

Quality Counts Participant Guidelines 2018

Quality Counts is the Quality Improvement Rating System (QIRS) in Sonoma County. QIRS systems are used across the country in order to improve and support the quality of early care and education programs. Numerous studies show that when children receive high quality care and education during their early years of life, they are better prepared for school, better readers, and are more likely to graduate high school. These outcomes benefit every child and family in our community.

By participating in Quality Counts, programs will have access to:

- Ongoing on-site support, training, and coaching for quality improvement,
- Local free or reduced-cost professional development trainings,
- An official CLASS and ERS assessment by a reliable external assessor, and
- Materials incentives for sites rating at a Tier 3 and cash incentives for sites rating at a 4 or 5.

Licensing Requirements:

All participating sites' licenses must be current and "In Good Standing", which means a licensed child care center or family child care home that currently does not have any of the following : 1) a non-compliance conference, 2) administrative action taken or in the process of being taken, 3) a probationary license.

If a site's license is anything other than "In Good Standing" the Quality Counts rating and coaching services will be suspended until corrections are made and the site is returned to "In Good Standing" by Community Care Licensing.

Site Ratings:

Participating programs are assessed on the following elements of quality on the matrix:

1. Child Observation
2. Developmental and Health Screenings
3. Minimum Qualifications for Lead Teacher/Family Child Care Home (FCCH)
4. Effective Teacher-Child Interactions, CLASS Assessments
5. Ratios and Group Size*
6. Program Environment Rating Scale
7. Director Qualifications*

* FCCHs are not assessed for ratios/group size or director qualifications.

Rating Cycles:

Quality Counts ratings occur in fall and spring annually; April/May Rating with incentives and ratings posted in June, and October/November rating with incentives and ratings posted in December. Coaches work with all Quality Counts participants and help each site determine their readiness for rating. Rating capacity is limited and the selection of sites to be rated during each cycle is made by a committee of the QIRS Consortium.

Rating Visit:

Quality Counts employs a monitoring and verification system with programs reporting elements of quality, and receiving an on-site review by the rater every two years. Two children's files from each classroom are randomly selected for review of child assessments and screenings by the rater during rating visits (if the child has been in the program less than 60 days, another file may be selected). Every child should have evidence of screening and assessment, or a parent "opt-out" form, or detailed documentation of repeated attempts to obtain parental consent.

Use of Existing Assessments:

An existing ERS and/or CLASS assessment may be accepted in lieu of Quality Counts sending an assessor if the assessment was:

- completed within 13 months of the rating
- performed by a valid and reliable external assessor
- conducted with the same teaching team, child age group, and physical location as the randomly selected classroom

Steps for Participating Programs:

- Meet with a coach to review the QIRS Matrix requirements, sign agreements, and complete an Action Plan in order to identify your program's current level of quality and outline goals to achieve a desired tier rating and other program quality improvement goals. Coaches will provide materials needed to develop a site portfolio.
- Schedule coaching in any areas that you feel your program may need support. Coaching is free! It can be as brief or as extensive as you would like (within reason) in order to meet QIRS requirements and earn your program's desired tier rating.
- Attend professional development trainings in order to meet your desired tier requirements. Provide professional development certificates to Quality Counts staff during rating visit.
- When you feel that your program is ready, contact your coach to request an ERS and/or CLASS assessment be scheduled.
- Prepare your paper or electronic portfolio of required documents – lead teacher and director transcripts, degree certificates or permits, professional development certificates, copy of ERS and CLASS assessments, copy of CLASS training certificate, etc, as required.

- When your assessments are complete and you are ready for a tier rating, contact the Quality Counts rater to schedule a rating visit. At this visit, points will be tallied based on document review and assessment scores and a rating will be generated according to QIRS guidelines.
- All rated programs are required to complete a Participant Survey to report how Incentive Funds were spent and to inform efforts to improve the quality of services provided through Quality Counts. Surveys are sent electronically or by mail in January and July each year.

After Rating is Complete:

- The participating Quality Counts program will continue to have access to Quality Counts staff for any needed technical assistance, professional development trainings, and any desired coaching in order to further support the program's quality and documented Action Plan.
- A program's tier rating is valid for two years. Programs must continue to meet the quality indicators in-between rating periods. Coaches will conduct monitoring visits in order to ensure that the program continues to meet all the requirements of their particular rating.
- At the end of the two year period, the program will be reassessed in both ERS and CLASS, and receive a rating visit to be re-rated (awards will be determined on a yearly basis as funds are available).
- Re-rating in-between regular rating periods can be triggered by: changes to a site license such as physical location, change in status, or other licensing change; major staffing changes; or other changes as determined by the QIRS Consortium on a case-by-case basis. There are no awards for re-rating in between rating periods.

Materials and Cash Incentives:

Programs Rated at a Tier 1 or Tier 2: Incentives are not provided for programs rating at a Tier 1 or 2, however coaches do have a small budget to assist programs in purchasing items that will improve their Environment Rating Scale scores. Coaching and access to professional development will continue after the rating to the degree each program wishes to participate, with the goal of helping all providers to achieve a Tier 4 or 5 on the CA Quality Matrix.

Programs Rated at a Tier 3: Tier 3 programs will have access to financial incentives to purchase materials, equipment, and professional development tied to the program's Quality Action Plan. Purchases will be pre-approved and verified by the Coach for that program. W-9 Forms must be completed to receive Incentive Funds from Quality Counts. Funds are awarded in December and June each year. Coaching and access to professional development will continue after the rating to the degree each program wishes to participate, with the goal of helping all providers to achieve a Tier 4 or 5 on the CA Quality Matrix.

Programs Rated at a Tier 4 or 5: Tier 4 or 5 programs will receive financial incentives through a check to use at their discretion. Programs are encouraged to focus on continuation of efforts to maintain the quality of their program through staff salary increases or bonuses, facility improvements, professional development or release time for staff training, or materials and resources. W-9 Forms must be

completed to receive Incentive Funds from Quality Counts. Funds are awarded in December and June each year. Coaching and access to professional development will continue after the rating to the degree each program wishes to participate, with the goal of helping all providers maintain their level of quality.

Incentive Structure:

First Time Rating Incentives					
	Small FCC	Lg. FCC/Small Center (< 16)	Med. Center (16-30)	Large Center (31-45)	XL Center (45+)
Tier 3 (Materials)	\$1000	\$1200	\$1500	\$2000	\$2500
Tier 4 (Cash)	\$2500	\$3000	\$3500	\$4000	\$4500
Tier 5 (Cash)	\$3000	\$3500	\$4000	\$4500	\$5000
Subsequent Rating Incentives					
	Small FCC	Lg. FCC/Small Center (< 16)	Med. Center (16-30)	Large Center (31-45)	XL Center (45+)
Tier 3 (Materials)	\$500	\$600	\$750	\$1000	\$1250
Tier 4 (Cash)	\$1250	\$1500	\$1750	\$2000	\$2250
Tier 5 (Cash)	\$1500	\$1750	\$2000	\$2250	\$2500

*Sites are eligible for a second rating award 2 years from the date of their first rating award, dependent on continued participation in Quality Counts and funds available

**Size based on the highest number of children enrolled in the program, regardless of full-time or part-time, within 30 days prior to rating

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