improvements focus on children's growth, development, and learning – so that each child has an equitable opportunity to be successful when entering school. This document contains the **FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality** that provide a framework for programs as they strive to make quality improvement efforts. The **Essential Elements of Quality** also serve as criteria used to determine a program's *STAR Level* –the level of quality that is indicated on its child care license. Successfully completing the criteria at FOCUS Levels 3, 4, and 5 correspond to the 3, 4, or 5 STARS on a program's license. Together, the **New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten** and the **FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality** provide:

- *Common Early Learning Standards*, standardized criteria for a common Authentic Observation Documentation Curriculum Planning Process, and
- *Common Early Learning Program Standards*, a standardized process for Continuous Quality Improvement and standardized criteria for a common quality rating and improvement system.

The **FOCUS** framework is also closely aligned with the New Mexico Professional Development System, a standardized early childhood workforce knowledge and competency framework with a corresponding progression of credentials and licensure.

Just as the **NM Early Learning Guidelines** provide a framework of criteria for children's growth, development, and learning that educators rely on to plan curriculum, the **FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality** provide a framework of criteria that program personnel can use to plan quality improvements for their programs.

Through **FOCUS**, the state's *Early Learning Standards*, *Early Learning Program Standards*, and *Early Childhood Professional Development Standards* merge. Altogether, they are designed to ensure that many more children from birth through age five have access to dramatically improved early learning programs so that they enter school with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to be successful. Through the use of a program improvement and quality rating system, early learning programs will increase their ability to focus on children's learning, improve their practice, and as a result of that improvement in practice, improve each child's kindergarten readiness.

FOCUS
On Young Children's Learning

Table of Contents

Eligibility Requirements for FOCUS Participation	6
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FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT I:

Foundations of Quality	8
A. Full Participation of Each Child.....	10
B. Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings	14
C. Professional Qualifications	15
D. Ratios and Group Size	18

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT II:

Quality Practices that Support Children’s Growth Development and Learning	20
A. Intentional Teaching: Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process	22
B. Intentional Leadership: Continuous Quality Improvement.....	27

History of New Mexico’s Quality Rating and Improvement System	31
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References	36
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Eligibility Requirements for **FOCUS** Participation



To be eligible for **FOCUS**, programs must meet and maintain the following:

Licensing

1. Child care programs must be licensed by the State of New Mexico and show evidence of substantial compliance with state licensing regulations.
2. Head Start and other early care and education programs operated by the military, tribal programs, and others must show substantial compliance with their regulatory agency.

Program

1. Program must agree to implement the New Mexico Authentic Observation Documentation Curriculum Development Process as defined using the **New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten**.
2. Program must agree to implement the *Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children, Birth through Age Eight, in New Mexico's Early Learning System*.
3. Program must engage in the ongoing Leadership and Continuous Quality Improvement process.

Site Director and Educators

1. Site Director must meet director qualifications in the Child Care Licensing Regulations without licensing waivers, variances, or exemptions.
2. All educators working directly with children employed after the **FOCUS** letter of agreement has been signed must have a high school diploma or equivalent (GED).

Data Reporting

1. Program must meet all **FOCUS** reporting requirements and ensure that the required data is current. This includes, but is not limited to, program data, classroom data, educator data, and child data using the **FOCUS** database system.

Fair Labor Standards Act

1. Director/Owner must provide signed acknowledgment stating that they are knowledgeable of all applicable regulations in the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA-see <http://www.dol.gov/whd/flsa/>) and have shared this information with their staff.

FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT I:
Foundations of Quality

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT II:
Quality Practices that Support Children's Growth, Development, and Learning



FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT I: Foundations of Quality

A. Full Participation of Each Child

- **Family Engagement**
- **Inclusive Practices for Children with Developmental Delays or Disabilities**
- **Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners (DLL)**
- **Promoting Social Relationships**

DEFINITION – Full participation refers to the range of practices that promote engagement in play, learning, development, and a sense of belonging for each child.

RATIONALE – Research indicates that human development is the result of an interaction of nature (biological factors) and nurture (experience factors), with culture affecting caregiving practices (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in his or her family’s unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances. Early learning programs that support the full participation of every child build on these strengths by promoting a sense of belonging, supporting positive social relationships, and enabling families and professionals to gain advocacy skills that positively impact the life of every child (State of New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department, 2010). In **FOCUS**, full participation is addressed in four areas: 1) how families are engaged in the development and learning of their children (family engagement); 2) how inclusive practices are implemented for young children with developmental delays and disabilities; 3) how the cultures and languages of each child, including young dual language learners (DLLs), are reflected and supported (culture and language including Dual Language Learners (DLLs); and 4) how focused attention is paid to promoting social relationships.

B. Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings

DEFINITION – Attention to each child’s health and wellness (including mental health) establishes a foundation for healthy development and provides for early detection, support, and intervention. With parental consent, quality programs use information from screenings and assessments to provide appropriate referrals while supporting the full participation of each child and their family.

RATIONALE – At a well-child visit, medical personnel check for health-related issues and ensure that children’s immunizations are current. They also check with families about any concerns they might have. A developmental screening provides families with information about their child’s growth and development (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2012; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007). Much of a child’s learning is based

on vision. So, a vision screening is vital to detecting and providing information about vision problems that might need correction. Dental health can also have a significant impact on a child's general health and well-being. Poor oral health can lead to serious infections and can lead to limitations in communication and social interactions. Hearing loss can affect a child's ability to develop speech, language, and social skills. The earlier a child who is deaf or hard of hearing begins receiving services the more likely he or she will reach full potential.

C. Professional Qualifications

DEFINITION – On-going training and professional development ensure that those working with young children have adequate knowledge to provide a developmentally appropriate program that supports each learner.

RATIONALE – Education and training with specialized, child-focused content are directly linked to the quality of educator practice. Site Directors and Education Coordinators in quality programs possess the training and education necessary to support the implementation of a quality program that is consistent with the program's philosophy and mission. Educators possess the training and professional development to recognize that learning occurs within the context of positive relationships. They plan and provide developmentally appropriate activities with experiences that support the growth, development, and learning of each child, including those of diverse cultures, languages, and abilities (Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, 2011; Center for Law and Social Policy, 2009; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010; State of New Mexico Children Youth and Families Department, 2010; Vu, Jeon, & Howes, 2008; Bowman, Donovan, & Burns, 2001; Curby, Ferhat, Edwards & Chavez, 2012).

D. Ratios and Group Size (for Center-Based Programs)

DEFINITION – Ratios are stated as the number of children allowed per one adult in each classroom at all times. The number of children per adult increases as the ages of children increases. Group size refers to the total number of children in any one classroom or clearly defined space.

RATIONALE – When educators have smaller numbers of children and smaller groups, they can supervise the children more carefully, provide more individualized attention, support children's social and emotional needs, plan and implement activities that are developmentally appropriate for each child, ensure that health and safety measures are in place, and engage in more one-on-one communication with the children in their care. One of the most important quality indicators for early childhood programs is the number of children related to the number of educators. Fewer children per adult and smaller group sizes result in positive outcomes for children (Galinsky, 2006; Howes, 1997; Le, Perlman, Zellman & Hamilton, 2006; NAEYC, 2005; Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, 2008).

FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

Full Participation of Each Child

Family Engagement

Definition: Family engagement is essential for enhancing children’s learning and family well-being. Family engagement occurs when there is an on-going, reciprocal, strengths-based partnership between families and their children’s early childhood education programs (Halgunseth et al, 2009).

Rationale: Positive family-program connections have been linked to greater academic motivation, grade promotion, and socioemotional skills across all young children, including those from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds (Christenson, 2000; Mantzicopoulos, 2003; McWayne et al., 2004).

The following continuum of examples is provided as a reference or guide to be used in the **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Process**. Programs are encouraged to use other recommended self-assessment tools for this purpose as well.

Beginning	Intermediate to Advanced	High Quality
<p>The center and classrooms reflect a welcoming environment for families. Greeting families as they drop off and pick up their children, displaying family and child photographs throughout the classroom at child’s and families’ eye level, and ensuring that posters and signs are clear and in families’ home language.</p>	<p>There is evidence in the Lesson Plan and assessment information that the program encourages and validates family knowledge and participation in decision-making related to their child’s education by obtaining crucial background information and setting up learning goals for their child.</p> <p>Lesson Plans reflect how staff and families collaborate in establishing goals for children both at home and at school. The Family Engagement materials have been shared with families.</p>	<p>There is evidence in the Lesson Plans and center logs that center staff encourage family members to share cultural heritage and practices, stories, activities, and language in the daily classroom activities.</p> <p>Program Policies and Philosophy reflect a comprehensive system for promoting family engagement at all levels of the program, including fatherhood engagement.</p> <p>There is evidence that parents participate in the program Self-Assessment as part of the Continuous Quality Improvement Process.</p>

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

Full Participation of Each Child

Inclusive Practices for Children with Developmental Delays or Disabilities

Definition: Early childhood inclusion embodies the values, policies, and practices that support the right of every infant and young child and his or her family, regardless of ability, to participate in a broad range of activities and contexts as full members of families, communities, and society (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).

Rationale: Children with disabilities should experience the same quality preschool classroom program (presumably high quality) as typically developing children (Bailey et al., 1998), become members of the classroom community through participation in class activities (Schwartz, 1996), and develop positive social relationships with class members and teachers (Guralnick, 1999; Storey, 1993).

The following continuum of examples is provided as a reference or guide to be used in the **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Process**. Programs are encouraged to use other recommended self-assessment tools for this purpose as well.

Beginning	Intermediate to Advanced	High Quality
<p>Identification There is a written plan indicating how the program will ensure that children and families of all abilities are welcomed and supported.</p> <p>With parental written consent, refer children who scored as “refer” in the developmental screening to the local Part C or Part B program.</p> <p>Inclusion In partnership with the child’s family, appropriate accommodations and modifications have been made to ensure full participation.</p>	<p>Identification There is a written plan for supporting individual children with disabilities. The plan describes the process for ongoing communication and consultation with the Part C and Part B service providers.</p> <p>Inclusion With parental written consent, use information from the child’s Early Childhood Outcomes summary and IFSP/IEP for lesson planning.</p> <p>If appropriate, with written parental consent, support IFSP/IEP services to take place in the classroom by the Part C/Part B provider as part of the regular schedule and activities. Classroom staff must remain in the classroom and continue the planned activities.</p>	<p>Identification There is written evidence that the program participates in Child Find Activities with local Part C and Part B Programs.</p> <p>Inclusion With written parental consent, actively participate in the child’s IFSP/IEP process.</p> <p>In collaboration and consultation with the Part C/Part B service provider, IFSP/IEP strategies are integrated into the classroom. Therapists and educators embed the goals into the daily schedule and incorporate typical peers in the activities.</p> <p>Transition With parental written consent, actively participate in the child’s IEP/IFSP process, Early Childhood Outcomes process, and the Transition Conference.</p>

FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

Full Participation of Each Child

Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners

Definition: Culture refers to the thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group (National Center for Cultural Competence, n.d). Dual language learners (DLLs) are children learning two (or more) languages at the same time, as well as those learning a second language while continuing to develop their first (or home) language (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center).

Rationale: Every child in New Mexico has diverse strengths rooted in his or her family's unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs, and circumstances (State of New Mexico, Children Youth and Families Department, 2010). In particular, children whose home language is other than English have many similarities to any other children. Yet, their development may also be different in many ways. Information about how to support DLLs is essential for teachers to know so that they can provide the best learning opportunities to ensure their future success in school and in life. Through their home language and culture, families share a sense of identity and belonging (McCabe et al, 2013).

The following continuum of examples is provided as a reference or guide to be used in the **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Process**. Programs are encouraged to use other recommended self-assessment tools for this purpose as well.

Beginning	Intermediate to Advanced	High Quality
<p>Culture and Language The program ensures materials and visuals in the classroom reflect the culture and language of the children and families enrolled in the program.</p> <p>Classroom staff learn from families about their family structure, their preferred child-rearing practices, and information families wish to share about their socioeconomic, linguistic, racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds.</p> <p>Supporting Dual Language Learners Program staff gather information from families regarding the language(s) that are spoken at home, documented in the enrollment information located in the child's file. Print-rich labeling is visible and represents all home languages.</p>	<p>Culture and Language The information is used to plan activities that support each child's and family's participation in classroom and center activities, including holidays.</p> <p>Supporting Dual Language Learners There is intentionality in the lesson plan to foster the relationship of children who speak languages other than English with English-speaking children.</p> <p>Implement a program policy describing how the program promotes children's home language while supporting English language development, and includes practices to communicate with families in their preferred language.</p>	<p>Culture and Language Classroom and program staff offer a variety of meaningful, culturally sensitive opportunities for families to participate in classroom and center activities.</p> <p>The program makes every effort to hire staff reflective of cultures and languages of families enrolled in the program.</p> <p>Supporting Dual Language Learners Teaching staff understand the stages of second-language acquisition and support children by planning activities, materials, and experiences that support each stage.</p> <p>Families who speak languages other than English are involved in developing policies and procedures related to DLLs and participate in the CQI process.</p>

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

Full Participation of Each Child

Promoting Social Relationships







Definition: Social skills that have been identified as essential for school success include getting along with others, following directions, identifying and regulating one’s emotions and behavior, thinking of appropriate solutions to conflict, persisting on tasks, engaging in social conversation and cooperative play, correctly interpreting others’ behaviors and emotions, and feeling good about oneself and others (Fox & Smith, 2007).

Rationale: Research has established a compelling link between social-emotional development and school success (Raver, 2002; Smith, 2006).

The following continuum of examples is provided as a reference or guide to be used in the **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Process**. Programs are encouraged to use other recommended self-assessment tools for this purpose as well.




Beginning	Intermediate to Advanced	High Quality
<p>Building Positive Relations Classroom and program staff promote a positive environment by greeting children and families on arrival, using proper names, and verbally interacting with each child. Interactions are supportive and adults engage children at eye level.</p> <p>Implementing Preventive Practices Resources have been provided for families of children who scored “Refer” in the ASQ-SE.</p> <p>The learning environment is arranged to eliminate wide spaces, allow children to interact in different areas, and reflect children’s interests. The classroom schedule includes a balance of large- and small-group activities, minimizes the number of transitions between activities, and is posted visibly. Transitions are addressed so that there is minimal waiting with nothing to do, and so children are notified individually and in a group about the upcoming transition.</p> <p>Classroom rules are brief, clear, and posted.</p>	<p>Implementing Targeted Social-Emotional Supports There is evidence of a follow-up on ASQ-SE referral conducted by the program with parental consent.</p> <p>The classroom staff demonstrate interactions with children to a) develop their self-esteem – active listening with children, no judgmental statements, responsive to children’s ideas, recognizing children’s efforts; b) encourage autonomy by providing children with opportunities to make choices, allowing children time to respond or complete tasks independently, creating opportunities for decision-making, problem-solving, and working together and teaching children strategies for self-regulating and/or self-monitoring behaviors; and c) promoting children’s individualized emotional regulation by helping them recognize emotional cues, identify appropriate choices, and solve problems.</p>	<p>Addressing Concerning Behaviors If applicable, and with written parental consent, the classroom staff actively participate in the child’s social-emotional support plans/strategies.</p> <p>In collaboration and consultation with the mental health agency/individual(s) supporting the child and family, strategies are integrated into the classroom. Mental health agency/individual(s) and educators embed the goals into the daily schedule and, as appropriate, incorporate typical peers in the activities.</p>

FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY			
Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings			
2+ STAR (Year 1) Criteria	2+ STAR (Year 2) or 3 STAR Criteria	4 STAR Criteria	5 STAR Criteria
Health Promotion Practices			
<p>2+.1 Within two months of enrollment, ensure that all enrolled children have had a well-child check according to the American Academy of Pediatrics schedule.</p> <p>2+.1a Appropriate resources have been provided if the well-child check has not been completed.</p>	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 requirements <i>plus:</i></p> 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 and 3 STAR requirements <i>plus:</i></p> 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1, 3 STAR, and 4 STAR requirements <i>plus:</i></p> 
	<p>3.2 Within four months of enrollment and, according to the approved tool's schedule, thereafter, ensure that all enrolled children have had an age-specific developmental screening (e.g., the Ages and Stages 3rd Edition [ASQ-3] and Social Emotional [ASQ-SE].</p> <p>3.2a Results of the developmental screening have been shared with the family.</p>		
		<p>4.3 Within six months of enrollment and annually thereafter, ensure that all enrolled children have dental, vision, and hearing screenings.</p> <p>4.3a Appropriate resources have been provided if the dental, vision, and hearing screenings have not been completed.</p>	

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY





Professional Qualifications — Site Directors/Education Coordinators

2+ STAR (Year 1) Criteria	2+ STAR (Year 2) or 3 STAR Criteria	4 STAR Criteria	5 STAR Criteria
Professional Development			
<p>2+.1 Site Director, or staff person designated as the site’s Education Coordinator, must be prepared to complete all the steps toward obtaining, or have already obtained, the New Mexico Child Development Certificate (or higher early childhood degree with corresponding certificate or license). Explore higher education entrance, registration, and enrollment requirements, including when the ACCUPLACER exam is required, in order to complete courses for the New Mexico Child Development Certificate.</p>	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>3.1 Site Director, or staff person designated as the site’s Education Coordinator, must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Growth, Development & Learning (3 credits) 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 and 3 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>4.1 Site Director, or staff person designated as the site’s Education Coordinator, must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of Children and Evaluation of Programs (3 credits) 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1, 3 STAR, and 4 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>5.1 Site Director, or staff person designated as the site’s Education Coordinator, must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and Community Collaboration (3 credits) • Health, Safety & Nutrition (2 credits) or Guiding Young Children (3 credits)
<p>2+.2 Program leadership must establish, and update annually, a Professional Development Plan for themselves as well as for each educator.</p>			
Training			
<p>2+.3 Site Director, or staff person designated as the site’s Education Coordinator, must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation to Intentional Teaching, an 8-hour series-based training that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Orientation to New Mexico’s Early Learning Guidelines</i> (2 hours) - <i>Orientation to Observation of Young Children</i> (2 hours) - <i>Orientation to Documentation of Young Children</i> (2 hours) - <i>Orientation to Curriculum Planning for Young Children</i> (2 hours) • Powerful Interactions (4 hours) • New Mexico Leadership Academy 1 Part-1 (8 hours) 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>3.3 Site Director, or staff person designated as the site’s Education Coordinator, must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Intentional Teaching, an 8-hour series-based training that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Introduction to New Mexico’s Early Learning Guidelines</i> (4 hours) - <i>Introduction to New Mexico’s Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process</i> (4 hours) • The Full Participation of Each Child (6 hours) • New Mexico Leadership Academy 1 Part-2 (8 hours) 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 and 3 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>4.3 Site Director, or staff person designated as the site’s Education Coordinator, must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediate Intentional Teaching, a 10-hour series-based training that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Intermediate New Mexico’s Early Learning Guidelines</i> (4 hours) - <i>Intermediate New Mexico’s Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process</i> (6 hours) • Quality Child Care Programs for All (6 hours) • New Mexico Leadership Academy 2 (10 hours) 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1, 3 STAR, and 4 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>5.3 Site Director, or staff person designated as the site’s Education Coordinator, must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Intentional Teaching, a 10-hour series-based training that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Advanced New Mexico’s Early Learning Guidelines</i> (4 hours) - <i>Advanced New Mexico’s Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process</i> (6 hours) • New Mexico Leadership Academy 3 (10 hours)

FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY

Professional Qualifications — Educators

2+ STAR (Year 1) Criteria	2+ STAR (Year 2) or 3 STAR Criteria	4 STAR Criteria	5 STAR Criteria
Professional Development			
<p>2+.1 Complete all the steps toward obtaining, or have already obtained, the New Mexico Child Development Certificate for the age(s) assigned. Explore higher education entrance, registration, and enrollment requirements, including when the ACCUPLACER exam is required, in order to complete courses for the New Mexico Child Development Certificate.</p>	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 requirements</p> 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 and 3 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>At least one educator per classroom (preferably the lead educator) must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Growth, Development & Learning (3 credits) 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1, 3 STAR, and 4 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>At least one educator per classroom (preferably the lead educator) must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment of Children and Evaluation of Programs (3 credits)
<p>2+.2 Establish, and update annually, a Professional Development Plan.</p>			
Training			
<p>2+.3 At least one educator per classroom (preferably the lead educator) must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation to Intentional Teaching, an 8-hour series-based training that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Orientation to New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines</i> (2 hours) - <i>Orientation to Observation of Young Children</i> (2 hours) - <i>Orientation to Documentation of Young Children</i> (2 hours) - <i>Orientation to Curriculum Planning for Young Children</i> (2 hours) 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>3.3 At least one educator per classroom (preferably the lead educator), must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Intentional Teaching, an 8-hour series-based training that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Introduction to New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines</i> (4 hours) - <i>Introduction to New Mexico's Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process</i> (4 hours) 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 and 3 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>4.3 At least one educator per classroom (preferably the lead educator) must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediate Intentional Teaching, a 10-hour series-based training that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Intermediate New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines</i> (4 hours) - <i>Intermediate New Mexico's Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process</i> (6 hours) 	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1, 3 STAR, and 4 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>5.3 At least one educator per classroom (preferably the lead educator) must have successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Intentional Teaching, a 10-hour series-based training that includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Advanced New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines</i> (4 hours) - <i>Advanced New Mexico's Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process</i> (6 hours)

Training continued

2+.4 All educators working directly with children must have successfully completed:

- *Powerful Interactions* (4 hours)

3.4 All educators working directly with children must have successfully completed:

- ***The Full Participation of Each Child*** (6 hours)
- ***Orientation to Intentional Teaching, an 8-hour series-based training that includes:***
 - *Orientation to New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines* (2 hours)
 - *Orientation to Observation of Young Children* (2 hours)
 - *Orientation to Documentation of Young Children* (2 hours)
 - *Orientation to Curriculum Planning for Young Children* (2 hours)

4.4 All educators working directly with children must have successfully completed:

- ***Quality Child Care Programs for All*** (6 hours)
- ***Introduction to Intentional Teaching, an 8-hour series-based training that includes:***
 - *Introduction to New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines* (4 hours)
 - *Introduction to New Mexico's Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process* (4 hours)

5.4 All educators working directly with children must have successfully completed:

- ***Intermediate Intentional Teaching, a 10-hour series-based training that includes:***
 - *Intermediate New Mexico's Early Learning Guidelines* (4 hours)
 - *Intermediate New Mexico's Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process* (6 hours)

FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

FOUNDATIONS OF QUALITY			
Ratios and Group Size			
2+ STAR (Year 1) Criteria	2+ STAR (Year 2) or 3 STAR Criteria	4 STAR Criteria	5 STAR Criteria
Staff: Child Ratios & Group Size			
<p>2+.1 Maintain ratios in the <i>NM Child Care Licensing Regulations</i></p>	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>3.1 Maintain ratios*:</p> <p>3.1.a Centers in which children are grouped by age:</p> <p>6 weeks through 24 months 1:6 2 Years 1:10 3 years 1:12 4 years 1:12 5+ years 1:15</p> <p>3.1.b Centers in which age groups are combined:</p> <p>6 weeks through 24 months 1:6 18 through 35 months 1:6 2 through 4 years 1:12 3 through 5 years 1:14</p>	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 and 3 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>4.1 Implement ratios*:</p> <p>4.1.a Centers in which children are grouped by age:</p> <p>6 weeks through 24 months 1:5 2 years 1:8 3 years 1:10 4 years 1:10 5 years 1:12</p> <p>4.1.b Centers in which age groups are combined:</p> <p>The adult:child ratio is determined by the age of the majority of children in the group. For example, the adult:child ratio for a group of 2's and 3's when most of the children are 2 would be 1:8.</p>	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1, 3 STAR, and 4 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>5.1 Implement ratios*:</p> <p>5.1.a Centers in which children are grouped by age:</p> <p>6 weeks through 24 months 1:4 2 years 1:6 3 years 1:9 4 years 1:10 5 years 1:10</p> <p>5.1.b Centers in which age groups are combined:</p> <p>The adult:child ratio is determined by the age of the majority of children in the group. For example, the adult:child ratio for a group of 2's and 3's when most of the children are 2 would be 1:6.</p>

* **REQUIRED:** Ratios in 3.1, 4.1, and 5.1 are required criteria.

Staff: Child Ratios & Group Size *continued*

3.2 Implement Maximum Group Size**

3.2.a Centers in which children are grouped by age:

6 weeks through 24 months	12
2 Years	20
3 years	24
4 years	24
5 years	25

3.2.b Centers in which age groups are combined:

6 weeks through 24 months	12
18 through 35 months	18
2 through 4 years	20
3 through 5 years	24

4.2 Implement Maximum Group Size**

(based on age/room capacity/physical barriers)

4.2.a Centers in which children are grouped by age:

6 weeks through 24 months	10
2 Years	16
3 years	20
4 years	20
5 years	24

4.2.b Centers in which age groups are combined:

Maximum Group Size for children older than 24 months is determined by the age of the majority of children in the group. For example, the maximum size of a group of 2's and 3's when most of the children are 2 would be 16.

5.2 Implement Maximum Group Size**

(based on age/room capacity/physical barriers)

5.2.a Child Care Centers in which children are grouped by age:

6 weeks through 15 months	8
12 through 24 months	12
2 years	12
3 years	18
4 years	20
5 years	20

5.2.b Centers in which age groups are combined:

Maximum Group Size is determined by the age of the majority of children in the group. For example, the maximum size of a group of 2's and 3's when most of the children are 2 would be 12.

****RECOMMENDED:** Maximum Group Size in 3.2, 4.2, and 5.2 are recommended and are not required criteria.

Group Sizes are recommended in order for the program to meet all other required criteria. The more these numbers are exceeded, the more difficult it will be to meet other criteria. In fact, it may be necessary to reduce numbers, at least temporarily, in order to meet other criteria.

It is recommended that both ratios and group size be lowered when one or more children in the group need additional adult attention to fully participate in the program because of ability, language fluency, developmental age or stage, or other factors. It is expected that this will be reflected in the program's continuous quality improvement process and documented in the Program Improvement Plan.

FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

ESSENTIAL ELEMENT II: Quality Practices that Support Children's Growth, Development, and Learning

A. Intentional Teaching: Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process

DEFINITION – New Mexico has created a comprehensive system for utilizing the **New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten** as the framework and criteria for an authentic assessment process and curriculum planning.

RATIONALE – Research and best practice in early childhood care and education emphasize the importance of carefully observing and assessing children within the context of their daily activities - and using those observations for curriculum planning and the ongoing monitoring of each child's growth, development, and learning. These criteria-based observations are the best way to plan developmentally appropriate curriculum that acknowledges each child's culture, language, and ability (Gao, & Grisham-Brown, 2011; NAEYC, 2005; New Mexico PreK, 2012; Zaslow et al, 2010; Riley Ayers et al, 2010; RAND Corporation, 2012).

B. Intentional Leadership: Continuous Quality Improvement

DEFINITION – **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)** is a proven strategy to increase and sustain efforts to improve a program's quality. **CQI** is considered to be an appropriate approach for a Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS) because it provides a clear framework for programs that are moving from one level of quality to the next. **CQI** uses data to inform and guide a program's efforts to improve their quality, thereby influencing positive outcomes for children. **CQI** is a four-step cycle:

- **PLAN** – establishing a plan of action by identifying, describing, and analyzing strengths and needs;
- **DO** – implementing the plan of action and making programmatic changes;
- **STUDY** – reflecting on the actions taken and learning from what has been done; and
- **ACT** – implementing successful changes into daily practice and determining what needs to be done next.

CQI relies on an organizational culture that is proactive, supports continuous learning, and is firmly grounded in the overall *mission, vision, and values* of a program. Perhaps most importantly, it is dependent upon the active inclusion and participation of everyone involved with the program - director, educators, board members, families, and **FOCUS** quality partners.

RATIONALE – The **Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)** process is an essential element of **FOCUS** because it focuses on 1) learning what is working well to promote each child’s growth, development, and learning; 2) systematically identifying programmatic challenges; and 3) targeting strategies to maintain and build upon successes. In **FOCUS**, program leadership guides the **PLAN – DO – STUDY – ACT CQI** cycle for the program as a whole that is focused on ten **Essential Elements of Program Quality**:

1. **Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning**
2. **Family Engagement**
3. **Inclusive Practices for Children with Developmental Delays or Disabilities**
4. **Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners (DLL)**
5. **Promoting Social Relationships**
6. **Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings**
7. **Professional Qualifications**
 - Site Directors/Education Coordinators
 - Educators
8. **Ratios and Group Size**
9. **Environments**
10. **Program Administration and Leadership**

The **FOCUS CQI** process is more than a plan on paper, it is a culture of change created, embraced, and guided by a collective vision and willingness to work on moving forward with actions that benefit children, their families, and the program as a whole (Deming, 2000; Miller, 2014; Wiggins & Mathias, 2013).





The **FOCUS CQI** process will be verified each year. Verification includes **CQI** process implementation and documentation of progress, utilizing recommended tools as a source of evidence. Updates and progress must be documented quarterly by the last days of March, June, September, and December.













FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

QUALITY PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN’S GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND LEARNING

Intentional Teaching: Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process

2+ STAR (Year 1) Criteria	2+ STAR (Year 2) or 3 STAR Criteria	4 STAR Criteria	5 STAR Criteria
Infants and Toddlers			
Meet the following requirements:	Meet 2+ Year 1 requirements <i>plus</i> :	Meet 2+ Year 1 and 3 STAR requirements <i>plus</i> :	Meet 2+ Year 1, 3 STAR, and 4 STAR requirements <i>plus</i> :
<p>2+.1 Using the <i>New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten</i>, educators must complete 3 focused observations for each child using the <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i> under the domains Beginning to Know About Ourselves and Others, Beginning to Communicate, and Beginning to Move and Do for each child within 45 days of enrollment and every four months thereafter.</p>		<p>4.1 Using the <i>New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten</i>, educators must complete 4 focused observations for each child using the <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i> under the domains Beginning to Know About Ourselves and Others, Beginning to Communicate, Beginning to Move and Do, and Beginning to Build Concepts for each child within 45 days of enrollment and every four months thereafter.</p>	<p>5.1 Using the <i>New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten</i>, educators must complete 5 focused observations for each child using the <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i> under the domains Beginning to Know About Ourselves and Others, Beginning to Communicate, Beginning to Move and Do, Beginning to Build Concepts, and Approaches to Learning for each child within 45 days of enrollment and every four months thereafter.</p>
<p>2+.2 Child observations must use objective language.</p>	<p>3.2 Child observations must use objective language and match the domains and components.</p>	<p>4.2 Child observations must use objective language, match the domains and components, and include contextual detail.</p>	
	<p>3.3 Use information from multiple sources, such as assessments, ongoing child observations, and family input, to complete the NM Weekly Lesson Plan Form or approved alternate lesson plan form.</p>		

Infants and Toddlers *continued*

<p>2+.4 Make each week's lesson plan available for families by posting in the classroom every Monday (or first day of the program week).</p>			
<p>2+.5 Hold a family/educator conference at the end of the school year to share information gathered on the completed <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i>.</p>	<p>3.5 Hold a family/educator conference three times per year to share information gathered on the completed <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i>.</p>		
<p>2+.6 Formally reflect on classroom practices weekly by completing the reflection section of the NM Weekly Lesson Plan Form or approved alternate lesson plan form.</p>		<p>4.6 Formally reflect on classroom practices weekly by completing the reflection section of the NM Weekly Lesson Plan Form or approved alternate lesson plan form. Incorporate reflections into lesson plans to document planned changes in practices and/or the physical environment.</p>	
<p>2+.7 Educators must have at least two hours of weekly planning time to review child assessment information and for curriculum planning.</p>			
			<p>5.8 For children with an IFSP: With written consent, actively participate in the child's IFSP process, Early Childhood Outcomes process, and the Transition Conference.</p>







FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

QUALITY PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN'S GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND LEARNING

Intentional Teaching: Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning Process











2+ STAR (Year 1) Criteria	2+ STAR (Year 2) or 3 STAR Criteria	4 STAR Criteria	5 STAR Criteria
Preschoolers			
<p>Meet the following requirements:</p>	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>3.1 Using the <i>New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten</i>, educators must complete the <i>NM Quick Look Recording Sheets</i> and report data for 8 Essential Indicators (EIs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.1 (Body Coordination and Strength) • 1.2 (Balance and Spatial Awareness) • 2.2 (Fine Motor) • 5.1 (Listens with Understanding) • 7.1 (Interest in Books) • 9.2 (Uses Numbers and Counting) • 10.1 (Recognizes Shapes) • 23.2 (Interest in Learning New Things) <p>This reporting must be done for each child within 45 days of enrollment and every six months thereafter.</p>	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1 and 3 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>4.1 Using the <i>New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten</i>, educators must complete the <i>NM Quick Look Recording Sheets</i> and report data for 11 Essential Indicators (EIs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.1 (Body Coordination and Strength) • 1.2 (Balance and Spatial Awareness) • 2.2 (Fine Motor) • 5.1 (Listens with Understanding) • 5.3 (Phonological Awareness) • 7.1 (Interest in Books) • 9.2 (Uses Numbers and Counting) • 10.1 (Recognizes Shapes) • 12.1 (Sorts and Classifies) • 19.1 (Cares for Personal and Group Possessions) • 23.2 (Interest in Learning New Things) <p>This reporting must be done for each child within 45 days of enrollment and every six months thereafter.</p>	<p>Meet 2+ Year 1, 3 STAR, and 4 STAR requirements <i>plus</i>:</p> <p>5.1 Using the <i>New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten</i>, educators must complete the <i>NM Quick Look Recording Sheets</i> and report data for 14 Essential Indicators (EIs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1.1 (Body Coordination and Strength) • 1.2 (Balance and Spatial Awareness) • 2.2 (Fine Motor) • 5.1 (Listens with Understanding) • 5.3 (Phonological Awareness) • 7.1 (Interest in Books) • 7.4 (Concepts of Print) • 9.2 (Uses Numbers and Counting) • 10.1 (Recognizes Shapes) • 12.1 (Sorts and Classifies) • 14.3 (Makes Predictions) • 19.1 (Cares for Personal and Group Possessions) • 23.2 (Interest in Learning New Things) • 24.2 (Develops Independence) <p>This reporting must be done for each child within 45 days of enrollment and every six months thereafter.</p>

Preschoolers continued

<p>2+.2 Complete portfolio documentation for EI 8.3 (Early Stages of Writing) and EI 11.3 (Measurement) using the <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i> specifically designed for these EIs.</p> <p>2+.2a Collect samples of children's creative work to support EI 13.1 (Communicates through Creative Activities).</p>	 	 <p>4.2a Embed EIs 6.1 (Converses in Home Language) and 20.1 (Plays with Others) in portfolio documentation.</p>	<p>5.2 Complete portfolio documentation for EI 7.2 (Comprehension of Stories Read Aloud), EI 8.3 (Early Stages of Writing), EI 11.3 (Measurement), and IE 14.1 (Uses Senses to Observe and Explore) using the <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i> specifically designed for these EIs.</p> <p>5.2a Embed EIs 6.1 (Converses in Home Language), 17.4 (Expresses Cultural Influences), 20.1 (Plays with Others), 20.2 (Problem Solving), 25.3 (Role Plays), and 27.1 (Focuses and Completes Tasks) in portfolio documentation.</p>
<p>2+.3 Child observations must use objective language.</p>	<p>3.3 Child observations must use objective language, match essential indicators, and have a rubric rating assigned.</p>	<p>4.3 Child observations must use objective language, match essential indicators, have a rubric rating assigned, and include contextual detail to support embedded EIs.</p>	
<p>2+.4 Hold a family/educator conference at the end of the school year to share information gathered on the completed <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i>. Share samples of children's creative work for EI 13.1.</p>	<p>3.4 Hold a family/educator conference after each of the designated reporting periods to share information gathered on the NM Quick Look Recording Sheets and the completed <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i>. Share samples of children's creative work for EI 13.1.</p>		
	<p>3.5 After each designated reporting period, enter rubric ratings from completed <i>NM Quick Look Recording Sheets</i> and <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i> for EI 8.3 (Early Stages of Writing) and EI 11.3 (Measurement) for all children into the web-based data collection system.</p>	<p>4.5 After each designated reporting period, enter rubric ratings from completed <i>NM Quick Look Recording Sheets</i> and <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i> for EI 8.3 (Early Stages of Writing), EI 11.3 (Measurement), and EI 14.1 (Uses Senses to Observe and Explore) for all children into the web-based data collection system.</p>	<p>5.5 After each designated reporting period, enter rubric ratings from completed <i>NM Quick Look Recording Sheets</i> and <i>NM Portfolio Collection Forms</i> for EI 7.2 (Comprehension of Stories Read Aloud), EI 8.3 (Early Stages of Writing), EI 11.3 (Measurement), and EI 14.1 (Uses Senses to Observe and Explore) for all children into the web-based data collection system.</p> <p>5.5a For children with an IEP – With written consent, actively participate in the child's IEP process, Early Childhood Outcomes process, and the Transition Conference.</p>




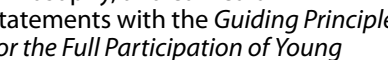





FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality

Preschoolers *continued*

	<p>3.6 Use information from multiple sources, such as assessments, ongoing child observations, and family input, to complete the <i>NM Weekly Lesson Plan Form</i> or approved alternate lesson plan form.</p>		
<p>2+.7 Make each week's Lesson Plan available for families by posting in the classroom every Monday (or first day of the program week).</p>			
<p>2+.8 Formally reflect on classroom practices weekly by completing the reflection section of the <i>NM Weekly Lesson Plan Form</i> or approved alternate lesson plan form.</p>	<p>3.8 Formally reflect on classroom practices weekly by completing the reflection section of the <i>NM Weekly Lesson Plan Form</i> or approved alternate lesson plan form. Incorporate reflections into lesson plans to document planned changes in practices and/or the physical environment.</p>		
<p>2+.9 Educators must have at least two hours of weekly planning time to review child assessment information and for curriculum planning.</p>			

QUALITY PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN'S GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND LEARNING










Intentional Leadership: Continuous Quality Improvement

CQI Cycle	2+ STAR (Year 1) Criteria	2+ STAR (Year 2) or 3 STAR Criteria	4 STAR Criteria	5 STAR Criteria
PLAN	Program Planning			
	Meet the following requirements: Use the program's mission, philosophy, and curriculum statements to guide the CQI process.	Meet 2+ Year 1 requirements <i>plus:</i> 	Meet 2+ Year 1 and 3 STAR requirements <i>plus:</i> 	Meet 2+ Year 1, 3 STAR , and 4 STAR requirements <i>plus:</i> 
		Align the program's mission, philosophy, and curriculum statements with the <i>Guiding Principles for the Full Participation of Young Children</i> . Document this alignment in the Family Handbook. 		
	Annually, administer the <i>CQI Strengths and Needs Survey</i> with families, educators, and board (if appropriate) to use as a source of evidence for program planning. 			

10 Essential Elements of Program Quality







1. *Authentic Observation Documentation and Curriculum Planning*
2. *Family Engagement*
3. *Inclusive Practices for Children with Developmental Delays or Disabilities*
4. *Culture and Language Including the Support of Dual Language Learners (DLL)*
5. *Promoting Social Relationships*
6. *Health Promotion and Developmental Screenings*
7. *Professional Qualifications*
 - *Site Directors/Education Coordinators*
 - *Educators*
8. *Ratios and Group Size*
9. *Environments*
10. *Program Administration and Leadership*

FOCUS: Essential Elements of Quality








































PLAN	Program Planning <i>continued</i>			
	Gather other appropriate sources of evidence relevant to four Essential Elements of Program Quality: 1, 2, 5, and 7.	Gather other appropriate sources of evidence relevant to five Essential Elements of Program Quality: 1, 2, 3 , 5, and 7.		
			Utilize at least one additional recommended self-assessment tool for program planning.	
				Include community partners in the self-assessment process.
	Establish a team to review the <i>CQI Survey</i> results and other sources of evidence to identify program strengths in Essential Elements 1, 2, 5, and 7.	Establish a team to review the <i>CQI Survey</i> results and other sources of evidence to identify program strengths in Essential Elements 1, 2, 3 , 5, and 7.		
	Identify program improvement needs for Essential Elements 1, 2, 5, and 7.	Identify program improvement needs for Essential Elements 1, 2, 3 , 5, and 7.		
	Identify one task to strengthen and improve Essential Elements 1, 2, 5, and 7.	Identify one task to strengthen and improve Essential Elements 1, 2, 3 , 5, and 7.		
				Over a period of five years, the program must have addressed all ten Essential Elements of Program Quality in their Program Improvement Plan.

QUALITY PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT CHILDREN'S GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND LEARNING

Intentional Leadership: Continuous Quality Improvement

CQI Cycle	2+ STAR (Year 1) Criteria	2+ STAR (Year 2) or 3 STAR Criteria	4 STAR Criteria	5 STAR Criteria
PLAN	Classroom Planning			
	Annually, use the recommended self-assessment tools and other sources of evidence to gather information (evidence) regarding at least one classrooms' strengths and improvement needs for Essential Elements 1, 2, 5, and 7.	Annually, use the recommended self-assessment tools and other sources of evidence to gather information regarding all classrooms' strengths and improvement needs for Essential Elements 1, 2, 3 , 5, and 7.		
			Annually, use at least one additional recommended self-assessment tool or other source of evidence to gather information in at least one classroom for Essential Elements 4, 6, or 9.	
	Together with the classroom team, identify one task to strengthen and improve each Essential Element 1, 2, 5, and 7 for at least one classroom.	Together with classroom teams, Identify one task to strengthen and improve each Essential Element 1, 2, 3 , 5, and 7 for all classrooms.		
			Together with at least one classroom team, identify a task to strengthen and improve classroom quality for Essential Element 4, 6, or 9.	
			Over a period of five years, all classrooms must have addressed the first nine Essential Elements of Program Quality in their Program Improvement Plan.	

For Both Program and Classroom

PLAN	Identify how you will measure progress, accomplishments, and success.			
	Document program improvement plan.			
	Coordinate program improvement plan with each individual's professional development plan as appropriate.			
DO	Work as a team and individually on action plans.			
	Meet monthly as a team to reflect, track, and document action plan progress.			
	Build staff knowledge and capacity.			
	Measure your success.			
STUDY	As a team, review data and share and document what is working, what has been successful, and what needs improving.			
	Celebrate successes.			
	Update progress on the program improvement plan quarterly as per schedule.			
ACT	Integrate successful practices.			
	Determine what more needs to be learned and done.			
	Consider revisions, modifications, and additions to plan.			

History of New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

1st Generation

On March 31, 1997, the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) implemented a new three-tiered quality rating system for licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes. The purpose of this system was to recognize, encourage, and reward child care providers for excellence in providing child care services. Programs were recognized with a Bronze, Silver, or Gold child care license designation. Although Silver and Gold license levels recognized the child care provider's efforts to achieve excellence in child care, the Bronze level did not imply substandard care. All providers were expected to comply with the regulations that required centers or family child care homes to ensure the health, safety, and emotional well-being of the children in their care. Silver and Gold quality criteria focused on Director and Staff Qualifications, and Staff/Child Ratios. Programs at a Silver license level were also required to be in the self-study phase for national accreditation or have a well-developed and written program curriculum document reflecting developmentally appropriate practices. Programs with a Gold license level were required to have obtained and maintained accreditation through one of the CYFD-recognized national accrediting organizations. Higher subsidy reimbursement rates, above the base reimbursement rate, were paid to Silver and Gold programs. Silver programs received an additional \$1.50 per child and Gold programs received an additional \$3.00 per child.



History of New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

It was CYFD's intent to assist as many child care programs as possible to improve the quality of services being provided to low-income children and families.

2nd Generation

It was CYFD's intent to assist as many child care programs as possible to improve the quality of services being provided to low-income children and families. To act on this commitment, beginning July 1, 1999, CYFD implemented the AIM HIGH Program Development Initiative, a voluntary program for licensed child care programs and registered family child care providers. The AIM HIGH Essential Elements of Quality were developed with criteria in five ascending levels that are nationally recognized to enhance the quality of services to young children. Programs serving the highest percentage of children receiving state subsidy were given priority for participation. Programs that were designated as Silver (52 programs) and Gold (54 programs) were automatically included in the AIM HIGH Initiative. Silver programs were considered to be level four and Gold programs were considered to be level five. These programs had one year to demonstrate that they met the AIM HIGH Essential Elements of Quality for Levels 1, 2, and 3 in order to maintain their higher license level.

Federal and state funding was provided to Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) contractors statewide to provide support, training, and technical assistance to interested programs. The on-site support included a task as simple as writing a Family Handbook or as complex as conducting a self-study in preparation for national accreditation.

Level 1 focused on Program and Operation with the premise that the success of the program is dependent upon the leadership of the administration. Level 2 programs received support related to the physical environment and curriculum. The Environment Rating Scales were introduced at this level. Programs were expected to develop and use a developmentally appropriate curriculum, based on the holistic view of each child and meets their needs in all six developmental areas. Programs at Level 3 received assistance in meeting criteria related to professional development. Programs at this level were expected to obtain and maintain higher rated scores on the Environment Rating Scales. Level 4 programs focused on ratios and group size. The focus for Level 5, the highest level in the revised system, was related to the self-study and accreditation process. The purpose of voluntary accreditation was to improve the quality of care and education provided to young children.

Knowing that lower ratios and national accreditation costs real money, CYFD agreed to attach a higher value to the child care vouchers of children who attended programs at higher levels. When funds were available, the Department has periodically increased the subsidy rate for programs operating at the higher levels.

Twice, when at least 70% of child care providers had reached a level, AIM HIGH criteria were moved from the AIM HIGH Essential Elements of Quality into child care licensing regulations. So, in 2005, Level 1 AIM HIGH Essential Elements of Quality were moved into child care licensing regulations. And, the AIM HIGH Levels began being represented by STARS on all child care licenses. This initiative was called Look for the STARS. By 2010, 70% of the licensed programs had reached STAR Level 2, so the child care licensing regulations were again revised to include AIM HIGH/2 STAR quality criteria.

Federal stimulus funds were used to conduct a review of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The CYFD Early Childhood Services Bureau convened a broad group of representatives from the early childhood community to participate in a three-day meeting. The primary responsibility of the group was to review and make recommendations to improve the QRIS. This process was led by an impartial facilitator. The group identified the top priorities in each of the major categories of the QRIS which were presented as recommendations to CYFD. Simultaneously, the federal Office of Child Care set a priority goal to strengthen the quality of early childhood programs, recognizing that states are using quality rating and improvement systems as a framework for organizing, guiding, and gauging the progress of early care and education. By setting high quality benchmarks, the federal government will be able to track investments and measure progress, as well as guide technical assistance and research efforts.



History of New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

3rd Generation

Recommendations from the early childhood community, quality benchmarks proposed by the federal government, and combined with the tremendous success of the NM PreK Program in licensed child care programs, led to the revision of the state's QRIS standards. In the first half of 2011, an internal workgroup developed the revised the standards. The revised Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS), titled **FOCUS** on young children's learning includes:

- Targeted program and practitioner supports;
- Professional development to increase educator knowledge and skills and program quality;
- Graduated program standards that are closely tied to the **New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten** and school readiness expectations;
- Substantive content related to child assessment and curriculum development;
- Health promotion practices and developmental screenings; and
- Emphasis on a program **CQI** process.

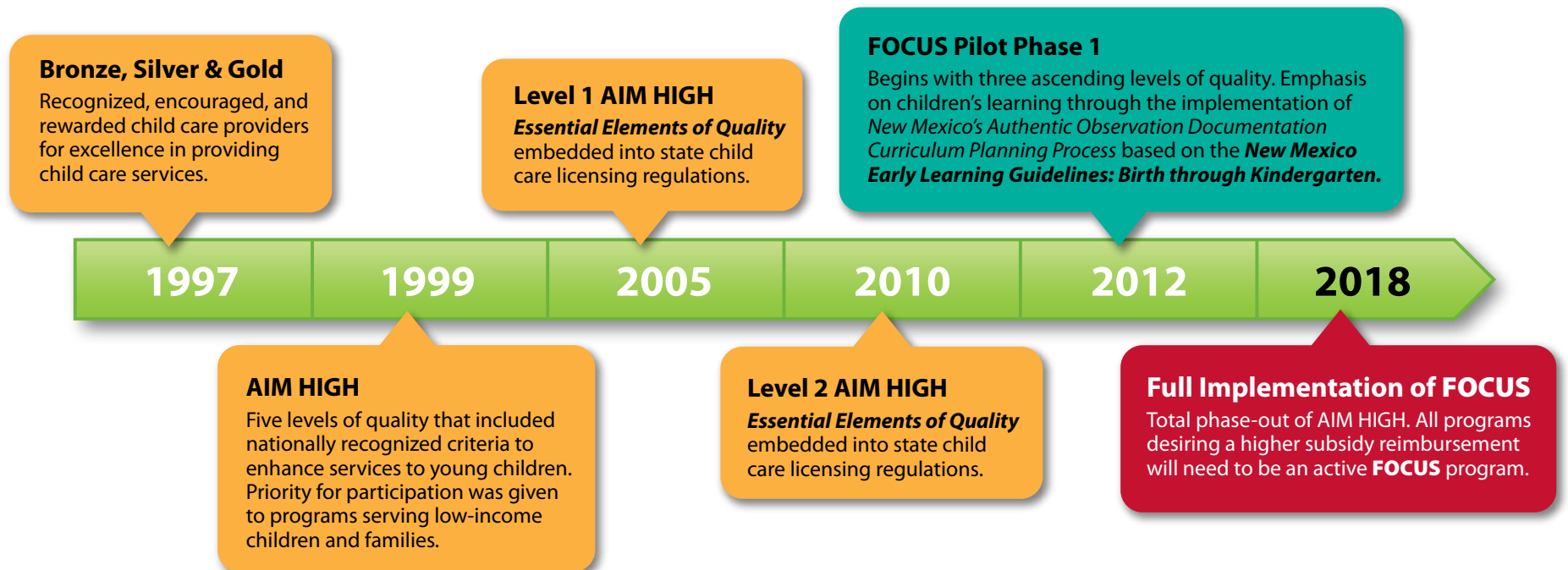
A multiyear process of phasing out the current AIM HIGH TQRIS to phasing in the new **FOCUS** TQRIS began in 2012. During this time, programs will maintain the standards for their current STAR license while they work to meet and maintain the new **FOCUS** criteria.



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On Young Children's Learning

History Timeline

History of New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)



During this timeline the **Children, Youth and Families Department** has periodically increased the subsidy rate for programs operating at the higher levels of quality.

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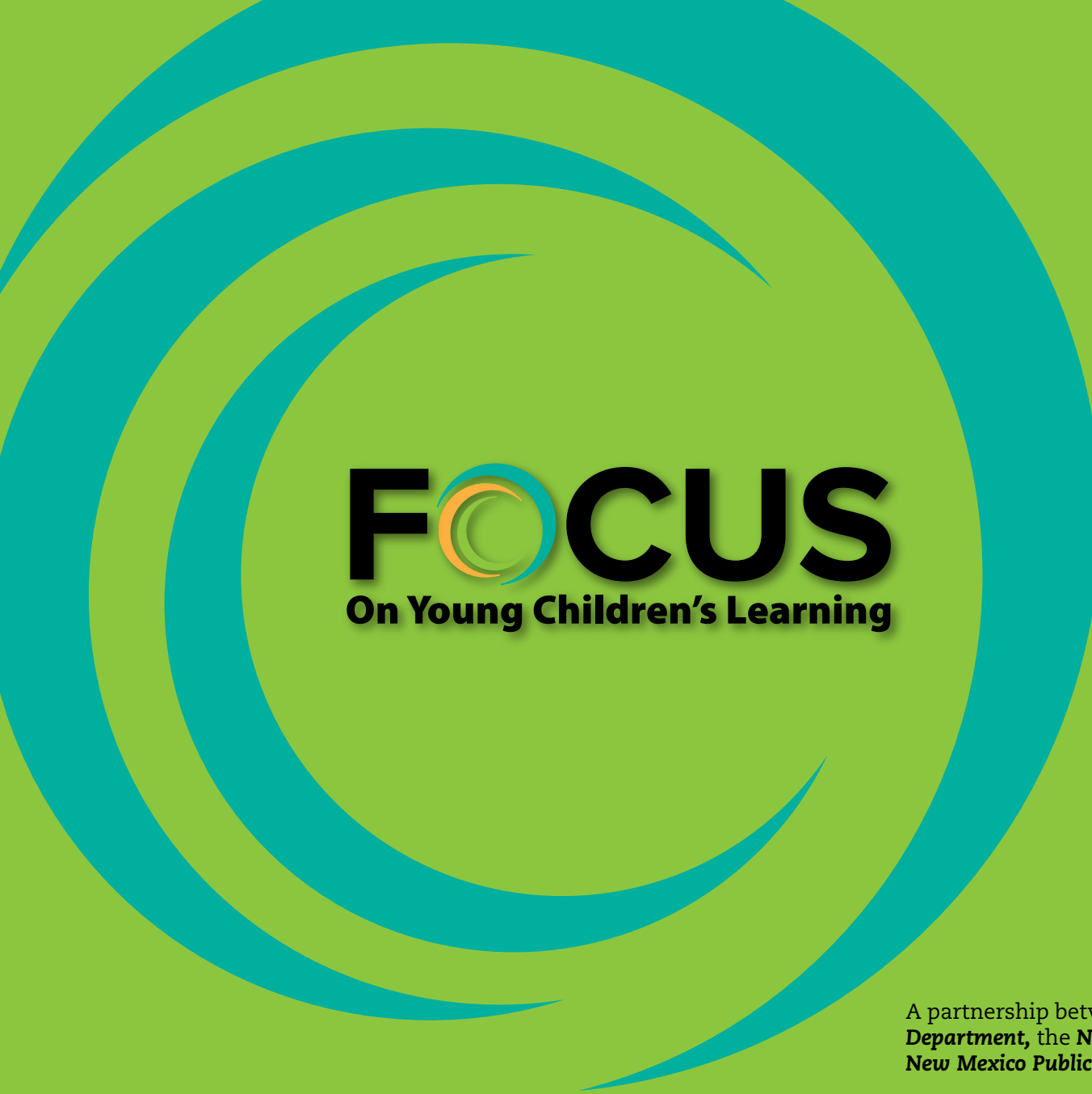
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