

## STARS CRITERIA CHILD CARE CENTERS

**One star** A facility automatically receives a **one star** rating when a license (6 month permit, license, provisional license) is issued.

In order to receive a higher star rating, the owner of a center has to apply for and submit documentation showing they meet the criteria:

**One star plus**

1+		
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**All 1+ criteria is met.**

**Two star**

1+	2	
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**All 1+ and 2 star criteria must be met.**

Another way a facility may qualify for **two star** is by earning and maintaining accreditation with one of the national accrediting agencies approved by Oklahoma Child Care Services (OCCS).

**Three star**

1+	2	3
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**All 1+, 2, and 3 star (accreditation) must be met.**

**Important note: A center may only operate on one star plus status for a total of 24 months. At the end of two years, the center must be approved as a two or three star, approved for an extension of time to comply or return to one star status.**

### **A. Licensing status and compliance with licensing requirements**

1+	2	3
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 The program has a license, provisional license or permit. (All)

1+	2	3
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 Center is compliant with licensing requirements. The program must not have numerous, repeated, or serious non-compliance with licensing requirements. (All) *See clarification note number 1.*

*Rationale: Meeting and maintaining minimum licensing requirements ensures the basic health and safety of children in care. A foundation of the Reaching for the Stars program is compliance with licensing requirements.*

### **B. Director**

1+	2	3
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 The director has documentation of 30 clock hours of job-related training within the last 12 months. In subsequent years, documentation of 30 hours of training per employment year is required. (All)  
*See clarification note number 2.*

1+	2	3
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 The director has a written professional development plan that is reviewed annually and updated as needed. (All)

*Rationale: Professional development is ongoing training and a plan to gain the knowledge and skills needed to best serve children and families. Having a written professional development plan helps individuals stay organized, meet training deadlines, plan for and track training needed to renew credentials, and provides a road map to progress in the field of early education.*

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 The director is a member of an early care and education professional organization. (2 and 3 star)

*Rationale: Membership in a professional organization provides excellent opportunities for early childhood educators to get together, network, and exchange ideas. Involvement demonstrates a commitment to professional growth and improvement in the lives of young children, supports and gives legitimate voice to the profession, serves as a conduit for dialogue and strengthens professional relationships.*

### **C. Learning Environment**

1+	2	3
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 The center has and follows current weekly lesson plans appropriate for the developmental needs of all groups of children. Lesson plans are readily available in the classroom. (All)

*Rationale: Quality learning experiences for children are enhanced by a well-planned curriculum. Lesson plans help teachers select and prepare for activities, projects and themes that are appropriate for the age and development of children in their care, as well as organize content, materials, and methods.*

1+	2	3
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 Teachers read to children a minimum of 15 minutes each day. (All)

*Rationale: Reading aloud to young children is important because it helps them acquire the information and skills they need to succeed in school and life. Vocabulary (knowing the names for things) begins to develop at birth and reading to children is the single most important activity for building the foundation required for eventual success in reading.*

1+		
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 Space for children 2 years of age and older is arranged and equipped in at least these **five** interest areas: blocks, dramatic play, manipulative, art, book/reading. (All)

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 Space for children 2 years of age and older is arranged and equipped in at least these **seven** interest areas: blocks, dramatic play, manipulative, art, book/reading, **math, and science/nature**. (2 & 3 star)

*Rationale: Interest centers are an important part of the early childhood environment. They are thoughtfully designed/planned areas of space. Learning is an interactive process and children learn through doing. The environment in which children play and learn should provide them with opportunities to explore and interact with a variety of activities and materials, and allow for each child's individual temperament, moods, and development. See clarification notes number 3.*

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 At least two learning centers are available outdoors for children's use. (2 and 3 star)

*Rationale: Outdoor centers offer learning opportunities just as they do inside. An outdoor classroom is ideal for emergent curriculum that is planned in response to children's interests. The outdoors is also a good place to provide experiences that are sometimes too messy for indoors, such as sand/water table.*

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 The center has and follows a schedule that allows time for children to complete tasks and reflects a balance and variety of activities. The schedule includes time for indoor/outdoor play, active/quiet play, rest periods, and meals. (2 and 3 star)

*Rationale: A daily schedule is the basic plan for the day. It helps the day flow better for the teacher and it builds consistency and routine which allows children to feel secure. A well planned and consistent schedule may minimize behavior problems as children know what to expect and when.*

#### **D. Staff**

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 Staff who have been employed at the facility for at least 12 months must have 20 clock hours of job-related training per employment year. (All)  
See clarification note 4.

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 All full-time staff have a written professional development plan on file at the center. The professional development plan is reviewed annually and updated as needed. (All)

*Rationale: The level of quality found in child care largely depends on the knowledge and skills of the people who work with children. Everyone who works with young children and their families needs a basic understanding of child development and early education, how children learn. A written professional development plan serves as a map to progress in the field of early education, helps individuals stay organized and meet training deadlines, plan for and track training needed to renew credentials and other certifications like CPR.*

#### **E. Parent Involvement**

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| 1+ | 2 | 3 |
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- A system is established and maintained for sharing and communicating to parents the happenings, activities and related issues about a child's physical and emotional state. (All)
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| 1+ | 2 | 3 |
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- Parents are welcomed in the center at all times, for example, to observe, eat lunch with a child or volunteer in the classroom. (All)
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|----|---|---|
| 1+ | 2 | 3 |
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- Individual parent conferences are arranged for and documented at least annually and at other times as needed to discuss children's progress, accomplishments, challenges and set goals together. (All)
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- A written report about the child is given to parents at the annual conference. (2 and 3 star)
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|----|---|---|
| 1+ | 2 | 3 |
|----|---|---|
- There is a parent resource area with books, pamphlets and articles on parenting that are accessible and available to parents. (All)
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| 1+ | 2 | 3 |
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- At least two parent meetings with guest speakers or special events are held each year, for example, open house, brown bag lunch, family pot-luck dinners and children's programs. (All)
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| 1+ | 2 | 3 |
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- Parents are informed of the center's program by two of these methods: bulletin board, newsletter, parent handbook, web-site specific to each center location, or e-mails. (All)
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|----|---|---|
| 1+ | 2 | 3 |
|----|---|---|
- Parents participate in program and policy development through board involvement or planning meetings or are given the opportunity to complete yearly questionnaires. (All)
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|----|---|---|
| 1+ | 2 | 3 |
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- The program makes a copy of applicable licensing requirements available to parents. (All)
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|--|---|---|
|  | 2 | 3 |
|--|---|---|
- Program maintains a current list of available community resources and assists parents in locating and connecting with these services. (2 and 3 star)

*Rationale: Parents are a child's first teacher and are the link between the educational setting and home. A strong connection between child care staff and parents is critical for building a positive environment for young children, allowing children to feel more secure, confident and self assured. In addition, high quality of parent involvement reduces the number of complaints made. Everyone, but especially children, benefits when providers and parents work together.*

## **F. Program Evaluation**

1+  2  3 Health and safety checklists for both indoor and outdoor spaces are completed annually and kept on file at the center. (All)

1+  2  3 Staff and parents are surveyed every two years to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program and evaluate the program's effectiveness in meeting the needs of children, parents, and staff. (All)

All methods of program evaluation described below are initially completed **within one year** of receiving two star status and then repeated as noted.

2  3 An approved self-assessment tool is completed every two years and kept on file at the center. (2 and 3 star)

2  3 The program is assessed within one year of two star status and every three years thereafter using an assessment tool approved by OCCS to determine the day-to-day quality of care provided to children. (2/ 3 star)  
[This assessment is not required for programs accredited through an approved national accrediting body.]

2  3 Program goals are established and updated every two years based on information gathered from **all** program evaluation items. (2 and 3 star)

2  3 The program has a written plan for meeting established goals. (2 and 3 star)

*Rationale: Taking the time to evaluate your program is universally recognized as one of the key indicators of quality in child care. Evaluating your program helps you identify the strengths and weaknesses in your program, grow as a professional, provide a quality environment for the children in your care, and increase parent awareness regarding the importance of their child's care.*

## **G. Administrative**

1+  2  3 All staff have access to licensing requirements. (All)

*Rationale: Licensing requirements are the minimum standard of care; in order for staff to improve practices and build quality, they need to know the starting point.*

1+  2  3 The director evaluates staff in writing at least once a year. (All)

*Rationale: No matter the size or type of business, your program and staff can benefit from regular employee performance evaluations. Evaluations can be used to clearly communicate expectations, document and improve performance, recognize accomplishments, and develop and motivate staff.*

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 The program has and follows a salary scale with increments based on job title, level of education, credentials, and years of early childhood experience. (2 and 3 star)

*Rationale: Research shows that well educated and compensated teachers and providers are key elements to early childhood program quality and outcomes for children. The child care field is plagued with high teacher turnover rate and low wages are part of the problem. The level of education and training attained by a child care provider is one of the strongest predictors for the provider's ability to offer high quality care, yet most child care teachers and providers earn poverty-level wages. Improved services for children require better compensation for the child care workforce.*

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 A policy and procedure manual that includes job duties and responsibilities for all staff is maintained on site. (2 and 3 star)

*Rationale: A policy and procedure manual specifically communicates the policies and procedures that govern the operation of the program, helps a business clarify the tasks and systems as well as the people designated to carry out the organization's mission.*

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 A minimum of two staff meetings are conducted each year. (2 and 3 star)

*Rationale: Meetings are the glue that holds the center together and serve as a way to communicate information, make and relay decisions, build teams, identify and resolve problems.*

## **H. Master Teacher**

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 There must be a staff person who meets master teacher qualifications for every 30 children of the licensed capacity. During the second and subsequent years of star status, there must be a master teacher for every 20 children of the licensed capacity. (2 and 3 star) In school age programs or programs where the *majority* of children are school-age, there must be a staff person who meets master teacher qualifications for every 40 children of the licensed capacity. *See clarification note 5.*

1+	2	3
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 Master teachers must be employed and on-site at the facility on a full-time basis and meet and maintain one of the qualifications listed:  
(2 and 3 star)

- A. an occupational child care competency certificate for a master teacher or lead teacher through an Oklahoma technology center and three months of satisfactory full-time experience in a licensed or legally exempt child care setting;
- B. a current Child Development Associate (CDA) or Certified Childcare Professional (CCP) credential;

- C. Certificate of Mastery in early childhood education or child development from an accredited Oklahoma college or university;
- D. 30 credit hours from an accredited college or university including 12 credit hours in early childhood education, child development or other coursework that supports working with children.
- E. a four year degree from an accredited college or university with six college credit hours in early childhood education, child development, or coursework that supports working with children.
- F. a two- or four-year degree from an accredited college or university in early childhood education or child development.
- G. A valid teaching certificate in early childhood education from the Oklahoma State Department of Education.

In centers licensed as school-age programs or programs where *the majority* of children are school-age, the master teacher must be employed and on-site at least 50% of the weekly operating hours. The master teacher must meet and maintain either:

- H. one of the qualifications above (A – G), however a degree or coursework may also be in elementary education, recreation, or other coursework that supports working with children, families, and the community.
- I. 120 clock hours of school-age related training within the last five years, one year of full-time experience in a licensed school-age child care program or legally exempt school-age child care program, and a minimum score of 5.0 on the School-Age Environment Rating Scale in a classroom where the master teacher is the lead teacher. In order to keep master teacher status via this option, staff must maintain 120 clock hours of school-age related training on an ongoing basis, and every two years receive a minimum score of 5.0 on the School-Age Environment Rating Scale.

**I. Accreditation**

To qualify for a three star center, the facility must meet all of the two star criteria listed above AND

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Have current accreditation by one of these agencies:

- Association of Christian Schools International’s Preschool Accreditation (ACSI)
- Council on Accreditation (COA)
- National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education (NAC)
- National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA)

**Notes for Clarification**

1. Numerous, Repeated, Serious

- A. Numerous non-compliance is any monitoring visit with six or more items documented as non-compliant on the monitoring report for a facility with a licensed capacity of less than 60 or seven or more items for a facility with a licensed capacity of 60 or more; for Family Child Care Homes it is any visit with five or more areas of non-compliance. Each numbered item on the monitoring report that has been marked as non-compliant is counted once even though there may be more than one non-compliance included in that item.
- B. Repeated non-compliance is three or more documented incidents of non-compliance with the same requirement within the last 12 months. For missing immunizations to be considered a repeat non-compliance, they must be regarding the same child.
- C. Serious non-compliance\* is a non-compliance with licensing requirements that exposes children to conditions that present an imminent risk of harm. Some examples of serious non-compliance are violations of requirements for: Staff-child ratio; supervision of children; sleep position; prohibited disciplinary actions; licensed capacity; use of passenger restraints; water activities; pools and other water hazards; multiple hazards; weapons; reporting child abuse; prohibited access to children by a person with a criminal record or health or behavior risk or failure to obtain background investigations; administering medication to children; room temperature; heat sources and loss of any utility service; compliance file and/or posting; cardiopulmonary resuscitation and first aid training; liability insurance; or vehicle liability insurance.

**A reduction in your star certification may occur when violations are not corrected in the agreed upon time frame, the facility has serious non-compliance with licensing requirements; a serious incident occurs resulting in injury or imminent risk of injury to a child; or an Emergency Order or notice of proposed denial or revocation of license is issued.**

**Repeated, and/or Serious licensing violations may prevent a facility from being approved for a higher star level.**

## 2. Director Training

Director: For initial approval, the director must have documentation of 30 hours of formal training within the last 12 months. For subsequent years of star certification and years of employment, the director must have 30 clock hours of training each employment year. **Reading does not count for stars training.**

If a new director is hired, the director must have documentation of 30 hours of training within the last 12 months prior to employment. If the new director does not have the 30 hours of training, the facility is required to submit a written plan to licensing staff for correcting the violation within 90 days of the new director's hire date.

Only six hours of in-service training (videos, on-site training) may be counted each year.

### 3. Interest Centers

Research indicates that children who play learn to regulate their own emotions and ideas, take more initiative, engage in higher level thinking, and develop an understanding of symbolic relationships that are a precursor to reading and mathematical thinking. Interest centers are thoughtfully designed/planned areas of space that are designated for certain activities - like or similar toys, materials, equipment are displayed and readily available.

Interest Center Basics:

- well defined: areas can be separated with low shelves; partial walls, rugs, etc.
- have a basic supply of materials organized so that children can use them effectively
- have an adequate number of play slots with no more than 3 to 4 children per center area.
- should be developmentally appropriate
- situated in such a way to afford visual supervision
- should be changed on a regular basis
- labeled with words and or pictures.

**Dramatic play** - helps children understand themselves and others; allows them to work out feelings, and practice language and social skills.

**Manipulative** – allows children to test problem solving, practice eye-hand coordination.

**Blocks** - building with blocks gives children the opportunity to think, plan and solve problems.

**Art** - express feeling and ideas, fosters imagination and creativity, improve self-image and provides practice for fine motor skills.

**Book** - language is enhanced; reading readiness skills are learned and practiced, children learn to tell stories and manipulate materials.

**Science/Nature** - Science knowledge is developed through experiences with real animals, plants and objects in the home, classroom and the environment. A science or nature center provides tools and materials for children to explore the world and how it works. By nurturing this sense of wonder, we help children to become scientific thinkers.

**Math** - Mathematics helps young children make sense of the world around them and understand their physical world. Children are inclined to make comparisons, notice similarities and differences in objects, and group their toys and materials. This ability to organize information into categories, quantify data, and solve problems

helps children to learn about time, space and numbers.

#### 4. Staff

At initial application, training may be counted if training was obtained within the last 12 months or within the staff's employment year. After initial approval for certification, the training criteria must be met within staff's employment year. Staff may count a total of six (6) hours of in-service training each year. **Reading does not count for star training.**

#### 5. Master Teacher

The number of master teachers needed is based on capacity. School age children may be deducted from the total capacity if the majority of children in care are younger than five years of age. For example:

Center's capacity is 55  
minus  $\frac{-25}{30}$  school age slot  
30 capacity = 1 master teacher the first year of two star

One master teacher would be needed when first applying for 2 star to meet the 1:30. After utilizing 12 months of two star status, there must be a master teacher for every 20 children of the licensed capacity.

A person is not counted as a master teacher or qualified caregiver in more than one facility or considered a master teacher in one facility and a director of another facility unless the facilities are programs that do not operate concurrently at any given time. For an exception to this rule to be considered, a written request must be submitted by the provider and approved by the stars program manager or designee.

The director is not counted as a master teacher in centers licensed for more than 30 children. The director may only be counted as a master teacher if the licensed capacity minus school-age children is 30 or less.

Centers licensed as school-age programs or programs where the majority of children are school-age must have a master teacher for every 40 children of the licensed capacity.

The director may be counted as a master teacher in centers licensed as school-age programs or programs where the majority of children are school-age.