

Keeping you informed on the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program

## STARS to Quality Program: Improving the Quality of Child Care in Montana

The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program is a voluntary quality rating improvement system that aligns quality indicators with support and incentives for early childhood programs and early childhood professionals.

The program will begin with a field test. Any state of Montana licensed or registered child care provider, Head Start or tribal program that can show the equivalents to Montana license or registration standards are met, **may be eligible for the field test** of the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program.

To be eligible, providers must have been in business in Montana for one full year. A provider cannot participate in STARS if they are on the National Disqualified List for the Child and Adult Care Food Program, they have a negative licensing action which is still being defined for the purposes of STARS, or they or anyone related to the business have had three strikes in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship program due to fraud.

Resources and support through technical assistance and training, and STAR kits will be available for those facilities selected for the field test of the STARS Program. Eligibility for incentives will be limited and selected through the following process.

There are four assigned quadrants to divide the state: Missoula/Kalispell Region, Bozeman/Butte/Helena Region, Great Falls/Havre/Lewistown Region, and Billings/Glasgow/Glendive/Miles City Region.

Selection for the field test sites receiving incentives (not including workforce incentives):

### WHY A FIELD TEST?

- To allow time to try the program out.
- To work through challenges.
- To conduct an evaluation of the program related to effectiveness and outcomes.
- To maximize limited funding.
- To gain valuable information to assist in securing new funds for the program to work in its entirety, especially related to incentives.
- To ensure fairness, facility type representation and geographical representation.



It is anticipated that there are approximately 72 slots available for eligibility to participate in the STARS program AND receive incentives.

Eighteen early childhood programs representing centers, group homes, and family child care homes will be selected for each quadrant using the following guidelines:

- Nine programs (50%) will be selected from providers eligible under the previous Stars program, in which a provider was a One or Two Star provider. Priority will be given to programs with the highest number of children receiving Best Beginnings Scholarships and will also take into account equal representation of family, group, and center.
- Nine programs (50%) will be selected from the general population of providers interested in participating in the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program, and again equal representation of family, group, and center, but will be randomly selected. Providers included in the first pool of previous Star providers, will not be considered in this random selection.

An additional 53 slots will be available for facilities to participate in the field test, but these providers **will not be eligible** for incentives. Eligibility for the 53 slots has yet to be determined.

In the event, a quadrant does not meet the 18 provider limit, the state will reallocate and divide opportunity among the other quadrants. Geographical representation will also be taken into account.

### Important Dates for the STARS to Quality Program

May 1, 2010	June 1, 2010	June 30, 2010	December 31, 2010	January 2, 2011
Applications to be considered in the new Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program will be available for the field test.	Deadline for applications into Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program.	Selection of field test participants for Best Beginnings STARS to Quality.	The former star quality program will sunset. Scholarship rate percentage increases will no longer be in effect. No more recognition for being a former One or Two Star provider.	Incentives and higher reimbursement rates in accord with the Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Incentives will be released.



**Inside this issue:**

- **STARS to Quality Program: Improving the Quality of Child Care in Montana**
- **Important Dates**



**STAR Notes**

The **Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Matrix and Criteria**, and **Quality Incentives** can be found online at [www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/bestbeginnings/bestbeginningsstarstoquality.shtml](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/childcare/bestbeginnings/bestbeginningsstarstoquality.shtml).

Please note that these documents are in a draft form and are subject to change.



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