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CHILD CARE PROVIDER CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES



A Quality Rating and Improvement System for Texas

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO TEXAS RISING STAR

The Texas Rising Star (TRS) program is a voluntary, quality-based child care rating system of child care providers participating in the Texas Workforce Commission's (TWC) subsidized child care program. TRS certification is available to licensed centers and licensed and registered child care home providers that meet the certification criteria. The TRS program offers three levels of certification (2-star, 3-star, and 4-star) to encourage providers to attain progressively higher levels of quality.

THE TEXAS RISING STAR PROVIDER IN THE CHILD CARE DELIVERY SYSTEM

Across Texas, parents and families enroll their children into child care programs, including center-based and home-based programs. Numerous research studies have shown that at-risk children who attend higher quality child care programs are more prepared for school entry than children who do not attend quality child care programs.

Those providers that voluntarily achieve TRS provider certification, offering quality care that exceeds the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) minimum Child Care Licensing (CCL) standards for director and staff qualifications, caregiver-child interactions, age-appropriate curricula and activities, nutrition and indoor/outdoor activities, and parent involvement and education, are in a better position to contribute to the early development of children. As providers progress through the levels of TRS provider certification, they contribute progressively more to the development of the children they serve daily.

TEXAS RISING STAR: A QUALITY RATING AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEM FOR TEXAS

In recent years, many states have adopted quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) to measure the quality of child care programs and to provide professional development to help these programs improve the quality of care they offer to children and families.

In September 2013, the Texas Early Learning Council (TELC) released recommendations for the state to develop a statewide, cross-sector QRIS for Texas. One of the recommendations included Texas Rising Star as the basis for a QRIS in Texas.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In the mid- to late-1970s, federal standards for quality child care were implemented across the nation. By the early 1980s these federal standards were discontinued. However, in Texas a state workgroup was then formed to develop standards for child care providers. The research from this workgroup formed the basis for the refinement and development of the TRS provider certification criteria. These criteria were in use from June 1991 to October 2000.

The TRS Child Care Provider Certification Guidelines (TRS Provider Guidelines) were revised and issued in October 2000, incorporating the recommendations of a workgroup formed in 1999. The workgroup consisted of

TWC staff, Board staff, child care contractors, and child care providers from across the state. In 2000, the revisions mainly updated the assessment and certification procedures. In 2003, TWC updated the recertification and monitoring time frames for TRS providers.

TEXAS RISING STAR REVISION (2013–2015)

Effective September 1, 2013, House Bill (HB) 376, 83rd Texas Legislature (Regular Session), amended Chapter 2308 of the Texas Government Code relating to the TRS program. As amended, Chapter 2308 required TWC's three-member Commission (Commission) to:

- create a TRS program review workgroup to recommend revisions to the TRS program;
- propose rules that incorporate the TRS workgroup's recommended revisions;
- establish graduated reimbursement rates for TRS providers;
- require Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) to use at least 2 percent of their annual allocations for quality child care initiatives; and
- make funds available for Boards to hire TRS assessors and mentors to provide TRS program technical assistance to child care providers.

In 2013, TWC convened a workgroup dedicated to the revision of TRS as required by House Bill (HB) 376 of the 83rd Texas Legislature. The purpose of the TRS workgroup was to recommend revisions to the TRS program. The TRS workgroup invited stakeholders from around Texas to participate in workgroup discussions and provide input into the proposed TRS program revisions.

HB 376 required that the workgroup submit recommendations proposing changes to TRS by May 2014, and rules that incorporate the proposed changes by September 2014. The proposed changes to TRS were approved by TWC on January 27, 2015.

TEXAS RISING STAR REVISION (2016) AND ONGOING

During the fall of 2015, TWC held several public meetings to solicit input on the child care program, including the TRS program. Also, in January 2016, TWC hosted two provider work group sessions and a TRS assessor/mentor group to gather feedback and recommendations on the 2015 TRS revisions. Based on the input from these stakeholder meetings, the Commission recommended modifications to the TRS Provider Guidelines designed to streamline the application and assessment process and to clarify and improve the TRS criteria. TWC continually monitors the progress of TRS and will review the program every four years.

ENHANCED REIMBURSEMENTS FOR STAR LEVEL RATING

Texas Government Code §2308.315 mandates that the minimum reimbursement rate for a TRS provider must be greater than the maximum rate established for a provider that is not TRS certified for the same category of care, i.e., at least:

- 5 percent higher for a provider with a 2-star rating;
- 7 percent higher for a provider with a 3-star rating; and
- 9 percent higher for a provider with a 4-star rating.

Further, to expand local flexibility, TWC rules allow Boards to establish a higher enhanced reimbursement rate for TRS providers than those provided above, so long as a minimum 2 percentage point difference between each star level is maintained.

SUMMARY OF THE TEXAS RISING STAR CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

Below is a summary of the TRS certification criteria. Detailed information regarding each category can be found in Section 2 of these guidelines. Based on the recommendations of the TRS workgroup, the TRS Provider Guidelines establish:

- required “met” or “not met” measures for base certification; and
- points-based measures scored on a scale of 0–3 points that may lift a provider to a higher star level.

Each subcategory may contain only required measures, only points-based measures, or a combination of the two.

Category 1: Director and Staff Qualifications and Training

Measures relating to the education, experience, and training of staff, including directors and all caregivers

SUBCATEGORY	REQUIRED (MET/NOT)	POINTS-BASED
Director Qualifications and Training	X	X
Caregiver Qualifications, Orientation, and Training	X	
Caregiver Qualifications and Training		X

Category 2: Caregiver-Child Interactions

Measures relating to group size, caregiver to child ratio, and quality of interactions between caregivers and children in the classroom

SUBCATEGORY	REQUIRED (MET/NOT)	POINTS-BASED
Group Size/Staff Ratios (center-based only)		X
Warm and Responsive Style		X
Language Facilitation and Support		X
Play-Based Interactions and Guidance		X
Support for Children’s Regulation		X

Category 3: Curriculum

Measures relating to the lesson plans, curriculum, and instructional formats that caregivers use in the classroom

SUBCATEGORY	REQUIRED (MET/NOT MET)	POINTS-BASED
Lesson Plans and Curriculum		X
Planning for Special Needs and Respecting Diversity		X
Instructional Formats and Approaches to Learning		X

Category 4: Nutrition and Indoor/Outdoor Activities

Measures relating to nutrition policies and practices, as well as the equipment, materials, and arrangement of the indoor and outdoor learning environments

SUBCATEGORY	REQUIRED (MET/NOT MET)	POINTS-BASED
Nutrition	X	X
Indoor Learning Environments	X	X
Outdoor Learning Environments		X

Category 5: Parent Involvement and Education

Measures relating to the education and involvement of parents and families in the program

SUBCATEGORY	REQUIRED (MET/NOT MET)	POINTS-BASED
Parent Education	X	X
Parent Involvement	X	X

STAR LEVEL SCORING

If a provider meets all the required measures for TRS certification, the score of the points-based measures will determine the star level for each category and ultimately for the provider. Points-based measures are scored, and points awarded through on-site assessments.

Each *category* of the certification criteria is given a star level rating based on the average score across all subcategory points-based measures in that category. A provider's overall star designation is based on the lowest star level achieved across the five categories. The rationale for this scoring protocol is to ensure the provider meets higher quality standards across measures in all categories.

Example: If a provider scores at a 4-star level in two categories, a 3-star level in one category, and a 2-star level in two categories, the provider would be certified as a 2-Star Program Provider.

However, a provider that achieves 4-star scores in four of the five categories, but a 2-star score in one category, will be certified as a 3-Star Program Provider.

The score for a points-based measure in which multiple classrooms are assessed is based on the median score of the measures which are then averaged.

The methodology for determining the star level of a category is based on the provider's average score across all measures of a category:

- **3-star – average score is 1.80 to 2.39 (60–79.9 percent of total points)**
- **4-star – average score is 2.4 or greater than 2.4 (80 percent of total points)**

A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF CHILD CARE

Certifying providers that meet the TRS certification criteria, awarding quality improvement equipment and materials, and offering training for those in the early care and education field are all part of a systematic approach to addressing the quality of life for all young children in care outside their homes.

A continuum of quality child care may be described in the following manner:

- Regulatory Requirements (minimum CCL standards): Defines the minimum acceptable level of care.
- Self-Assessment: Enables an individual facility to evaluate its own progress in improving the quality of care.
- TRS Provider Certification: Provides measurable indicators of quality child care practices that exceed the minimum CCL standards.

The continuum of quality child care represents a systematic progression in the quality of early childhood programs. Data about a provider's performance are collected in partnership by state agencies, the child care contractors, and child care providers. Measurable data include factually quantifiable information, such as director and caregiver qualifications and training, group sizes, a facility's physical space (indoor and outdoor), and a program's policies for nutrition, staff orientation, and parent education. Other data, such as child-staff ratios, activities, curricula, and caregiver-child interactions, must be collected by observation in individual programs. Based on the data collected, a provider's performance may be improved by training, technical assistance, and resource linkages. The outcome is enhanced physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of the children in care.

TEXAS RISING STAR ASSESSOR AND MENTOR ROLES

Mentor staff assists providers in attaining, maintaining, and improving TRS certification status. An assessor's primary focus is conducting assessments to determine TRS certification status and conducting annual monitoring visits to ensure the level of quality is maintained. Because of the two distinct roles, TWC rules prohibit a mentor from being an assessor for the same facility. For more information on the roles of assessors and mentors, please see the assessor and mentor protocols and best practices in the Reference Section. Also see TWC rule §809.134 Minimum Qualification for TRS Assessors and Mentors (Chapter 809).

SECTION 2: TEXAS RISING STAR CERTIFICATION PROCESS

ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS

As provided in Texas Government Code §2308.3155, the Texas Rising Star (TRS) program is a voluntary, quality-based child care rating system for child care providers participating in the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) subsidized child care program. Additionally, a child care provider is eligible to apply for TRS certification if the provider:

- (1) has a permanent (non-expiring) license or registration from the Child Care Licensing (CCL);
- (2) has at least 12 months of licensing history with CCL and is not on:
 - corrective action with a Local Workforce Development Board (Board) pursuant to Chapter 809, Subchapter F;
 - a “Notice of Freeze” with TWC pursuant to Chapter 213 of the Texas Labor Code (Enforcement of Texas Unemployment Compensation Act) or Chapter 61 of the Texas Labor Code (Payment of Wages); or
 - corrective or adverse action with CCL; or
- (3) is regulated by and in good standing with the U.S. Military.

Additionally, TRS providers must demonstrate consistent compliance with minimum Child Care Licensing (CCL) requirements.

TEXAS RISING STAR BUILDS UPON CHILD CARE LICENSING STANDARDS

As the child care licensing and regulatory agency for Texas, CCL’s regulations establish minimum licensing requirements that all child care providers must follow. If a child care provider has repeated licensing deficiencies, CCL may place the provider on corrective action. CCL may initiate an adverse action, to include a revocation or suspension of a license, if:

- deficiencies are not corrected timely;
- there are repeat deficiencies; or
- there is an incident or single deficiency that poses an immediate risk to children.

The TRS program is a voluntary rating system for providers choosing to meet standards above minimum CCL standards. For a provider to meet and maintain TRS program standards, the provider must demonstrate consistent compliance with minimum CCL standards. Accordingly, as set forth in TWC Child Care Services rule §809.131, providers placed on corrective or adverse action by CCL are automatically found not to have demonstrated consistent compliance with minimum licensing standards and, therefore, are not eligible to participate in the TRS program.

A child care facility is **not** eligible to apply for TRS certification if, during the most recent 12-month CCL licensing history, the provider had:

- any critical licensing deficiencies, as listed in these guidelines;
- five or more high or medium-high licensing deficiencies, as listed in these guidelines; or
- 10 or more total licensing deficiencies of any type.

Currently certified TRS providers must also adhere to CCL compliance. Impacts of non-compliance can be found in Section 4 of these Guidelines.

CRITICAL DEFICIENCIES

Providers are not eligible to apply for TRS if any of the critical deficiencies listed below are cited during the most recent 12-month CCL licensing period.

CRITICAL DEFICIENCIES – CENTERS
745.626 Background Checks Requirement – Providing Direct Care [HIGH]
745.656 Individuals on Texas State Sex Offender Registry – Cannot Be Present at a Facility [HIGH]
745.661 Criminal Convictions or Central Registry Findings – Take Appropriate Action [HIGH]
746.201(9) Permit Holder Responsibilities – Complying with Child Care Licensing Law in Chapter 42, Human Resources Code [MEDIUM-HIGH]
746.1201(4) Responsibilities of Employees and Caregivers – Ensure No Child is Abused, Neglected, or Exploited [HIGH]
746.1201(5) Responsibilities of Employees and Caregivers – Report Suspected Child Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation [HIGH]
746.1311(a) Director Annual Training – 30 Hours Required [MEDIUM-HIGH]
746.1315 First Aid and CPR Requirements [MEDIUM-HIGH]
746.2805 Prohibited Punishments [HIGH]
746.3805(a) Administering Medication – How to Administer Medication [HIGH]
746.3805(b) Administering Medication – How to Administer Medication [(2) HIGH; (1), (3) MEDIUM-HIGH]

CRITICAL DEFICIENCIES – HOMES
745.626 Background Checks Requirement – Providing Direct Care [HIGH]
745.656 Individuals on Texas Sex Offender Registry – Cannot Be Present at a Facility [HIGH]
745.661 Criminal Convictions or Central Registry Findings – Take Appropriate Action [HIGH]
747.207(4) Reporting Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation [HIGH]
747.207(8) Primary Caregiver Responsibilities – Complying with Child Care Licensing Law in Chapter 42 Texas Human Resources Code [HIGH]
747.1309(a) Documented Director Annual Training – 30 Hours Required [MEDIUM]
747.1313 First Aid and CPR Training [HIGH]
747.1501(a)(3) Responsibility of Caregivers – Ensure No Child is Abused, Neglected or Exploited [HIGH]
747.2705 Prohibited Punishments [HIGH]
747.3605(a) Administering Medication – How to Administer Medication [HIGH]
747.3605(b) Administering Medication [(2) HIGH; (1), (3) MEDIUM-HIGH]

CRITICAL DEFICIENCIES – SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS
745.626 Background Checks Requirement [HIGH]
745.656 Individuals on the Texas State Sex Offender Registry – Cannot Be Present at a Facility [HIGH]
745.661 Criminal Convictions or Central Registry Findings – Take Appropriate Action [HIGH]
744.201(9) Permit Holder Responsibilities – Complying with Child Care Licensing Law in Chapter 42, Human Resources Code [MEDIUM-HIGH]
744.1201(4) Responsibilities of Employees and Caregivers – Ensure No Child is Abused, Neglected, or Exploited [HIGH]
744.1201(5) Responsibilities of Employees and Caregivers – Report Suspected Child Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation [HIGH]
744.1309(a) Caregiver/Site Director Annual Training – 15 Hours Required [MEDIUM-HIGH]
744.1311(a) Director Annual Training – 20 Hours Required [LOW]
744.1315 First Aid and CPR Requirements [MEDIUM-HIGH]
744.2105 Prohibited Punishment [HIGH]
744.2655(a) Administering Medication – How to Administer Medication [HIGH]
744.2655(b) Administering Medication – How to Administer Medication [(2) HIGH; (1), (3) MEDIUM-HIGH]

HIGH/MEDIUM-HIGH DEFICIENCIES

A provider is not eligible to apply for TRS if the provider has five or more of the high or medium-high deficiencies listed below in its most recent 12-month CCL licensing compliance history.

HIGH/MEDIUM-HIGH DEFICIENCIES – CENTERS	
745.621 Background Checks Requirement – Submitting Requests [HIGH]	
746.1003 Director Responsibilities [(1), (3–6) HIGH (2) Medium]	
746.1201(1) Responsibilities of Employees and Caregivers – Demonstrate Competency, Good Judgement, Self-Control [HIGH]	
746.1305 Preservice Training Requirement (whole section)[(a) MEDIUM; (b) MEDIUM-HIGH]	
746.1203(4) Responsibilities of Caregivers – Supervision of Children [HIGH]	
746.1203(5) Responsibilities of Caregivers – Children in Control [MEDIUM-HIGH]	
746.1309(a) Documented Annual Training – 24 Hours Required [MEDIUM-HIGH]	
746.1309(e) Annual Training for Caregivers of Children under 24 Months [MEDIUM-HIGH]	
HIGH/MEDIUM-HIGH DEFICIENCIES – HOMES	
745.621 Background Checks Requirement [HIGH]	
747.207 (1-3), (5-7) Primary Caregivers Responsibilities [(6) HIGH; (1-3), (7) MEDIUM-HIGH, (5) MEDIUM]	
747.1305(d) Annual Training for Caregivers of Children under 24 Months [MEDIUM-HIGH]	
747.1309(d) Annual Training for Director of Children under 24 months [MEDIUM-HIGH]	
747.1501(c)(1) Responsibilities of Employees and Caregivers – Competency, Good Judgement, Self-Control [HIGH]	
747.1501(c)(4) Responsibilities of Caregivers – Supervision of Children [HIGH]	
747.1501(c)(5) Additional Responsibilities of Caregivers – Children in Control [MEDIUM-HIGH]	
747.3501 Safety – Areas Free from Hazards [(1-7) MEDIUM-HIGH, (8) HIGH]	
HIGH/MEDIUM-HIGH DEFICIENCIES – AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS	
745.621 Background Checks Requirement [HIGH]	
744.1005(a)(1)–(6) Director Responsibilities [MEDIUM-HIGH]	
744.1201(1) Responsibilities of Employees and Caregivers – Demonstrate Competency, Good Judgement, Self-Control [HIGH]	
744.1203(4) Responsibilities of Caregivers – Supervision of Children [HIGH]	
744.1203(5) Additional Responsibilities of Caregivers – Children in Control [MEDIUM-HIGH]	

TRS SCREENING PROCESS

The TRS Screening Form must be completed on a quarterly basis (every 3 months) by an assessor. Boards must ensure the separation of assessor and mentor roles. Mentors assist providers in attaining, maintaining, and improving certification status; assessors primary focus is conducting assessments and monitoring visits. A dual-role mentor/assessor should not act in both roles at the same provider.

Assessors must complete the screening forms, as results of the screening can affect the provider's star level (critical deficiencies) or require that the provider be placed on TRS probation (based on number of deficiencies). Assessors should share screening results with mentor staff if it results in the provider dropping a star level or needing to be placed on TRS probation, as mentor staff may be able to provide mentoring, training, and resources to assist the provider with compliance.

Per CCL, deficiencies are not posted on the website until after the appeals process has been completed. Once a deficiency is posted on the CCL website, it is considered final and TRS corrective action is taken accordingly. As a best practice, for initial applicants, the assessor should check the CCL website when the application is received, again before the provider's assessment, and again before the TRS certification start date in The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST). Any consequences from the screening form would be applied before the certification start date is entered into TWIST.

Note: If a specific standard is listed on the Screening Form, for example, 746.3805(a), only that specific standard would apply, whereas if whole sections are listed, rather than a specific standard, such as 745.626 and 746.280, any deficiency cited in the whole section would apply.

TRS APPLICATION PROCESS (NON-NATIONALLY ACCREDITED PROVIDERS)

STEP 1: ORIENTATION

The TRS orientation can be found at www.TexasRisingStar.org. The orientation video includes an overview of the TRS program application process, an overview of the required and points-based measures on which a provider's quality designation is rated, and finally, an introduction to the on-site assessment process through which TRS certification is attained. TWC's Child Care Services rules at §809.133(a) require all prospective TRS providers to participate in an orientation prior to submitting their applications.

STEP 2: INTEREST FORM

After reviewing the orientation video or attending a TRS orientation training, a provider is encouraged to complete the Texas Rising Star Interest Form, also available at www.TexasRisingStar.org. This form collects basic information about the provider (e.g., facility address, CCL licensing number) and submits it to the Board in the provider's local workforce development area (workforce area). Completion of the interest form informs the Board of the provider's interest in becoming a TRS-certified provider.

STEP 3: SELF-ASSESSMENT

TWC Chapter 809 Child Care Services rules require that applicants complete a TRS self-assessment of the Facility Assessment Record Form. The self-assessment must be submitted with the TRS application and accompanying documents (see Step 4 below).

A self-assessment or self-evaluation is a way for child care providers to improve the quality of their services by reflecting on their own comfort with and expertise in areas known to enhance early childhood environments and experiences. The purpose of the TRS self-assessment tools is to provide applicants with a guided review of their programs to determine if they are ready to proceed with the TRS Initial Certification Assessment. The tools cover all TRS-required and points-based quality measures on which the provider would be scored in the Initial Certification Assessment.

The Facility Assessment Record Form (FARF) is required for the self-assessment. The Classroom Assessment Record Form (CARF) is optional. However, providers are encouraged to complete the classroom self-assessment, which can clarify if some time to improve in certain areas to increase star level would be beneficial. In these cases, TRS encourages the program to contact the Board in its workforce area and/or review helpful professional development and other resources available at www.TexasRisingStar.org.

A copy of both the FARF and the CARF are available on the TRS website at www.TexasRisingStar.org.

Tips for Self-Assessment

1. Read over the self-assessment tools, the FARF and the age-appropriate CARF (downloadable from www.TexasRisingStar.org) completely before beginning. Have staff read all information, too.
2. Go back and look at each measure and item individually. Start with one that is manageable and look for required (met/not met) items—these will be shaded gray.
3. Identify what you have ready for the assessment, what you need to complete before assessment, and what questions you need to ask TRS staff in order to complete your preparation.
4. Determine what you would like to change about your program before having the TRS assessor come for the assessment.
5. Contact your TRS mentor or assessor, or the appropriate Board, to discuss the results of the self-assessment, ask questions, and take the next step in the assessment process.

STEP 4: APPLICATION, SCREENING, AND DOCUMENT CHECKLISTS

Each provider must complete the TRS application. Additionally, providers must complete the appropriate TRS Provider Certification Screening Form. Assessors will also screen the provider for licensing deficiencies and corrective/adverse actions prior to the on-site assessment.

All forms are available at the [Texas Rising Star website](#) under the TRS Tools tab:

- TRS Application
- TRS Screening Forms:
 - Licensed Child Care Centers
 - Home-Based Providers
 - After-School Programs

As part of the certification eligibility packet, the provider must complete the following documents:

- TRS Application
- TRS Site Data Form
- TRS Provider Certification Screening Form
- TRS Facility Assessment Record Form

The provider has the option to complete and submit the [Classroom Assessment Record Form](#) for each classroom.

Finally, the provider must collect several documents that are used to verify required and points-based measures for the facility and staff. **These documents must be made available for review during the on-site assessment**, but they do not have to be submitted with the application. A detailed list of these documents is compiled in the [TRS document checklists](#). Two checklists are provided: the first refers to measures that are required for certification. The second refers to points-based measures. Providers are not required to meet all the points-based measures. *If the provider does not have the documentation on the checklist for a points-based measure, the assessor will score that measure as a zero.*

Providers are asked to submit a copy of each checklist with their application as an attestation that they will have the documents available on-site.

STEP 5: SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION

Providers must submit the TRS Application, the TRS Site Data Form, TRS Screening Form, the Facility Assessment Record Form, and a document checklist to the appropriate Board by the Board's preferred method. After TRS staff receives the application package and confirms the provider's eligibility, they will contact the provider within 20 calendar days with an estimated timeframe for scheduling the on-site Initial Certification Assessment.

RECERTIFICATION PROCESS

Recertification must occur at or before the end of the three-year TRS certification cycle. TRS providers undergoing the recertification process must complete Steps 3–5 described in the TRS Application Process.

To ensure that recertification is conducted prior to the end of the three-year certification cycle, these materials should be submitted to the appropriate Board at least three months before the three-year anniversary of certification. Late submission of the recertification materials could delay the provider's recertification. A full, on-site recertification assessment is then conducted. See the Recertification section in the Technical Scoring Manual for additional information.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND NATIONALLY ACCREDITED PROVIDERS

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE–OPERATED CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

Providers operated and monitored by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) are required to meet high-quality standards established and monitored by DoD. Therefore, DoD-operated providers receive initial 4-star certification without requiring a full on-site assessment. DoD-operated providers are not subject to or monitored by CCL and, therefore, not subject to TRS screening. Additionally, DoD-operated providers are not subject to the annual unannounced TRS monitoring or the three-year reassessment.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE–RECOGNIZED NATIONAL ACCREDITATIONS

Child care providers *not operated by DoD*, but with a DoD-recognized national accreditation, receive initial 4-star certification without requiring a full on-site assessment. However, these providers are subject to and monitored by CCL and, therefore, are subject to the TRS screening.

The following national accreditations are recognized by the DoD for either on-base child care or for the DoD's Off-Base Child Care Military Fee Assistance Program; and, therefore, receive initial 4-star certification:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)
- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)
- National Accreditation Commission for Early Child Care and Education (NAC)
- Council of Accreditation (COA)
- AdvancED Quality Early Learning Standards (QELS)

TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION–RECOGNIZED NATIONAL ACCREDITATIONS

The former TRS Provider Guidelines recognized child care facilities with Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) certification as initial 4-star certification. TWC will continue to honor this recognition pending a review of ACSI's standards consistent with the National Accreditation Recognition Process described in the Reference section of these guidelines.

SCREENING and MONITORING FOR NATIONALLY ACCREDITED PROVIDERS

All nationally accredited providers, *other than those operated and monitored by the DoD*, are regulated and monitored by CCL, subject to the TRS screening, and required to comply with the procedures for the annual TRS monitoring detailed in Section 3 of these guidelines.

TRS staff will verify a provider's national accreditation status annually.

TEXAS RISING STAR APPLICATION PROCESS

DoD and TWC-recognized nationally accredited providers wishing to participate in the TRS certification system are required to complete the following:

- TRS Application
- TRS Site Data Form
- TRS Screening Form applicable to the provider type
- Copy of current, valid national accreditation certificate

For reassessment visits, nationally accredited providers must complete the following:

- TRS Application
- TRS Site Data Form
- TRS Screening Form applicable to the provider type
- Copy of current, valid national accreditation certificate

National accrediting entities that wish to become recognized by TWC will need to complete the TRS

Accreditation Recognition Process. Please see the References section for more information.

RECERTIFICATION PROCESS

NATIONALLY ACCREDITED PROVIDERS

Recertification must occur on or before the end of the three-year certification cycle. However, if the accrediting organization has certified or recertified the facility through an on-site visit within the provider's three-year TRS assessment time frame, the provider is not required to have a modified TRS Recertification Assessment at the end of that three-year TRS cycle.

At recertification, all accredited providers must complete the steps described in the TRS Application Process for TWC-Recognized Nationally Accredited Providers.

CHILDREN'S LEARNING INSTITUTE ENGAGE RESOURCES

TWC has partnered with the Children's Learning Institute (CLI) at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston to provide a streamlined, technology-based program and technical assistance (TA) tracking system. The TRS tools are hosted on the CLI Engage online platform. TRS assessors will use this system to capture scores and generate reports on all TRS measures after on-site assessments. TRS mentors will use the report to generate TA plans.

Additionally, CLI Engage hosts professional development courses, child progress monitoring tools, and supplementary activities that are available to all TRS providers. Providers can track completion of staff professional development in language and literacy instruction; science, technology, and engineering instruction; classroom management; and more. Caregivers will have access to many supplemental lessons across several key learning domains. Finally—brief child assessments provide real data to target instruction and monitor child progress over time.

To access these resources, providers must enroll in CLI Engage. Providers will be invited via e-mail to enroll after the on-site assessment and star level designation. A link in the e-mail invitation will take providers to the CLI Engage logon screen.

After logging on to CLI Engage, providers will be taken to their school summary page, where they can review the information about their programs. All information housed on CLI Engage will be used by TRS assessors and mentors to provide targeted technical assistance. Caregivers at a program can use the professional development and child progress monitoring tools available on the CLI Engage platform. For more detailed information about CLI Engage, visit <https://cliengage.org>.

SECTION 3: TYPES OF TEXAS RISING STAR PROGRAM ASSESSMENTS

Texas Rising Star (TRS) conducts several types of on-site visits to assess and monitor ongoing quality of TRS-certified providers. Providers should be aware that during any assessment following an initial assessment –if required measures are not met, the provider will lose TRS certification.

INITIAL CERTIFICATION ASSESSMENT

The Initial Certification Assessment is a full, on-site assessment of all TRS measures. Required measures such as written policies are verified. Points-based measures involving caregivers and environments are assessed in observation blocks of one to one and a half hours per classroom.

TRS assessors assess all classrooms using the Facility Assessment Record Form (FARF) and the age-appropriate Classroom Assessment Record Form (CARF) (available for review at www.TexasRisingStar.org), and the scores are calculated to determine overall star level designation. TRS assessors enter assessment scores into the online TRS Assessment tool, Children's Learning Center (CLI) Engage, which generates the final star level certification. The online system then uses the scores to generate and refine Technical Assistance (TA) plans.

ANNUAL UNANNOUNCED MONITORING VISIT

The annual monitoring may be conducted at any time but must be conducted before the yearly anniversary date of the TRS certification start date in The Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST).

The annual monitoring is a requirement of TRS, per Child Care Rule §809.133 (d)(1):
§809.133. Application and Assessments for the TRS Program.

(d) Boards shall ensure that certified TRS providers are monitored on an annual basis and the monitoring includes:

- (1) at least one unannounced on-site visit

Should a provider refuse an Annual Unannounced Monitoring Visit, the assessor will remind the provider in writing, that an unannounced annual monitoring visit is a requirement of TRS and will occur within the next 4-6 weeks, citing the Guidelines and Child Care Rule §809.133 (d)(1). In this correspondence, the assessor will inform the provider that failure to comply when the assessor arrives will result in an immediate loss of TRS certification and the provider will be required to wait six months to re-apply.

NON-NATIONALLY ACCREDITED PROVIDERS

TRS staff will observe 50 percent of the classrooms, including at least one classroom for each age group, to include any new classroom added since the previous visit. Priority for observations will be classrooms with caregiver turnover. The assessor will review the annual training hours for those caregivers not observed. If all caregivers must be observed due to the size of the center; all caregiver training hours will be reviewed. TRS staff will also complete the appropriate TRS Screening Form prior to the visit. All categories are observed and scored, as applicable.

If, during the on-site visit, TRS staff discovers that a change in director was not reported immediately as required and the current director does not meet the requirements of the provider's current star level, then the star level will be re-determined at the on-site visit using the current director's qualifications (see *Ongoing Responsibilities of the Texas Rising Star Provider*).

NATIONALLY ACCREDITED PROVIDERS

TRS staff will observe 50 percent of the classrooms, including at least one classroom for each age group. However, assessors only observe measures in Categories 2 and 4.

ALL TEXAS RISING STAR PROVIDERS

Results of the annual monitoring will not affect the provider's star level rating. Rather, the scores are used to generate TA plans, or a Service Improvement Agreement (SIA) if deficiencies in TRS standards are found.

The one-hour core observation time is not required for monitoring visits. However, if necessary, the assessor can observe for up to one hour in each classroom. The assessor needs to ensure that the length of the observation is appropriate to determine if a SIA is needed (see Section 4 for information on SIAs). *Any monitoring that results in a SIA should be based on an hour-long classroom observation.*

An annual monitoring can also result in the observation of significant improvements in a provider's quality of care. In these cases, TRS staff will work with the director to determine if a full assessment to increase the star level is appropriate (see *Star Level Evaluation in this section*).

RECERTIFICATION ASSESSMENT

The Recertification Assessment will occur no later than three years to the month of the previous full-site assessment and certification. This assessment requires that 100 percent of classrooms are assessed, all required measures are verified, and all points-based measures are scored. The provider's star level designation prior to the Recertification Assessment does not affect the assessment result; providers may lose, gain, or maintain a star level rating and its respective reimbursement rate.

The provider is responsible for submitting to its Board a TRS application, TRS Site Data form, screening form, and FARF self-assessment no later than three months before its three-year anniversary from the TRS certification start date in TWIST.

STAR LEVEL EVALUATION

A provider may make significant improvements across TRS measures that could result in a higher star level designation upon reassessment. In these cases, the provider may request a Star Level Evaluation to determine the new star rating. Star Level Evaluations are conducted upon mutual agreement between the TRS provider and the appropriate Board and can occur at any time. Star Level Evaluations are full, on-site assessments of all classrooms, categories and applicable measures.

Because the Star Level Evaluation is a full-site assessment, the three-year recertification cycle resets to the date of the Star Level Evaluation (i.e., the date of the Initial Certification Assessment is no longer used to determine the recertification date) regardless of star level status.

CATEGORY REASSESSMENT

After any full assessment (Initial, Recertification, Star Level Evaluation, etc.) providers may request, within three months from the TRS certification start date in TWIST, that a reassessment of not more than two of the facility's lowest-rated categories be conducted without requiring a reassessment of the other categories. The three months begins from the certification date the assessor documented in TWIST. If a provider requesting a reassessment of the lowest-rated category or categories has experienced a change of director or staff within the three months, then *Category 1 – Director and Staff Qualifications* must also be reassessed. Reassessments for providers under this provision will be completed as soon as possible based on resource availability, with a goal of completing the reassessments within 60 days of the request.

Note: A TRS provider that is on TRS probation or loss of star level due to licensing violations is not eligible for a Category Reassessment.

FACILITY CHANGES

There are varying types of changes a provider may go through while being TRS-certified. These changes may affect the type of care that is being provided therefore action by the Board and/or assessor may be necessary.

Facility expansions are defined as a facility continuing to operate at an existing location with the existing classrooms and age groups served, while the owner/provider opens a new facility within the same city, zip code, or county to expand and add classrooms or age groups served. Facility expansions require a new director at either the existing or new facility.

Facility splits are defined as a facility continuing to operate at an existing location and the owner/provider opening a new facility within the same city, zip code, or county and moving a subset of the staff and the children served to the new facility.

Both facility expansions and facility splits involve establishing a new director at either the existing or new location. A facility split also involves a modification of the current classroom structure and staffing. For licensing purposes, CCL considers both facility expansions and facility splits to be new facilities.

A TRS provider that expands or splits its facility within the same county is treated as a new facility and requires a new permanent license in order to begin the TRS-certification process. Licensing history for the certification will be based on CCL monitoring conducted while the facility was operating under the initial license.

Facility moves are defined as a facility closing and relocating to a new location within the same city, zip code, or county in which the provider is currently operating. A facility move does not alter the current composition of director or staff but may involve an increase in capacity or age groups served.

When a facility moves locations, it must initiate a new CCL facility application and obtain a new license number from CCL. A facility does not carry its 12-month licensing history with it to the new location.

Facility-type changes are defined as a provider changing facility type (e.g., changes from a registered child care home to a licensed child care home). The facility does not carry its 12-month licensing history to the new facility type.

Additionally, **facility ownership changes** usually require a new CCL facility application and for the new owner to obtain a new license number from CCL. A facility does not carry its 12-month licensing history with it to the new owner or the new facility.

A TRS provider that experiences any one of these changes (expansion, splits, facility type, changes ownership, or moves to a new location within the same city, zip code, or county in which the provider is currently operating) will retain its star level during the move or change. The provider will undergo a full TRS reassessment within the initial three-month period from the date the new CCL permit associated with the move or change is issued. The provider's new TRS star level will be based on the results of the full reassessment. The provider must have a full permit with CCL but does not need to have 12 months of history in this situation.

RECONSIDERATION

TWC Child Care Services rule §809.135 requires Boards to ensure a process for reconsideration of facility assessment at the Board level, as the TRS program is not subject to TWC's Integrated Complaints, Hearings, and Appeals rules (Chapter 823).

A reconsideration may be requested by a provider that feels that the assessment was inaccurate or unfairly conducted. The reconsideration process may include scheduling a second assessment with the same assessor, a second visit with two assessors, or an assessment with a different assessor. The reconsideration may also involve

a reassessment of a particular measure as requested by the provider. Boards can also coordinate with other Board assessors for a second review of the provider. Additionally, in responding to a reconsideration request from a provider, the Board may make additional mentoring services available to assist the provider in meeting TRS standards.

Policies regarding the reconsideration process, time restrictions on requesting a reconsideration, the number of reconsiderations allowed, and the elements eligible for reconsideration must be made aware to any provider receiving an assessment and may vary across Boards.

DIRECTOR AND STAFF CHANGES

TRS providers must report to TRS staff immediately if there is:

- a change of director; or
- staff turnover that causes the TRS provider to fall below its current star level based on the provider's completion of the Staff Qualifications and Training section of the TRS self-assessment tool.

All other staff turnover should be reported to TRS staff during annual monitoring visits.

REPORTED STAFF CHANGES

In the event of staff change, if the loss of a director or staff turnover causes the TRS provider to fall below the provider's current star level for the Director and Staff Qualifications and Training standards, TRS requires that:

- the provider will retain its current star level for no more than six months; and
- provider staff qualifications will be reassessed by TRS staff at or before the end of the six-month period to determine appropriate star level or loss of TRS certification.

UNREPORTED STAFF CHANGES

If a staff change was not reported immediately, a provider's star level will be re-determined at the annual monitoring visit using the qualifications of the facility's new director or staff.

SECTION 4: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR CERTIFIED PROVIDERS

Texas Rising Star (TRS) provides professional development resources and mentoring to sustain and improve the quality of early childhood environments at TRS-certified centers. TRS-certified providers may have access to three types of assistance: Technical Assistance (TA) plans, Service Improvement Agreements (SIAs), and probationary assistance. The three types of assistance are summarized below in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1

Technical Assistance Plan	Service Improvement Agreement	TRS Probation
WHY? TA plans are initially generated from scores on TRS measures from the first certification assessment to provide a road map for continued quality improvement.	WHY? SIAs go into effect if deficiencies are found in TRS categories at the annual monitoring visit. SIAs give providers an opportunity to correct TRS deficiencies before potentially losing a star level of TRS certification at the next recertification assessment.	WHY? TRS providers are placed on TRS probation when 10–14 total CCL licensing deficiencies are cited within a 12-month period.
HOW? TA plans are targeted toward TRS measures the mentor/provider feel will help the provider maintain or improve its star level	HOW? Technical assistance is targeted to the TRS deficiencies that led to the SIA.	HOW? Technical assistance is made available to the TRS provider to address CCL licensing deficiencies, but is not mandatory.
HOW LONG? TA plans are voluntary, ongoing, and continually updated by mentor recommendations and provider goals.	HOW LONG? Mandatory six months	HOW LONG? Mandatory six months
RESULT? TA plans may result in a Star Level Evaluation Assessment—a full provider assessment that may be requested if the provider and mentor feel the provider is ready to move to a higher star level.	RESULTS? A category assessment will be conducted on the TRS categories found deficient to determine the new star level. <i>Note:</i> The SIA, with a TA plan, is mandatory. Using TRS resources for technical assistance is not mandatory, but strongly encouraged; however, providers may choose to use external resources to correct TRS deficiencies.	RESULT? If the provider is re-cited for the same deficiencies while on probation, the provider loses a star level (2-star loses certification). The provider is eligible for reinstatement to former star level at the end of a six-month period if deficiencies are not re-cited.

Please note that non-TRS-certified providers may also access technical assistance resources to help them prepare for certification.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PLAN

FOR TEXAS RISING STAR-CERTIFIED PROVIDERS

TA plans are designed to assist providers in increasing the quality of their early childhood programming with the **goal of maintaining or increasing their TRS star level**. A TA plan contains improvement goals for a targeted number of TRS measures, as well as resources to help reach those improvement goals, including professional development coursework and an on-site TRS mentor. TA plans for TRS providers are automatically generated after the first full assessment and can be further refined at annual visits and as the provider begins to work with the mentor. Participation in a TA plan is voluntary but encouraged.

The set of professional development resources available to TRS providers represents many hours of online learning, featuring extensive video-based demonstrations of effective instructional practices for responsive interaction, language and literacy, mathematics, and science. TA plans will assign TRS providers/caregivers specific courses depending on their quality improvement needs.

Mentors will be assigned to work with directors and caregivers in all TRS measures, both points-based and required. The amount of time a mentor can be on-site at the center will vary depending on the resources of each Local Workforce Development Board (Board).

FOR NON-TEXAS RISING STAR-CERTIFIED PROVIDERS

Providers that are not yet eligible for TRS or that may not be ready to apply can still participate in technical assistance. Some professional development resources are available through the CLI website (<https://cliengage.org/>). Additionally, some mentoring services may be provided prior to TRS certification, depending on Board resources. Contact the appropriate Board for more information.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AGREEMENT

TRS assessors conduct unannounced, annual monitoring visits to ensure that TRS-certified providers are maintaining the level of quality that is reflected in their current star level certification. If an assessor finds deficiencies in TRS categories during these visits, a Service Improvement Agreement (SIA) may go into effect. SIAs are six-month mandatory agreements designed to assist TRS providers in maintaining their current star level. Technical assistance through the SIA focuses on the TRS categories where deficiencies were found during a monitoring that would result in an overall lower star level for the facility during an assessment.

The TRS-certified provider retains its current star level certification while on the SIA. After the six-month SIA, a scheduled assessment of the categories originally observed as deficient is conducted for all classrooms/staff, as applicable to the category. If deficiencies persist, a new star level will be determined, based on the observations at the end of the SIA.

TEXAS RISING STAR PROBATION

A TRS-certified provider will be put on TRS probation when 10–14 total Texas Child Care licensing (CCL) deficiencies are cited within a 12-month period (15 or more deficiencies result in a loss of TRS certification; see Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) Child Care Services rule §809.132). During this probationary period, the provider may request technical assistance from TRS mentors to assist with licensing issues, as appropriate. TRS staff are not trained by CCL in Minimum Standards, therefore they should collaborate with the provider's CCL representative, to ascertain what TA can be provided.

If the TRS provider is re-cited for the same deficiencies while on probation, the provider will lose a star level (2-star loses certification). The provider is eligible for reinstatement to former star level at the end of a six-month

period if deficiencies are not re-cited. If any new deficiencies are cited while on probation, a second six-month probationary period for that deficiency begins. If any new deficiencies are cited during this second probationary period, the provider will lose TRS certification.

Providers losing TRS certification shall be eligible to reapply for certification after six months following the loss of the certification, as long as no current deficiencies are re-cited and no additional licensing deficiencies are cited during the disqualification period.

A provider that has been placed on probation for having 10-14 deficiencies must finish out the six-month probation (and not be placed on an additional probation) to be eligible for a Star Level Evaluation, Category Reassessment, and/or star-level gain due to national accreditation. The provider may request a Star Level Evaluation or Category Reassessment during that six-month timeframe, however, the assessment cannot be conducted until the conclusion of the probationary period.

LOSING A STAR LEVEL AND LOSING TEXAS RISING STAR CERTIFICATION

There are a number of circumstances that can result in a TRS provider either losing a star level or losing TRS certification, as illustrated by Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 IMPACT OF DEFICIENCIES ON TRS STATUS

Priority	Deficiency	TRS Applicant	TRS-Certified Provider			Duration
			2-Star Provider	3-Star Provider	4-Star Provider	
Priority 1: Not Eligible / End TRS	CCL Corrective Action	Not Eligible	End TRS	End TRS	End TRS	Eligible to reapply no sooner than six months from the loss of certification; additionally, cannot currently be on CCL or Board Corrective Action or TWC notice of Freeze.
	Board Corrective Action	Not Eligible	End TRS	End TRS	End TRS	
	TWC Notice of Freeze	Not Eligible	End TRS	End TRS	End TRS	
	15 Total CCL Deficiencies	Not Eligible	End TRS	End TRS	End TRS	
Priority 2: Not Eligible / Reduce to 2-Star	Any Critical* (TRS Provider Guidelines)	Not Eligible	End TRS	2-Star	3-Star	Eligible to be reinstated at former level if no citations described in §809.132(b)-(d) occur within six-month reduction timeframe.
Priority 3: Not Eligible / Star Reduction	Five High to Medium High (TRS Provider Guidelines)	Not Eligible	End TRS	2-Star	3-Star	2-Star: Eligible to reapply no sooner than six months from loss of certification
Priority 4: Not Eligible / 1st Probation	10–14 Total CCL Deficiencies	Not Eligible	Probation	Probation	Probation	Six months

*Impact of critical deficiencies are applied for each deficiency cited. Example: November 1, 2018 two critical deficiencies are cited for a 4-star provider. First critical moves 4-star provider to 3-star status. As provider is now 3-star status second critical results in loss of additional star level moving provider to 2-star status. A provider at a 3-star status that receives 2 critical deficiencies would result in loss of TRS.

Probation	Deficiency	TRS Applicant	TRS Probation			Duration
			2-Star Provider	3-Star Provider	4-Star Provider	
1st Probation: Star Reduction	1st Probation with Re-Cite of Same CCL Deficiency/Deficiencies	Not Applicable	End TRS	2-Star w/ Probation	3-Star w/ Probation	3-Star/4-Star: Eligible to be reinstated at former level if deficiency is not recited by CCL within six months. 2-Star: Eligible to reapply no sooner than six months from loss of certification
2nd Probation	1st Probation with New CCL Deficiencies (<15 total)		2nd Probation	2nd Probation	2nd Probation	Six months
2nd Probation: End TRS	2nd Probation with New CCL Deficiencies (<15 total)		End TRS	End TRS	End TRS	Eligible to reapply no sooner than six months from the loss of certification

SECTION 5: REFERENCES, OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS, AND FORMS

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APPLICATION FOR TEXAS RISING STAR PROVIDER CERTIFICATION

Texas Rising Star (TRS) Provider certification is voluntary and recognizes enrolled child care providers who exceed minimum Child Care Licensing (CCL) standards and who meet certain additional criteria. All child care providers that have agreements with a Board's child care contractor are eligible to apply for assessment and certification.

Initial Application

Recertification Application

TRS Provider Name:

Child Care Licensing #:

Site Address:

Facility Phone:

Contact Phone:

Owner:

Director:

TYPE OF FACILITY

- Licensed Center (all ages)
- Licensed Child Care Home
- Registered Child Care Home
- Licensed Center (school-age only)

TYPE OF NATIONAL ACCREDITATION (if applicable)

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC)
- National Accreditation Commission for Early Child Care and Education Program (NAC)
- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)
- Council on Accreditation (COA)
- AdvancED Quality Early Learning System (QELS)
- Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)

The Texas Rising Star (TRS) Certification Guidelines contain prerequisites that must be met in order for a child care provider to be assessed (see the Facility Self-Assessment, Classroom Self-Assessment, and Document Checklists). The contracted child care provider's signature below is assurance that these requirements are fully met and the assessment/certification process may be initiated. (Nationally accredited child care providers or child care providers regulated by the U.S military do not undergo an Initial Certification Assessment; however, they must submit the TRS Application, TRS Self-Assessment, and the TRS Screening Form).

A child care provider is eligible to apply for the TRS program if the provider has a current agreement to serve Commission-subsidized children and:

- (1) has a permanent (non-expiring) license or registration from CCL;
- (2) has at least 12 months of licensing history with CCL; and is not on:
 - corrective action with a Board pursuant to Subchapter F of chapter 809 of the Texas Administrative Code;
 - a "Notice of Freeze" with the Commission pursuant to Chapter 213 of the Texas Labor Code (Enforcement of Texas Unemployment Compensation Act) or Chapter 61 of the Texas Labor Code (Payment of Wages); or
 - corrective or adverse action with CCL
- (3) is regulated by and in good standing with the US Military.
- (4) viewed the TRS provider orientation video.

A child care provider is also subject to CCL requirements as outlined in the TRS Certification Guidelines and the TRS Screening forms. The provider must complete the TRS Screening form as an attestation of eligibility.

By signing below, I attest that I understand and meet the eligibility and application requirements of Section 809.131 of the Child Care Services Rules listed above.

I understand and agree to abide by the responsibilities and requirements set forth by Chapter 809, Subchapter G of the Child Care Rules and the TRS Guidelines and that my TRS certification may be impacted if I or my child care facility:

- is on corrective or adverse action with CCL, the Local Workforce Development Board, and/or TWC;*
- has substantial or critical high-risk licensing deficiencies as described in Section 2 of the TRS Guidelines;*
- fails to comply with annual unannounced monitoring visits;*
- fails to communicate any changes in my facility (owner/director/staff/location, etc.) in a timely manner to my local Board as applicable*

Name/Title of person authorized to contract for facility:

Signature:

Date:

TEXAS RISING STAR SITE DATA FORM

Facility Name: _____

Child Care License Number: _____

Director: _____

CCL Licensed Capacity: _____

Total Number of Classrooms: _____

Classroom Name	Specified Age Group	Caregiver(s) Name(s)

Screening Form Completed YES NO

YES NO

Pre-Assessment Completed (optional) YES NO

YES NO

Nationally Accredited YES NO

YES NO

If YES, name of nationally accrediting body: _____

Caregivers (attach additional pages if necessary)

*Note: Title examples are: Lead, Assistant, floater, sub, administrative, etc.

I certify that the above information is correct and accurate, to the best of my knowledge.

Provider Signature

Date

**TEXAS RISING STAR PROVIDER CERTIFICATION
SCREENING FORM
Licensed Child Care Centers**

Provider Name: _____
Director Name: _____

Address: _____
License #: _____

Initial Applicants (Sections 1a—5)	TRS Monitoring/Recertification (Sections 1b--5)																																	
<p>1a. Applicant has CCL licensing history for the 12-month period prior to the date of application? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date of Application: _____ Stop process if "No"</p> <p>2a. On Corrective or Adverse Action with CCL? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No On Corrective Action with Board? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No On Notice of Freeze With TWC? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Stop process if "Yes"</p> <p>3a. Stop process if the applicant has received any of the following CCL Deficiencies listed below.</p>	<p>1b. Provider has CCL licensing history for the 12-month period prior to the date of the TRS monitoring/recertification visit? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Date of TRS Monitoring/Recertification Visit: _____ Review the provider's 12-month CCL licensing history.</p> <p>2b. On Corrective or Adverse Action with CCL? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No On Corrective Action with Board? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No On Notice of Freeze With TWC? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No Repeal TRS certification if "Yes"</p> <p>3b. Provider is reduced one-star level if the certified provider has any of the CCL Deficiencies listed below (2-Star lose TRS certification)</p>																																	
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<p>Staff Signature _____ Date _____</p>																																		

**TEXAS RISING STAR PROVIDER CERTIFICATION
SCREENING FORM
After School Programs**

Provider Name: _____
Director Name: _____

Address: _____
License #: _____

Initial Applicants (Sections 1a—5)	TRS Monitoring/Recertification (Sections 1b—5)																																				
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<p>Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____</p>																																					

**TEXAS RISING STAR PROVIDER CERTIFICATION
SCREENING FORM
Licensed Child Care Homes/Registered Homes**

Provider Name: _____
Director Name: _____

Address: _____
License #: _____

Initial Applicants (Sections 1a—5)	TRS Monitoring/Recertification (Sections 1b—5)																																	
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<p>Staff Signature _____ Date _____</p>																																		

CHECKLIST: DOCUMENTS FOR REQUIRED MEASURES

Please make documentation available for review for each of the following items:

CATEGORY 1 – DIRECTOR AND STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

All Facilities

- Volunteer and Substitute Caregiver Orientation (S-COTQ-02)
- Annual Caregiver Training Plans with Certificates (S-DQT-04; S-COTQ-03-07)

All Facilities (except registered child care homes)

School-Age Only Programs

- Caregiver Orientation (S-COTQ-01)
- Director Training Plan with Certificates (S-DQT-03)

CATEGORY 4 – NUTRITION AND INDOOR/OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

All Facilities – Nutrition

- Program Practices (S-N-01)
- Home Lunch Practices (S-N-02)
- Menu Planning (S-N-03)
- Breastfeeding Resources Available (S-N-04)

All Facilities – Indoor/Outdoor Learning Environment

- Classroom Self-Assessment (S-ILE-01) - optional

CATEGORY 5 – PARENT EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT

All Facilities

- Written Policies and Procedures for Parent Education (S-PE-01)
- Written Policy/Process for Addressing Challenging Behaviors (S-PI-02)
- Community Resources (S-PI-04)

CHECKLIST: DOCUMENTS FOR POINTS-BASED MEASURES

Please make documentation available for review for each of the following items you would like considered in the scoring of points-based measures:

CATEGORY 1 – DIRECTOR AND STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

All Facilities: Director Formal Education Worksheet

- Diploma for Highest Education Attained
- Early Childhood Credentials
- College Coursework Transcripts
- Certificate for Clock Hours
- Work Experience – Résumé

All Facilities: Caregiver Education and Training Training Worksheet

- Diploma for Highest Education Attained
- Early Childhood Credentials
- College Coursework Transcripts
- Certificate for Clock Hours
- Work Experience – Résumé
- Evidence of working towards a CDA, Associate's or Bachelor's Degree

CATEGORY 3 – CURRICULUM

All Facilities

- Lesson Plans and Curriculum

CATEGORY 5 – PARENT EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT

All Facilities

- Parent Orientation (P-PE-01)

TEXAS RISING STAR ASSESSMENT TRACKING FORM

Name of the Facility: _____

Date of the initial Texas Rising Star (TRS) Interest Form submission for TRS certification: _____

Date of eligibility determined: _____

TRS Assessor: _____ Date: _____

TRS Mentor: _____ Date: _____

Date application, self-assessment, and documentation received: _____

Documentation of required items: All items received Documents missing

List missing items: _____

Date of Child Care Licensing (CCL) Minimum Standard screening: _____

Is applicant/provider eligible to continue certification process? Yes No

Date applicant/provider notified of eligibility: _____

Provider is ready for program assessment? Yes No

Date on-site assessment scheduled: _____ Date of on-site assessment visit: _____

Assessment Result: Not certified 2-star certification
 3-star certification 4-star certification

Date certification given to provider: _____

Staff Member Name (Print): _____

STAFF MEMBER SIGNATURE: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Name (Print): _____

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE: _____ Date: _____

TEXAS RISING STAR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

Provider Name: _____

Site Address: _____

License Number: _____ Phone: _____

I have been given a copy of the Technical Assistance (TA) Plan for my facility/classroom. I understand that my participation in the TA Plan is voluntary. However, I understand that my participation may assist our facility in attaining certification or pursuing a higher star level.

PROVIDER ACCEPTS PARTICIPATION IN TA PLAN

PROVIDER DECLINES PARTICIPATION IN TA PLAN

Provider Staff Name (Print): _____

PROVIDER STAFF SIGNATURE: _____ **Date:** _____

TRS Staff Name (Print): _____

TRS STAFF SIGNATURE: _____ **Date:** _____

TEXAS RISING STAR CHILD CARE LICENSING DEFICIENCIES ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

For Texas Child Care Licensing Deficiencies

Texas Rising Star (TRS) Provider Name: _____

Site Address: _____

License Number: _____ Phone Number: _____

On [date], the TRS provider indicated above was found to be in CCL noncompliance with:

CC LICENSING	RESULTS	ELIGIBILITY REINSTATEMENT
<input type="checkbox"/> Any critical deficiency	-Reduced one-star level for each critical received; -Loss of TRS certification (2-star providers)	-Eligible to be reinstated at former level if deficiency is not re-cited by CCL within six months -Eligible to reapply no sooner than six months following loss of TRS certification
<input type="checkbox"/> five or more high/medium-high deficiencies	-Loss of star level -Loss of TRS certification (2-star providers)	-Eligible to be reinstated at former level if deficiency is not re-cited by CCL within six months -Eligible to reapply no sooner than six months following loss of TRS certification
<input type="checkbox"/> 10–14 total deficiencies of any type	-Placed on a six-month probation -Loss of star level (if re-cited for same deficiencies within six-month probation) -Placed on second six-month probation (if any new deficiencies are cited)	-Eligible to be reinstated at former level if deficiency is not re-cited by CCL within six months
<input type="checkbox"/> 15 or more total deficiencies of any type OR probation exceeds 12 consecutive months	-Loss of TRS certification	-Eligible to reapply no sooner than six months following loss of TRS certification
<input type="checkbox"/> Placed on CCL Adverse or Corrective Action	-Loss of TRS certification	-Eligible to reapply no sooner than six months following loss of TRS certification and not currently on CCL Adverse/Corrective Action

I understand that, to continue participation in TRS, I must meet the requirements of the eligibility reinstatement applicable to my CCL licensing deficiency.

Provider Signature: _____ Date: _____

TRS Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

ACTION REVIEW(end of six-month period)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Reinstated	ACTION: Provider was not re-cited and received no new CCL deficiencies
<input type="checkbox"/> Probation Continued	ACTION: Provider received new deficiencies during probation (not to exceed 14); a new six-month probation is established
<input type="checkbox"/> Lose Certification	ACTION: Provider received 15 or more total deficiencies OR was on probation for more than 12 consecutive months
<input type="checkbox"/> Lose Certification	ACTION: Placed on CCL Adverse or Corrective Action

Provider Signature: _____ Date: _____

TRS Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

TEXAS RISING STAR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AGREEMENT

For Texas Rising Star (TRS) Deficiencies

TRS Provider Name: _____

Site Address: _____

License Number: _____ Phone Number: _____

On _____ [date], the TRS provider indicated above was found to be in noncompliance with the following TRS categories and a Service Improvement Agreement (SIA) set in place _____ [date].

Noncompliance must be corrected on or before _____ [date] (no later than six months from the effective date).

CATEGORIES OF NONCOMPLIANCE	SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACTIONS	DATE COMPLETED (Mentor initials)

I understand to continue participation in TRS at my current star level, I must complete the actions of a mandatory six-month TRS SIA. I also understand that, after the six-month SIA, the categories in which these TRS deficiencies were found will be assessed to determine the appropriate star level.

Provider Signature: _____ Date: _____

TRS Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AGREEMENT REVIEW (end of six-month SIA period)	
Date of SIA Assessment visit: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Provider corrected TRS deficiencies within six-month time frame. Star level remains the same as originally certified.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Provider did not correct TRS deficiencies; provider's new star level is _____

Provider Signature: _____ Date: _____

TRS Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

TEXAS RISING STAR ASSESSOR PROTOCOL

Introduction

The program the assessor will be visiting as part of the Texas Rising Star (TRS) certification process has shown a commitment to providing high-quality early childhood education. The assessor's arrival at the facility is the final step in the process of pursuing TRS certification. It is important to show the utmost respect to all of the program and teaching staff as well as the children and their families throughout the time at the program.

In order that all programs receiving a site visit for TRS certification receive a fair and equitable assessment, all TRS assessors must collect and report data consistently. The following protocol has been established to ensure that the TRS certification process is reliable and credible. All assessors should follow these practices when conducting a site visit.

Observations

No more than four group/classroom observations can be completed in one day per assessor. It is up to the assessor's discretion whether to conduct a four-classroom observation certification visit in one day. Factors that should be considered when determining if a four-classroom observation certification visit should be completed in one day versus across two consecutive days include the following:

- The program site's operating hours;
- Assessor availability (i.e., case load, personal commitments, etc.); and
- Assessor stamina.

It is allowable for multiple assessors to complete a visit.

Keep in mind that assessors should not request that programs extend their business hours, but if necessary should instead conduct the certification visit across two or more consecutive days.

Visit Length

Certification visits should not be completed across a weekend (i.e., visit begins on a Friday and is completed on a Monday), nor should there be an exclusion day in between a multiple-day certification visit. Multiple-day visits should occur on consecutive days. Exceptions to this are weather, field trips, majority of primary staff absent, etc.

Prior to Assessment Date

The assessor will call the director to introduce themselves and let them know what to expect the day of the assessment. This should include the following:

- What the assessor will be doing while there
- How many assessors will be there
- How many days the assessment will last
- Discussion of the entrance and exit meeting

If the assessor's Local Workforce Development Board (Board) permits it, they request that the documentation for all structural requirements be sent ahead of the assessment date for review (ideally 30–45 days prior to the visit). Explain to the director that this will give the assessor the opportunity to review the documents before the assessment and give the site the opportunity to submit any missing paperwork. Once received, the assessor will review for completion and communicate anything missing to the director. The director has the option to submit the missing documentation before the visit. If it is still incomplete, they will have the opportunity to produce it on-site at the assessment. If the Board does not request structural requirements documentation prior to the on-site visit, the assessor will explain to the director that documentation will be reviewed before beginning the classroom observations. Any points-based documentation can be reviewed at this time as well. If anything is missing from the structural or points-based documentation, the assessor will notify the director of which measures are lacking and the director will have the opportunity to provide it by the end of the day.

TEXAS RISING STAR PROVIDER ASSESSOR PROTOCOL (cont.)

Arrival

Assessors should arrive no earlier than 15 minutes after the program's opening time. If more than one assessor will be part of the assessment, plan to meet outside the program and enter as a team.

Accepting Refreshments and Resources

With a few exceptions, assessors may NOT accept refreshments, food or resources from the program. Exceptions are the following:

- Assessors may accept water from programs at all times.
- Assessors may accept other light refreshments if failing to do so would offend the cultural norms of the program.
- Assessors may borrow a pen if their pen runs out of ink and the assessor neglected to bring a second pen.

Assessors should be prepared to carry meals, snacks, drinks, office supplies, and a mobile phone to the site, or should have informed themselves of available resources nearby before the start of the visit.

Demeanor

Be cordial and pleasant when interacting with staff and children. Remember that staff may be nervous about the visit and they will do their best if the assessor can put them at ease. While talking in the classrooms during observations must be minimal, the assessor may engage in common small talk with staff. Do not initiate interaction with the children but do respond briefly to children when *not* doing so would set an awkward tone. The assessor should move if he/she is in the way of program administrators, teachers, children, or families.

Dress

Wear functional "business casual" clothing for visits. The assessor can expect to go outside, sit in tiny chairs or on the floor, and spend long hours at programs. Dress appropriately. Consider wearing layers, as the assessor may not know if a program's facility will be too hot or cold. Also, the assessor should try not to wear anything (e.g., jewelry, bright clothes) that calls attention to him/her. The assessor will want to blend into the background as unobtrusively as possible.

Assessor's Belongings

Limit the personal belongings taken into a program. Whenever possible the assessor should leave personal items in a locked car. However, if this is not possible, they can consult with the program administrator to find a safe location to store their personal belongings during the visit. This is an important safety precaution, as purses and bags can contain items dangerous to children.

If the assessor brings food into the program, they should be aware of food restrictions that might be in effect. For example, if the program forbids peanut products throughout the facility due to a severe allergy, the assessor would not bring such products into the center.

Lunch Break

Lunch breaks are recommended, but it is left up to the individual assessor to decide whether to work through lunch, eat on premises, or take a longer break off premises. If the assessor leaves the premises for a lunch break, he/she should notify the program staff of when they are going and when they will return. They should secure all confidential or proprietary information while they are off the premises.

Telecommunications

If the assessor carries his/her cell phone into the program, they need to be sure it is in silent mode so that it does not interrupt the on-going program activities/environment. *Assessors do not make or receive phone calls or text messages during classroom observations.*

Classroom Observations

Assessors should allow EXACTLY one hour for direct observation, plus an optional 30 minutes for supplemental observation (transitions, meal times, outdoor, etc.).

Guidelines for Conducting Classroom Observations

The following guidelines can help ensure that the classroom observation process is conducted as unobtrusively as possible and will help to make the site visit a positive experience for everyone involved:

- Assessors begin a classroom observation if the group includes at least one awake child and one teaching staff member. Do not begin an observation if no children have arrived, or if all children have departed for the day, or if there are children present but asleep.
- Classroom observations should last one hour (no more or less than 60 minutes). This means that the assessor stays with children and staff for one hour, wherever they are. However, there are exceptions to the one-hour time rule. If the class moves to an activity where the group is led by someone other than the primary caregiver(s) (e.g., music or Spanish class), the assessor may pause in observation. The assessor is allowed, in addition to the one hour, an additional 30 minutes of observing time if he/she does not get to adequately observe interior and/or exterior group environments, meal times, or transitions.
- The hour observation can be broken up if there is a transition; however, the assessor must ensure that an entire hour is captured for each classroom. If multiple groups eat lunch together, multiple groups can be assessed on lunch practices at the same time.
- Upon starting each observation, confirm the names of the teaching staff present and the status of other adults present (parents, volunteers). It may be that the assessor can determine the names of the staff present by reading their name tags, seeing their photos posted, or listening to their conversation. If none of these means is available, briefly ask staff to confirm names, and then begin the observation. The assessor does not need to ask classroom staff about children with special needs, or dialogue with them about what the children are currently doing. Keep all talk to a minimum.
- Do not interfere with the classroom activities in any way. The assessor should be as unobtrusive as possible and move if he/she is in the way of teachers or children.
- The assessor should station him/herself around the perimeter of the classroom as inconspicuously as possible. He/she may walk around to get a better vantage point during the observation.
- The assessor may sit in a chair or on the floor. Do not sit on other furniture such as shelves, tables, the children's chairs near an activity table, or on play equipment.
- Assessors should refrain from talking to other assessors when in the classroom.
- The assessor must silence their cell phone.
- The assessor may acknowledge children if they approach, but do not otherwise take part in classroom activity. The assessor can tell them that he/she is watching them play today or that he/she must finish their work.
- The assessor should try to keep a pleasant or neutral facial expression, so children and/or staff are neither drawn to nor concerned about the assessor's response to them.
- Assessors should not wear shoes into infant rooms that do not allow shoes. The assessor should wear weather-appropriate attire to enable him/her to follow a group outside during the hour.
- Assessors are required to make notes within the assessment tool. They should note generally what went on in the observation period. It may also be helpful to make criteria-specific notes in the margins throughout the tool, beside the applicable measure; note what was observed that led to negative scoring for specific criteria. When writing notes, assessors need to keep the notes as objective as possible. State the facts and describe what is seen. Keep the notes specific to what is seen and what is occurring during the one-hour observation. Do not give general information regarding the program, the weather, or situations unless they directly pertain to and have affected the observation.
- If an assessor witnesses the possible failure of a required measure during an observation, the assessor should write detailed notes describing what child and/or adult was involved, the physical layout of the environment (if applicable), the time or duration of the incident (if applicable), and the setting. If there is physical structure in the classroom that is pertinent to the description of the incident, make the location and placement of the physical structure clear. *Example:* no cognitive enhancements for the diaper changing table in an infant room would equal a failed required measure.

Report Serious Incidents

If an assessor witnesses a serious incident, best practice is to call his or her supervisor during the site visit to report if an incident has occurred that may need to be reported to Child Care Licensing. Unless there is immediate risk involved, wait until completion of a group observation to call. If an assessor witnesses a serious incident, the assessor should write detailed notes describing what child and/or adult was involved, the physical layout of the environment (if applicable), the time or duration of the incident (if applicable), and the setting. If there is physical structure in the classroom that is pertinent to the description of the incident, make the location and placement of the physical structure clear. Serious incidents could include (but are not limited to) prohibited punishment or supervision issues.

Assessment/Monitoring Visit Form

This form allows for signatures and affirmations of elements of the visit by both the assessor and the program administrator.

The program administrator and lead assessor present should sign this form. Each element being endorsed has its own checkbox. If any signer does not agree that a specific element of the visit was followed, the checkbox should be left unchecked. If a box is unchecked, a comment note should be added to the form describing the nature of the discrepancy.

Communications with Texas Rising Star Mentor

An assessor should ensure that he or she takes detailed notes during the assessment. These notes will help the program's mentor with details of the Technical Assistance (TA) plan. If possible, schedule a debriefing with the mentor, separate from the provider, to discuss the details of the assessment.

ASSESSOR ENTRANCE AND EXIT MEETING WITH DIRECTOR/PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR

Entrance Meeting

The certification visit begins with an entrance meeting between the assessor(s) and the director/program administrator.

Introduction

The lead assessor should identify him or herself as such and introduce all other assessors. If the assessor is doing a multi-day visit, he/she may choose to give the program administrator a business card that includes a cell phone number(s). It may become important for program staff to be able to contact the assessor by phone if a problem arises after hours between assessment days at the program.

Schedule

The assessor will ask the program administrator if all information in the submitted Site Data Form is still accurate. The assessor will review the daily schedules of each classroom. At this time, he/she can ask the program administrator for the names of the teaching staff considered the primary caregivers in each classroom, as only the primary caregivers are observed. They can ask the administrator if any substitutes or “other adults” are scheduled to be in the classrooms during the observations; note these on the schedule as well, as that information is needed to ensure they are not included in the observations. The assessor should also ask the program administrator if there are any new classrooms or classroom changes since the last communication.

The assessor should review each group with the program administrator and confirm the age category for each group.

Also, the assessor should verify that the scheduled times for observations are times when those groups are in session and not napping. For programs with infant groups, he/she should verify that not all infants are anticipated to be asleep during the scheduled observation time.

Facility Orientation

The assessor will ask the program administrator for a short, guided tour of the facility. He/she should make it clear that this is not the official observation time, but just an orientation of the site’s layout.

If the program occupies part of a larger facility, be sure the assessor understands where the program’s space begins and ends. Also, if needed, the assessor can have the program administrator point out where staff files are kept and identify the location where the assessor’s review of the program documentation (education documentation, training hours, etc.) can be completed in private.

Meeting Completion

The assessor should thank the program administrator and begin the assessment—if not reviewed prior to the assessment, the assessor will begin the assessment with the structural documentation, and any points-based documentation submitted.

ASSESSOR ENTRANCE AND EXIT MEETING (cont.)

Exit Meeting

The exit meeting is an opportunity for the assessor(s) and director/program administrator to verify that the assessment was conducted as outlined on the Assessment/Monitoring Visit Form. This meeting should take place on the last day of the assessment (if it occurred over multiple days). Assessors and program administrators review and sign the Assessment/Monitoring Visit Form acknowledging the review and affirming that procedures were followed. *Remind the program administrator that assessors are not permitted to discuss any of the results of the assessment at the closing meeting.*

The Assessment/Monitoring Form is mandatory for the assessor to complete. The form is an acknowledgement that the assessor followed protocol. If the director does not agree that the assessor followed protocol, he or she can refuse to sign the form. If this occurs, the assessor should encourage the director to write notes in the “Additional Notes” section detailing why he or she does not want to sign the form. If the director does not want to complete that, the assessor can ask for details and write those notes himself or herself.

Depending on what has been agreed upon, the mentor for the site may be included in this meeting. This meeting is also the time when the director will have the opportunity to provide any additional documentation that was previously missing. Best practice is for the assessor to inform the director approximately one hour before the completion of the assessment of any documentation still needed for review. Explain that the assessor will contact the program administrator to schedule an Assessments Results Meeting. The assessor should thank the program administrator for his or her time and exit the facility.

Assessment Results Meeting

An assessment results meeting is a scheduled meeting with the program administrator to review the results of the assessment.

Prior to scheduling this meeting, the assessor should score and finalize the assessment. Once the assessment is complete and scored, the assessor and mentor should meet to review the results and notes, Technical Assistance (TA) plans, and any recommendations the assessor may have. The assessor should then schedule the results meeting with the program administrator, and, if possible, include the mentor.

For this meeting, the assessor will bring two copies of the reports generated, one for the program administrator to keep, and one for the program administrator to sign and return. During this meeting, he/she will explain to the program administrator that they are only to share the results—what was seen and not seen. After the meeting, the mentor will work with the program on any possible improvements needed.

The assessor should also discuss the annual monitoring visits that will occur during the provider’s 3-year certification, including what the monitoring visit typically entails. The assessor should inform the provider that monitoring visits are to ensure the provider is maintaining the quality level at which they were certified, and to develop a SIA to support the provider if that quality level has not been maintained. Additionally, the assessor should explain that he/she will conduct quarterly CCL screenings to ensure CCL compliance.

When the meeting is complete, the Assessment Results report should be signed and returned to the assessor. The assessor should ask if there are any questions and congratulate them on their certification!

TEXAS RISING STAR ASSESSMENT/MONITORING VISIT REPORT

(Optional) Entrance Time: _____

(Optional) Exit Time: _____

Provider Name: _____

License #: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Director: _____

Date: _____

Assessor(s): _____

Please list the classrooms observed and age groups: (note if the room is new)

Classroom name	Specified age group

The following were observed for the facility and in each observed classroom: (add comments if not observed)

Director and staff paperwork

Comments: _____

Caregiver-child interactions

Comments: _____

Curriculum/transitions

Comments: _____

Mealtime

Comments: _____

Indoor environment

Comments: _____

Outdoor environment

Comments: _____

Parent education and involvement

Comments: _____

Entrance meeting conducted

Exit meeting conducted

The above information is accurate and correct.

Director signature

Date

Lead Assessor signature

Date

ADDITIONAL NOTES (as applicable)

TEXAS RISING STAR MENTOR PROTOCOL

The program the mentor will be visiting as part of the Texas Rising Star (TRS) certification process has shown interest in a commitment to providing high-quality early childhood education. The mentor's arrival at the facility is the program's first step in the process of pursuing TRS certification. It is important to show the utmost respect to all of the program and teaching staff, as well as the children and their families throughout the mentor's time at the site. The following protocol has been established to ensure that the TRS certification process is reliable and credible. All mentors should follow these practices when conducting a site visit.

The mentor will assess the site's needs by making connections, building trust, and identifying successes and challenges. Using the mentor checklist will help document those successes and challenges and aid in identifying goals and next steps.

Arrival

It is important to be respectful of the staff's time and schedules. The mentor schedules his/her visits in advance with the director and call the day before to confirm. When he/she schedules the visit, they should try to give the director an idea of how long they will be at the site, and how much of his or her time they will need. They should arrive on time.

Demeanor

The mentor needs to be cordial and pleasant when interacting with staff and children. They should remember that staff may be nervous, or even defensive, about the mentor's visit and staff members will do their best if they are put at ease.

Dress

The mentor should wear functional "business casual" clothing for visits. He/she can expect to go outside, sit in tiny chairs or on the floor, and spend long hours at programs. He/she may be modeling play for a teacher, so should dress appropriately. They should consider wearing layers, as a program's facility may be too hot or too cold. They should also try not to wear anything (such as jewelry) that could put a child they are interacting with at risk.

Accepting Refreshments and Resources

With a few exceptions, mentors may NOT accept refreshments or resources from the program. Exceptions are the following:

- Mentors may accept water from programs at all times.
- Mentors may accept other light refreshments if failing to do so would offend the cultural norms of the program.
- Mentors may borrow a pen if their pen runs out of ink and the mentor neglected to bring a second pen.

Mentors should be prepared to carry meals, snacks, drinks, office supplies, and a mobile phone to the site, or should have informed themselves of available resources nearby before the start of the visit.

Mentor's Belongings

Limit the personal belongings taken into a program. Whenever possible the mentor should leave personal items in a locked car. However, if this is not possible, they can consult with the program administrator to find a safe location to store their personal belongings during the visit. This is an important safety precaution, as purses and bags can contain items dangerous to children.

If the mentor brings food into the program, they should be aware of food restrictions that might be in effect. For example, if the program forbids peanut products throughout the facility due to a severe allergy, the mentor would not bring such products into the center.

TEXAS RISING STAR MENTOR PROTOCOL (cont.)

Lunch Break

Lunch breaks are recommended, but it is left up to the individual mentor to decide whether to work through lunch, eat on premises, or take a longer break off premises. If he/she leave the premises for a lunch break, he/she should notify the program staff of when they are going and when they will return. They should secure all confidential or proprietary information while they are off the premises.

Telecommunications

If the mentor carries his/her cell phone into the program, they need to be sure it is in silent mode so that it does not interrupt the ongoing program activities/environment. *Mentors do not make or receive phone calls or text messages during classroom observations.*

Initial Meeting

This meeting is important because it will set the tone for the relationship with the director. The mentor should thank the director for his or her time and commend him or her for having an interest in TRS. The director should be asked what prompted him or her to want to become TRS. The mentor should ask about the culture of the program, what norms to should expect, what the staff expects from the mentor. The role of a mentor should be explained and what that may look like. The mentor and director should discuss what kind of timeline the director is hoping for to reach TRS certification. They should discuss and document each of the goals for this process (for the initial meeting, they should try to limit it to three; items can be removed and added later). They can use the “Checklist: Mentoring Protocol Form” as a guide (optional).

The mentor should discuss and document any concerns the director may have regarding the process. The mentor should ask for a tour of the facility and introductions to the staff. This is not the time to offer mentoring, but rather to begin to build the necessary relationships with the director and staff. If possible, the mentor should keep the meeting brief, no more than an hour. He/she should ask the director if they would like a TRS orientation given to the staff or for the mentor to orient the director, with the director to then orient the staff. This in-person orientation is encouraged, but not mandatory. Before leaving, the mentor should thank the director again for his or her time.

TRS Orientation

A TRS orientation is mandatory for application to the program. The TRS orientation can take different forms: it can be the TRS orientation video on the TRS website, a one-on-one with the director, a training for the entire staff, small group trainings with staff, or a multiple-provider orientation.

This may be the mentor’s first opportunity to truly interact with the staff. The orientation can set the tone for the entire process. The mentor needs to consider their audience when planning the orientation. Has the director indicated that the staff may be resistant to the process? Has any of the staff already worked with TRS? When possible, the orientation should be tailored to the needs of the staff. The mentor should be upbeat and passionate. But also realistic -- he/she should let them know that this may seem overwhelming and hard, but that’s why they have a mentor. The orientation is also a great time to have each of them fill out the Needs Assessment Survey (optional). The survey can also be given to the director to give to staff and returned to the mentor at a later date. The Needs Assessment Survey can give the mentor better insight into what each individual caregiver may need from the mentoring process, as well as provide some talking points when individual meetings occur. Discussion of the Classroom Assessment Record Form (CARF) is a good time to encourage staff to review the CARF and complete a self-assessment. This will help them recognize what is expected, as well as what questions they may have for the mentor. He/she should tell the staff about the mentor’s role and what that may look like in their classrooms. Additionally, it is important to stress during the orientation that he/she, as a mentor, cannot be counted in the classroom ratio. If the caregiver needs to leave the classroom, they will need to find another caregiver to relieve them before leaving the classroom.

TEXAS RISING STAR MENTOR PROTOCOL (cont.)

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations are a good way to assess the needs of an individual classroom. It can be intimidating to be observed, so an open dialogue should be had with the caregiver. The mentor should inform the caregiver that for the first observation, he/she will only be observing to understand the climate and routines of the room. The caregiver should be assured that while the mentor will take notes, there is no need for concern, as it is only for observing strengths and challenges. The mentor should inform the caregiver that while he/she will not ignore the children, they will keep their interactions to a minimum in order to observe what is typical to the room. The mentor should take detailed notes on both the strengths and challenges observed. It should be determined beforehand, with the director, when the mentor will share those notes with the caregiver after the observation (as to not interfere with supervision), and the caregiver should be told that time frame. The mentor should thank the caregiver at the end of the observation and give him/her at least one positive note before leaving the room.

On subsequent observations, the mentor may be modeling different interactions with the children. It may be a story time, small group, or one-on-one. He/she may also be offering suggestions to the caregiver while in action. All of these should be done respectfully, with the aim of the caregiver taking something useful away from the interactions. The relationship is a two-way street that is an intentional, focused partnership that enables both the mentor and the caregiver to get to know each other's style of communication and classroom practice. The caregiver should feel as if he/she has a voice and power in the classroom and success. Each caregiver will need an individualized approach for his/her learning needs.

Exit Meetings

When leaving a site after observing, the mentor should always let the director or staff member in charge know that he/she is leaving. The director may want a debriefing after each visit; this is something that can be established at the beginning of the partnership.

Assessment

A mentor and assessor may agree that both parties should be available for a debriefing with the director after an assessment. It should be made clear that the mentor will not be on-site for the duration of the assessment but may attend the debriefing. The director should be aware that the debriefing will not include scoring results.

Communications with the Texas Rising Star Assessor

If possible, schedule a debriefing with the assessor, separate from the provider, to discuss the assessor's notes from the assessment. These notes will help create a more detailed plan, in conjunction with the TA plan generated by the Children's Learning Institute (CLI) Engage.

Strategies to Building Relationships

- Listen
- Dialogue openly
- Create a “mutual vision”
- Freely exchange ideas and reflection
- Be open to new ideas/approaches
- Respect
- Offer hands-on support
- Make the partnership collaborative

TEXAS RISING STAR MENTOR PROTOCOL (cont.)



Ongoing	Individualized
	Developmental
Reciprocal	Nonevaluative

- Ongoing: The mentoring relationship occurs over a period of time, and it changes as the caregiver emerges as a more competent, self-confident, and self-reflective practitioner. The ongoing nature of the relationship reinforces good practices.
- Individualized: The content areas and strategies on which mentoring is based are tailored to the needs of the individual caregiver and program.
- Developmental: Mentoring builds on the strengths of individual caregivers and enhances areas that need improvement. The focus of the mentoring evolves as new skills and knowledge are gained.
- Reciprocal: The mentor-caregiver relationship is reciprocal, since mentors also learn as they gain insight from their caregivers and reflect on their own and their caregivers' practices.
- Nonevaluative: Mentoring provides constructive feedback and support for learning and growth. Mentors observe caregivers, but the feedback is used only to enhance learning.

Checklist: Mentoring Protocol

General Information

Mentor: _____

Facility: _____

Director: _____

Mentoring Goals

Developmental goals (identified in initial meeting):

-
-
-

Topics and Activities

-
-
-
-

Challenges and Suggestions

Challenges	Suggestions

Next Steps

Tasks for Mentee	Tasks for Mentor

Next Conversation:

Date: _____

Time: _____

In preparation for the next talk, mentor and mentee should view the suggestions and next steps of the last talk as a starting point.

Texas Rising Star Needs Assessment

Name:

What is your current position?

How long have you been with this site?

How long have you been an early childhood caregiver?

Please list the three most recent experiences you have had with professional development and evaluate them by circling the word that most closely resembles your feelings.

Training Topic

Evaluation of Training

_____ very useful/somewhat useful/slightly useful/not useful

_____ very useful/somewhat useful/slightly useful/not useful

_____ very useful/somewhat useful/slightly useful/not useful

What areas of caregiving do you consider to be your areas of expertise?

What areas of caregiving do you wish to learn more about?

What do you consider the main areas of concern for your site as a whole?

What do you consider the main areas of concern for your classroom?

TEXAS RISING STAR ACCREDITATION RECOGNITION APPLICATION PROCESS

U.S. Department of Defense Recognition

Accreditation entities not currently recognized by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) that would like to apply to be recognized through Texas Rising Star (TRS) would be initially certified at the 4-star level without a full TRS assessment if the accreditation is:

- recognized by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) for child care facilities operated by the U.S. military on military installations; or
- recognized as participating in DoD's Off-Base Child Care Military Fee Assistance Program.

Established National Accreditation

For national accrediting entities not recognized by DoD, the minimum criterion required to be eligible to apply for TWC recognition is that the accrediting entity must be well established and national in scope. To ensure this, the accrediting entity must have:

- accredited facilities in at least 26 states (50 percent of the 50 states and the District of Columbia);
- at least 500 nationally accredited facilities; and
- had the standards in place for at least five years.

Publicly Accessible Standards and List of Facilities

Information regarding TWC-recognized national accrediting entities is provided to parents as part of consumer education required through the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. Therefore, the national accreditation entity must have a public website that contains, at a minimum:

- its accreditation measures;
- its scoring thresholds; and
- a list of accredited facilities, searchable by state.

Minimum Assessor/Evaluator Qualifications

The national accrediting entity must have minimum assessor/evaluator qualifications that align with the following TRS requirements for assessors in TWC's Child Care Services rule §809.134(a). Specifically, the assessor/evaluator qualifications must include one of the following:

- A bachelor's degree in early childhood education, child development, special education, child psychology, educational psychology, elementary education, or family consumer science;
- A bachelor's degree with at least 18 credit hours in early childhood education, child development, special education, child psychology, educational psychology, elementary education, or family consumer science with at least 12 credit hours in child development; or
- An associate's degree in early childhood education, child development, special education, child psychology, educational psychology, elementary education, or family consumer science with two years of experience as a director in an early childhood program.

Includes All Age Groups

TRS certification includes measures for all age groups served by the TRS-certified facility. To be eligible for TWC recognition, the national accrediting entity's measures and certification must include all age groups served by the facility.

TRS ACCREDITATION RECOGNITION APPLICATION PROCESS (cont.)

Application Requirements and Procedures

Accreditation entities must complete a profile, which describes their compliance with the eligibility criteria listed above, specifically:

- the number of states with accredited facilities;
- the total number of accredited facilities;
- how long the current accreditation standards have been in place;
- the accrediting entity's website with a link to the measures, scoring, and provider search information; and
- minimum assessor/evaluator qualifications.

The profile must also include:

- content areas included in the accreditation standards;
- total number of criteria;
- total number and listing of the required measures;
- percentage and number of measures that must be met in order to be certified;
- length of the accreditation certification period; and
- the monitoring process.

Submission of the TRS Crosswalk

National accreditation entities must complete and submit a crosswalk document *provided by TWC* to compare the accrediting entity's standards to TRS standards.

Assessment of the TRS Crosswalk

In the crosswalk, new accreditation entities must demonstrate that all TRS 2-star (required) measures are also required by the accrediting entity.

If the TRS 2-star required measures are not required by the accrediting entity, the entity must develop a separate assurance process to document that its accredited facilities in Texas will meet the TRS-required measures as part of the entity's accreditation process for Texas.

Scoring of the TRS Crosswalk

TWC staff will review and evaluate the submitted crosswalk. If the entity meets the minimum thresholds listed below, a 2-star, 3-star, or 4-star level will be assigned to the accreditation entity within the TRS program:

TRS Star Level	Accreditation Score Thresholds
2-Star Certification	Accreditation requires all TRS 2-star (required) measures (or entity has submitted a separate assurance process for the Texas providers).
3-Star Certification	Accreditation requires all TRS 2-star (required) measures; plus, <i>80 percent</i> of TRS points-based measures <i>per age group</i> are included in the accreditation measures.
4-Star Certification	Accreditation requires all TRS 2-star (required) measures; plus, <i>90 percent</i> of TRS points-based measures <i>per age group</i> are included in the accreditation measures.

CHAPTER 809 OF THE TEXAS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE

CHAPTER 809. CHILD CARE SERVICES

SUBCHAPTER G. TEXAS RISING STAR PROGRAM

§809.130. Short Title and Purpose.

- (a) The rules contained in this subchapter may be cited as the TRS Program rules.
- (b) The purpose of the TRS Program rules is to interpret and implement Texas Government Code §2308.3155(b) requiring the Commission to establish rules to administer the TRS program, including guidelines for rating a child care provider for TRS certification.
- (c) The TRS Program rules identify the organizational structure and categories of, and the scoring factors that shall be included in, the TRS guidelines.
- (d) The TRS guidelines for rating a child care provider shall:
 - (1) describe measures for the TRS program that contain, at a minimum, measures for child care providers regarding:
 - (A) director and staff qualifications and training;
 - (B) caregiver-child interactions;
 - (C) curriculum;
 - (D) nutrition and indoor and outdoor activities; and
 - (E) parent involvement and education;
 - (2) specify measures that:
 - (A) must be met in order for a provider to be certified at each star level; and
 - (B) are observed and have points awarded through on-site assessments; and
 - (3) specify the scoring methodology and scoring thresholds for each star level.
- (e) The TRS guidelines:
 - (1) shall be adopted by the Commission subject to the requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act; and
 - (2) may be amended by the Commission, provided that the amendments are adopted subject to the requirements of the Texas Open Meetings Act.

§809.131. Eligibility for the TRS Program.

- (a) A child care provider is eligible to apply for the TRS program if the provider has a current agreement to serve Commission-subsidized children and:
 - (1) has a permanent (non-expiring) license or registration from CCL;
 - (2) has at least 12 months of licensing history with CCL, and is not on:
 - (A) corrective action with a Board pursuant to Subchapter F of this chapter;
 - (B) a "Notice of Freeze" with the Commission pursuant to Chapter 213 of the Texas Labor Code (Enforcement of the Texas Unemployment Compensation Act) or Chapter 61 of the Texas Labor Code (Payment of Wages); or
 - (C) corrective or adverse action with CCL; or
 - (3) is regulated by and in good standing with the US Military.
- (b) A child care facility is not eligible to apply for the TRS program if, during the most recent 12-month CCL licensing history, the provider had:
 - (1) any of the critical licensing deficiencies listed in the TRS guidelines;
 - (2) five or more of the high or medium-high licensing deficiencies listed in the TRS guidelines; or
 - (3) 10 or more total licensing deficiencies of any type.

§809.132. Impact of Certain Deficiencies on TRS Certification.

- (a) A TRS provider shall lose TRS certification if the provider:
 - (1) is placed on corrective action with a Board pursuant to Subchapter F of this chapter;
 - (2) is under a "Notice of Freeze" with the Commission pursuant to Chapter 213 of the Texas Labor Code (Enforcement of the Texas Unemployment Compensation Act) or Chapter 61 of the Texas Labor Code (Payment of Wages);
 - (3) is placed on corrective or adverse action by CCL; or
 - (4) had 15 or more total licensing deficiencies of any type during the most recent 12-month licensing history.
- (b) TRS providers with any of the critical licensing deficiencies listed in the TRS guidelines during the most recent 12-month CCL licensing history shall have the following consequences:
 - (1) reduction of one star level, so a 4-Star Program Provider is reduced to a 3-Star Program Provider, a 3-Star Program Provider is reduced to a 2-Star Program Provider; or
 - (2) a 2-Star Program Provider loses certification.
- (c) TRS providers with five or more of the high or medium-high deficiencies listed in the TRS guidelines during the most recent 12-month DFPS licensing history shall lose a star level with a 2-Star Program Provider losing certification.

- (d) TRS providers with 10 to 14 total licensing deficiencies of any type during the most recent 12-month CCL licensing history shall be placed on a six-month TRS program probationary period. Further:
- (1) TRS providers on a six-month probationary period that are re-cited by CCL within the probationary period for any of the same deficiencies shall lose a star level with a 2-Star Program Provider losing certification;
 - (2) if any new deficiencies--not to exceed 14 total deficiencies--are cited by CCL during the first probationary period, a second six-month probationary period shall be established effective upon the date of final CCL determination of the deficiencies; and
 - (3) if any new deficiencies--not to exceed 14 total deficiencies--are cited by CCL during the second six-month probationary period, a provider shall lose TRS certification.
- (e) Providers losing a star level due to licensing deficiencies shall be reinstated at the former star level if no citations described in §809.132(b) - (d) occur within the six-month reduction time frame.
- (f) Providers losing TRS certification shall be eligible to reapply for certification after 6 months following the loss of the certification, as long as no current deficiencies are re-cited and no additional licensing deficiencies are cited during the disqualification period.

§809.133. Application and Assessments for the TRS Program.

- (a) TRS program applicants must complete:
- (1) an orientation on the TRS guidelines, including an overview of the:
 - (A) TRS program application process;
 - (B) TRS program measures; and
 - (C) TRS program assessment process; and
 - (2) a TRS program self-assessment tool.
- (b) Boards shall ensure that:
- (1) written acknowledgment of receipt of the application and self-assessment is sent to the provider;
 - (2) within 20 days of receipt of the application, the provider is sent an estimated time frame for scheduling the initial assessment;
 - (3) an assessment is conducted for any provider that meets the eligibility requirements in §809.131 and requests to participate in the TRS program; and
- (4) TRS certification is granted for any provider that is assessed and verified as meeting the TRS provider certification criteria set forth in the TRS guidelines.
- (c) Boards shall ensure that TRS assessments are conducted as follows:
- (1) On-site assessment of 100 percent of the provider classrooms at the initial assessment for TRS certification and at each scheduled recertification; and
 - (2) Recertification of all TRS providers every three years.

- (d) Boards shall ensure that certified TRS providers are monitored on an annual basis and the monitoring includes:
 - (1) at least one unannounced on-site visit; and
 - (2) a review of the provider's licensing compliance as described in new §809.132.
- (e) Boards shall ensure compliance with the process and procedures in the TRS guidelines for conducting assessments of nationally accredited child care facilities and child care facilities regulated by the US Military.
- (f) Boards shall ensure compliance with the process and procedures in the TRS guidelines for conducting assessments of certified TRS providers that have a change of ownership, move, or expand locations.

§809.134. Minimum Qualifications for TRS Assessors and Mentors.

- (a) Boards shall ensure that TRS assessors and mentors meet the minimum education requirements as follows:
 - (1) Bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year college or university in early childhood education, child development, special education, child psychology, educational psychology, elementary education, or family consumer science;
 - (2) Bachelor's degree from an accredited four-year college or university with at least 18 credit hours in early childhood education, child development, special education, child psychology, educational psychology, elementary education, or family consumer science with at least 12 credit hours in child development; or
 - (3) Associate's degree in early childhood education, child development, special education, child psychology, educational psychology, elementary education, or family consumer science with two years of experience as a director in an early childhood program, with preference given to experience with a provider that is accredited or TRS certified.
- (b) The Commission may grant a waiver of no more than two years of the minimum education requirements in subsection (a) of this section if a Board can demonstrate that no applicants in its local workforce development area meet the minimum education requirements.
- (c) Boards shall ensure that TRS assessors and mentors meet the minimum work experience requirements of one year of full-time early childhood classroom experience in a child care, Early Head Start, Head Start, or prekindergarten through third-grade school program.
- (d) Boards shall ensure that if an individual performs the duties of both an assessor and a mentor, the individual providing TRS mentoring services to a provider does not act as the assessor of that same provider when determining TRS certification.
- (e) Boards shall ensure that TRS assessors and mentors are required to complete annual professional development and continuing education consistent with the TRS annual minimum training hours requirement for a TRS-certified child care center director.
- (f) Boards shall ensure that TRS assessors and mentors meet the background check requirement consistent with Chapter 745 of this title.
- (g) Boards shall ensure that TRS assessors and mentors demonstrate:

- (1) knowledge of best practices in early childhood education; and
- (2) understanding of early childhood evaluations, observations, and assessment tools for both teachers and children.

§809.135. TRS Process for Reconsideration.

Boards shall ensure a process for reconsideration of facility assessment at the Board level for the TRS program. The TRS program is not subject to Chapter 823 of this title, the Integrated Complaints, Hearings, and Appeals rules.