Standards Evidence Requirements Guidance Revision

January 2025 Implementation

FAQ

About the Standards Revision

Why is QUALITYstarsNY revising the Standards evidence requirements?

QUALITYstarsNY is making these changes to give participants greater clarity around the documentation they need to submit in the rating process.

What is being revised in the Standards?

QUALITYstarsNY has combined what was previously the "Documentation" and "Minimum Requirements" columns in our Standards PDF to a single column for "Evidence Requirements." This is designed to make it clear the types of documents that can be submitted for evidence, and any parameters around what needs to be reflected/referenced in the documentation you are submitting. No changes were made to the Standards themselves.

When will these revisions be implemented?

All revisions will be implemented in the rating system and Standards documents on qualitystarsny.org on January 31, 2025. In the meantime, please visit the QUALITYstarsNY blog to access the revised versions of the Standards applicable to your program type.

If my program begins re-rating before January 31, 2025, will I be held to the revised evidence requirements?

Any program that has started their first rating or re-rating cycle and signed their Participant Agreement before January 31, 2025, will move into "Accepted" status in the QUALITYstarsNY data system. Any program in the system status of "Accepted" before January 31 will be held to the current version of the Standards, not the revised Standards. You can access your program's QUALITYstarsNY Participation page in the QUALITYstarsNY data system to see if your program is in the status of "Accepted" before the January 31 implementation date. Please speak to your Quality Improvement Specialist if you are unable to determine if your program is in Accepted status before the January 31 implementation date.

Which programs should begin using the revised Standards immediately?

Programs that will begin their rating cycle after January 31, 2025, should begin using the revised Standards now to prepare for their next Standards Inventory submission. This includes programs currently working on their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) goals, even if they are not rating within the next year. Now is the time to become familiar with the new standards evidence requirements so you are fully prepared when you begin re-rating.

General Guidance on Standards Inventory Submission Processes

Can programs submit evidence in languages other than English?

Yes, programs can submit evidence in languages other than English. If the rater is not fluent in the language of submitted documentation, the rating team will use translation software to determine the content of the submitted evidence.

How do I get support if information from The Aspire Registry is not being accurately reflected in my Standards Inventory/Qualifications and Experience Report?

If you have an inquiry about your Qualification & Experience Report, please complete the Qualifications & Experience Report Inquiry Form for assistance BEFORE you submit your Standards Inventory. Standards with evidence verified through The Aspire Registry cannot be appealed in the rating process, so it is important to ensure the Q&E Report is correct before submitting your Standards Inventory in the system.

How should I submit evidence from a large document such as a handbook?

When submitting a policy or practice statement as evidence, **it MUST be clear** that the written policy or practice statement is part of the program's official manual/handbook. For example, submit a copy or excerpt of the policy or practice statement that visibly shows the page number from the program's manual/handbook or submit a copy of the table of contents from the program's manual/ handbook along with a copy of the written policy/practice statement.

Evidence Notes Box: when uploading evidence for each Standard in the data system, you will find an "Evidence Notes" box where you can input a note about your uploaded documentation. **If submitting a large document, <u>such as an official manual/handbook</u>, you must enter a note in the Evidence Notes box indicating what page(s) shows the relevant information.** In the large document, it must be clear what page is being referred to and the relevant text must be highlighted.

If programs do not have the software to highlight in PDF, they can print the handbook, go through & highlight all areas that will meet the Standards, then scan the highlighted copy to submit for each Standard. When they do this, they should use the Evidence Text Box to include specific page(s) for raters to locate the information submitted for review for that specific Standard.

Can my program upload a handbook once for a single Standard and then reference page numbers in other Standards?

No, the handbook or excerpts from the handbook must be uploaded for each relevant Standard. Program must use the Evidence Notes box in the data system to identify which page(s) the relevant content appears if an entire handbook is uploaded.

Guidance on Specific Standards or Types of Evidence

For Standards that require an "Improvement or Action Plan", is there a specific template my program needs to use or does the Improvement or Action Plan need to be presented in a specific format?

Some Standards reference the need for programs to submit an "Improvement or Action Plan" after completing an assessment or a survey. Many resources available in the QUALITYstarsNY Interactive Standards will offer an Improvement or Action Plan template for programs to use to demonstrate how they plan to use results of the assessment or survey in their program. However, you do not need to use the specific template associated with the tool or offered in the QUALITYstarsNY Interactive Standards.

Programs are free to develop their own Improvement or Action Plan, which can be presented in any document style – as narrative, bullet points, or table formats.

Many Standards require "a detailed written policy or practice statement." Is there a difference between a policy and practice statement, and what qualifies as "detailed"?

A policy or practice statement is viewed interchangeably in the QUALITYstarsNY Standards. They refer to documentation of how a policy or practice is implemented in a program. The policy and practice statement do not need to be two distinct documents – they are two different ways a program could potentially demonstrate the application of the practice/procedure in the program's handbook.

To qualify as "detailed", the policy or practice statement must go beyond just stating the policy – it must describe the steps on how the policy/practice is carried out at the specific program. There is no specific length required to qualify as "detailed."

Which staff roles qualify as a "teacher" or "administrator"?

Positions that qualify as Director/Administrator roles:
- Director/Administrator
- Family Child Care Provider
- Principal
- Assistant Director/Administrator
- Assistant Principal
- Education Director
- Education Coordinator
- Head Start/Early Head Start Director
- Owner

Positions that qualify as Teacher roles:
- Teacher
- Assistant Teacher
- Assistant Provider (Family Child Care)
- Head Start/Early Head Assistant Start Teacher
- Head Start/Early Head Start Teacher
- Infant/Toddler Teacher
- Lead Teacher
- Pre-K Teacher
- Pre-K Teaching Assistant
- Special Education Teacher
- Special Education Paraprofessional

FIS 2 requires programs to submit "written evidence of intentionally having offered social gatherings inclusive of extended family members in addition to parents (e.g., grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts, etc.)". Do all types of extended family members need to be listed in the documentation submitted?

No, the document must state "family" or "families" to demonstrate that the gatherings offered are for caregivers beyond just parents or guardians. If the word "family" or "families" is not explicitly stated, it is also acceptable to reference extended family members such as grandparents, aunts/uncles, etc.

For FAS 3 for center-based programs, what do non-profit programs need to submit as proof of payment of state taxes?

A non-profit center-based program should submit IRS form 990. If the program is tax exempt, they should submit a tax-exempt letter stating that they are not required to file IRS form 990.

My program only has classrooms where all children have IEPs/IFSPs with needs that cannot be met in a general education classroom. How do I approach Standards COA 3, COA 4, and CO 9 (Centers & School-based)/COA 2, COA 3, and COA 7 (Family Child Care), or the ERS assessment process?

If your program only has self-contained classrooms because all children in the classrooms have IEPs/IFSPs, your program will automatically receive points for Standards COA 3, COA 4, and CO 9

(Centers & School-based)/COA 2, COA 3, and COA 7 (Family Child Care). **To receive these points, your program must mark all your classrooms in the classrooms tab of your Organization Profile in The Aspire Registry as "self-contained".**

In this instance, your program also would not qualify for an ERS assessment if your program is Provisionally Rated 3-5 Stars. Since we would not be able to conduct an ERS assessment in any of your classrooms, Standards CE 3-5 (Centers & School-based)/HE 3-5 (Family Child Care) would not be factored in to determine your final Active Rating score.

If your program has some self-contained classrooms but not ALL your site classrooms are self-contained, you will still have to submit evidence for these Standards.