General Questions

Q: Where can I see the draft criteria for STARS?
A: The draft criteria, along with a presentation on the ideas behind the criteria is available in a recorded webinar on YouTube: https://youtu.be/HJiFtcHn6BI

Q: What is the timeline for the changes to STARS?
A: Currently the earliest proposed timeline for effective date for phase 2 changes is January 1, 2021. You can see the complete timeline on the evolution website: https://dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/providers/stars/evolution

Q: Will the STARS application process be clearer and easier to understand?
A: Our hope is to make the application process clearer, and easier for providers to understand. This is one of the objectives that relates to the divisions overall goal for revising STARS. One way that we hope to make information clearer is by having a guidance manual for STARS that includes examples and checklists.

Q: Are our STARS status used in reporting to the AOE and for what purpose?
A: No. The number of stars a program has achieved is publicly posted on the Agency of Human Services website http://brightfutures.vermont.gov. Programs that apply to become prequalified prekindergarten programs are required to be 4 or 5 stars at the time of application. This is a different process from the STARS changes.

Q: Having to meet new criteria for a STAR level will that prompt a new STARS bonus for that level for everyone?
A: There is a group of child care providers that will work on proposed changes to the bonus structure in summer 2019. If you are interested in being part of this group complete this survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/STARS_Bonuses_Advisory_Group_Sign_Up

Q: Is there going to be a “weighted” numbering system so program practices can gain more points than something like education/administration?
A: The new draft structure of STARS removes the arenas from STARS, and programs will no longer earn points to achieve STARS. The proposal is that programs will achieve criteria for each block to earn the number of stars. For more information about the new structure check out the webinar presentation on the structure at: https://youtu.be/HJiFtcHn6BI

Q: Can Afterschool program be considered differently in achieving STARS? The structure is very different from early childhood programs.
A: The proposed criteria is intended to cross all program types, however the evidence provided for the criteria may be different for each program type.

Q: Will programs that are NAEYC accredited continue to receive 5 STARS?
A: How accreditations fit into the proposed system is still being drafted. Proposals for how it should be considered can be submitted through June 30th in our feedback survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS
Q: Is it possible to change the STARS program so that registered home providers could participate at the 4- or 5-star level without having to give their entire selves to the profession?
A: The intention behind the revision of STARS is to include fewer criteria that are more powerful.

Q: Will there be opportunities for those that live in Southern Vermont to participate in the conversation without a long commute?
A: There are opportunities to participate in the conversations across the state. Please visit https://dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/providers/stars/evolution to read more about the ways we are gathering input and sharing news and information about changes to STARS.

Q: Will the changes recognize that if program has a certain number of STARS currently, and the center changes owners, that the STARS will stay in place as the program isn’t changing. Especially if it is still being run by the previous owners. In the past, the program dropped to 1 STAR.
A: Currently, a program has 90 days from issuance of a new license to reapply to STARS. Many programs who reapply remain at the same star level. At this point we do not know if this policy will remain the same or will change.

Q: How will this impact programs who are already in STARS?
A: Phase II changes will impact all programs. Since criteria in each star level in the new system will be different, programs will need to provide different evidence to receive credit for having met those criteria.

Q: Does this make you a specialized child care provider? If I don’t want to be a specialized provider, do I need to be one?
A: A program will still need to be at the 3-star level to be a specialized care provider. As of 9/1/2019 programs will not be required to be specialized to receive points in any arena. The phase 2 proposal does not require specialized child care as criteria.

Q: How do you define as quality? Explain how the criteria is being picked.
A: A broad stakeholder committee that includes CDD, AOE, researchers from Child Trends and representatives from all program types currently participating in STARS is currently working to identify criteria. The committee generated a large list of criteria associated with quality programming that results in better outcomes for children and families. The Committee is reviewing the list to identify and either eliminate or choose criteria that are observable, reportable, backed by research, and impactful. The goal is to include, at each star level, the relatively few criteria that are also the most powerful because they are likely to have the most positive impact on children and families.

Q: Will schools automatically getting 3 points in the administration?
A: In phase 2 there will no longer be arenas for programs to achieve points. Recommendations for streamlining evidence or application can be made at the feedback survey through June 30, 2019 at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS
Q: Is there a list of the people who are on the STARS Evolution Committee?
A: Yes there is a list available here: https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/CDD/Proposed/STARS/STARS_Evolution_Committee_Members.pdf

Q: Will the renewal process be the same? Will it become an annual process? Will there be a grace period if our program applies close to the 2021 date?
A: We cannot answer these questions at this time. The division is collecting information on what supports are needed through June 30th, 2019 at our survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS A grace period may be a suggested support if that is needed.

Q: What are the breakdowns for STAR levels going forward?
A: The proposal for the phase 2 changes is that STARS will be a hybrid block structure. Check out the presentation on YouTube on what is a hybrid block structure: https://youtu.be/HJiFtcHn6BI

Q: How will school districts be made aware of changes in STAR levels as it relates to Act 166?
A: We plan to send updates to school districts through the Agency of Education weekly field notes.

Q: Should programs continue to apply for more STARS?
A: Yes.

Q: Will there be a new application to accompany these changes?
A: The application will be modified. The goal will be for a revised application to be as much like the application currently in effect at that time, as possible.

Q: Should we expect more phases to come?
A: You should not expect more phases.

Q: Will there still be two avenues for the Families and Communities criteria?
A: Unlike the revised system the revised system will not contain “arenas.” However, each star level in the revised system will contain criteria. Criteria related to family engagement and leadership is incorporated in 2- and 3-STARS level.

Q: Will the renewal process be the same? Will it become an annual process? Will there be a grace period if our program applies close to the 2021 date?
A: We do not have the answer to this question currently.

Q: If you are currently a 4- or 5-STAR program, do you keep it after phase II?
A: Under the new system programs will reapply and be approved for the star level that is calibrated to the new system and time of renewal. We are asking for feedback on if programs need a transition time under the new system. Feedback can be submitted through June 30th, 2019 at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS
Q: There will be a cost to implementation, how will the state support those costs? Are legislative requests needed now for support?
A: We are not sure if there will be costs associated with implementation. We are looking to programs to give us feedback, including feedback on costs that would be associated with the changes. You can provide feedback through the survey here: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS

Q: What about changing the name? There is an association with restaurants and hotels.
A: We are not considering changing the system name currently.

Q: How does the new process account for the disparity in the workforce around the state?
A: We recognize that all programs would like to hire high quality staff. STARS is not intended to address any workforce issues. However, the Building Bright Futures subcommittees of Early Learning and Development and the Professional Preparation and Development are looking at workforce issues.

Q: Will there be a virtual pilot for phase II, as there was for phase I?
A: A survey on the draft criteria was sent to every regulated child care program was sent out in June 2019. Programs have until June 30th, 2019 to complete the survey. Information from this survey is one of the ways that CDD will determine the impact on programs for the changes in STARS. If your program did not receive the pilot survey and want to complete it before June 30th please contact Heather Mattison at heather.mattison@vermont.gov

Q: Will there be samples of materials be provided?
A: A guidance manual will be developed with sample materials and checklists for the criteria in each level of STARS.

Q: What happens if you don’t meet the criteria in one of the lower levels – and you were 4 STAR and that drops you down?
A: In the proposed phase 2 changes you will need to meet all the criteria at one star, two star, three star, and four stars to achieve and maintain 4 STARS.

Q: Will there be a transition time or will programs all need to reapply in January 2021?
A: We do not know what a transition time would look like yet. If you have proposals for what a transition would look like please submit your ideas by June 30th, 2019 to our feedback survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS

Q: How did families have an opportunity to weigh in on the changes or perceptions of STARS?
A: The Division conducted market research on parent’s perceptions of STARS. Through that research it was found that parents either had not heard about STARS or they thought it was confusing and did not use it to show the quality of the program.

Q: Does the guidance manual need to go through the legislature? Or can it be changed whenever?
A: The guidance manual will not need to go through the legislature, and changes that go through the approval process will be added as necessarily.
Q: Are the criteria set in stone? Or is CDD really going to use feedback that is being provided?
A: This is a draft of criteria. The feedback that was collected at the spring information sessions and through the surveys will be given to the evolution committee to consider recommendations of changes. The evolution committee makes recommendations to the STARS Oversight committee. The STARS Oversight committee finalizes recommendations to the Child Development Division that makes decisions.

Q: What would happen if we saw programs that are not able to maintain their star level?
A: The division is conducting a survey of current programs and what supports are needed to support them in maintaining their star level. We are hoping to develop supports for what programs will need.

One STAR Criteria Questions

Q: If a program that has had violations will they be able to move up in STARS?
A: Programs that have received violations, but remain in good regulatory standing will be able to move up in STARS.

Q: If a program is not in currently in good regulatory standing will they be in STARS?
A: Starting September 1, 2019 child care programs that are not in good regulatory standing will not be able to participate in STARS until the program comes back into good regulatory standing.

Q: What is the definition of good regulatory standing?
A: “Good regulatory standing” means a program holds full licensure under Vermont’s child care program regulations and has been determined by the Division that the licensee is in full or substantial compliance with applicable provisions of the appropriate Vermont Child Care Regulations. Programs that are in any of the following statuses are not considered in good regulatory standing: provisional license, intent to suspend, suspended, intent to revoke, or revoked.

Q: What part of the study informed the decision about good regulatory history?
A: Chapter 5 in the full report specifically shows the component of the study that informed the decision about good regulatory history. It showed that most programs achieved all available points in the regulatory arena, meaning this may not be a good method to measure differences in quality. To see the full report visit our website at https://dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/providers/stars/evolution
Two STAR Criteria Questions

Q: Communities activities – will this still be part of the criteria and be tracked?
A: One of the draft criteria in STAR 2 is that the program leader engages in networking with community organizations and others outside the program.

Q: Who will decide what community organizations that will count (STAR level 2)?
The evolution committee will make the initial recommendations on the type of community organizations that will count towards this criterion. The STARS Oversight Committee will make any future recommendations to the Child Development Division about types of organizations that count.

Q: Will there be a lot of guidance or a format for the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan?
A: Yes, there will be guidance and potentially sample formats for the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan.

Q: Is the CQI plan the same at each STAR level or different plans?
A: This is the same plan for all levels of STARS. At each level of STARS there may be additional assessments that are required to inform the plan.

Q: Is it possible for home-based programs to combine the IPDP and the program improvement plan?
A: At this point this is not the intent of the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) plan. The CQI plan is specific to your program’s quality, while the Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) is specific to your own professional development.

Q: Is the CQI a personalized plan by the program? So, every program’s plan will be different?
A: Yes.

Three STAR Criteria Questions

Q: How does the criteria about benefits apply for family child care home programs?
A: Often home child care providers are paying for benefits out of their business income, for example paying for professional development, or taking paid time off. We are looking for more examples of benefits home programs would like represented in the menu of options. Any ideas can be submitted through our feedback survey by 6/30/2019 at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS

Q: How do we suggest additional tools for self-assessments for families?
A: Suggestions for additional assessment tools can be made through June 30th, 2019 through our feedback survey at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS. Additional assessments will be considered by the STARS Oversight Committee once the changes are made.
Q: Will there be a list of benefits?
A: Yes, there will be a list of benefits available in the guidance manual.

Q: If I moved someone into a lead position would the variance be for the period of time, they have been an employee? Or the time in the position?
A: As currently proposed the variance time period is for the time they are in the position.

Q: I have never used the Strengthening Families self-assessment, where can I get more information?

Q: What does something like paid planning time look like for home providers?
A: We are looking to home providers to help us understand how this can be documented. Please suggest ideas for documentation in the feedback survey by 6/30/2019 at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS

Q: In the section on 3 STARS about CQI – informed by families and staff – does this mean from a survey of families?
A: Yes, this can be accomplished by surveying families.

Q: In 3 STARS criteria, when it states that staff need to not have a variance does this mean they need to meet the qualifications for licensing?
A: Yes, after 5 years in their position.

Q: Does the criteria to have a pay scale require programs to pay a livable wage?
A: No, the draft criteria does not require a specific minimum or maximum wage.

Q: What is the definition of the people “leading” the group of the children”?
A: The criteria is intended to follow the child care regulations definition.

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Four STAR Criteria Questions

Q: Will there be a new program assessment tool used?
A: The program assessment tools to be used in the future are still being determined. If you have any recommendations of program assessment tools you can submit them now to our feedback survey (by 6/30/2019) at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS Future recommendations after the changes are made in phase 2 can be made to the STARS Oversight Committee.

Q: Are you making changes to staff qualifications and wages criteria?
A: Yes, you can see the criteria on staff qualifications and pay scale in the recording of the presentation on the changes here: https://youtu.be/HJiFtcHn6BI
Q: How will the changes allow us to effectively use CLASS assessments? Will there be trained assessors available for ALL ages, including toddlers?
A: There currently are trained CLASS assessors in VT for all ages, including toddlers. CLASS may be one of the assessments used in the 4-star criteria. If you would like to suggest CLASS or other assessments to be used, you can do so at our feedback survey (by 6/30/2019) at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS.

Q: Will you consider adding the Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT) to the list of approved classroom evaluations?
A: The list of state-approved tools has not yet been finalized. At this point we are considering use of multiple observation and assessment tools, one of which is TPOT.

Q: Schools get automatic points for staff qualifications; will that be something that will be considered?
A: The draft phase 2 changes do not include points.

Q: Will the Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) stay in STARS?
A: There will still be program assessment tools used, but it has not yet been determined which ones will be used.

Q: Will the structure for environments still be based on ITERS/ECERS and CLASS? If yes, for those who are embracing CLASS, do you anticipate more training opportunities on this model for teaching teams and not just Directors? (CLASS certification model).
A: The program assessment tools to be used in the future are still being determined. We will work with Northern Lights at CCV on providing trainings related to any program assessment tools used for STARS.

Q: How will you measure diversity/language criteria?
A: The current draft has criteria on the inclusion of each and every child at the 4-star level. Documentation required for this criterion has not yet been determined. Suggestions on the documentation can be submitted now to our feedback survey (by 6/30/2019) at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS.

Q: How do we suggest additional program assessment tools that would be acceptable?
A: If you have any recommendations of program assessment tools you can submit them now to our feedback survey (by 6/30/2019) at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Spring2019STARS. Future recommendations after the changes are made in phase 2 can be made to the STARS Oversight Committee.

Q: Does the wellness policy mean an illness policy?
A: No, wellness is about encouraging healthy behaviors with staff, children and families.

Q: What kind of help will be available to individuals that need to get more college credits?
A: There are several current resources available to help individuals that need to get more college credits. The resource advisors at Northern Lights are available to help guide you to the appropriate path and resources for you. A list of the resource advisors and their contact information is available here: https://northernlightsccv.org/about-us/contact-us/
Five STAR Menu Questions

Q: How will you allow programs at the 4- or 5-star level, choose points to show their individual strengths?
A: Rather than continuing to be a blend programs at star levels up to level 3 or level 4 will all meet the same requirements. At level 5 there will be a menu of items to choose from, that will add up to a points total.