



Families with young children are faced with an array of different early care and learning programs – child care, Head Start, UPK, nursery schools – each with their own standards, procedures and policies making a complicated situation for families to navigate. Policymakers have little assurance that any of these various programs are delivering the high quality services that build healthy brains and bodies and that lead to success in school.

Twenty states have responded with a common approach to early learning policy and funding through a quality rating and improvement system. These systems rest on a set of common standards, focus public and private resources on continuous quality improvement in all kinds of programs, offer families an easy to understand way to judge the relative quality of different programs for their children, and provide policymakers with an efficient accountability measure.

New York needs such a system.

- QUALITYstarsNY is a comprehensive initiative that will give the 1.5 million New Yorkers under the age of six opportunities for high quality early learning experiences.
- Parents will have an easy-to-understand rating system where all forms of regulated early childhood programs can receive up to five stars based on their levels of quality along with higher levels of State funding.
- Successful models for quality improvement and professional development that are already working across the state will be united in support of common quality standards.
- QUALITYstarsNY will make certain that funding for early childhood services produces results, providing policymakers with accountability for public investment.
- By linking funding, professional development and quality improvement supports based on participation in QUALITYstarsNY, the system will harmonize programs and funding streams into a unified early learning system.
- Ultimately, this system can eliminate the school readiness gap by improving early learning for all children and increasing access for low-income children to higher quality programs.

Exploration for QUALITYstarsNY began in March, 2005 when 50 diverse experts were convened by the New York State Child Care Coordinating Council (NYSCCCC) with support from several private foundations. The group examined the quality rating and improvement systems created by 18 other states and the results they achieved. A set of common standards was developed and reviewed by over 100 organizations and 300 providers and parents in interviews, focus groups and webinars.

Since 2007, a smaller Design Group of those who are well-versed in research on quality and child outcomes has been working cooperatively with various government agencies to complete the design of QUALITYstarsNY. Gladys Carrión, Commissioner for the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is strongly committed to the establishment of QUALITYstarsNY. The Governor's Children's Cabinet Advisory Board and the Early Childhood Advisory Council strongly support implementation of QUALITYstarsNY. This effort supports the Board of Regents' Statement of Early Childhood Priorities and will help advance the implementation of UPK and the new Early Learning Standards for Prekindergarten.

QUALITYstarsNY is now ready for a field test, to assure that the ratings properly assess levels of quality and that technical and financial support is adequate to help programs improve. A public-private partnership is being assembled to provide the \$1.2 million needed to conduct this first phase of implementation in selected communities across the State.

Finally, as the State allocates early childhood funding made possible by the President's Economic Stimulus Package, it is essential that all quality improvement activities are consistent with QUALITYstarsNY, inclusive of planning, implementation and evaluation.

A website has been created to provide information and updates about the development of QUALITYstarsNY (www.earlychildhood.org/QSNY).