



# QUALITYstarsNY & Start with Stars FAQ for the OCFS Child Care Deserts Grant

## General Information

### What is QUALITYstarsNY?

[QUALITYstarsNY](#) is New York State's voluntary Quality Rating and Improvement System for early childhood programs. QUALITYstarsNY is designed to empower programs to enhance the quality of early childhood education for New York's children and families. Programs participating in QUALITYstarsNY are rated on a 5-Star scale every three years and are supported with a full complement of resources to improve their quality and increase their Star Rating. The core focus of QUALITYstarsNY is to help early childhood programs in all regulated settings engage in continuous quality improvement to best serve young children and their families.

### What is Start with Stars?

Start with Stars is a QUALITYstarsNY initiative designed, in part, to support newly licensed early childhood programs. Programs participating in Start with Stars have access to individualized support to help them create a foundation for success right from the start.

### How Does Start with Stars Differ from QUALITYstarsNY?

The duration of participation in Start with Stars is short-term (6 months) while QUALITYstarsNY participation is ongoing. In Start with Stars, programs meet more frequently with their Quality Improvement Specialist. Start with Stars programs are not rated until they transition into QUALITYstarsNY, after which they have access to the full range of QUALITYstarsNY resources.

### Do I have to participate in Start with Stars if I am awarded a Child Care Deserts Grant?

Yes, recipients of the OCFS Child Care Deserts Grant are expected to participate in Start with Stars within 30 days of receiving their license for the new program.

### Could my Child Care Deserts Grant program choose to participate in QUALITYstarsNY instead of Start with Stars?

No, grant awardees are expected to participate in Start with Stars before joining QUALITYstarsNY. After six months of building capacity to engage in continuous quality improvement, programs will transition into QUALITYstarsNY to continue their quality improvement journey.



## Start with Stars Participation

### How will my program benefit from participating in Start with Stars?

As a Start with Stars participant, your program will be paired with a Quality Improvement Specialist (QI Specialist) with expertise in the field of early childhood education. Your QI Specialist will provide individualized support to help your new program establish a strong foundation, rooted in best practices in early childhood education. After six months, your program will transition into QUALITYstarsNY. After earning their QUALITYstarsNY Star Rating, your program will have access to the full range of QUALITYstarsNY's support and resources to enhance and sustain your program quality.

### What will I be expected to do as a Start with Stars participant?

As a Start with Stars participant, you are expected to meet every 2- 4 weeks with your QI Specialist on-site at your program and regularly communicate with them via email and/or phone between meetings. Partner with your QI Specialist to complete foundational tasks that will build your program's capacity to engage in continuous quality improvement.

### How long does participation in Start with Stars last?

Your program will participate in Start with Stars for six months, after which you'll transition into QUALITYstarsNY.

## Applying for Start with Stars

### When do I need to apply to participate in Start with Stars for my Child Care Deserts Grant program?

**If your new program has already been issued a license/permit:** you will have 30 days from when you are awarded a Child Care Deserts Grant to apply for Start with Stars.

**If you complete the license/permit process after you are awarded the grant:** you will have 30 days from when your license/permit is issued to apply for Start with Stars.

### What do I need to do before applying for Start with Stars?

Your program must have its license/permit issued before you can apply for Start with Stars. Additionally, you must create an Organization Profile for your new program in The Aspire Registry before you can apply or participate in Start with Stars. Learn how to [join Aspire](#) and [create your program's Organization Profile](#) in [The Aspire Registry Help Center](#).

### Do I need to create a new Aspire Organization Profile if I'm transitioning from a family to group family child care license?

You can contact [The Aspire Registry through their Help Center](#) to request your current Organization Profile be updated with your new group family license information. This only applies to programs that are remaining in the same location—just changing from a family to group family child care license. If you are opening a site at a new location, you will have to create an Organization Profile in Aspire for that new location before applying to Start with Stars.

## How do I apply for Start with Stars?

There are two steps to apply to Start with Stars. The first step to start the application process is to complete the Program Interest Form available on our website at [qualitystarsny.org/apply](https://qualitystarsny.org/apply). On the Interest Form, please answer the questions under the “Child Care Deserts” section to help us identify your program as a Child Care Deserts Grant applicant. Once your Program Interest form is reviewed, our staff will make the Start with Stars application available for you to complete in the QUALITYstarsNY data system. You will receive an email notification when the Start with Stars application is available to your program.

## Transitioning into QUALITYstarsNY

### Am I required to transition into QUALITYstarsNY after participating in Start with Stars as part of the Child Care Deserts Grant?

Yes, programs must participate in QUALITYstarsNY for the duration of their grant term after completing 6 months in Start with Stars.

### What can I expect when my program participates in QUALITYstarsNY?

Your program will continue to partner with your QI Specialist throughout your participation in QUALITYstarsNY through regular on-site meetings and ongoing communication. Once you transition to QUALITYstarsNY, you will complete the rating process to earn your first Star Rating. Working with your QI Specialist, you will use the [QUALITYstarsNY Program Standards](#) to identify opportunities for improvement and continue to develop your Quality Improvement Plan, with access to [a range of resources](#) to achieve your quality improvement goals. Approximately every 3 years, you will complete the re-rating process to reflect on your progress and celebrate the ways you are enhancing and sustaining quality.

### What resources are available to QUALITYstarsNY programs?

Programs participating in QUALITYstarsNY receive:

- Ongoing support from their Quality Improvement Specialist
- Data-driven assessment through the rating process to inform quality improvement planning
- Professional development opportunities and scholarships for staff
- Access to high quality classroom materials and furnishings
- And more!