

## **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](mailto: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: Two- and Three-Star-Certified Programs (April through December 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 through December for Two- and Three-Star-certified programs.

- Recertification assessments and unannounced annual monitoring visits that were not conducted during the months of April through December for Two- and Three-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 by July 31, 2022. 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**

- The second priority consists of initial assessment requests that were received during or before the deferment period.
- Initial assessments 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, with a goal for completion by July 31, 2022. 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.
- 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 within the three-month extension time frame as noted within the guidelines. 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.
  - The program must retain a full permit after the change to remain eligible for Texas Rising Star. See the guidelines for more information regarding facility change eligibility.
  - 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: Two- and Three-Star-Certified Programs (January through March Visits)**

- The fourth priority consists of Recertification assessments and unannounced annual monitoring visits that are due January 1, 2022–March 31, 2022, for Two- and Three-Star–certified programs.
- Recertification assessments and unannounced annual monitoring visits for Two- and Three-Star–certified programs that were scheduled to be conducted from January through March 2022 and were deferred 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 by July 31, 2022. 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, 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 5: Four-Star–Certified Programs**

- The fifth priority consists of Recertification assessments and unannounced annual monitoring visits whose due dates were extended for Four-Star certified programs.
- Recertification assessments and unannounced annual monitoring visits that were not conducted for Four-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 by July 31, 2022. 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 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-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.
- **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 or 2022, 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 for a Three-Star certified program with a January due date was extended, and an annual monitoring visit is due in January. 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 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](mailto: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 2022 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 through December for Two- or Three-Star certified programs	Two- or Three-Star-certified programs that have Recertification or annual monitoring visits past due from April through December
2	Initial Assessments	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 due from January through March for Two- or Three-Star certified programs	Recertification or annual monitoring visits due from January through March are conducted as close to their month due as caseload allows
5	Visits past due for Four-Star certified programs	Four-Star-certified programs that have Recertification or annual monitoring visits past due
6	Category Reassessments	Newly requested based on a 2021 or 2022 assessment (has time frame limitations)
6	Initial Assessments	Requested post implementation
6	Star-Level Evaluations	Requested based on a 2021 or 2022 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 or 2022. 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.

The following example indicates that three of the 10 programs are in Priority 1, two programs are in Priority 2, one program is in Priority 3, one program is in Priority 4, and three programs are 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. Assessors should be able to complete one–two visits per week, depending on the size of the program.

This table has been updated to assume that there is a continued backlog of visits, which may need to be re-prioritized because of updated guidance and the availability of assessors to conduct visits.

<b>Program Name</b>	<b>Recertification Due Date</b>	<b>2022 Visit (based on 9/1/2021)</b>	<b>Special Situations</b>	<b>Month of Visit</b>
Child Care 1 (Two-Star)	6/1/2020	Past-Due Recert. (Priority 1)	N/A	March 2022
Child Care 2 (Four-Star)	7/1/2022	Annual Monitoring Due (Priority 5)	N/A	April 2022
Child Care 3 (Three-Star)	9/1/2021	Recertification Due (Priority 4)	N/A	April 2022
Child Care 4 (Three-Star)	12/1/2022	Annual Monitoring Due (Priority 5)	Requested a Star-Level Evaluation 4/2020; Moves to Priority 2	May 2022
Child Care 5 (Two-Star)	5/1/2020	Past-Due Recert. (Priority 1)	N/A	March 2022
Child Care 6 (Three-Star)	7/1/2021	Past-Due Recert. (Priority 1)	N/A	March 2022
Child Care 7 (Four-Star)	11/1/2021	Annual Monitoring Due (Priority 5)	N/A	May 2022
Child Care 8 (Four-Star)	3/1/2021	Past-Due Recert. (Priority 5)	Had a Facility Change effective 1/1/2022; Moves to Priority 3	April 2022
Child Care 9 (Four-Star)	2/1/2022	Annual Monitoring Due (Priority 5)	N/A	April 2022

Child Care 10 (none)	None	Initial Assessment (Priority 2)	Initial Applicant	March 2022
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