

What does Keystone STARS mean?

Keystone STARS (Standards, Training/Professional Development, Assistance, Resources) provides families with a tool to gauge the quality of early learning programs. The STARS program supports early learning programs in the commitment to continuous quality improvement. Programs that participate in Keystone STARS care about providing quality early learning to your child. As programs move up the STARS ladder, they are providing even higher quality experiences, so your child benefits even more from the program. Early learning programs can earn STAR 1 to a STAR 4 level. At each level, programs have to meet certain research-based quality standards that measure four areas that make a difference in the quality of care your child receives:

1. Staff Education.
2. Learning Environment
3. Leadership Management.
4. Family and Community Partnerships.

As a program moves from STAR 1 to STAR 4, the requirements in these areas increase.

At a Keystone STARS Program you should find:

- Department of Public Welfare Certificate of Compliance for child care centers and group homes or Centers of Registration for family care homes.
- A comfortable place where your child can explore and learn.
- Laughing, reading and talking which builds language skills.
- Teachers learning new ways to help your child thrive.
- A safe, healthy and exciting place.
- Music, art, science and play activities that increase school readiness.
- Your child feeling good about himself or herself.
- Families involved in the program and their child development.
- Teachers that listen to children and parents.
- Children having fun together and being respectful of each other.

Keystone STARS: Questions and Answers

Q: Why is Keystone STARS important to your child?

A: Your child's Early Education is critical to his/her development and future success in school and life. Keystone STARS sets requirements for early childhood educators to promote the best learning environment and safest setting possible for your child. Children who attend quality early learning programs:

- Come to Kindergarten ready to learn
- do better in school
- are more likely to graduate high school, attend college, and get good jobs.

Q: What are the requirements set by Keystone STARS?

A: Star levels are based on quality standards in four key areas:

1. Staff education - early childhood teachers have the training and knowledge for working with young children.
2. Learning environment – the program has a variety of materials and activities for each age level that makes it possible for children to learn something new everyday!
3. Leadership and management – a quality program has to have sound business practice to ensure your child's safety and early learning.

4. Family and community partnerships - Parents and community members are encouraged to become a part of the child's learning.

Q: How does Keystone STARS rate a program?

A: Programs complete a self-study evaluation based on STARS standards to apply for a STAR level. Keystone STARS evaluators will then confirm their STAR level. Programs that are earning a STAR 3 or STAR 4 also receive an independent Environmental Ratings Scale.

Q: What is the difference between a STAR 1 and higher STAR ratings?

A: Programs are rated using the four quality areas, but the requirements increase in each area for each STAR level. Please speak with your local Child Care Information Services (CCIS) for details of STAR level requirements. [Learn more about each STAR level.](#)

Q: The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare (DPW) certifies programs. Isn't that good enough?

A: A certified center does meet Pennsylvania's minimum requirements for safety. However, certification does not address Early Education. A child's first years are crucial to their lifelong learning, and the quality of their learning experiences will affect their readiness for school. Keystone STARS programs combine these safety requirements with Early Education standards to give children a safe and an educational environment.

Q: Does it cost more to enroll my child in a Keystone STARS program?

A: Providers enroll voluntarily in the Keystone STARS program and there are no charges for the provider to enroll. Costs to parents are set only by the provider themselves. Keystone STARS provides many child care providers with targeted financial assistance to help them continue to improve quality so they do not have to pass the cost on to families.

Q: What will my child get out of being enrolled in a Keystone STARS program?

A: Many things! Individual attention, daily learning activities, a safe, friendly, and respectful environment, feeling good about themselves, a well educated staff, parent involvement, and more.

Q: What do parents get out of enrolling their children in a Keystone STARS program?

A: Knowing that your child is safe and respected, that your child is learning something new every day, and the security of knowing what to expect from your provider in certain situations. Most of all, giving your child the best opportunity to succeed today and in the future