

Texas Rising Star Revisions: Implementation Prioritization Plan

This prioritization plan is intended to provide guidance on which visits should be conducted and what to do if scheduling conflicts arise when trying to complete past due assessments and currently due assessments in a timely manner. Although Local Workforce Development Boards (Boards) should attempt to maintain certification cycles for currently due assessments, they may implement scheduling shifts based on this prioritization plan. Boards may submit a request for review of their plans for prioritization and scheduling of assessment visits to TexasRisingStar@twc.texas.gov.

How to Determine Prioritization

- Review each child care program's certification time frame to determine what type of visit is required; this may include reviewing which visit due dates have been extended.
- Once the child care program's next visit type is identified, review the criteria below for prioritization of visits to determine when the visit should be conducted.

Communication Directives

- Email all participating child care programs regarding the implementation of revisions to the Texas Rising Star standards. The email must include information on how the revisions directly affect the program (for example, by extending the scheduled time frame for an assessment or waiving an annual monitoring visit).
- Use social media platforms and local news media to promote the revisions and availability of additional support services, as applicable and necessary.
- Establish a process for collecting and distributing essential mail and documents, such as Texas Rising Star documents for review, applications, requests for assessments, and notifications of additional mentoring visits.

Prioritization of Visits

Mentoring Visits

- Mentors must continue their visits with all child care programs to help them comply with time frames for revisions and visits.
- In-person visits must follow providers' health and safety policies as well as all local and state health and safety policies to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Boards may perform a needs assessment of all child care programs to determine whether some mentoring visits can be conducted virtually through online platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or Cisco WebEx.
- In an effort to assist child care programs more efficiently, mentors may conduct professional learning communities (PLCs) or virtual group meetings with child care programs that have similar timelines, status levels, or mentoring needs.

Priority 1: 2- and 3-Star–Certified Programs (April through August Visits)

- The first priority consists of Recertification assessments and unannounced annual monitoring visits whose deadlines were extended and which are due during the months of April, May, June, July, and August for 2- and 3-Star–certified programs.

- Recertification assessments and unannounced annual monitoring visits that were not conducted during the months of April, May, June, July, and August for 2- and 3-Star certified programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic and/or Texas Rising Star revisions deferment must be conducted as soon as possible, with a goal for completion within four months of implementation. Child care programs due for these assessments must be notified of their status, the scheduled time frame for completing the assessment, and due date for any required documentation.
- Annual monitoring visits are considered Recertification visits.
 - Boards may need to adjust individual assessor monthly caseloads to accommodate the additional required visits.
 - Boards may reach out to neighboring Boards to contract out assessors in order to meet caseload needs.
 - Boards with caseloads that assessors are unable to accommodate must contact the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) to determine whether additional extensions may be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Once the submitted paperwork is verified as complete, child care programs must be given a two-week notice as to when the visit will occur.
- To reduce the spread of COVID-19, staff conducting visits must adhere to providers' health and safety policies as well as any applicable federal, state, and local requirements.
- Before the visit, a licensing screening must be conducted and impacts must be applied, as applicable.
- Once the visit is conducted and scored in the Engage platform as a Recertification visit, a new line in the Texas Workforce Information System of Texas (TWIST) must be entered to represent the new three-year certification time frame.

Priority 2: Past-Due Initial Assessments and Star-Level Evaluations

- The second priority consists of initial assessment requests or Star-Level Evaluation requests that were received during or before the deferment period.
- Initial assessments and Star-Level Evaluation requests that were not conducted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and/or the Texas Rising Star revisions deferment must be conducted as soon as possible, within four months of implementation. Child care programs due for these assessments must be notified of their status, the scheduled time frame for completing the assessment, and due date for any required documentation.
 - Boards may need to adjust individual assessor monthly caseloads to accommodate the additional required visits.
 - Boards may reach out to neighboring Boards to contract out assessors in order to meet caseload needs.
 - Boards with caseloads that assessors are unable to accommodate must contact TWC to determine whether additional extensions may be made on a case-by-case basis.
- If a child care program was scheduled to have a Star-Level Evaluation visit during the COVID-19 pandemic, that visit may be conducted at the request of the child care program.
- Once the submitted paperwork is verified as complete, child care programs must be given a two-week notice as to when the visit will occur.
- To reduce the spread of COVID-19, staff conducting visits must adhere to providers' health and safety policies as well as any applicable federal, state, and local requirements.

- Before the visit, a licensing screening must be conducted and impacts must be applied, as applicable.
- Once the visit is conducted and scored in the Engage platform, a new line in TWIST must be entered to represent the new three-year certification time frame.

Priority 3: Facility Change Assessments

- The third priority consists of Facility Change assessments whose due dates were extended and Facility Change assessments that are due.
- Facility Change assessments that were not conducted due to the COVID-19 pandemic and/or the Texas Rising Star revisions deferment must be conducted as soon as possible, with a goal for completion within four months of implementation. Child care programs whose assessments are due must be notified of their status, the scheduled time frame for completing the assessment, and due date for any required documentation.
 - These assessments are specific to programs experiencing a permanent change in facility type, ownership, or location, or an expansion or split. A temporary change during the COVID-19 pandemic will not be considered a facility change unless that change resulted in a permanent change.
 - Boards may need to adjust individual assessor monthly caseloads to accommodate the additional required visits.
 - Boards may reach out to neighboring Boards to contract out assessors in order to meet caseload needs.
 - Boards with caseloads that assessors are unable to accommodate must contact TWC to determine whether additional extensions may be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Once the submitted paperwork is verified as complete, child care programs must be given a two-week notice as to when the visit will occur.
- To reduce the spread of COVID-19, staff conducting the visits must adhere to providers' health and safety policies as well as any applicable federal, state, and local requirements.
- Before the visit, a licensing screening must be conducted and impacts must be applied, as applicable.
- Once the visit is conducted and scored in the Engage platform, a new line in TWIST must be entered to represent the new three-year certification time frame.

Note: All facilities that are currently due or past due for a Facility Change assessment will undergo a full assessment regardless of the guidance provided within the Facility Change Rubric. However, once a child care program has been fully assessed using the revised guidelines, staff should refer to the Facility Change Rubric within the revised guidelines to determine which assessment should be conducted in the event of a future facility change.

Priority 4: 4-Star–Certified Programs (April through August Visits)

- The fourth priority consists of Recertification assessments and unannounced annual monitoring visits whose due dates were extended to be due during the months of April, May, June, July, and August for 4-Star certified programs.

- Recertification assessments and unannounced annual monitoring visits that were not conducted during the months of April, May, June, July, and August for 4-Star certified programs due to the COVID-19 pandemic and/or the Texas Rising Star revisions deferment must be conducted as soon as possible, with a goal for completion within four months of implementation. Child care programs due for these assessments must be notified of their status, the scheduled time frame for completing the assessment, and due date for any required documentation.
- Annual monitoring visits are considered Recertification visits.
 - Boards may need to adjust individual assessor monthly caseloads to accommodate the additional required visits.
 - Boards may reach out to neighboring Boards to contract out assessors in order to meet caseload needs.
 - Boards with caseloads that assessors are unable to accommodate must contact TWC to determine whether additional extensions may be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Once the submitted paperwork is verified as complete, child care programs must be given a two-week notice as to when the visit will occur.
- To reduce the spread of COVID-19, staff conducting visits must adhere to providers' health and safety policies as well as any applicable federal, state, or local requirements.
- Before the visit, a licensing screening must be conducted and impacts must be applied, as applicable.
- Once the visit is conducted and scored in the Engage platform as a Recertification visit, a new TWIST line must be entered to represent the new three-year certification time frame.

Priority 5: September through March Visits

- The fifth priority consists of Recertification assessments and unannounced annual monitoring visits that are due September 1, 2021–March 31, 2022.
- Recertification assessments and unannounced annual monitoring visits that were scheduled to be conducted from September 2020 through March 2021 and were deferred due to the COVID-19 pandemic and/or the Texas Rising Star revisions deferment must be conducted as close as possible to their current certification cycle. Child care programs due for these assessments must be notified of their status, the scheduled time frame for completing the assessment, and due date for any required documentation.
- Annual monitoring visits are considered as Recertification visits.
 - Boards may need to adjust individual assessor monthly caseloads to accommodate the additional required visits.
 - Boards may reach out to neighboring Boards to contract out assessors in order to meet caseload needs.
 - Boards with caseloads that assessors are unable to accommodate must contact TWC to determine whether additional extensions may be made on a case-by-case basis.
- Once the submitted paperwork is verified as complete, child care programs must be given a two-week notice as to when the visit will occur.

- To reduce the spread of COVID-19, staff conducting visits must adhere to providers' health and safety policies as well as any applicable federal, state, and local requirements.
- Before the visit, a licensing screening must be conducted and impacts must be applied, as applicable.
- Once the visit is conducted, Texas Rising Star staff must document the visit in the Engage platform as a Recertification visit.

Priority 6: Voluntary Assessments

- The sixth priority consists of the two assessments listed below, which may be conducted as requested and as the assessors' caseloads allow. Child care programs due for these assessments must be notified of their status, the scheduled time frame for completing the assessment, and due date for any required documentation.
- **Initial Assessments Requested after September 1, 2021**
 - These are assessments requested after the September 1, 2021, expiration of the deferment period.
 - A child care program may request that staff conduct an initial assessment in which all measures are observed. Observation of teacher-child interactions and the classroom and outdoor environments must be performed during operational hours.
 - To reduce the spread of COVID-19, staff conducting visits must adhere to providers' health and safety policies as well as any applicable federal, state, and local requirements.
 - Before the assessment, a licensing screening must be conducted and impacts must be applied, as applicable.
- **Star-Level Evaluation Assessments**
 - These are assessments that were requested as a result of a Recertification assessment conducted on or after the September 1, 2021, expiration of the deferment period.
 - A child care program may request a Star-Level Evaluation at any time during its three-year certification time frame.
 - To reduce the spread of COVID-19, staff conducting visits must adhere to providers' health and safety policies as well as any applicable federal, state, or local requirements.
 - Before the assessment, a licensing screening must be conducted and impacts must be applied, as applicable.
- **Category Reassessments**
 - Category reassessments whose due dates were extended or due as the next visit for a child care program are dismissed, as they are no longer applicable due to the nature of these visits and the implementation of the revised standards.
 - A child care program may request a category reassessment for any full assessment conducted. Any category reassessment requested after September 1, 2021, must

be completed according to the time frame provided in the revised Texas Rising Star Certification Guidelines.

- To reduce the spread of COVID, staff conducting visits must adhere to providers' health and safety policies as well as any applicable federal, state, and local requirements.
 - Before the assessment, licensing screenings must be conducted and impacts must be applied, as applicable.
- **Service Improvement Agreement Assessments**
 - Service Improvement Agreement (SIA) assessments that were extended or due as the next visit for a child care program are dismissed, as they are no longer applicable due to the nature of these visits and the implementation of the revised Texas Rising Star Certification Guidelines.
 - Any child care program currently on an SIA will have the SIA dismissed, as it is no longer applicable under the newly revised categories.
 - Texas Rising Star staff must document the dismissal of the SIA assessment in the Engage Event Log as a "Status Update."

Multiple Required Visits

- Child care programs that have had multiple required visits whose due dates were extended because of the COVID-19 pandemic and/or the Texas Rising Star revisions deferment, resulting in overlapping visits to be due in 2021, will have only one visit conducted based on the highest priority level.
 - Example: Both a Recertification assessment with a June due date and a Facility Change assessment are due. Only one full assessment needs to be conducted, based on priority level; therefore, the Recertification assessment (Priority 1) is conducted and entered into the Engage platform.
 - Example: A Recertification assessment with a November due date was extended, and an annual monitoring visit is due in November. Both types of visits are fourth in priority. The requirement of the annual monitoring visit will be satisfied by the Recertification assessment or any other full assessment that is due.
- These child care programs must be notified of their status, the scheduled time frame for completing the assessment, and due date for any required documentation.
- Using TWIST comments and the Engage Event Log, Texas Rising Star staff will document the allowance of a required assessment or visit to be waived due to the completion of a full assessment.

Other Protocols

Licensing Screening Impacts

- All child care programs will continue to be screened quarterly as well as before any assessment visit during the COVID-19 pandemic or the Texas Rising Star revisions deferment of assessments.
- If a deficiency occurs outside of the previous 12-month review time frame, no impact is applied.
- If a deficiency is no longer on the screening form, no impact is applied.

- If a child care program had an impact applied that is no longer warranted according to the revised screening form, the program may be removed from that impact, effective immediately, if no other impact has occurred.

Example: A child care program was placed on probation for too many total deficiencies, but upon review, using the revised screening form, this impact no longer applies. The program must be removed from probation immediately.

- If a child care program had an impact applied that has changed due to the revised screening form, the program will finish out the impact's time frame with the revised impact.

Example: A child care program was dropped a star level four months ago for a specific deficiency that, under the revised guidelines, now has an impact of probation. The program must revert to its previous star level and be placed on probation for the remaining two months of the initial star-level drop.

- If a child care program incurs an impact due to a review of its licensing history with the revised screening form, the impact occurs upon the date of discovery.

Example: A child care program incurs a licensing deficiency under the new guidelines, the impact of which is a star-level drop. The program must be dropped one star level for six months, effective on the first day of the following month.

- For situations in which Texas Rising Star staff is unsure of which impact to apply, please contact TWC at TexasRisingStar@twc.texas.gov for a case-by-case determination.

Documentation of Professional Development

- All applicable training and education documents must be reviewed using the process identified by the Board. Submission of documentation before the on-site visit is recommended. The assessor must request that the program provide any missing items within a specified time frame or during the assessment.
- Program staff of child care programs that remained open during the COVID-19 pandemic must complete the required professional development training with a balance of in-person and online hours. Note that live webinars may count toward in-person training hours.
- Boards have local flexibility to give individual consideration to child care programs adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as those that were closed for a prolonged period of time or that experienced significant staffing issues resulting in program staff, including the director, being unable to meet annual training hour requirements. The Board must document the allowance and supporting evidence in Engage, as applicable. An example of evidence is a letter written by the child care program director explaining the reason for noncompliance; this is included in the staff member's file for assessor review.

- Child care programs that were closed may choose to rehire staff when they reopen. In this case, the staff member is considered a new hire and previous training hours will not be reviewed. Going forward, the assessor will use the new hire date as the hire date for the staff member.

Local Heightened COVID-19 Concerns

- If the local health authority has determined that there is a heightened concern about COVID-19 in the area and the child care program requests that Texas Rising Star staff not conduct the assessment due to COVID-19, the Board will place a comment within the child care program's TWIST comments section regarding this request and will continue to extend the certification as applicable for this program. The program must formally submit the request in writing to the Board.
- TWC has not set a time limit on the child care program's ability to request that the assessment not be conducted due to local heightened COVID-19 concerns.
- The Board shall communicate to TWC, via the quarterly reporting requirement, the number of programs that have made this request and the length of time that the previously planned assessment has been extended.
- Once a child care program has determined that the assessment may be conducted, the program must formally submit the request in writing to the Board. The Board will place the program into the assessor's caseload based on the program's previously identified priority level.

Prioritization Table for 2021 Assessments

The prioritization table below will help Boards understand how to best prioritize past-due visits while also conducting those that are due. Once the Board has resolved the backlog of visits whose due dates were extended at the various priority levels, regular scheduling must occur.

Priority Level	Type of Assessment/Visit	Situation
1	Visits past due in April, May, June, July, or August for 2- or 3-Star certified programs	2- or 3-Star-certified programs that have Recertification or annual monitoring visits past due in one of the following months: April, May, June, or July
2	Initial Assessments and Star-Level Evaluations	Requested prior to September 1, 2021
3	Past-Due Facility Changes (type, location, ownership, split, or expansion)	Facility Change that is due regardless of type
4	Visits past due in April, May, June, July, or August for 4-Star certified programs	4-Star-certified programs that have Recertification or annual monitoring visits past due in one of the following months: April, May, June, or July
5	Visits due from September through March	Recertification or annual monitoring visits due from September through March are conducted as close to their month due as caseload allows
6	Category Reassessments	Newly requested based on a 2021 assessment (has time frame limitations)
6	Initial Assessments	Requested post implementation
6	Star-Level Evaluations	Requested based on a 2021 assessment
No Longer Applicable	SIA Assessments	Past due (extended) or previously requested based on a 2020 assessment
No Longer Applicable	Category Reassessments	Past due (extended) or previously requested based on a 2020 assessment
Ongoing	Mentoring Visits	Focused supports for child care programs with higher priority-level visits due

Example Caseload Prioritization Plan

To assist in determining the priority level for each child care program, the Board should examine each program's recertification due date, as that will inform what visit should occur (or should have occurred) in 2021. Using the prioritization guidance, the Board will determine the correct priority level and the estimated month of when the visit will occur. This table shows how priority levels 1 through 5 are determined as well as in which month and year the visit should occur. Boards should note any special situations that the program may experience, as they might factor into the prioritization of the visit. These situations may include Star-Level Evaluation requests or Facility Change assessments due before and during the deferment period.

Program Name	Recertification Due Date	2021 Visit (based on 9/1/2021)	Special Situations	Month of Visit
Child Care 1 (2-Star)	6/1/2020	Past-Due Recert. (Priority 1)	N/A	September 2021
Child Care 2 (4-Star)	7/1/2022	Annual Monitoring Due (Priority 4)	N/A	September 2021
Child Care 3 (3-Star)	9/1/2021	Recertification Due (Priority 5)	N/A	September 2021
Child Care 4 (3-Star)	12/1/2022	Annual Monitoring Due (Priority 5)	Requested a Star-Level Evaluation 4/2020; Moves to Priority 2	September 2021
Child Care 5 (2-Star)	5/1/2020	Past-Due Recert. (Priority 1)	N/A	September 2021
Child Care 6 (3-Star)	7/1/2021	Past-Due Recert. (Priority 1)	N/A	September 2021
Child Care 7 (4-Star)	11/1/2021	Annual Monitoring Due (Priority 5)	N/A	November 2021
Child Care 8 (4-Star)	3/1/2021	Past-Due Recert. (Priority 5)	Had a Facility Change effective 1/1/2021; Moves to Priority 3	September 2021
Child Care 9 (4-Star)	2/1/2022	Annual Monitoring Due (Priority 5)	N/A	February 2022
Child Care 10 (none)	None	Initial Assessment (Priority 2)	Initial Applicant	September 2021

This example indicates that eight of the 10 programs could potentially be assessed in September 2021, with three programs in Priority 1, two programs in Priority 2, one program in Priority 3, one program in Priority 4, and one program in Priority 5. When considering an assessor's caseload restrictions, the Board should first shift programs in the lower priority groups to

accommodate scheduling needs. For additional information regarding caseload shifting, see the next section, Example Caseload Shifting.

Example Caseload Shifting

Once priority levels are determined, Boards may need to reschedule, or shift, visits to accommodate their staff members’ caseload limitations. Assessors should be able to complete 1–2 visits per week, depending on the size of the program. The table below shows how nine visits needed to be shifted from September to October to allow the assessor to visit only 1–2 programs per week. This type of shift sometimes causes other programs to shift, as depicted below, when four programs were shifted from October to November. This distribution can inform the Board as to the earliest date that voluntary assessments may be conducted or when to conduct them to assist in balancing monthly caseloads. The table shows that November and January are open for new applicants (applicants requesting visits after September 1, 2021) and that December is not ideal for any new applicants.

Month	# Visits	New # of Visits	Shift	New # of Visits	Final Total	Number of Assessors	Monthly Per Assessor	Weekly per Assessor
September	19	10	9	10	10	2	5	1.25
October	1	14	4	10	10	2	5	1.25
November	1	5	0	5	5	2	2.5	0.625
December	10	10	0	10	10	2	5	1.25
January	7	7	0	7	7	2	3.5	0.875
February	5	5	0	5	5	2	2.5	0.625
March	7	7	0	7	7	2	3.5	0.875