

Texas Rising Star Questions on Proposed Revisions

Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) has created a question and answer document to provide additional clarification on the intent of some of the proposed changes. These answers may change based on final approval and additional discussion on implementation. Numerous supports and resources will be provided to all interested and current Texas Rising Star programs to assist in transitioning to any revisions made within Texas Rising Star.

Proposed Revisions

Question 1: Why are proposed revisions being made to Texas Rising Star?

Answer 1: Pursuant to Texas Government Code §2001.039 and 40 Texas Administrative Code §809.130, the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) must review and update the Texas Rising Star guidelines at a minimum every four years. The last review and subsequent revisions were made in 2015/2016. Similar to early learning programs being encouraged to continuously improve quality, TWC believes that Texas Rising Star's standards, practices, and policies are meant to be continually improved, gradually moving the needle of quality up across Texas. Standards are often thought of as "stagnant" or "permanent," but not so within a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) such as Texas Rising Star. TWC is dedicated to ensuring that working families and their children receive quality services, which means reflecting on current standards and practices and making revisions over time.

Question 2: Why were measures proposed to be removed?

Answer 2: Measures proposed for removal were done so because the workgroup felt they were duplicative with child care licensing standards, they didn't measure what it was intended to, or they did not fit within the category where they were originally placed. Therefore, most measures were physically moved into another category, condensed into or clarified within another measure, or modified to be strengthened.

Question 3: How will current 4-star certified programs be affected by these proposed changes?

Answer 3: TWC reviewed data based on current program scoring and determined that while some programs may be impacted by the proposed changes, the impact should be minimal. Additionally, dependent on the current Texas Rising Star program's certification cycle, they may not receive an assessment over the revised measures for quite some time. This will allow the program to work with their mentor to understand the impact of the measure changes and to receive technical assistance through the Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP) to make any needed changes. All programs will receive support and resources from TWC and their local Board to assist in the transition.

Question 4: What sections of Child Care Rule Chapter 809 need to be amended?

Answer 4: The following sections are proposed to be amended as applicable: §809.130 [Texas Rising Star] Short Title and Purpose, §809.131 Eligibility for the TRS Program, §809.132 Impact of Certain Deficiencies on TRS Certification, and §809.134 Minimum Qualifications for TRS Assessors and Mentors, if all proposed revisions are approved.

Question 5: When will these revisions go into effect?

Answer 5: These revisions will not be effective until the Commission approves them, estimated for early 2021. All current processes, guidelines and measures will remain until Commission approval.

Question 6: Due to the current COVID-19 freeze on Texas Rising Star assessments and visits and the upcoming freeze due to the revisions, how will programs be scheduled for completing missing and/or upcoming Texas Rising star visits and assessments?

Answer 6: TWC will provide Boards with a prioritization protocol to help determine if and when a visit or assessment should occur. Additionally, TWC continues to monitor the COVID-19 situation and evaluate the impact to the implementation of the revisions and will make adjustments if warranted.

TRS Processes

Question 1: Why will a 2-week window for an assessment be provided rather than a scheduled date?

Answer 1: A two-week window aligns with other national quality rating and improvement systems. The intent of a 2-week window is for an assessor to observe on a typical day and provide more flexibility within their caseload to adjust visits as needed without completely rescheduling. Early learning programs may inform the assessor of any dates within the 2-week window that would not depict a typical day (i.e., picture day, numerous staff out, or school closure).

Question 2: How will the revised weighting of categories impact Nationally Accredited programs that will not be subject to all categories?

Answer 2: For the categories not assessed, Category 1: Director and Staff Qualification and Training and Category 3: Program Administration, they will be considered as scoring at a 4-star level. Therefore, the weighting of each category remains as proposed with Category 2: Teacher-Child Interactions being weighted as 40% of the overall star level and the 3 remaining categories at 20% each.

Proposed Pre-Star Designation

Question 1: How is an early learning program designated Pre-Star within this proposed process?

Answer 1: Early learning programs that have an agreement to serve subsidized children and can pass the Pre-Star Checklist specific to compliance with Child Care Regulation (CCR) would be designated Pre-Star. These programs would receive no enhanced reimbursement rates, but they may begin working with mentors and receive supports to pursue 2-, 3-, or 4-star Texas Rising Star certification.

Question 2: Is there a proposed timeline on how long a program could remain as Pre-Star?

Answer 2: Currently there is no proposed time restriction for a program to remain Pre-Star. The intent of this proposed process is to identify programs serving subsidy that can be outreached by local Board mentors to begin the certification process and to ensure that programs serving children receiving subsidy are meeting CCR compliance as noted on the Pre-Star Checklist. TWC will develop a long-range 5-year plan for all programs providing subsidy to meet Pre-Star designation by a specified date. The Pre-Star rollout plan will be included in the 2022-2024 Child Care and Development Fund State Plan and will be made available for public comment in 2021. TWC will seek input from early learning programs and other stakeholders on the plan. Additionally, TWC will monitor the progress of Pre-Star programs that pursue and attain Texas Rising Star certification which may inform future program requirements.

Question 3: If Texas Rising Star staff are only looking for compliance with the checklist, does a mentor have to physically visit the program to achieve the proposed Pre-Star designation?

Answer 3: No, a mentor would not need to physically visit the program to designate the program as Pre-star. However, the Board would provide information to all early learning programs with current

subsidy contracts that are Pre-Star and provide them with supports and resources to better understand Pre-star requirements and the opportunity to achieve Texas Rising Star certification. Once a program is designated as Pre-star, the program may request a visit to provide more information about next steps to pursue certification and start the creation of a CQIP.

Question 4: Can an early learning program, currently serving subsidy, “opt out” of the proposed Pre-star screening process?

Answer 4: No. As proposed, all early learning programs with current subsidy contracts would be screened for Pre-star designation with the requirement rolling out statewide over a 5-year period. However, the proposed revisions do not require Pre-star early learning programs to participate in Texas Rising Star at this time.

Question 5: If a child care center or home has not achieved the proposed Pre-star designation, are they allowed to continue serving subsidized children?

Answer 5: If a center or home cannot achieve the proposed Pre-star designation, they may continue to serve subsidized children at this time. There is a proposed long-range goal for all subsidy early learning programs to have at least Pre-star designation within five years of implementation. As described above, the five-year plan will be defined in the 2022-2024 State Plan, which programs will have an opportunity to provide input on.

Question 6: If the proposed Pre-star designation is approved, how often will Pre-star programs be screened for continued compliance?

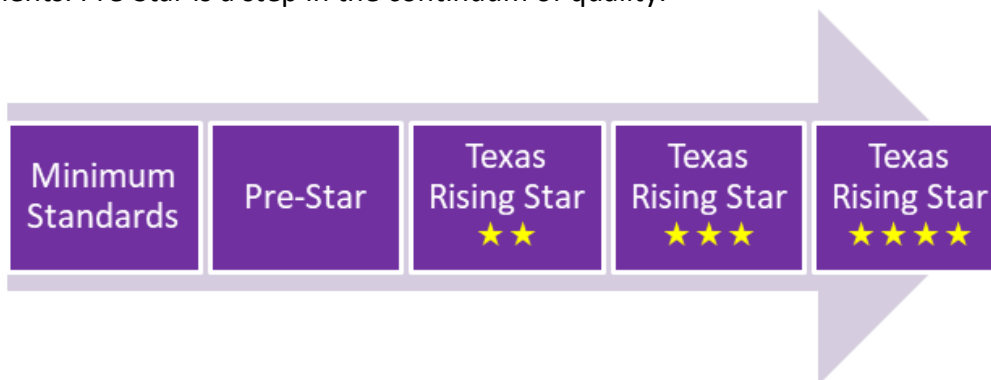
Answer 6: Programs will be initially screened to determine designation. Once designated as Pre-star, the program would be screened at least annually for continued compliance. If a center or home cannot achieve or maintain Pre-star designation, they may continue to serve subsidized children in accordance with the 5-year statewide plan for Pre-Star. The proposed long-range goal is for all subsidy early learning programs to have at least Pre-star designation within five years of implementation.

Question 7: Is a program required to have 12-months of licensing history to be Pre-Star designated?

Answer 7: No, the program is not required to have 12-months of licensing history to be Pre-Star designated nor is it required to have a full permit issued by licensing. They must only meet the Pre-Star checklist to be designated as Pre-Star.

Question 8: If a program is already certified as Texas Rising Star, will they be required to be also Pre-Star designated?

Answer 8: If a program is currently certified they are already Pre-Star designated as they already meet the requirements. Pre-Star is a step in the continuum of quality.



Screening Forms

Question 1: Which deficiencies are accounted for when considering screening form impacts?

Answer 1: The Screening Form reviews a program's most recent 12-month CCR licensing history. There are specified deficiencies and situations that the program may not have to be certified. There are also specified deficiencies that will result in either a star level drop for 6-months or probation for 6-months. Additionally, the Screening Form accounts for the total High or Medium-High CCR weighted deficiencies a program has received to determine if certification is allowed, revoked or placed on probation. Please refer to the specified facility type Screening form for your program's current Texas Rising Star status (not certified or currently certified) for more information.

Question 2: When reviewing the total number of deficiencies a program has received in the most recent 12-months, what deficiencies are considered?

Answer 2: Only deficiencies that are weighted by CCR as High or Medium-High are counted for the total. Deficiencies weighted Medium, Medium-Low and Low are not considered when calculating the total deficiencies received.

TECPDS

Question 1: Why is registration on the TECPDS Workforce Registry (WFR) being proposed as required?

Answer 1: The WFR alleviates some administrative burden on owners/directors, provides portability of staff records, and helps elevate the early childhood education profession. The WFR allows all education and training documentation to be housed on one online platform, safe from natural disasters, theft, etc. and it allows teachers to "own" their training documentation, contributing to a higher level of professionalism. Additionally, it also assists directors with individualized training plans, overall programmatic professional development, and record-keeping.

Question 2: How long would an early learning program have to get staff registered within TECPDS WFR?

Answer 2: Current Texas Rising Star programs would be provided a timeline for entering staff information into the WFR based on their upcoming recertification date. Local Boards would assist early learning programs in this process based on priority levels, with initial and recertification assessments being first priority. However, early learning programs may choose to participate sooner in the WFR on their own.

Question 3: Would someone assist an early learning program in transferring their staff's documentation to TECPDS WFR?

Answer 3: The Local Board, as well as TECPDS staff, would assist early learning programs in transferring all documentation into the WFR. The Boards, in coordination with TECPDS, are implementing a rollout of supports for all early learning programs in their area, with a focus on Texas Rising Star programs.

Question 4: Would all staff from the program have to register for the WFR?

Answer 4: Texas Rising Star staff will look for 100% of an early learning program's teaching staff, plus the director, to be registered on the WFR. However, if a program demonstrates commitment to this goal but is unable to meet it due to individual staff declining to participate, the program will not be penalized. Texas Rising Star mentors and assessors will assist with communicating the benefits of the registry and assisting staff with registering to the greatest degree possible for each program.

Question 5: How many years of professional development is required to be inputted into the WFR?

Question 5: If the practitioner is wanting to qualify as option E for P-CQT-01 or 02, the most recent 5 years is needed for review. Otherwise only their current and previous year of professional development is needed for review.

Question 6: If a practitioner (staff) links their account to the current facility they are working for, what access does the director, or any other person have to it?

Answer 6: Once the practitioner links their account with their facility of work, the director is only able to view the practitioner's record and add professional development training to it. Boards and Texas Rising Star staff (mentors and assessors) will only have access while viewing and validating the records. No one can delete or modify any of the information within the record other than the practitioner.

Proposed Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP)

Question 1: Is the proposed CQIP for goals that involve the entire program and staff or just the director?

Answer 1: The proposed CQIP is created between the mentor and the director/owner of the early learning program to assist in obtaining, maintaining, or increasing the program's Texas Rising Star certification level. It may include goals that are specific to the program, the director or administrative staff, the classrooms, and/or individual staff. The program may choose to have additional CQIPs that are specific to each classroom and/or early childhood educator. Only a program level CQIP is required for Texas Rising Star.

Question 2: How would success be measured within the CQIP?

Answer 2: Success for each goal will look different. Success is determined by the mentor and the director/owner or educator creating the goal. Reaching success may be a program obtaining Texas Rising Star or increasing the program's star level at the next assessment. Promising practice would be for mentors to assist directors/owners in creating specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely goals. Examples of success are:

- development of a of documented system for ensuring staff and student files are organized and complete
- completion of 6 hours of training in a specified subject area by a specified date
- improved practice for an individual teacher's read-alouds in support of children's emerging literacy skills

Question 3: Is there a suggested time limit on how long a program can work on a specific goal?

Answer 3: There is no suggested time limit associated with CQIPs or goals that are set. There may be some goals that can be marked completed within a few weeks or months while others may take a full year or more. Promising practice would be for mentors to assist directors/owners in creating specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely goals that are reviewed at least annually.

Question 4: What would happen if a program cannot achieve a specific goal?

Answer 4: The mentor would review goals that are showing little to no movement towards success with the director/owner and possibly readjust. CQIPs are intended to be frameworks of support therefore a reflection of the goal(s) should include asking if it is specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and/or timely and modifying as needed.

Question 5: Can each teacher have their own CQIP?

Answer 5: Yes, if the mentor and director/owner agree that it would be beneficial for each teacher/early childhood educator to have their own specific CQIP, one can be created for them. The program must first have its own CQIP prior to creating individual CQIPs for program staff.

Question 6: Would mentors' caseloads need to change to accommodate the proposed CQIP framework?

Answer 6: Mentors may need to adjust their caseloads to meet the needs and goals of the early learning programs they are working with. While the proposed CQIP framework is more specific regarding what should be covered and how goals are documented, the assistance will mimic much of what the mentors were already providing. Each Board area has the flexibility to place additional requirements or caseload restrictions on the mentors. TWC will continually review mentor caseloads to determine if additional supports are needed.

Question 7: What training for the Texas Early Learning or Pre-kindergarten Guidelines is accepted and how often will it need to be completed?

Answer 7: The director is required to obtain training specific to understanding and using the Texas [Early Learning](#) and [Pre-kindergarten](#) Guidelines once prior to certification. As a currently certified program, if the director has already obtained this training it can be marked as complete. The director must have training for each of the Guidelines that corresponds to the ages served within their facility, e.g. if the program is a home that serves all ages (0-8 years), they must receive both Guidelines training. If the program is an infant and toddler center, they must receive at minimum the Early Learning Guidelines training. These trainings can be provided in-person by the mentor, the Board or an external trainer, or via the online CLI Engage course.

Category 3: Program Administration Proposed Measures

S-PM-01: Program supports families and children who may need additional accommodations, to include home language, special needs/differing abilities and cultural backgrounds

Question: How would an assessor verify this measure as being met or not met?

Answer: Assessors will look at whether a program has written policies or documented procedures in place for supporting families or children who may need additional accommodations, including but not limited to home language, differing abilities and cultural backgrounds. These policies or procedures may be included in parent and staff handbooks, posted on bulletin boards, posted on the program's website, or provided through family enrollment packets and new staff orientations. These examples are not all inclusive and additional support and guidance will be provided within the Technical Scoring Manual (TSM). An assessor may request additional documentation to verify compliance. In addition, mentors will work with programs to identify areas for improvement around serving children and families with differing needs and will help programs to integrate related goals and strategies into their CQIP.

P-PM-01: Program offers staff formal compensatory supports to encourage staff retention

Question 1: Could a program receive credit for having a written wage/salary scale available or would the program be required to provide additional evidence?

Answer 1: The intent of this specific proposed support is that a program has a written wage/salary scale that they are utilizing, therefore the assessor may ask for current pay wage/salary of staff to

verify compliance. Promising practice would be for the wage/salary scale to be provided to staff so that they are aware of opportunities for professional growth within the program.

Question 2: Would catering lunch once a month or providing group outings for team building count as a form of support for this proposed measure?

Answer 2: While promoting and providing a positive work culture climate is of great importance for staff retention, morale and effective program leadership, these are not specific to compensation or financial wage benefits, therefore would not be counted for this proposed measure. However, these strategies are valuable and important for a program to communicate to their Texas Rising Star mentor to further the program's CQIP. A strongly engaged staff may help the program director and Texas Rising Star mentor uncover key opportunities for improvement.

Question 3: Would all staff need to receive a raise in order to get points on this proposed measure?

Answer 3: While wage increases are important for staff retention and livelihood, there are various ways of earning points for this proposed measure that go beyond direct raises. For example, the program may develop and share a written wage/salary scale based on current compensation practices or they may offer access to paid leave of employer-supported health insurance.

P-PM-03: Curriculum

Question 1: Are lesson plans still required for review?

Answer 1: Yes, lesson plans will still be required for an assessor to review and use in determining scoring for multiple measures within Texas Rising Star.

Question 2: Why were the lesson plan specific measures removed?

Answer 2: Based on the Workgroup's feedback and the results of the Strengthening Texas Rising Star Implementation study, it was confirmed that these measures did not accurately score the intent of assessing curriculum and instructional planning within the classroom or program and was noted as being very burdensome for programs and assessors. Therefore, the workgroup proposed to restructure how instructional planning was observed and scored by creating the new measures within the subcategory Program Management, that focus on curriculum, curriculum supports, and the use of child assessments. Additionally, the Instructional Formats and Approaches to Learning (IFAL) measures were moved to category 2 and provide additional guidance in how the lesson planning and teacher interactions are interwoven in determining scoring.

Question 3: If the program is a school-age based one, will it be required to have a curriculum and lesson plans?

Answer 3: To receive points for this measure, yes, the program will need to show evidence that an appropriate curriculum is used as well as lesson plans for each classroom. However, during the school year curriculum will look very different than during breaks and summer programming. When school-age children are in wraparound care during the regular school year, child care curricula should support children's out-of-school-time needs including exercise, recreation, socialization, and homework help. Program planning should ensure that school-age children are provided with activities that are stimulating and appropriate to their developmental level and needs.

P-PM-04: Curriculum Planning Supports

Question: What are some examples of supports programs might provide as evidence for this proposed measure?

Answer: The program should provide documentation that may include, but is not limited to, policies or procedures for supporting curriculum/lesson planning by the early childhood educators for each classroom. Some examples are consistent planning time (weekly or monthly depending on how often the lesson plans change), physical resources made available to staff, the opportunity to receive feedback on their lessons, and/or professional development to aide in completing lesson plans. These examples are not all inclusive and additional support and guidance would be provided within the Technical Scoring Manual (TSM).

P-PM-05: Child Assessments

Question: What score would be given if a teacher only conducted observations of the children's social-emotional development, physical development, and language development? Do they need to have their observations written down to receive credit for this proposed measure?

Answer: A program that only observed developmental progress with no formal documentation of this observation would receive a score of 1 for this proposed measure. While many programs and/or classrooms may modify lessons based on observations, promising practice is to have a formal documentation process, whether that is through anecdotal recording, portfolios, completing checklists, or a formal assessment tool. Written documentation of progress also helps with providing accurate feedback to parents on their child's developmental progress.