

TEXAS RISING STAR CERTIFICATION GUIDELINES

A Quality Rating and Improvement System for Texas



Texas 
Rising Star

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Child Care Services

The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) oversees the Child Care Services (CCS) program, which provides financial aid (also known as subsidies or scholarships) for child care to families who meet income requirements and promotes long-term self-sufficiency by enabling parents to work or attend education activities. The CCS program strives to educate parents about the availability of quality child care, enhance children's early learning, and support child care and early learning programs that are working to improve the quality of the child care and early education they provide.

Children enrolled in CCS may attend any child care and early learning program as long as that program has agreed to participate in the CCS program and has a signed CCS Provider Agreement with a Local Workforce Development Board (Board). Under state law, CCS providers must also participate in the Texas Rising Star program.

Section 1: Introduction to Texas Rising Star

The Texas Rising Star program is a quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) for child care programs participating in TWC's CCS program. Texas Rising Star certification is available to licensed centers and licensed and registered child care home facilities that meet the certification criteria.

The Texas Rising Star program offers three levels of quality certification (Two-Star, Three-Star, and Four-Star) to encourage child care and early learning programs to attain progressively higher levels of quality. These certification levels are tied to graduated enhanced payment rates for children receiving child care financial aid.

Numerous research studies have shown that children who attend higher-quality child care and early learning programs are more prepared for school entry than children who do not attend high-quality programs. Child care and early learning programs that achieve Texas Rising Star certification offer quality care that exceeds the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Child Care Regulation (CCR) minimum health and safety standards and are in a better position to positively affect the physical, social-emotional, and cognitive development of children. As programs advance through the levels of Texas Rising Star certification, they are increasingly able to positively affect the development of the children they serve daily.

Historical Perspective

The movement to improve and standardize quality in child care and early learning programs began in the 1970s, but did not gain momentum until the 1990s, when states began to implement tiered QRISs and to tie enhanced Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) payment rates to levels of quality. The following is a brief history of the evolution of QRIS in Texas:

- In the 1980s, a state workgroup was formed to research and develop standards for early learning programs in Texas, providing the basis for the Texas Rising Star Provider Certification criteria.
- From 1991 through 2000, the Texas Rising Star Provider Certification criteria were in use to evaluate quality in CCS child care and early learning programs in Texas.
- In 1999, a new state workgroup formed to review and revise these criteria.
- In October 2000, the Texas Rising Star Certification Guidelines (Guidelines) were released, reflecting the recommendations of the workgroup, including revamping assessment and certification processes.
- In 2003, TWC updated the recertification and monitoring time frames for Texas Rising Star-certified programs.

- In 2013, the 83rd Texas Legislature passed House Bill (HB) 376, which required TWC to:
 - create a review workgroup to recommend revisions to the Texas Rising Star program;
 - establish graduated payment rates for Texas Rising Star certification levels; and
 - make funds available to Boards to hire Texas Rising Star mentors and assessors in order to provide technical assistance to child care and early learning programs.
- On January 27, 2015, TWC approved the changes proposed by the Texas Rising Star review workgroup, as required by HB 376. Full implementation of the revisions was completed on September 1, 2015.
- In 2015, the 84th Texas Legislature passed HB 208, which required TWC to implement a process for the regular review of the Texas Rising Star quality standards. TWC adopted rules which established a review of Texas Rising Star every four years.
- In late 2015 and early 2016, TWC solicited further input on the Texas Rising Star program and the 2015 revisions. Based on the input from these stakeholder meetings, TWC modified the Guidelines to streamline the application and assessment processes and to clarify and improve criteria.
- In 2018, TWC commissioned the [Strengthening Texas Rising Star Implementation Study](#) to examine the reliability of the assessment and indicators of external validity of certification criteria.
- In 2019, Texas Rising Star underwent its first four-year review, and TWC convened a [Four-Year Review Workgroup](#) to review the Texas Rising Star program, as required by HB 208. In October 2020, TWC's three-member Commission (Commission) approved the proposed rules regarding Texas Rising Star. In January 2021, the final rules and updated guidelines were adopted. Modifications to the Texas Rising Star program became effective on January 25, 2021.
- In September 2021, the 87th Texas Legislature enacted HB 2607, which:
 - requires all child care programs in TWC's CCS program to participate in Texas Rising Star; and
 - directs TWC to include an entry-level rating for child care and early learning programs and establish the maximum length of time that a provider may participate in CCS at the entry level.
- In September 2022, the Commission adopted amendments to [TWC Chapter 809 Child Care Services rules](#) to implement the new requirements. Effective October 3, 2022, all child care and early learning programs in CCS must participate in the Texas Rising Star program. In order to be a CCS provider, child care and early learning programs must:
 - meet the Entry Level designation point threshold; and
 - attain at least a Two-Star certification level within 24 months.
- In July 2023, Texas Rising Star underwent its second four-year review as follows:
 - TWC convened the 2023 [Four-Year Review Workgroup](#) to review the Texas Rising Star program, as required by HB 208. With support from TWC, the workgroup led a collaborative review that involved stakeholders from across the state.
 - TWC conducted six public meetings throughout the state in February 2024 about the recommendations from the review.
 - Based upon the stakeholder input received, TWC presented Texas Rising Star changes to both the Ch. 809 Texas Rising Star Rules, as well as the Texas Rising Star Guidelines at the April 30, 2024 Commission Meeting. The Final Rule amendments and Guidelines revisions were approved in July 2024.
 - Modifications to the Texas Rising Star program became effective on September 1, 2024, with the new Classroom and Facility Assessment tools being implemented on October 1, 2024.

A System for Progressive Quality Improvement

In Texas, child care and early learning programs must adhere to minimum standards defined by CCR. These standards help ensure the health and safety of children in care outside of the home. As the child care regulatory and licensing agency for Texas, CCR monitors programs for compliance with minimum standards and may issue corrective or adverse actions when programs fail to comply. CCR also makes this essential [licensing and inspection data](#) available to the public.

To participate in TWC's CCS program, child care and early learning programs must achieve [Entry Level designation](#) by demonstrating a high rate of compliance with CCR's minimum standards. Child care and early learning programs then have up to two years to attain (at least a Two-Star) Texas Rising Star certification.

For a child care and early learning program to meet and maintain Texas Rising Star certification criteria, the program must demonstrate **consistent** compliance with CCR minimum standards.

Texas Rising Star is intended to measurably improve the quality of child care and early learning programs and thereby enhance children's development and promote school readiness.



Texas Rising Star provides a systematic approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in child care and early learning programs. Texas Rising Star assigns a score to early learning programs that meet a set of defined program standards. These standards exceed those required by CCR minimum standards. By participating in Texas Rising Star, programs engage in a process of continuous quality improvement.

As a QRIS, Texas Rising Star includes the following key components:

- **Standards criteria** that are understandable, measurable, and verifiable
- **Accountability** and transparent monitoring to assess achievement of (and ongoing compliance with) quality standards and to validate the assignment of scores
- **Support** to encourage participation and improve quality, including training, technical assistance, mentoring, and peer-learning opportunities
- **Consumer education** to inform families and the community about the importance of quality in child care and early learning programs
- **Financial incentives** to help programs improve learning environments, attain higher scores, and sustain long-term quality

Financial Incentives: Tiered Enhanced Payment Rates

Texas Rising Star-certified programs receive higher payment rates for children enrolled in the CCS program than noncertified programs. [Texas Government Code §2308.315](#) requires the minimum payment rate for a Texas Rising Star-certified program to be greater than the maximum rate established for a program that is not Texas Rising Star-certified for the same category of care. Specifically, Two-

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Star rates must be at least 5 percent higher, Three-Star rates must be at least 7 percent higher, and Four-Star rates must be at least 9 percent higher.

TWC Chapter 809 Child Care Services rule [§809.20\(a\)](#) requires Boards to establish their maximum payment rates at or above a level established by the Commission. TWC has published each of the Board's [maximum payment rates](#) as of October 1, 2024. The Commission requires Boards to set their Texas Rising Star maximum payment rates at or above the following levels:

- For Four-Star providers, at least 9 percent higher than the 75th percentile of the most recent Market Rate Survey
- For Three-Star providers, at least 7 percent higher than the 75th percentile
- For Two-Star providers, at least 5 percent higher than the 75th percentile

TWC has also published a [Texas Rising Star Revenue Calculator](#) to help child care and early learning programs forecast the revenue impact of enhanced payment rates.

Note: Child care and early learning programs that are designated as Entry Level do not receive enhanced payment rates.

Entry Level Designation

[Texas Government Code §2308.3155](#) requires that all CCS child care and early learning programs participate in the Texas Rising Star program beginning at the Entry Level designation, and it requires TWC to establish a maximum length of time that a child care and early learning program may participate at Entry Level designation. Section [809.131\(d\)](#) of TWC's rules establishes a maximum period of 24 months during which a program may participate at the Entry Level designation.

Child care and early learning programs that are interested in participating in CCS must submit an Interest Form to start the Entry Level process. (See [Step 1: Becoming a CCS Provider](#) for more information.)

Entry Level–designated programs will be offered technical assistance, resources and materials, and mentoring to support them in attaining Texas Rising Star certification. Entry Level–designated programs may determine if they want to accept these technical assistance and mentoring resources.

Note: Relative providers and out-of-state child care and early learning programs are not required to participate in Texas Rising Star. Relative providers will continue to operate under the current TWC rules for relative providers set forth in [§809.91](#).

To qualify for Entry Level designation, a child care and early learning program must meet the following minimum quality standards. The program must:

- be licensed or registered with CCR (may have an initial permit) or regulated by the United States military;
- not be on corrective or adverse action with CCR; and
- not exceed the points threshold of 40 for high- and/or medium-high–weighted CCR deficiencies (based on a review of the most recent six months of CCR licensing history).

Child care and early learning programs with initial permits or programs with fewer than six months of licensing history will be reviewed based on all available CCR licensing history. The points threshold of 40 is calculated by assigning the following points to high- and medium-high–weighted CCR deficiencies received within the most recent six months of CCR licensing history:

- Five points are added for each high-weighted deficiency.
- Three points are added for each medium-high-weighted deficiency.

If a program's points total is less than or equal to 40, the program meets the points threshold requirement for Entry Level designation. There are no exceptions or waivers available to programs that fail to meet the Entry Level points threshold.

Once designated as Entry Level, a child care and early learning program will have a maximum of 24 months to attain star-level certification in Texas Rising Star. At minimum, Entry Level-designated programs must be reviewed for Texas Rising Star certification eligibility no later than the 12th month of the 24-month period.

If, at the 18th month of a program's Entry Level designation time, an Entry Level-designated program will not be eligible for star-level certification in Texas Rising Star by the end of the Entry Level designation time frame, the program may not receive CCS referrals for new families until it attains star-level certification. The only exception allowed is if the program is located in a child care desert or serves an underserved population as defined and approved by TWC; if a program qualifies for a CCS referral exception, the program may continue to receive referrals for new families during the last six months of its 24-month Entry Level-designated period. The program will be monitored monthly for certification eligibility. [WD Letter 12-24](#), issued August 13, 2024, and titled "Texas Rising Star Entry Level Designation Implementation" has additional information about requesting a CCS referral exception.

Note: Referrals may be made for siblings of children who are currently enrolled in the program during this period. Intake can be opened for new CCS family referrals once the program complies with the initial Texas Rising Star certification screening requirements.

The referral restriction in the last six months is intended to minimize the likelihood that children are placed in a facility that ultimately fails to meet Texas Rising Star certification criteria. Therefore, only children who were previously referred (including any new siblings) may continue to be served during the program's last six-month extension period. At the 60th day of the end of the extension period, if the program is still ineligible for certification, Boards will be required to notify the program and all currently referred families that the program is in jeopardy of losing its CCS agreement.

Entry Level-designated programs may be assessed for star-level certification at any time within the 24-month time frame if they meet certification eligibility and screening requirements.

Entry Level Timeline—New CCS Regulated Programs

Effective October 3, 2022, new CCS programs will follow the timeline below:

Deadline	Action
CCS Provider Agreement start date	Child care and early learning program must meet Entry Level designation eligibility.
No later than 12 months	Boards must screen program for initial star-level certification.
18 months	If the program is not meeting Texas Rising Star certification criteria, no new family referrals may be made. The program will be reviewed monthly for the remainder of the designation timeline.
24 months	The program must achieve Texas Rising Star certification or notify the Centralized Assessment Entity (CAE) of their assessment-ready status to continue providing CCS.

Additionally, effective April 1, 2023, Entry Level–designated programs will be reviewed for Entry Level points threshold compliance every six months beginning on October 1, 2023. Any program exceeding the points threshold at the October review or at the subsequent April review will no longer be eligible to provide CCS and will have its CCS Provider Agreement terminated within 30 calendar days. Entry Level–designated programs may continue to provide CCS if they are placed on Corrective Action with CCR, per the guidance in the [Child Care Services Guide](#), as long as the programs do not exceed the points threshold at the applicable October or April review.

Date	Action
October 1 each year	Boards must review all Entry Level–designated programs for continued points threshold compliance
April 1 each year	Boards must review all Entry Level–designated programs for continued points threshold compliance

Child care and early learning programs that are in noncompliance with the points threshold are not eligible for any waiver or extension to their CCS Provider Agreement. The program may return to providing CCS once it meets the Entry Level points threshold and it may be provided the remainder of the program’s Entry Level time frame that was not previously exhausted.

Criteria for the Entry Level Extension Waiver

Child care and early learning programs that are unable to achieve Texas Rising Star certification by the end of the 24-month time frame may submit a request to their Board for an Entry Level extension waiver. The Board will review the request and determine whether the program meets at least one of the criteria listed below before forwarding the request to TWC for determination, per [WD Letter 12-24](#).

To be eligible for an Entry Level extension waiver, the child care and early learning program must be:

- located in a child care desert (an area where the number of children younger than six years of age who have working parents is at least three times greater than the capacity of licensed child care programs in the area) or serving an underserved population as determined by TWC;
- unable to meet the certification requirements due to a declared emergency/disaster; and/or
- unable to meet the certification requirements due to conditions that are outside the program’s control.

Note: An underserved population may include limited availability of infant capacity or care for children with disabilities.

TWC will review all Entry Level extension waiver requests and may grant a program up to an additional 36 months to remain at Entry Level in order for the program to achieve Texas Rising Star certification. Child care programs with approved Entry Level extension waivers will not be able to receive new family referrals unless the program is located in a child care desert or serves an underserved population and is approved by TWC to accept new family referrals.

Additional information regarding implementing Entry Level designation is provided in [WD Letter 12-24](#).

Signed Agreements

CCS Provider Agreement

Once a child care and early learning program is designated as Entry Level, the program is required to enter into a CCS Provider Agreement with its Board to provide child care to eligible families. The signed agreement details the requirements for providing CCS, including the child care and early learning program's responsibilities, reporting requirements, and conditions for payment. The CCS Provider Agreement also provides information on Texas Rising Star and the program parameters that CCS programs must meet. Child care and early learning programs must have a signed CCS Provider Agreement with the Board whose area the program is located in regardless of accepting CCS referrals from that Board area.

Texas Rising Star Mentoring Agreement

Entry Level–designated and Texas Rising Star–certified child care and early learning programs are provided mentoring supports by the Board whose area the program is located in. Programs that want to receive mentoring, coaching, and support must enter into a signed Texas Rising Star Mentoring Agreement with their Board. The mentoring agreements outline the program's responsibilities and requirements and the program's assigned mentor's duties regarding the program's participation in Texas Rising Star.

Note: Child care and early learning programs may not be terminated from CCS for failure to comply with their Texas Rising Star Mentoring Agreement, including failure to make advancements in the quality improvement strategies outlined in their Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP). Programs may opt out of mentoring services. (See [Self-Developed CQIPs](#) for more information.)

Summary of the Texas Rising Star Criteria

Child care and early learning programs must be assessed on the Texas Rising Star certification criteria, as outlined in the Facility Assessment Record Form (FARF) and the Classroom Assessment Record Form (CARF). The forms are available on the Texas Rising Star website at [Texas Rising Star Tools](#). Below is a summary of the Texas Rising Star certification criteria, which are based on the following measures:

- Structural “met” or “not met” measures are required for certification at any level (Two-, Three-, or Four-Star).
- Qualitative, points-based measures scored on a scale of 0–3 points determine the star level.

Each subcategory contains required measures, points-based measures, or a combination of the two. Refer to the facility and classroom assessment forms for each measure's definition and scoring criteria.

Category 1: Director and Staff Qualifications and Training

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

Subcategory	Structural Measures? (Met/Not Met)	Points-Based Measures? (Scored 0–3 points)
Director Qualifications and Training	Yes	Yes
Staff Qualifications, Orientation, and Training	Yes	Yes

Category 2: Teacher-Child Interactions

Measures relating to group size, staff-to-child ratio, and quality of interactions between teachers and children in the classroom:

Subcategory	Structural Measures? (Met/Not Met)	Points-Based Measures? (Scored 0-3 points)
Group Size/Staff Ratios (center-based only)	No	Yes
Warm and Responsive Style	No	Yes
Language Facilitation and Support	No	Yes
Play-Based Interactions and Guidance	No	Yes
Support for Children's Regulation	No	Yes
Instructional Formats and Approaches to Learning	No	Yes

Category 3: Program Administration

Measures relating to education and involvement of parents and families in the program and how the program is managed:

Subcategory	Structural Measures? (Met/Not Met)	Points-Based Measures? (Scored 0-3 points)
Family Education	Yes	Yes
Family Involvement	Yes	Yes
Program Management	Yes	Yes

Category 4: Indoor and Outdoor Environments

Measures relating to the equipment, materials, and arrangement of indoor and outdoor learning environments:

Subcategory	Structural Measures? (Met/Not Met)	Points-Based Measures? (Scored 0-3 points)
Indoor Learning Environments	No	Yes
Outdoor Learning Environments	No	Yes

Star-Level Scoring

If a program meets all the required measures for Texas Rising Star certification, the scores of the points-based measures are used to determine the star level for each category and ultimately for the program as a whole. Points-based measures are scored and awarded through both in-person observation and document review.

A Texas Rising Star assessment assigns each of the four certification categories a star level based on the average score across the points-based subcategory measures. Additionally, each category is assigned a specific weight that is used to calculate the program's overall star level. Category 2: Teacher-Child Interactions has the highest weight at 40 percent, because teacher-child interactions are known to correlate strongly with high-quality care and positive child outcomes.

Below are the weights assigned to each of the four categories:

Certification Category	Weight
1: Director and Staff Qualifications and Training	20%
2: Teacher-Child Interactions	40%
3: Program Administration	20%
4: Indoor and Outdoor Environments	20%

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 program's average score across all measures of a category:

- **Four-Star**—average score is 2.4 or greater (80 percent of total possible points)
- **Three-Star**—average score is 1.80 to 2.39 (60–79.9 percent of total possible points)
- **Two-Star**—average score is below 1.80 (fewer than 60 percent of total possible points)

For nationally accredited programs, Categories 1 and 3 will receive an automated average score of 3.0.

Eligible early learning programs that receive [Classroom Assessment Scoring System® \(CLASS®\)](#) observations have the option to have their CLASS® scores replace a Category 2: Teacher-Child Interactions observation during an assessment or annual monitoring visit. See [CLASS® Option for Category 2 Observations](#) for more information.

Texas Rising Star Assessor and Mentor Roles

Texas Rising Star staff members interact regularly with child care and early learning programs to recruit, assess, and onboard new programs and to mentor certified programs in order to help them attain increasing levels of quality. Texas Rising Star employs two key roles to work with programs: assessors and mentors.

- **Assessors** objectively evaluate a program's compliance with standards and level of quality. Assessors evaluate certification status for new and existing Texas Rising Star–certified programs using the applicable facility and classroom assessment forms. Assessors are required to successfully complete the Texas Rising Star Certification course to demonstrate mastery of the Texas Rising Star certification criteria. Additionally, assessors must demonstrate their ongoing mastery of the criteria and their ability to reliably assess program quality through participation in quarterly checks.
- **Mentors** provide technical assistance and coaching support to assist child care and early learning programs in attaining, maintaining, and improving Texas Rising Star certification status. Mentors regularly consult with programs to develop and monitor CQIPs, model best practices, provide constructive feedback, deliver targeted training, and refer programs to other helpful resources and training. Mentors must meet the minimum education requirements established by the Commission and outlined in [§809.134](#). Mentors are required to complete the Texas Rising Star Certification course training components and must pursue TWC's required coaching microcredential.

Texas Rising Star assessors and mentors have distinct roles, and the separation of duties is critical to ensure valid, reliable assessments. For more information on the roles of assessors and mentors, please see the assessor and mentor protocols and best practices in the Texas Rising Star Staff Handbook.

In July 2023, TWC procured a Centralized Assessment Entity (CAE). This role was awarded to the Children’s Learning Institute (CLI) at University of Texas Health Science Center—Houston after a competitive procurement process. Effective October 2023, the CAE took over assessment functions.

Assessor and Mentor Roles in Relation to Child Care Regulation

Texas Rising Star staff members are not trained in CCR minimum standards for regulated child care. However, many mentors and assessors are knowledgeable about the standards and may occasionally observe a possible licensing deficiency while on-site at a program site.

The role of mentors and assessors is to assist programs with improving their level of quality through ongoing assessment, self-reflection, coaching, and tailored technical assistance. When a mentor or assessor observes a potential deficiency, he or she will share the observation with the program director, preferably while still on-site. If the potential deficiency is reportable, the mentor or assessor will encourage the director to file a self-report with CCR. Mentors work as partners with child care and early learning programs and will support programs to address potential as well as cited deficiencies.

Importantly, as defined in [§809.136\(6\)](#), Texas Rising Star staff members are considered “mandatory reporters.” As such, when they observe a situation in which a child has been harmed, neglected, or placed in imminent danger, they must ensure that the incident is reported to CCR. Mentors and assessors will use their professional judgment in deciding whether an observed situation rises to a reportable level.

Section 2: Certification Process

Eligibility for Texas Rising Star

Texas Rising Star is a quality-based child care rating system for child care and early learning programs participating in TWC's CCS program.

All programs requesting initial Texas Rising Star certification must:

- have an active CCS Provider Agreement with a Board to accept referrals from TWC's CCS program and a current Entry Level designation;
- have a permanent (nonexpiring) license or registration from CCR*;
- have at least 12 months of licensing history with CCR*;
- demonstrate a high level of compliance with CCR minimum standards* over the preceding six months in accordance with the Texas Rising Star [Initial Screening Form](#); and
- ensure that a center director account is created in the Texas Workforce Registry (WFR) and that the director encourages their staff members to create individual accounts within the WFR.

*Programs that are not regulated by CCR but are regulated by the U.S. military and in good standing are also eligible to request Texas Rising Star certification.

Star-Level–Drop Deficiencies

Programs are not eligible to request an initial assessment for Texas Rising Star if any of the noted deficiencies listed below are cited during the most recent six-month CCR licensing period. (These deficiencies are also reflected in the Texas Rising Star Screening Form). Additionally, the program cannot exceed 25 total points of CCR-weighted high- or medium-high–deficiencies. Programs that are currently Texas Rising Star–certified will incur a star-level drop for each deficiency cited during the most recent six-month CCR licensing period. Two-Star certified programs will be placed on suspension status.

Deficiencies Leading to a Star-Level Drop—Centers

- 745.635: Criminal Convictions or Central Registry Findings—Take Appropriate Action [High]
- 745.641: Background Checks Requirement—Providing Direct Care [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]

Deficiencies Leading to a Star-Level Drop—Homes

- 745.635: Criminal Convictions or Central Registry Findings—Take Appropriate Action [High]
- 745.641: Background Checks Requirement—Providing Direct Care [High]
- 747.207(4): Reporting Suspected Abuse, Neglect, or Exploitation [High]
- 747.1501(a)(3): Responsibility of Caregivers—Ensure No Child Is Abused, Neglected, or Exploited [High]

Deficiencies Leading to a Star-Level Drop—School-Age Programs

- 745.635: Criminal Convictions or Central Registry Findings—Take Appropriate Action [High]
- 745.641: Background Checks Requirement [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]

Probation Deficiencies

Programs that are currently Texas Rising Star–certified will be placed on a six-month probation (Probation A) if any noted deficiency is cited during the most recent six-month CCR licensing period.

Deficiencies Resulting in a Probation—*Centers*

- 745.621: Background Checks Requirement—Submitting Requests [High]
- 746.1003: Director Responsibilities [(1), (3–6) High]
- 746.1201(1): Responsibilities of Employees and Caregivers—Demonstrate Competency, Good Judgment, Self-Control [High]
- 746.1205(a)(4): Responsibilities of Caregivers—Supervision of Children [High]
- 746.1315: First Aid and CPR Requirements [Medium-High]
- 746.1601: Child/Caregiver Ratios [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]

Deficiencies Resulting in a Probation—*Homes*

- 745.621: Background Checks Requirement—Submitting Requests [High]
- 747.207 (1–3), (6–7): Primary Caregivers Responsibilities [(6) High; (1–3), (7) Medium High]
- 747.1501(c)(1): Responsibilities of Employees and Caregivers—Demonstrate Competency, Good Judgment, Self-Control [High]
- 747.1503(a)(4): Responsibilities of Caregivers—Supervision of Children [High]
- 747.1313: First Aid and CPR Training [High]
- 747.1701 (RCCH)/747.1801 (LCCH): Child/Caregiver Ratios [Medium-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]
- 747.3501: Safety—Areas Free from Hazards [(1–7) Medium-High, (8) High]

Deficiencies Resulting in a Probation—*School-Age 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 Judgment, Self-Control [High]
- 744.1205(a)(4): Responsibilities of Caregivers—Supervision of Children [High]
- 744.1315: First Aid and CPR Requirements [Medium-High]
- 744.1601: Child/Caregiver Ratios [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]

Ongoing Screening Process for Certified Programs

Texas Rising Star–certified programs are expected to maintain a consistent and high level of compliance with CCR minimum licensing standards. The assessor must review the child care and early learning program’s CCR history against the Texas Rising Star Screening Form before any assessment or annual monitoring visit and on a regular basis. An automated daily review will be conducted for all certified programs within the Texas Rising Star online assessment platform, CLI Engage. This automated review will notify the assessor of any potential impacts to be reviewed and determined as applicable.

Assessors must conduct the certification screening process, as results of the screening may affect the program’s star level (star-level–drop deficiencies) or require that the program be placed on Texas Rising Star probation or suspension status (based on specific deficiencies and/or the total of high- and/or medium-high-weighted CCR deficiencies). Assessors must share screening results with mentor staff if it results in the program dropping a star level or needing to be placed on Texas Rising Star probation or suspension status, as mentor staff may be able to provide mentoring, training, and resources to assist the program with compliance.

Per CCR, deficiencies are not posted on the website until after the appeals process has been completed. Once a deficiency is posted on the CCR website, it is considered final, and Texas Rising Star impacts are applied accordingly at the time of discovery. As a best practice, for initial assessments, the assessor should screen the program for CCR compliance when the request for certification is received and again before the program’s assessment. For other assessments, the assessor would also screen the program for CCR compliance again before entering the Texas Rising Star certification start date into the Texas Rising Star online assessment platform, CLI Engage.

Additional information regarding impacts of screening form deficiencies is noted in [Table 4.1](#) in the Guidelines. Any impacts placed on a program will be recorded by the assessor in the CLI Engage Event Log (as directed) and noted via the Texas Rising Star Impacts Notice form found in [Section 5: Resources](#). Effective September 1, 2024, the certification status and any impacts are captured in CLI Engage and automatically shared with TWC’s child care case management system, Texas Child Care Connection (TX3C).

Note: If a specific licensing 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 746.2805, any deficiency cited in the whole section would apply.

Texas Rising Star Certification Process

For Programs That Are Not Nationally Accredited

All child care and early learning programs working toward Texas Rising Star certification must comply with certain requirements, which includes the eligibility requirements described in [§809.131](#). Additional requirements comprise the following:

- Completion of Texas Rising Star orientation (see [Step 2](#))
- Creation of and participation in a CQIP
- Participation in the Texas Workforce Registry (WFR)
- Documentation submittal (see [Step 4](#)), including the following:
 - Completed Texas Rising Star Screening Form (applicable to facility type)
 - FARF self-assessment (including completed staff worksheet)
 - Classroom roster document (including classroom name, staff names, and specified age group for each operating classroom)
 - Parent Handbook

The high-level steps below outline how a child care and early learning program would move through the certification process—from becoming a CCS Provider through requesting an assessment for Texas Rising Star certification. All interested programs will be assigned a mentor once they complete the interest form; the mentor is available to assist the program in moving through all requirements and steps.

Step 1: Becoming a CCS Provider

Programs interested in participating in TWC’s CCS program and achieving Texas Rising Star certification must complete the [Texas Rising Star Interest Form](#). This online form collects basic information about the program (for example, facility address and CCR licensing number) and submits the information to the Board in the program’s local workforce development area (Board area). Submission of the interest form informs a Board of a program’s interest in becoming a Texas Rising Star–certified program, initiates the program’s CLI Engage account creation through an email invitation from CLI, and starts the certification process. Programs are required to complete this step prior to entering into a CCS Provider Agreement with their local Board.

Step 2: Attend or Complete Orientation

Texas Rising Star orientation is an online, self-instructional course that is available via the [CLI Engage Course Catalog](#) for early learning programs. The orientation includes an overview of the Texas Rising Star program certification process, describes the required and points-based measures on which a child care and early learning program’s quality certification is determined, and introduces the on-site assessment process through which a program attains Texas Rising Star certification. Per [§809.133\(a\)](#), all prospective Texas Rising Star child care and early learning programs must complete Texas Rising Star orientation before submitting their Request for Certification (described in more detail below). A live orientation session may also be provided by local Texas Rising Star staff.

Step 3: Conduct a Self-Assessment

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

TWC Chapter 809 Child Care Services rule [§809.133](#) requires that programs complete a Texas Rising Star self-assessment of the FARF. The self-assessment must be submitted with accompanying documents (see [Step 4](#)).

In addition to the FARF, which is required for the self-assessment, programs may opt to submit the CARF for each classroom in their program. Completing the CARF self-assessment may clarify whether a program would benefit from additional time and mentoring before the Initial Assessment. The FARF and the CARF are available on the Texas Rising Star website at [Texas Rising Star Tools](#).

Programs are encouraged to collaborate with their local Board for mentoring and technical assistance. Helpful resources are also available on the [Digital Resource Collection](#) page of the Texas Rising Star website.

Tips for Self-Assessment

- Read over the self-assessment tools, the FARF, and the age-appropriate CARF completely before beginning. Have staff read all information, too.

- 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.
- Identify what items are ready for the assessment, what will need to be completed before the assessment, and what questions should be asked of Texas Rising Star staff in order to be completely prepared.
- Determine what changes or modifications may be needed before having the Texas Rising Star assessor come for the assessment.
- Consult your Texas Rising Star mentor to discuss the results of the self-assessment, ask questions, and confirm the next step in the assessment process.

Step 4: Request for Certification Assessment

When the child care and early learning program is ready for assessment, the program must complete the Texas Rising Star Certification Request Form (via the portal) and upload the certification eligibility packet described below within CLI Engage.

As part of the certification eligibility packet, the program must complete the following documents for certification. All forms are available on the [Texas Rising Star Tools](#) page on the Texas Rising Star website.

- Texas Rising Star Screening Form (applicable to the facility type)
- Texas Rising Star FARF self-assessment
- Texas Rising Star CARF for each classroom (optional)
- CQIP (created in collaboration with an assigned mentor within CLI Engage or self-developed by the child care and early learning program)
- Classroom roster document (including classroom name, staff names, and specified age group for each operating classroom)
- Parent and Staff Handbook

Finally, the program must collect several additional documents that are used to verify required and points-based measures for the facility and staff. **These documents must be made available for review prior to (or during) the Initial Assessment.** A detailed list of these documents is included in the [FARF \(All Facilities\)](#).

Two checklists are provided within the FARF. The first refers to measures that are required for certification. The second refers to points-based measures. Programs are not required to meet all the points-based measures. **If the program does not have the document on the checklist for a points-based measure, the assessor will score that measure as a zero.**

Programs are asked to submit a copy of each checklist with their request for certification as an attestation that they will have the documents available for review—either submitted electronically via CLI Engage or on-site at the time of assessment. If the program uses the WFR, the assessor will verify applicable uploaded items electronically through the registry. Any documents submitted by the program must accurately depict the program’s regular daily staffing and classroom composition.

After Texas Rising Star assessor staff receives the applicable documents and confirms the program’s eligibility, the CAE will contact the program within 20 calendar days with an estimated time frame for scheduling the Initial Assessment. Assessors will screen the program for licensing deficiencies and corrective and/or adverse actions before the Initial Assessment.

Recertification Process

Recertification must occur at or before the end of the three-year Texas Rising Star certification cycle. Texas Rising Star–certified programs undergoing the recertification process must complete [Steps 3 and 4](#) as described in Texas Rising Star Certification Process.

To ensure that recertification is conducted before the end of the three-year certification cycle, these materials must be submitted by a child care and early learning program via its CLI Engage account at least three months before the three-year anniversary of certification. Late submission of the recertification materials could delay the program’s recertification. A full, on-site recertification assessment is then conducted.

U.S. Department of Defense and Nationally Accredited Early Learning Programs

U.S. Department of Defense–Operated Child Care and Early Learning Programs

Facilities 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 facilities receive Four-Star certification without requiring submittal of a request for certification or an assessment. DoD-operated facilities are not subject to or monitored by CCR and, therefore, are not subject to the screening process. Additionally, DoD-operated facilities are not subject to the unannounced annual monitoring visit or the three-year recertification visit. Please note that programs who participate in the Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood (MCCYN) program are not considered DoD-operated as they are regulated and monitored by CCR. These programs are required by the DoD to be nationally accredited and would fall under the guidelines for TWC-recognized nationally accredited programs. For more information about MCCYN, visit Child Care Aware of America’s [Military Programs](#) web page.

Effective October 3, 2022, Texas began participation in the MCCYN-Plus program. This program allows Texas Rising Star Three- and Four-Star programs to participate in the MCCYN-Plus program. Child care and early learning programs in Texas that have the MCCYN-Plus designation are not required to be nationally accredited and would fall under the Texas Rising Star Certification Guidelines for non-nationally accredited programs. For more information about MCCYN-Plus, visit Child Care Aware of America’s [MCCYN-Plus Initiative](#) web page.

TWC-Recognized National Accreditations

Child care and early learning programs with a TWC-recognized national accreditation will receive a modified Initial Assessment. These facilities must meet Texas Rising Star eligibility requirements and are subject to and monitored by CCR and, therefore, are subject to ongoing screenings of licensing history. Additionally, programs with recognized accreditation are required to comply with the procedures for the annual monitoring visit and recertification assessments detailed in [Section 3](#) of these Guidelines. Texas Rising Star staff will also verify a program’s national accreditation status at least annually.

The following national accreditations are recognized by TWC:

- 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)
- Cognia

- Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI)
- Early Head Start and/or Head Start Programs (regulated by CCR offering wraparound services)
- American Montessori Society (AMS)
- Association Montessori International/USA (AMI/USA)
- Middle States Association (MSA)

National accrediting entities that wish to become recognized by TWC will need to complete the Texas Rising Star Accreditation Recognition Process. Refer to [Section 5: References and Forms](#) for more information.

Certification Process

TWC-recognized nationally accredited child care and early learning programs wishing to participate in Texas Rising Star are required to complete and submit the following at initial assessment and upon recertification:

- Texas Rising Star Certification Request Form (via the [portal](#)) – for Initial Assessment only
- Texas Rising Star Screening Form, applicable to the facility type
- Copy of current, valid national accreditation certificate
- CQIP developed in partnership with a Texas Rising Star mentor or self-developed by the child care and early learning program

Certification and Recertification Process

Initial Assessment for Nationally Accredited Facilities

Upon receipt of the documents for certification, nationally accredited facilities will receive a modified Initial Assessment, in which the assessor observes and scores Categories 2 and 4 for all classrooms. These facilities are subject to and monitored by CCR and, therefore, are subject to the screening process and annual unannounced monitoring visits.

Recertification for Nationally Accredited Facilities

Recertification must occur on or before the end of the three-year certification cycle. All nationally accredited programs are required to have a modified recertification assessment on or before the end of the three-year certification cycle.

At recertification, all accredited programs must complete the steps described in the Texas Rising Star Certification Process for TWC-recognized nationally accredited facilities.

CLI Engage—Free Online Resources for Texas Rising Star Programs

TWC has partnered with CLI at the University of Texas Health Science Center—Houston to provide an online platform—CLI Engage—for child care and early learning programs pursuing Texas Rising Star certification and for those that have already attained certification. CLI Engage offers free professional development tools and resources to improve the quality of child care and early education that programs provide.

CLI Engage hosts free professional development courses, offers child progress monitoring tools, and provides a classroom activity collection for Texas Rising Star–certified programs and programs pursuing certification. Program directors can track completion of staff professional development in language and literacy instruction; science, technology, and engineering instruction; classroom management; and more. Teachers have access to hundreds of lesson plans for [classroom activities](#) that address key early learning domains and are available in both English and Spanish. Many activities also include video exemplars to

help teachers learn best practices for implementing lessons. Additionally, teachers have access to age-appropriate child assessment tools that provide real data to target instruction and monitor child progress over time.

To access CLI Engage resources and tools for Texas Rising Star programs, programs must register. Programs will be invited via email invitation from CLI or the assigned mentor after expressing interest in achieving Texas Rising Star. A link in the email invitation will go to the CLI Engage login screen. After logging in to CLI Engage, the user will be taken to the school summary page, where information about their program can be reviewed and documents may be submitted.

Texas Rising Star mentors use program information on CLI Engage to provide targeted technical assistance. CLI Engage provides a certification management and technical assistance tracking system for Texas Rising Star mentors and assessors. Texas Rising Star assessors use CLI Engage to capture scores and generate reports on all Texas Rising Star measures after all assessments. Texas Rising Star mentors use these reports to generate CQIPs through the CLI Engage online platform.

For more detailed information about CLI Engage, visit the [CLI Engage](#) website.

Considerations for Programs Adhering to Specific Early Learning Philosophies

Many child care and early learning programs follow specific early learning philosophies such as Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf, or faith-based philosophies. Texas Rising Star certification criteria support the participation of such programs.

Programs may have their curriculum reviewed by the CAE to ensure that their curriculum aligns with developmentally appropriate standards. The CAE will complete the applicable curriculum checklists (based on age range), which are designed to recognize curricula that follow a scope and sequence of learning and development and are responsive to individual children's needs. More information about scope and sequence of early learning and development is available in the [Texas Infant, Toddler, And Three-Year-Old Early Learning Guidelines](#), Texas' early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers, and in the [Texas Prekindergarten Guidelines](#) for three- and four-year-old children.

Additionally, programs that follow certain philosophies will find that they will earn high scores in certain categories for their emphasis on diversity, warm and responsive caregiving, and children's access to real items. Faith-based, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf, and Montessori programs should work with their assigned mentors to understand the scoring methodology and how their philosophies align with Texas Rising Star.

Logo and Outreach Materials

In 2021, TWC updated the Texas Rising Star logo and rebranded the program with new graphics and a new color scheme. With this change came revisions to numerous outreach materials provided by TWC and the Boards, including the [Texas Rising Star Program brochure](#) and the [Texas Rising Star Parent brochure](#).

Boards and early learning programs must comply with the requirements set forth in [WD Letter 03-22](#), issued January 24, 2022, and titled "Use of the New Texas Rising Star Rebrand Materials," when using the logo for outreach materials. Child care and early learning programs may use the logo alongside their assessed star-level graphic to indicate their participation and certification within Texas Rising Star to the community and families they serve. Beginning in late 2024, all certified programs will be provided a

digital toolkit to support their use of the Texas Rising Star logo and outreaching families about the program's certification status. Boards may choose to provide child care and early learning programs with additional outreach materials, such as banners, posters, or window decals to assist in consumer education and outreach for the certified programs in their Board areas.

Section 3: Types of Program Assessments

Texas Rising Star requires several types of on-site visits to assess and monitor the ongoing quality of Texas Rising Star–certified child care and early learning programs. Texas Rising Star assessors evaluate the program as a whole with the FARF and each classroom with the age-appropriate CARF by scoring each of the applicable measures specific to the facility type and/or the classroom’s age group. Certified programs must be aware that during any assessment following an Initial Assessment, if structural measures are not met, the program will be placed on [suspension status](#). CLI Engage uses the program’s scores from each assessment to generate reports that mentors may use to help refine the program’s CQIP.

All assessments, except the annual monitoring visit, Recertification assessment, and SIA assessment, must be formally requested by the child care and early learning program through the online [Certification Request Form](#) found on the [Texas Rising Star Tools](#) web page.

Except for the required annual monitoring visit, assessors will provide programs with a **two-week window** during which an unannounced visit will occur. Programs should work with their assessor if there are any specific times during the two-week window that would be poor for a visit (for example, if the majority of the staff is out, classes will be on a field trip, or it is picture day).

The effective date of certification for any assessment will fall on the date the assessment results are finalized. However, the enhanced rate will not be effective until the first payment period following certification.

Initial Assessment

The Initial Assessment is a full assessment of all Texas Rising Star measures. The assessor confirms that all required measures, such as written policies, are verified. The assessor assesses the points-based measures, such as teacher-child interactions and environments, in observation blocks of one to one-and-a-half hours per classroom. Programs may not become certified with only structural (required) measures reviewed. This type of assessment is requested by Entry Level–designated programs seeking initial certification and by programs that are returning to CCS as a certified program. For nationally accredited programs, only Categories 2 and 4 are assessed for all classrooms.

Entry Level–designated programs that are unable to achieve certification after an initial assessment remain Entry Level and may request a Category Reassessment.

This type of assessment may also be requested by certified programs that are in suspension status seeking certification.

Annual Monitoring Visit

The annual monitoring visit (annual monitoring) is unannounced and must be conducted before the yearly anniversary date of a program’s Texas Rising Star certification start date. Programs will receive two annual monitoring visits during the duration of their three-year certification period.

Unannounced annual monitoring is required by [§809.133\(d\)\(1\)](#)—there is no two-week window for annual monitoring visits, and the timing is at the sole discretion of Texas Rising Star assessor staff. Before an annual monitoring visit, the assessor will complete the appropriate Texas Rising Star Screening Form to review the program’s recent CCR licensing history and determine whether there are any impacts on the program’s certification status or mentoring needs.

If a program declines an annual monitoring visit upon the assessor's arrival, the assessor informs the program in writing that an annual monitoring visit is a requirement of Texas Rising Star and will occur within the next six weeks, citing these Guidelines and [§809.133\(d\)\(1\)](#). In this correspondence, the assessor also informs the program that failure to comply when the assessor arrives will result in being placed on suspension status and the program will be required to wait six months to request a certification assessment.

Classroom Observations

The assessor will observe and assess 50 percent of a program's classrooms, including at least one classroom for each age group and any new classrooms added since the previous visit. Newly added classrooms and classrooms in which the teacher has changed will be prioritized for observations.

The assessor will spend at least one hour in each observed classroom during annual monitoring visits. The assessor may observe for an additional 30 minutes in a classroom to ensure all measures can be scored accurately.

Director and Staff Training and Qualifications

During the annual monitoring, the assessor reviews all staff files. If, during the on-site visit, the assessor discovers that a change in director occurred and the current director does not meet the requirements of the program's current star level, then the program will be placed on a [Service Improvement Agreement \(SIA\)](#) for six months to assist the program with retaining the current star level. Additionally, the same process would occur for programs that had staff turnover between visits. All new staff members' qualifications are reviewed and scored as applicable.

Results of the Annual Monitoring Visit

Results of the annual monitoring will not affect the program's star-level certification. Rather, the scores are used to develop a CQIP (or an SIA, as applicable) to help the program maintain or increase its star level.

An annual monitoring can also result in the observation of significant improvements in a program's quality of care. In these cases, Texas Rising Star staff will work with the director to determine whether a future full assessment to increase the star level is appropriate (see [Star-Level Evaluation](#) in this section).

Recertification Assessment

Texas Rising Star certification lasts three years. The Recertification Assessment will occur no later than three years to the month of the previous full-site assessment and certification for any Texas Rising Star-certified program.

Except for programs with TWC-recognized national accreditation, the recertification assessment requires that 100 percent of classrooms are assessed, all required measures are verified, and all points-based measures are scored for all categories. For nationally accredited programs, all classrooms are assessed for Categories 2 and 4 only.

A program's star level before the Recertification Assessment does not affect the assessment result; programs may lose, gain, or maintain a star level as a result of the Recertification Assessment.

Texas Rising Star-certified programs will be automatically scheduled for a Recertification Assessment by the CAE. However, they are responsible for uploading the required documents to include the completed Texas Rising Star Screening Form, the FARF self-assessment, and additional structural measure documents (such as parent and staff handbooks, staff training records or a classroom roster) no

later than three months before the three-year anniversary from the Texas Rising Star certification end date.

The recertification process slightly differs for nationally accredited facilities. Please see the [section](#) specific to these programs for more information.

Star-Level Evaluation

Texas Rising Star Two- and Three-Star programs may make significant improvements across Texas Rising Star measures that could result in a higher star-level certification upon reassessment. In these cases, the program may request a Star-Level Evaluation to determine the new star-level certification. Star-Level Evaluations are conducted upon mutual agreement between the Texas Rising Star–certified program and the mentor and may occur at any time. Star-Level Evaluations are full assessments of all classrooms, categories, and applicable measures.

Because the Star-Level Evaluation is a full assessment, the three-year recertification cycle resets to the date of the Star-Level Evaluation (that is, the date of the Initial Assessment is no longer used to determine the recertification date), regardless of the star level resulting from the Star-Level Evaluation.

This type of assessment may be requested by certified Two- or Three-Star programs seeking a higher star level.

Note: Nationally accredited programs may request a Star-Level Evaluation, which will include assessing all classrooms for Categories 2 and 4.

Category Reassessment

After any full assessment such as an Initial, Recertification or Star-Level Evaluation, programs may request, within 30 days from the Texas Rising Star certification effective date, that a reassessment of not more than two of the program’s lowest-rated categories be conducted without requiring a reassessment of the other categories. If a program 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 programs under this provision will be completed within 60 days of the request. Only one Category Reassessment can be requested per full assessment.

For nationally accredited Texas Rising Star–certified programs, a Category Reassessment may be requested following the same protocols detailed above; however, only one category is chosen for reassessment—either Category 2 or 4. Changes in director or staff will not require assessment of Category 1: Director and Staff Qualifications for nationally accredited programs.

This type of assessment may be requested by a program who has recently received a full assessment, regardless of certification status, and has 1–2 categories that scored poorly.

Note: A Texas Rising Star–certified program that is on Texas Rising Star probation or has had a loss of a star level due to licensing violations is not eligible for a Category Reassessment.

Facility Changes

There are varying types of changes a child care and early learning program may go through while being Texas Rising Star certified. These changes may affect the type of care that is being provided, requiring action by the Board and/or assessor.

- **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/program opens a new facility within the same city, ZIP code, or county to expand and add classrooms or age groups served.
- **Facility splits** are defined as a facility continuing to operate at an existing location while the owner/program opens a new facility within the same city, ZIP code, or county and moves a subset of the staff and the children served to the new facility. A facility split also involves a modification of the current classroom structure and staffing.
- **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 program 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.
- **Facility-type changes** are defined as a program changing facility type (for example, changing from a registered child care home to a licensed child care home). A facility-type change may alter the current composition of director or staff and may involve an increase in capacity or age groups served.
- **Facility ownership changes** are defined as a program changing owners, which may alter the current composition of staff or current policies and procedures.

When a facility incurs one of the noted facility changes above, it must notify CCR and may initiate a new CCR facility application and obtain a new license number from CCR. The facility may or may not carry its licensing history with it to the new license number.

A Texas Rising Star–certified program that experiences **any** one of these changes (expansion, split, facility type, changes in ownership, or a move to a new location within the same city, ZIP code, or county in which the program is currently operating) does not need to have 12 months of CCR history in this situation in order to retain its star level during the move or change, regardless of permit type issued (full or initial). The program will undergo a Texas Rising Star reassessment per the [Facility Change Rubric](#) within the initial three-month period from either the date the new CCR permit associated with the change is issued or the date the change occurred if a new permit is not issued.

The program’s new Texas Rising Star level will be based on the results of the reassessment. The CCR history that is available under the permit before the change will be used when completing the Texas Rising Star Screening Form for these assessments, if applicable.

Any program that receives an initial permit due to a facility change must receive a permanent (full) permit within 12 months of the change, otherwise the program will be placed on suspension status.

A certified program must submit this type of assessment request once the new permit has been issued or the change has occurred if no new permit is issued. Programs that undergo a name change only are not subject to reassessment.

Reconsideration

Rule [§809.135](#) requires TWC’s assessment entity, the CAE, to ensure a process for reconsideration of facility assessment, as the Texas Rising Star program is not subject to TWC Chapter 823 Integrated Complaints, Hearings, and Appeals rules.

A reconsideration may be requested by a program that feels that their 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 category and/or measure as requested by the

program. In responding to a reconsideration request from a program, Boards may make additional mentoring services available to assist programs in meeting Texas Rising Star standards.

Boards must make programs aware of the CAE's policies regarding the reconsideration process, time restrictions on requesting a reconsideration, the number of reconsiderations allowed, and the elements eligible for reconsideration.

A reconsideration assessment may be requested after any assessment, including annual monitoring visits. When requesting this assessment, a child care and early learning program must provide specific details of which items are being requested for reconsideration (such as specific measures, specific categories, or the whole assessment).

Director and Staff Changes

Texas Rising Star–certified programs should report to Texas Rising Star mentor staff when there is:

- a change of director; or
- staff turnover that may cause the Texas Rising Star–certified program to fall below its current star level based on the program's completion of the Staff Qualifications and Training section of the FARF.

Staff positions that have changed will be reassessed at the program's next annual monitoring or next Texas Rising Star assessment using the qualifications of the facility's new director and/or staff. New directors are required to meet the CQIP requirements prior to the program's next annual monitoring or next Texas Rising Star assessment. The new director and mentor should work together to ensure understanding and participation in CQIP.

If the change in director or staff results in the program not meeting the requirements of the program's current star level after an annual monitoring visit, the program will be placed on an SIA for six months to provide time for the program to address the shortfall and retain its star level.

Texas Workforce Registry

Child care and early learning programs participating in Texas Rising Star are expected to participate in the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System's (TECPDS) WFR. The WFR is an online system in which early childhood professionals can store and access their education and employment history, as well as the training hours they have completed.

During the certification process for Texas Rising Star, Board-designated TECPDS subject matter experts (SMEs) and mentors are available to assist programs and their staff in entering staff information into the WFR. The Board's designated TECPDS SME and mentors will provide ongoing support to encourage and support programs to use the WFR, and assessors will review the program's use of the WFR at the initial assessment, each annual monitoring, and any subsequent assessment visits. Programs that elect not to receive mentoring services are still required to have their center director account established within the WFR and can receive the TECPDS SME's support.

If a program fails to use the WFR and to encourage staff to use it, the TECPDS SME or mentor may provide technical assistance and work with the program to include use of the WFR in its CQIP.

More information about a Board's designated TECPDS SME is provided within [WD Letter 10-23, Change 1](#), issued February 15, 2024, and titled "Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System Board Training and Participation—Update."

CLASS® Option for Category 2 Observations

The [CLASS® \(Classroom Assessment Scoring System®\)](#) is a program-quality assessment and professional development system for measuring and improving teacher-child interactions.

While the CLASS® assessment tool does not measure the identical teacher-child interactions that Texas Rising Star measures, it is an evidence-based tool that examines substantially similar items. A crosswalk of this alignment is provided within [WD Letter 06-22, Change 1, Attachment 1](#), issued March 18, 2022, and titled “Texas Rising Star and CLASS® Crosswalk: Category 2.” If an early learning program has received a CLASS® assessment for each classroom within the most recent 12 months, the results of those assessments may be replaced for the observation and scoring each classroom receives for Category 2: Teacher-Child Interactions.

The CLASS® observation must be completed within the most recent 12 months of the Texas Rising Star assessment or annual monitoring visit by a certified CLASS® evaluator for that age group and the CLASS® evaluator may not also be the early learning program’s mentor.

If the early learning program chooses to have its CLASS® scores replace its Texas Rising Star Category 2 scores, the program will upload those scores into CLI Engage and the assessor will enter those scores into the applicable assessment per the CLI Engage User Guide. The following table indicates how the CLASS® scoring is aligned with Texas Rising Star scoring:

CLASS® Scoring	Texas Rising Star Score for Category 2
LOW—Score of 1–2	LOW—Score of 0–1
MID—Score of 3–5	MID—Score of 2
HIGH—Score of 6–7	HIGH—Score of 3

Section 4: Continuous Quality Improvement

Texas Rising Star provides professional development resources and mentoring to sustain and improve the quality of child care and early learning in Texas Rising Star–certified facilities. Texas Rising Star–certified programs have access to three types of technical assistance: CQIPs, SIAs, and targeted assistance for programs on Texas Rising Star screening impacts, to include probation or suspension status. The three types of assistance are summarized below.

Continuous Quality Improvement Plans

- Why?** Generated upon initial interest in achieving Texas Rising Star certification as well as from scores on Texas Rising Star measures from any certification assessment, CQIPs provide a road map for continued quality improvement.
- How?** CQIPs are targeted toward Texas Rising Star measures that, via collaboration, the mentor/program believe will help the program maintain or improve its star level. Programs choosing to not participate in mentoring services must create their CQIPs per the [Self-Developed CQIP Guide](#) available on the [Texas Rising Star Tools](#) tab on the Texas Rising Star website.
- How long?** CQIPs are required, ongoing, and continually updated based on mentor recommendations and program goals.
- Results?** CQIPs may determine the decision for a Star-Level Evaluation Assessment—a full assessment that may be requested if the program and mentor believe that the program is ready to move to a higher star level.

Service Improvement Agreements

- Why?** SIAs go into effect when a program fails to maintain its certified star level at the annual monitoring visit. SIAs give programs an opportunity to receive mentoring and supports before potentially losing a star level of Texas Rising Star certification at the next recertification assessment.
- How?** Technical assistance is available via the mentor, documented within the CQIP, and targeted toward the Texas Rising Star categories that led to the SIA.
- How long?** SIAs last a mandatory six months.
- Results?** To determine the new star level, an SIA assessment for all classrooms will be conducted within 30 days of the SIA end date for the Texas Rising Star categories found deficient. Programs with SIA assessments that result in a lower star level will have the opportunity to revise their CQIPs with goals focused on increasing the star level.

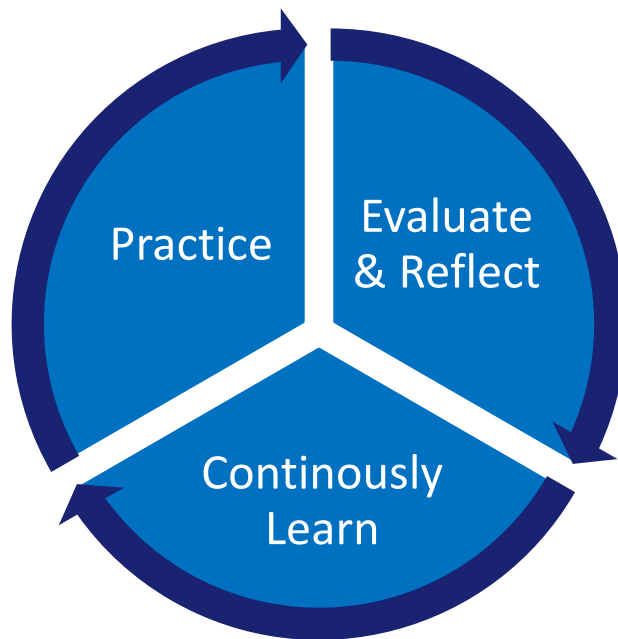
Targeted Assistance for Texas Rising Star Screening Impacts

- Why?** Child care and early learning programs are placed on a screening impact, such as a star level drop, probation or suspension status based on results within Sections 2 through Section 5 of the facility’s screening form.
- How?** Targeted technical assistance is available via a program’s mentor and documented within its CQIP to address CCR licensing deficiencies.
- How long?** Probations, suspensions, and star-level drops last a mandatory six months.
- Results?** If a program is cited for additional CCR deficiencies within a six-month impact, it will receive additional impacts related to its current status (which may include being placed

on a second consecutive probation with a concurrent star-level drop impact), be placed on suspension status, or receive an extension of suspension status.

Continuous Quality Improvement

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) provides a systemic and intentional process for improving quality in child care and early learning programs and increasing positive outcomes for children. Texas Rising Star–certified programs and Entry Level–designated programs have the ability to work closely with a Texas Rising Star mentor to engage in a cyclical process that includes self-reflection, continuous learning, practice, and evaluation. CQI helps programs attain certification, achieve increasingly higher levels of quality, sustain high quality over time, and ensure high quality across classrooms and age groups.



For Texas Rising Star–Certified Programs

CQIPs are designed to assist programs with increasing the quality of the child care and early learning experiences they provide with the goal of maintaining or increasing a program’s star level. A CQIP contains improvement goals for a targeted number of Texas Rising Star measures and/or categories, as well as resources to help reach those improvement goals, including professional development coursework, coaching from a Texas Rising Star mentor, and identification of other available resources and training material.

CQIPs can also address key areas for improvement that are not directly measured by Texas Rising Star, but are still important indicators of quality, such as implementing inclusive caregiving practices, working with English language learners, and developing policies to prevent suspension and expulsion. Mentors may work with programs to determine their specific needs and the best goals to incorporate in the CQIP over time. Mentors may provide direct support to help programs meet their goals or they may help identify and access appropriate resources to support improvement efforts. Mentors and programs may work together to reach an agreement on what goals and strategies are included in the CQIP.

CQIPs for Texas Rising Star child care and early learning programs are developed upon initial acknowledgment of desire to participate in Texas Rising Star and again after the first full assessment. CQIPs may be further refined during annual visits with the assistance of the mentor. Additional

technical assistance plans for Texas Rising Star–certified programs are automatically generated after each assessment for each classroom and the facility as a whole and may be used to further refine the CQIP. Participation in a CQIP is required.

A set of professional development resources is available to Texas Rising Star child care and early learning programs, including many hours of online learning modules featuring extensive video-based demonstrations of effective instructional practices for responsive interaction, language and literacy, mathematics, and science. Through the CQIP, mentors may recommend specific courses for Texas Rising Star child care and early learning programs and their teachers to complete depending on their quality improvement needs.

Mentors will be provided to work with directors and their staff on all Texas Rising Star measures, both points-based and structural. The amount of time a mentor spends on-site at the facility will vary based on the mentor’s caseload and the program’s needs. At a minimum, the mentor will visit the program once a month, either in person or through a scheduled call or virtual meeting.

For Programs Not Currently Texas Rising Star Certified

Child care and early learning programs that are not yet eligible for Texas Rising Star certification or that may not be ready to request an assessment may still participate in technical assistance provided by their local Board and/or assigned mentor. Some professional development resources are available through the CLI [website](#). Contact the appropriate Board or the program’s assigned mentor for more information. At a minimum, the mentor will visit the program once a month, either in person or through a scheduled call or virtual meeting.

Self-Developed CQIPs

Each child care and early learning program is assigned a mentor upon initial interest ([Step 1 of the Certification Process](#)); however, programs may elect to move through the Texas Rising Star certification and maintenance process without a mentor. The program is still responsible for meeting all eligibility, CQIP, and ongoing requirements (annual monitoring visits and recertification, including updated CQIPs). To assist these programs in creating a self-developed CQIP, the [CQIP Desk Aid](#) is available on the [Texas Rising Star Tools](#) tab on the [Texas Rising Star](#) website. The self-developed CQIP must be submitted with the Certification Request documents and updated at Recertification, as needed or applicable. Mentors will still be available to provide resources and supports.

Service Improvement Agreement

Texas Rising Star assessors conduct annual monitoring to ensure that Texas Rising Star–certified programs are maintaining the level of quality that is reflected in their current star-level certification. If an assessor finds that a program is unable to maintain certified (calculated) star level during these visits, an SIA will go into effect. SIAs are six-month mandatory agreements designed to assist Texas Rising Star–certified programs in maintaining their current star level. Technical assistance through the SIA focuses on the Texas Rising Star categories that resulted in a **lower overall calculated star level** during annual monitoring (not necessarily a lower category score). SIAs are put in place alongside the program’s current CQIP. For self-developed CQIPs, the program will be required to provide an updated CQIP to address this impact.

Texas Rising Star–certified programs retain their current star level while on an SIA. After the six-month SIA, an 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 assessment. SIA assessments may yield a higher or lower star level and are not considered a full assessment unless all categories are assessed.

This type of assessment is **not** requested by the program and will occur within 30 days of the end of the SIA six-month period.

Texas Rising Star Probation

A Texas Rising Star–certified program may be put on Texas Rising Star probation for six months based on licensing deficiencies incurred. Probation A is assigned when the program is cited for any one of the noted licensing deficiencies within Section 4 of the certified screening form. Probation B is assigned when the program has incurred 26–40 total points (when reviewing CCR licensing deficiencies weighted high and/or medium-high cited within the most recent six-month period). Incurring 41 or more total points will result in a loss of Texas Rising Star certification and CCS Provider Agreement; see [§809.132](#).

During either type of probation, a program may receive technical assistance (as noted in its CQIP) from its assigned mentor to assist with licensing issues, as appropriate. Texas Rising Star staff members are not trained by CCR in the minimum standards for licensed child care; therefore, Texas Rising Star staff should collaborate with the program’s CCR representative to ascertain what technical assistance can be provided. For self-developed CQIPs, the program will be required to provide an updated CQIP to address this impact.

If a Four-Star or Three-Star Texas Rising Star–certified program is cited for any deficiencies within Section 4 (while on Probation A) or Section 5 (while on Probation B) of the screening form while on probation, the program will lose a star level and be placed on a second consecutive probation. The program is eligible for reinstatement to its former star level at the end of a six-month period if deficiencies within Section 4 (while on second Probation A) or Section 5 (while on second Probation B) are not cited. If any new deficiencies are cited during this second probationary period, the program will be placed on suspension status.

If a Two-Star Texas Rising Star–certified program is cited for any deficiencies within Section 4 (while on Probation A) or Section 5 (while on Probation B) of the screening form, the program will be placed on suspension status.

A program that has been placed on probation must finish out the six-month probation (and not be placed on an additional probation) to be eligible for a Star-Level Evaluation and/or Category Reassessment. The program may request a Star-Level Evaluation or Category Reassessment during that six-month time frame; however, the assessment may not be conducted until the conclusion of the probationary period.

Losing a Star Level and Texas Rising Star Suspension Status

There are several circumstances that may result in a Texas Rising Star–certified program either losing a star level or being placed on Texas Rising Star suspension status, as described in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2.

The impact of a child care and early learning program losing a star level will last for six months at a minimum. A program may return to its previous star level if it meets the requirements of the determination for the drop, which includes not receiving any additional specified licensing deficiencies within the six-month time frame related to the star-level drop.

Suspension status occurs when a certified program falls below the Two-Star level. A child care and early learning program that is placed on suspension status is still considered as participating in Texas Rising Star, but it is no longer considered certified and does not qualify for the Entry Level designation time frame. Pursuant to [§809.132\(h\)\(1\)](#), the program is required to maintain the Entry Level points threshold

during the suspension status and will be reviewed monthly for Entry Level points threshold compliance. For self-developed CQIPS, the program will be required to provide an updated CQIP to address this impact.

A child care and early learning program on suspension status will be eligible for reassessment after six months following the start of its suspension, as long as no additional specified licensing deficiencies noted within Section 3 and/or Section 4 of the screening form are cited during the suspension period. The program must comply with eligibility requirements and request a reassessment via the online request form within 15 months of the suspension impact. The assessor must document details of a program's suspension status in CLI's Engage Event Log to ensure that proper procedures are followed for these situations. A program that is unable (or ineligible) to move out of suspension status by the ninth month of the suspension will not receive new CCS family referrals, unless the child care program is located in a child care desert or serves an underserved population, as defined and approved by TWC. Boards must ensure that intake is appropriately closed and documented in TWC's child care management system. For more information about this request, see [WD Letter 12-24](#).

Any child care and early learning program that has been placed on suspension status due to not meeting structural measures during a full assessment may request a Category Reassessment, per the timeline guidance for that assessment, via the online request form. However, if the program again fails to meet structural measures after the Category Reassessment, the program can request a full assessment via the online request form after six months from the start of the suspension status. Any request for assessment following suspension status is subject to the program demonstrating CCR licensing history compliance.

Any impacts placed on a program will be noted within CLI's Engage Event Log (as directed) and via the [Texas Rising Star Impacts Notice form](#) found in [Section 5: References and Forms](#).

A program that is unable to meet eligibility for certification by the end of the suspension time frame will receive a written Notice of Termination at the beginning of the 15th month. The Notice of Termination will provide for a 30-day period prior to the termination date (30 days post the suspension time frame) of the program's CCS Provider Agreement during which time the Board will work with enrolled CCS families to identify eligible child care and early learning programs to which they may transfer. Child care and early learning programs in this situation must meet Texas Rising Star—certification eligibility and screening requirements and be assessed at least at a Two-Star certification level to return to providing CCS. Boards may offer mentoring to these programs during this time if the Boards' mentor caseloads allow and should have a modified mentoring agreement in place if so. Programs returning to CCS after termination due to noncompliance with suspension will need to complete the following steps:

- 1) Create and implement a [Self-Developed CQIP](#) until eligible and ready to request assessment
- 2) Submit an [Interest Form](#) (this notifies CLI and its Board that a program is ready to return to CCS and CLI Engage)
- 3) Upload the required documents within CLI Engage, including those needed for scoring Category 1 and 3
- 4) Request an Initial Assessment through the online [Certification Request Form](#) (this notifies CLI that a program has uploaded its documents to CLI Engage and is ready for assessment)

The Board and the CAE will confirm the child care and early learning program's eligibility for both providing CCS and for Texas Rising Star and communicate any applicable next steps. This may include the Board assigning a mentor to verify CQIP requirements have been met, entering into a modified CCS Provider and/or Mentoring Agreement until certification is awarded, and providing basic technical assistance prior to the assessment.

Table 4.1: Initial Impact of Certain Deficiencies on Texas Rising Star Status

Impact	TRS Applicant	TRS Two-Star Program	TRS Three-Star Program	TRS Four-Star Program	Duration/Reassessment Eligibility
CCR Corrective Action; Board Corrective Action; or TWC Notice of Freeze	Not eligible	Suspension status	Suspension status	Suspension status	Eligible to request a reassessment six months from suspension status; may not currently be on CCR Corrective Action, Board Corrective Action, and/or TWC Notice of Freeze
Cited for CCR firearms deficiency	Not eligible	Suspension status	Suspension status	Suspension status	Eligible to request a reassessment six months from suspension status
More than 40 total points (high- and/or medium-high-weighted CCR deficiencies)	Not eligible	Suspension status and immediate loss of CCS Provider Agreement	Suspension status and immediate loss of CCS Provider Agreement	Suspension status and immediate loss of CCS Provider Agreement	Eligible to request a reassessment once the program falls under the points threshold and can meet the initial certification screening criteria
Any star-level-drop deficiency* (Texas Rising Star Guidelines)	Not eligible	Suspension status	Dropped to Two-Star level for six months	Dropped to Three-Star level for six months	Eligible to be reinstated at former level if no denoted star-level drop deficiencies are received within six-month reduction time frame
Any Probation A deficiencies (Texas Rising Star Guidelines)	Not eligible	Six-month probation	Six-month probation	Six-month probation	Eligible to have probation ended if no Probation A deficiencies are received within the six-month probation time frame
Probation B 26-40 total points (high- and/or medium-high-weighted CCR deficiencies)	Not eligible	Six-month probation	Six-month probation	Six-month probation	Eligible to have Probation B ended if no additional high- and/or medium-high-weighted CCR deficiencies are received within the six-month probation time frame

Note: The impact of star-level-drop deficiencies is applied for each deficiency cited. For example: On September 1, 2024, a Four-Star program receives two star-level-drop deficiencies. The first star-level-drop deficiency moves the Four-Star program to Three-Star certification. The second star-level-drop deficiency results in loss of an additional star level, moving the program to Two-Star certification. A program at Three-Star certification that receives two star-level drop-deficiencies will be placed on suspension status.

Table 4.2: Impact of *Additional* Deficiencies on Texas Rising Star Status

Current Impact Status	Additional Impact	TRS Two-Star Program	TRS Three-Star Program	TRS Four-Star Program	Duration
Star-level reduction	Citation of additional star-level-drop deficiency	Suspension status	Dropped to Two-Star level	N/A	Eligible to be reinstated at former level or reassessed if no denoted deficiencies are received within second six-month reduction time frame.
First Probation A (specified deficiencies)	New specified CCR deficiencies (< 41 total points of high- and/or medium-high-weighted)	Suspension status	Second probation (consecutive) and dropped to Two-Star level for six months	Second probation (consecutive) and dropped to Three-Star level for six months	Eligible to be reinstated at former level or reassessed if no denoted deficiencies are received within second six-month reduction time frame.
First Probation B (total)	New high- or medium-high-weighted CCR deficiencies (< 41 total points of high- and/or medium-high-weighted)	Suspension status	Second probation (consecutive) and dropped to Two-Star level for six months	Second probation (consecutive) and dropped to Three-Star level for six months	Eligible to be reinstated at former level or reassessed if no high- or medium-high-weighted CCR deficiencies are received within second six-month reduction time frame.
Second Probation A (specified deficiencies)	New specified CCR deficiencies (< 41 total points of high- and/or medium-high-weighted)	Suspension status	Suspension status	Suspension status	Eligible to be reassessed six months from start of suspension status if no specified deficiencies are received within those six months.
Second Probation B (total)	New high- and/or medium-high-weighted CCR deficiencies (< 41 total points of high- and/or medium-high-weighted)	Suspension status	Suspension status	Suspension status	Eligible to be reassessed 6 months from start of suspension status if no high- or medium-high-weighted CCR deficiencies are received within those six months.

Termination of CCS or Mentoring Services

There may be situations when either the CCS Provider Agreement or Texas Rising Star Mentoring Agreement must be terminated based on a specific noncompliance, as discussed herein, or due to a program voluntarily withdrawing.

Entry Level—designated child care and early learning programs that voluntarily withdraw or are terminated from CCS may request to return to CCS once they meet Entry Level requirements and will be provided the amount of time remaining on their initial 24-month time frame to become Texas Rising Star—certified. Example: A program is designated as Entry Level from January 2024–October 2024, which is 10 months out of the 24 months allowed; when it returns to CCS, it will have 14 months to achieve certification.

Certified child care and early learning programs (Two-, Three-, or Four-Star) may be terminated from CCS due to noncompliance with [§809.132\(h\)\(1\)](#), failure to maintain Entry Level points threshold during suspension status, and [§809.132\(i\)](#), failure to obtain certification at the end of suspension status. Additional termination guidance is provided below for each agreement type. Certified child care and early learning programs (Two-, Three-, or Four-Star) that are terminated may request an assessment to become certified again at any time as long as they meet all the Texas Rising Star eligibility and screening form compliance requirements at the time of request. **Note:** These programs do not qualify for the 24-month Entry Level designation time frame.

CCS Provider Agreement—Texas Rising Star Provisions

Prior to termination of a child care program’s CCS Provider Agreement due to noncompliance specific to Texas Rising Star provisions, a Board must document all pertinent incidents of noncompliance, which include:

- determination of illegal or fraudulent conduct; and
- failure to honor the terms of the agreement and related state, federal or local law and regulation.

Noncompliance may result in adverse action, such as the following:

- Board Service Improvement Agreement or Board Corrective Action
- Closing of provider intake
- Nonpayment or recoupment of funds, when applicable
- Termination or nonrenewal of the CCS Provider Agreement

Texas Rising Star Mentoring Agreement

Prior to termination of a child care program’s Texas Rising Star Mentoring Agreement because of noncompliance with the Mentoring Agreement, a Board must document all pertinent incidents of noncompliance. A program’s noncompliance may include:

- consistent unresponsiveness to a mentor by a program administrator;
- not allowing a mentor to conduct monthly visits; or
- inappropriate conduct by program staff toward a mentor or other Workforce Solutions Office staff members.

Note: Child care and early learning programs will not be terminated from their CCS Provider Agreements for failure to make advancements in the quality improvement strategies outlined in their CQIP or for termination of the Texas Rising Star Mentoring Agreement.

Programs must be provided with a written warning of their noncompliance and an opportunity to address their areas of noncompliance before termination. Child care and early learning programs that have not corrected their areas of noncompliance for the issues identified or that failed to acknowledge the notice will be considered as voluntarily terminating their mentoring agreement with their mentor.

The child care program may terminate the Mentoring Agreement at any time without repercussion to its CCS Provider Agreement; however, the program must continue to comply with the requirements of Texas Rising Star. Programs that have their Texas Rising Star Mentoring Agreement terminated (voluntarily or not) will receive an official written Notice of Termination from their Board acknowledging the ending of the Mentoring Agreement, which will include information about the program's requirements for continued participation in Texas Rising Star as a CCS provider.

Termination of the Mentoring Agreement will require the child care and early learning program to implement a self-directed CQIP in accordance with those requirements as stated in these Guidelines.

Section 5: References and Forms

[Texas Rising Star Certification Request](#): a form for all facility types when requesting initial certification or recertification

[Facility Change Rubric](#): a rubric of requirements for each type of facility change, including the type of change and impacts for compliance or noncompliance

[Continuous Quality Improvement Plan](#): an online form for all facility types when creating goals and action steps to obtain or maintain certification, including requirements for compliance, also available in [Spanish](#)

[Texas Rising Star Impacts Notice](#): a form for all facility types when a change in certification status occurs, including star level drops, probation, and suspension status

Screening Forms

[Texas Rising Star Initial Screening Form—Licensed Child Care Centers](#): a screening form for noncertified licensed child care centers, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[Texas Rising Star Current Screening Form—Licensed Child Care Centers](#): a screening form for certified licensed child care centers, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[Texas Rising Star Initial Screening Form—Licensed/Registered Child Care Homes](#): a screening form for noncertified registered or licensed child care homes, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[Texas Rising Star Current Screening Form—Licensed/Registered Child Care Homes](#): a screening form for certified registered or licensed child care homes, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[Texas Rising Star Initial Screening Form—After-School Programs](#): a screening form for noncertified before-and after-school-only programs, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[Texas Rising Star Current Screening Form—After-School Programs](#): a screening form for certified before-and after-school-only programs, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

Facility Assessment Record Forms

[Facility Assessment Record Form—All Facility Types](#): a scoring form for all facility types that includes all Texas Rising Star measures for Category 1: Director and Staff Education/Experience and Category 3: Program Administration, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[Facility Assessment Record Form—Licensed Child Care Centers](#): a scoring form for licensed child care centers that includes only the Texas Rising Star measures for Category 1: Director and Staff Education/Experience and Category 3: Program Administration that are applicable to licensed child care centers, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[Facility Assessment Record Form—Registered/Licensed Child Care Homes](#): a scoring form for registered/licensed child care homes that includes only the Texas Rising Star measures for Category 1: Director and Staff Education/Experience and Category 3: Program Administration that are applicable to registered/licensed child care homes, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[Facility Assessment Record Form—After-School Programs](#): a scoring form for licensed after-school programs that includes only the Texas Rising Star measures for Category 1: Director and Staff Education/Experience and Category 3: Program Administration that are applicable to licensed after-school programs, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

Classroom Assessment Record Forms

[Classroom Assessment Record Form—All Ages](#): a scoring form for all classroom age groups that includes all of the Texas Rising Star measures for Category 2: Teacher-Child Interactions and Category 4: Indoor/Outdoor Learning Environment, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[Classroom Assessment Record Form—Infants \(0–17 months\)](#): a scoring form for infant (0 to 17 months) classrooms that includes the Texas Rising Star measures for Category 2: Teacher-Child Interactions and Category 4: Indoor/Outdoor Learning Environment that are applicable to infant (0–17 month) classrooms, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

[Classroom Assessment Record Form—Toddler, Preschool, or School Age \(18 months to 12 years\)](#): a scoring form for toddler, preschool, or school-age (18 months to 12 years) classrooms that includes the Texas Rising Star measures for Category 2: Teacher-Child Interactions and Category 4: Indoor/Outdoor Learning Environment that are applicable to toddler, preschool, or school-age (18 months–12 years) classrooms, also available in [Spanish](#) and [Vietnamese](#)

Other Resources

[Accreditation Recognition Application Process](#): a resource for national accreditation entities to refer to when requesting acknowledgment of their standards against Texas Rising Star standards

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Facility Change Rubric

Change	Impact for Compliance	Impact for Noncompliance
Facility Expansion		
Currently certified program opens a second location in the same city, county, or ZIP code	If new facility meets basic eligibility requirements (with the exception of 12 months of CCR history after the change), it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> retains star level of current site; and receives a full assessment within three months of opening. 	If new facility does not meet basic eligibility requirements (CCR history waived), it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not retain star level; and may be assessed once it meets initial screening criteria.
Currently certified program opens a third or more location in the same city, county, or ZIP code	If new facility meets basic eligibility requirements (with the exception of 12 months of CCR history after the change), it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> retains level of the lowest current site's star level; and receives a full assessment within three months of opening. 	If new facility does not meet basic eligibility requirements (CCR history waived), it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not retain star level, and may be assessed once it meets initial screening criteria.
Facility Split		
Currently certified program moves a subset of its staff to a new location in the same city, county, or ZIP code (thus, only a subset of age groups are served at both locations, for example, the current site becomes an infant and toddler center, while the new site becomes a preschool center)	If new facility meets basic eligibility requirements (with the exception of 12 months of CCR history after the change), it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> retains star level of the previous site; and receives a full assessment within three months of the split. <p>Note: the current facility must also be reassessed within three months of the split.</p>	If new facility does not meet basic eligibility requirements (CCR history waived), it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not retain star level; and may be assessed once it meets initial screening criteria.
Facility Moves		
Currently certified program physically moves the location of the program within the same city, county, or ZIP code	If facility continues to meet basic eligibility requirements (with the exception of 12 months of CCR history after the change): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> it retains star level; classrooms previously served (same teacher and age group) are assessed for only Category 4 within three months of move; and new classrooms and teachers are observed for all applicable measures within all categories. 	If new facility does not meet basic eligibility requirements (CCR history waived), it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not retain star level; and may be assessed once it meets initial screening criteria.

Change	Impact for Compliance	Impact for Noncompliance
Ownership Change		
Currently certified program changes ownership	<p>If facility continues to meet basic eligibility requirements (with the exception of 12 months of CCR history after the change), it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retains star level; and • receives a full assessment within three months of the change. 	<p>If new facility does not meet basic eligibility requirements (CCR history waived), it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not retain star level; and • may be assessed once it meets initial screening criteria.
Facility-Type Change		
Currently certified program changes the type of facility it runs (for example, a registered home becomes licensed home or a licensed home becomes a licensed center)	<p>If facility continues to meet basic eligibility requirements (with the exception of 12 months of CCR history after the change), it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • retains star level; and • receives a full assessment within three months of the change. 	<p>If new facility does not meet basic eligibility requirements (CCR history waived), it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not retain star level; and • can be assessed once it meets initial screening criteria.
Changes that May Result in a New License Number		
Currently certified program changes business entity type (such as becoming an LLC or going from for-profit to nonprofit)	<p>If facility continues to meet basic eligibility requirements (with the exception of 12 months of CCR history after the change), no impact is incurred.</p>	<p>If facility does not meet basic eligibility requirements (CCR history waived), it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not retain star level; and • may be assessed once it meets initial screening criteria.
Currently certified program changes program name	<p>If facility continues to meet basic eligibility requirements (with the exception of 12 months of CCR history after the change), no impact is incurred.</p>	<p>If facility does not meet basic eligibility requirements (CCR history waived), it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • does not retain star level; and • may be assessed once it meets initial screening criteria.

Texas Rising Star Impacts Notice

This form acknowledges that the program noted below has been placed on a Texas Rising Star impact as described within the table.

Facility name: _____

CCR license number: _____

Date impact began: _____

Length of impact: _____

From the impact column below, select which impact has occurred and complete the columns as denoted.

Impact	Specified criteria	Reason for impact (evidence)
Star-Level Drop	Denote current star level: ____ Denote new star level: ____	
Probation A or B	Denote which: A or B	
Probation Continued	Denote which: A or B	
Suspension	Denote which: Screening Form or SIA Redetermination	
Service Improvement Agreement	Denote which category: 1,2,3, or 4	

Requirements for eligibility reinstatement

Impact	Requirements for eligibility reinstatement
Star-Level Drop (Screening Form) or Probation	Facility is not cited for specified deficiencies relating to impact.*
Suspension Status	Facility has not been Texas Rising Star for 6 months and meets initial certification requirements (considering previous impacts).*
Service Improvement Agreement	Facility maintains current star level upon assessment of specified categories.

*See [Table 4.1](#) or [Table 4.2](#) in the Texas Rising Star Certification Guidelines for specific information regarding screening impacts reinstatement eligibility.

I understand that for my facility to be removed from this status, the facility must meet the requirements of the eligibility reinstatement applicable to its impact.

Program Signature: _____ Date: _____

TRS Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

Once the required time frame for impact has ended, Texas Rising Star staff will determine whether removal of action is warranted. For screening impacts that are not met, and a new action is placed, a new form is completed.

☐ Met requirement Date ended: _____
☐ Did not meet requirement: ☐ New impact/New form ☐ SIA determined new star level: ____

Program Signature: _____ Date: _____

TRS Staff Signature: _____ Date: _____

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 would be eligible to be certified through a modified Texas Rising Star 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 criteria 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 Texas Rising Star requirements for assessors in TWC Chapter 809 Child Care Services rule §809.134(c). 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
- 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

Texas Rising Star certification includes measures for all age groups served by the Texas Rising Star-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.

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 program 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 period; and
- the monitoring process.

Submission of the Texas Rising Star Crosswalk

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

Assessment of the Texas Rising Star Crosswalk

In the crosswalk, new accreditation entities must demonstrate that all Texas Rising Star Two-Star (required) measures are also required by the accrediting entity.

If the Texas Rising Star Two-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 Texas Rising Star–required measures as part of the entity's accreditation process for Texas.

Scoring of the Texas Rising Star Crosswalk

TWC staff will review and evaluate the submitted crosswalk. If the entity meets the minimum thresholds listed below, the accreditation entity may be recognized within the Texas Rising Star program and eligible for a modified assessment:

Texas Rising Star Category	Accreditation Score Thresholds
Category 1	Accreditation requires all Texas Rising Star Two-Star (required) measures (or entity has submitted a separate assurance process for Texas child care and early learning programs); plus 80 percent of the Texas Rising Star points-based measures per facility type are included in the accreditation measures.
Category 3	Accreditation requires all Texas Rising Star Two-Star (required) measures (or entity has submitted a separate assurance process for Texas child care and early learning programs); plus, 80 percent of Texas Rising Star points-based measures per age group are included in the accreditation measures.

Quick Reference List of Changes

Revisions Approved July 2024 | Revisions Effective September 2024

Historical Perspective: Revised to streamline events and changes within last bullet regarding recent rule changes related to the recent Texas Rising Star Four-Year Review

System for Progressive Quality Improvement: updated link to 2024 Board maximum payment rates

Entry Level Designation:

- Revised guidance regarding
 - the points threshold,
 - time period for CCR history review
 - updated link for WD Letter 23-22, Change 2
- Added guidance regarding
 - requirement to complete an Interest Form,
 - no exceptions or waivers for programs failing to meet points threshold,
 - monthly review of compliance during the final 6-months of Entry Level designation
 - CCS intake opened once in compliance
 - returning to CCS with remaining designation timeframe

Signed Agreements: Clarified guidance on having agreements with the program's local Board and added guidance related to opting out of mentoring services

Texas Rising Star Roles: Updated guidance on procurement of the centralized assessment entity.

Eligibility for Texas Rising Star: Revised to review six months of CCR history

Star-Level Drop: Revised to review six months of CCR history and added new points threshold requirement for initial certification eligibility

Probation Deficiencies: Revised to review six months of CCR history and changes to specific CCR deficiencies that have impact (supervision, ratios, and director responsibilities)

Ongoing Screening Process:

- Revised to denote daily automated screening
- clarified guidance on screening prior to assessment
- Added guidance on impacts captured in CLI Engage automatically transferring to TX3C (once live)

Certification Process:

- Revised and clarified the steps to certification
- Added required documents for submission

DoD Programs: Added three accrediting agencies specific to Montessori and clarified Early Head Start/Head Start

Considerations for Programs with Specific Philosophies: Clarified curriculum review guidance

Logo and Outreach Materials: Added guidance on upcoming digital toolkits for certified programs

Types of Program Assessments:

- Clarified guidance
 - on not meeting structural measures for assessments received after the initial
 - which documents to submit for recertification
- Added guidance
 - requesting assessments via the online request form
 - which type of programs might request each type of assessment
- Revised guidance
 - facility changes that result in an initial permit
 - CAE conducting reconsiderations

Texas Workforce Registry: Added guidance related to the Board’s designated TECPDS subject matter experts

CLASS® Option for Category 2: Revised guidance on submission of CLASS® observation scores and updated WD Letter, Change 1 link

Continuous Quality Improvement: Added guidance for suspension status

Service Improvement Agreement: Added guidance regarding not requesting this assessment and yielding a change in star level

Texas Rising Star Probation:

- Clarified guidance on Probation A and B
- Revised guidance for Probation B to have points threshold requirement

Losing a Star Level and Texas Rising Star Suspension Status:

- Clarified guidance on
 - returning to a star level
 - eligibility for assessment on suspension
- Added guidance
 - for Boards to document closed intake in TX3C
 - steps for a program to return to CCS after termination

Table 4.1 and 4.2: Impact of Deficiencies: Revised impacts and duration as applicable to match changes to rule and clarifications provided

Facility Change Rubric: Revised to provide guidance as applicable to match the change related to initial permit issued

Accreditation Recognition Application Process: Clarified guidance for eligibility of certification through modified assessment, acknowledgement of DoD Child Care Military fee assistance program and crosswalk requirements for Categories 1 and 3.