



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is Quality Rated?

Quality Rated is a tiered quality rating and improvement system used to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early and school-age care and education programs. Similar to rating systems for other service-related industries like hotels and restaurants, Quality Rated assigns a quality rating to early and school-age care and education programs that meet a set of defined program standards.

2. Why should I participate?

Programs that participate in Quality Rated demonstrate a commitment to higher early care and education standards than those required. This alone can support a program's marketing efforts. Participation in Quality Rated also helps a program gain access to free technical assistance, training, enhancement grants, and Quality Rated bonus packages.

3. Who can I call with questions about the Quality Rated process?

Information about and support for Quality Rated is available by calling the Help Desk toll-free at 1-855-800-7747 or e-mailing questions to qualityrated@decalfga.gov. The Help Desk is available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

4. How do I know that Quality Rated child care programs actually improve child outcomes?

Research studies have found positive relationships between the quality of early care and education programs and child outcomes that relate to school readiness (Vandell, 2004). One study examined children's outcomes over time in elementary school in light of their participation in quality early care and education programs (Peisner-Feinberg and Burchinal, 1997, 1999, 2001). In this study, young children who attended higher quality preschool programs had better language development, problem solving, and social skills. More importantly, the positive effects of a quality preschool experience carried over past kindergarten into the second grade. Research about quality rating and improvement systems and increased quality in early care and education continues to support that better program quality is associated with better outcomes for children.

5. Who is eligible to participate?

All child care programs licensed or registered by DECAL may volunteer to participate in Quality Rated. Programs such as military child care programs licensed by the Department of Defense and Georgia's Pre-K programs operated by local boards of education, Early Head Start and Head Start programs, university and technical college lab schools, and early learning and development programs funded by Part B or C of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) or under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) are not required to be licensed by the state of Georgia but are eligible to participate. Programs that are exempt from Georgia's licensing requirements may opt to become licensed and wait twelve months in order to participate.

Eligibility Requirements

- Licensed or registered for a minimum of 12 months
- Compliant with state licensing rules and regulations
- Compliant with Georgia's Pre-K Program (if applicable)

- Compliant with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) (if applicable)
- Registration of all staff members in the Georgia Professional Development Registry

6. How do I apply?

Annually, child care programs compliant with state licensing rules and regulations will be notified that their programs are eligible to be Quality Rated and will be invited to complete an online application. After your application is submitted, reviewed, and approved, you will be notified of your acceptance into the program and will receive an online notification that will guide you through the online process.

7. How can I receive more information?

Monthly information and orientation sessions are offered at your local child care resource and referral agency. For a schedule of orientation sessions, go to <https://www.cnp2000.decal.ga.gov/QualityRatedTraining/Splash.asp>. Child care programs that choose to participate must attend an orientation session.

8. What are the steps of the Quality Rated process?

Orientation, Application, Technical Assistance (if requested), Portfolio Completion, Environment Rating Scale (ERS) Observation, and Notification of Your Quality Level.

9. What do you mean by technical assistance, and how can I receive it?

On-site technical assistance is available to help child care programs prepare for and maintain being Quality Rated. Child care resource and referral agencies offer free technical assistance to participating programs. Targeted technical assistance includes training on topics such as: Environment Rating Scales, Early Learning Standards, Cultural Competency, and the use of the Physical Activity and Nutrition Assessment. A standardized technical assistance model supports the completion of the Quality Rated process and pending ERS observation. You may request technical assistance on your application.

10. What is collected in the portfolio?

The online portfolio helps you organize and submit all of the supporting evidence that demonstrates how your program meets criteria within five program standards.

- Standard 1 – Director and Teacher Qualifications and Professional Development Registry Verification
- Standard 2 – Teacher: Child Ratio Requirements
- Standard 3 – Child Health, Nutrition, and Physical Activity
- Standard 4 – Family Partnerships
- Standard 5 – Intentional Teaching Practices

11. What is an environment rating scale?

The environment rating scales are observation tools used to measure the quality of the child care environment. The tool(s) used during the observation is based on the type of child care site and the age groups served. The valid and reliable environment rating scales used in the QRIS process are:

- *Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised*
- *Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Revised*
- *Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale – Revised*
- *School-Age Care Environment Rating Scale*

12. Who will conduct my observation?

A Quality Rated Assessor from DECAL will conduct the appropriate observation of your program. All Assessors are valid and reliable for using all the environment rating scales. After you have received an e-mail notifying you that your portfolio has been reviewed, you will receive an **unannounced** environment rating scale observation within 30 days.

13. What are the Quality Rated levels? How am I notified about them?

The final step of the Quality Rated process is the notification of your program's level of quality. Georgia has proposed three levels of quality. The program's level is determined by a point system; points are assigned based on data collected through the portfolio and environment rating scale score(s). The tabulated points equate to a quality level. You will be notified of your level by e-mail within 30 business days of your observation visit. Levels will not be publicized during the Quality Rated's inaugural year.

14. What is the grievance process for programs that do not agree with the level assigned?

If you believe that the process for determining your program's quality level was compromised in a way that adversely affected the designation of quality, you may file a grievance with DECAL that will initiate a process review.

15. What will happen if a Quality Rated program becomes non-compliant with rules or the Pre-K program requirements?

Child care programs achieving a Quality Rated status are expected to maintain their commitment to quality child care. A Quality Rated program that is observed and documented by DECAL to have fallen below the levels of quality may be subject to disciplinary action. Additionally, any serious Pre-K, Child Care Services, and/or Child and Adult Care Food Program violations may result in disciplinary action. Quality Rated disciplinary actions range from a letter of notification, an office visit, a plan of improvement, revocation, or suspension of the quality rating. Disciplinary action will be taken on a case-by-case basis and will be determined by the seriousness of the rule violation.

16. What incentives are available for participation in Quality Rated?

Programs participating in Quality Rated will be eligible for free training, technical assistance, enhancement grants, and bonus packages. Quality Rated programs serving children subsidized through the CAPS programs will be eligible for tiered reimbursement in 2013.

17. Are programs that are not rated, *not good*?

No. Participation in Quality Rated is voluntary. Child care programs that choose not to participate are simply not rated.

18. Can programs that are nationally accredited be Quality Rated? We welcome nationally accredited programs to participate in Quality Rated. Child care programs that have achieved national accreditation will receive bonus points toward their Quality Rated level.