



Parent Aware Policy Manual

January 2024

Policy changes go into effect on Jan. 1, 2024

Overview of policy manual

The Parent Aware Policy Manual is designed to assist in your everyday work. This manual is designed for:

- The Child Care Aware of Minnesota system including Quality Coaches, Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Coaches, Professional Development staff, Coach Supervisors, Parent Aware Raters, Parent Aware Recruiters, Child Care Aware Coordinating Office staff and others
- Minnesota departments of Health, Human Services and Education staff
- Implementation partners, including Minnesota Tribal Resources for Early Childhood Care, First Children's Finance, Center for Early Education and Development at the University of Minnesota, Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children, Center for Inclusive Child Care, Achieve – The Minnesota Center for Professional Development, The Registry, Inc., Child Trends and others.

Help Parent Aware work better for programs and families

We are committed to continuously improving Parent Aware policies and implementation. It is your responsibility to understand these policies and seek answers to your questions. Your feedback on policies and how this document works is essential to ongoing improvements.

If you work for a Child Care Aware agency, please contact the Quality Improvement Team at qualityimprovementinfo@childcareawaremn.org to share your ideas. Additionally, all staff in the Child Care Aware system have access to a feedback loop process for policy recommendations.

If you work to support Parent Aware at a state agency or an organization that contracts with the Minnesota Department of Human Services, contact Jennifer Barshack at jennifer.barshack@state.mn.us to share your ideas.

This is the 16th in a regular cycle of updates. You can expect one policy update released annually each April. New policies will go into effect on July 1 each year. Procedural changes may occur between updates and will be announced through email, webinars and at Parent Aware Implementation Team meetings.

For assistance in Hmong, Somali or Spanish, programs may contact the Language Access Line provided through Child Care Aware of Minnesota at 888-291-9811 or 651-655-0150.



For accessible formats of this information or assistance with additional equal access to human services, write to dhs.child.care@state.mn.us, call 651-431-4407, or use your preferred relay service. ADA1 (2-18)

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Part 1: Participation and Rating for all Pathways

Section 1: Requirements, monitoring, eligibility

This section includes:

- **Participation requirements**
- **Health and safety monitoring**
- **Eligible programs**

1.1 Participation requirements

1.1.1 Voluntary

Participation in Parent Aware is voluntary.

1.1.2 Serving children

Programs must be actively providing care to at least one child ranging in age from birth to kindergarten entry.

1.1.3 Located in Minnesota

Programs must be located within the state of Minnesota.

1.1.4 Meet safety standards

Programs must meet basic child safety and health standards, either by being licensed for child care in the state of Minnesota or by a Tribal government, or by having their basic child safety and health standards monitored by an approved organization, including Head Start, public school-based programs or charter school boards. License-exempt child care programs that are authorized to receive child care assistance are certified and monitored for safety and health standards by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

1.1.5 Good standing

Licensed child care programs must be currently licensed and in good standing with a Tribal government or the Minnesota Department of Human Services. Child care centers and family child care programs licensed with the department must not have licensing sanctions, including conditional license; temporary immediate suspension; suspension; revocation; or a maltreatment determination.

1.1.6 Signed agreement

Programs must sign a Participation Agreement before participating in Parent Aware.

1.1.7 Repayment

Programs that are required to repay Parent Aware grants and have not repaid the full amount are not eligible to

participate in Parent Aware.

1.1.8 Accurate information

Programs must submit information and evidence that accurately reflects their current use of best practices.

Individuals and organizations that knowingly provide false or fraudulent information during participation in Parent Aware, or while Rated, will not be allowed to continue participating. The program's Rating will be revoked and removed from the Parent Aware website, the program will be required to repay any Parent Aware grants received and will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services reserves the right to investigate any suspected fraud in documentation submitted to Parent Aware. Parent Aware Rating staff, at their discretion, may require additional documentation which they believe is relevant to verify the information provided, prior to completing the application process and after a Rating is issued.

All forms of fraud will be fully prosecuted of the law. Those who are found to have given fraudulent information to obtain a Rating will not be allowed to participate or be Rated in Parent Aware.

1.1.9 Nondiscrimination

The program shall not discriminate based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation or disability.

The Minnesota Human Rights Act ("MHRA") seeks to protect Minnesotans from discrimination. The Minnesota Department of Human Rights ("MDHR") is responsible for determining whether a complaint is covered by the MHRA and whether discrimination occurred. Complaints must be filed with the MDHR within one year of when the discrimination occurred. ([Minn. Stat. § 363A.28, subd. 3\(a\)](#))

Individuals interested in filing a complaint should contact the MHRA by phone at 651-539-1100 or toll free at 1-800-657-3704, or by email at info.MDHR@state.mn.us. See intake procedures on the MHRA website (<https://mn.gov/mdhr/intake/>). Alternatively, an individual may file a civil lawsuit. ([Minn. Stat. § 363A.33, subd. 1](#))

1.2 Health and safety monitoring

The following entities are responsible for ensuring health and safety requirements are met for each eligible program type.

1.2.1 Tribal child care licensing

For each Tribally licensed child care program, the Minnesota Department of Human Services requires the program to submit a copy of the license, and will confirm with the Tribal child care licensor that the program has a Tribal license in good standing. The Tribal child care licensor is responsible for informing the Minnesota Department of Human Services if the program is no longer in good standing under Tribal licensing standards.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services will end participation in Parent Aware and revoke the Rating if a program is not in good standing with a Tribal government.

1.2.2 Minnesota Department of Human Services Licensing Division

Licensing provides a foundation for quality. It provides the necessary oversight mechanisms to ensure licensed child care is delivered in safe and appropriate settings, provided by qualified people, and structured to nurture and develop children. The Minnesota Department of Human Services, in partnership with counties, licenses and monitors child care programs and investigates reports of maltreatment.

The department and county licensors monitor licensed child care providers in four categories: health and safety; staff training and qualifications; physical building and site; and background studies. By ensuring that providers meet minimum standards in these four categories, licensing promotes safe and nurturing child care environments.

The department receives and processes license applications and provides monitoring for child care centers statewide. Counties receive and process license applications and provide monitoring for family child care applicants, and submit licensure recommendations to the department. The Minnesota Department of Human Services is responsible for receiving and reviewing county recommendations to deny or grant a family child care license. Tribally licensed child care is licensed by a Tribal government.

Under state law, the department has the authority to issue licensing sanctions, or licensing actions, to license holders in response to violations and maltreatment findings. Licensing sanctions may be issued for both licensing violations and maltreatment allegations that are substantiated.

Programs with a substantiated conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding (facility responsible) will have their Rating revoked and/or their participation in Parent Aware ended by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Certified license-exempt child care centers: The Minnesota Department of Human Services is responsible for certifying and monitoring license-exempt child care centers that participate in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) in accordance with [Minn. Stat., Ch. 245H](#). An overview of the process is in [Certification of License-Exempt Child Care Centers: A guidance document for implementation](#) (PDF).

1.2.3 Local school districts and public school-based programs

Local school districts and public school-based programs are responsible for ensuring that basic health and safety standards are met for license-exempt public school-based programs. Programs that are authorized to receive child care assistance payments must be certified and monitored by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

1.2.4 School board of charter school

The school board of a charter school is responsible for the overall management of the charter school, including health and safety standards. While the board may delegate the responsibilities to school employees, the board itself is responsible to ensure that the school is meeting all federal, state and local requirements ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.10, Subd. 8a](#)).

1.2.5 Head Start grantees

For license-exempt programs, the Head Start grantee must be in good standing with health and safety monitoring conducted by the Office of Head Start monitoring.

For licensed programs, the Minnesota Department of Human Services Licensing Division monitors health and safety requirements.

1.2.6 Changes to health and safety monitoring-licensing entity

If a child care program currently licensed by a Tribal licensing agency is participating and/or Rated in Parent Aware and becomes licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services Licensing Division, the program must submit a new Parent Aware Application.

If a child care program currently licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services Licensing Division is participating and/or Rated in Parent Aware and becomes licensed by a Tribal licensing agency, the program must submit a new Parent Aware Application.

1.3 Eligible programs

The following types of programs are eligible to earn a Parent Aware Star Rating.

1.3.1 Tribally licensed programs

Tribally licensed child care programs.

1.3.2 DHS-licensed child care programs

Non-accredited and accredited child care centers licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and non-accredited and accredited family child care programs licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

1.3.3 License-exempt public school programs, certified and uncertified

License-exempt public school prekindergarten programs and their licensed child care partners, meeting School Readiness program requirements ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.15, Subd. 3](#)) or voluntary prekindergarten standards ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.151](#)). See Part 1, Section 2 for additional information on child care partnerships.

1.3.4 License-exempt charter school programs, certified and uncertified

License-exempt charter school early learning programs, officially recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education.

1.3.5 Head Start programs

Licensed and license-exempt Head Start programs and their licensed child care partners meeting Head Start Program Performance Standards. See Part 1, Section 2 for additional information on child care partnerships.

1.3.6 Early Head Start programs

Licensed and license-exempt center-based Early Head Start programs and their licensed child care partners meeting [Head Start Program Performance Standards](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii) (<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii>). See Part 1, Section 2 for additional information on child care partnerships.

1.3.7 Not eligible for Rating

The following program types are not eligible to earn a Parent Aware Rating:

- License-exempt Early Childhood Special Education programs
- License-exempt programs serving only children who are age 33 months or older, that are operated by a nonpublic school, for no more than four hours per day per child, with no more than 20 children at any one time, and are accredited ([Minn. Stat. § 245A.03, Subd. 2 \(26\)](#))
- Prekindergarten programs in charter schools that are accredited through a national accrediting body and have not received official recognition from the Minnesota Department of Education, or are not licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Section 2: Rating

The Rating section covers policies for the following:

- **Public school-based programs and child care partnerships**
- **Voluntary prekindergarten and child care partnerships**
- **Head Start or Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships**

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Role of the Minnesota Department of Human Services

The Minnesota Department of Human Services creates the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators; assesses program quality using established Standards and Indicators; determines a Rating or determines that no Rating was earned; issues Ratings; and reassesses and revokes Ratings.

2.1.2 Standards and Indicators

[The Parent Aware Standards and Indicators \(PDF\)](#) provide a common definition of quality for early care and education programs in Minnesota.

2.1.3 Rating levels and quality areas

Parent Aware has One- to Four-Star Rating levels. Programs are rated in five quality areas: health and well-being of children, teaching and relationships with children, relationships with families, assessment and planning for each individual child, and professionalism.

2.1.4 Pathways to Rating

Five Pathways to meet Parent Aware Standards and Indicators are available to programs:

- Full-Rating
- Accelerated
- Automatic
- Expedited

- Automatic One-Star

The Full-Rating Pathway is based on the complete set of the [Parent Aware Standards and Indicators \(PDF\)](#). Programs volunteer to earn a One- to Four-Star Rating by identifying and documenting ways they meet the Standards and Indicators, and submitting documentation for evaluation by reliable raters. Centers serving preschool children are also required to meet minimum scores in a classroom observation to earn a Three- or Four-Star Rating.

The Accelerated Pathway is a streamlined process to earn a Four-Star Rating, and is available to licensed accredited child care and public school-based prekindergarten programs (meeting [Minn. Stat. § 124D.15](#)). These programs already meet or exceed the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators through national accreditation requirements, state law or School Readiness requirements.

The Automatic Pathway is offered for center-based Early Head Start and Head Start programs and their partners, and for voluntary prekindergarten programs (meeting [Minn. Stat. § 124D.151](#)) to receive a Four-Star Rating because they already meet or exceed the requirements through federal regulation on Head Start Program Performance Standards or state law, and are rigorously monitored.

The Expedited Pathway is an option for new sites of high Rated, multi-site centers with experienced leadership, ensuring consistent quality practices across sites.

The Automatic One-Star Pathway (effective July 1, 2026) will be an option for Unrated, licensed child care providers that are in good standing with the state or their Tribe to automatically receive a One-Star Parent Aware Rating (Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.142, subdivision 2), unless they choose to opt out. The option to commit to accepting an Automatic One-Star Rating when it is available in 2026 will be available in early 2024. Those who sign a participation agreement for this option will be participating in Parent Aware and will be eligible to accept Early Learning Scholarships.

The Accelerated, Automatic and Expedited Pathways each have an entity that is accountable for ensuring that quality requirements are met. Specifically, national accrediting bodies, school districts, public school-based programs, the Minnesota Department of Education, the federal government and owners of child care center chains ensure that any Indicators not reviewed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services are met.

2.1.5 Rating period

Ratings are valid for two years from the date issued on the Parent Aware Rating certificate. If programs do not seek a Re-Rating before their Rating expires, the Rating is invalid on the expiration date on the Parent Aware certificate and is removed from ParentAware.org.

2.1.6 Parent Aware Rating certificate

Once a program earns a Rating, a Parent Aware Rating certificate is mailed to the program. The certificate includes two dates: date issued and expiration date.

2.1.7 Withdrawing Ratings

Programs will not have the option to withdraw a Parent Aware Rating. All Ratings are publicly available online at [ParentAware.org](#).

2.1.8 Re-Rating

Programs that earn a Four-Star Rating are eligible to seek a Re-Rating only when their Rating is expiring. Programs that earn a No Rating or a One-, Two- or Three-Star Rating may seek a Re-Rating six months after the Rating issuance date.

2.1.9 Most recent Rating is valid

For programs that have earned a Re-Rating, the new Rating (including “No Rating”) is valid as soon as it is issued, and the previous Rating becomes invalid – even if the previous Rating has not yet expired.

2.1.10 Commitment to accurate Ratings

The Minnesota Department of Human Services is committed to issuing accurate Ratings. Parent Aware Raters must demonstrate 85% exact agreement on the Parent Aware Indicators for Full, Accelerated and Expedited Pathway Ratings.

Reliability is checked at a rate determined by Develop, approximately every 10 Ratings. When exact agreement does not occur, rigorous training and increased reliability checks between Quality Raters and the Anchor Quality Rater occur.

2.2 Public school-based programs and child care partnerships

2.2.1 Definition

License-exempt public school-based programs meeting School Readiness requirements ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.15](#)) may contract with child care programs or Head Start programs to deliver School Readiness services. These agreements are referred to as public school-based and child care partnerships.

2.2.2 Rating options

It is the child care program’s choice, if they are in a full partnership, as to whether they earn/maintain their own Parent Aware Star Rating, or are included in the Rating as a site of the public school-based program.

- Family child care programs cannot have more than one Rating.
- Child care centers can hold more than one Rating in certain conditions (see policies below).

2.2.3 Partnership models eligible for Accelerated Rating as a site of the public school-based program

There are three models of public school-based and child care partnerships that are eligible for Rating through the Accelerated Pathway, if the public school-based program submits evidence on behalf of the licensed child care program partner as part of its application for the Accelerated Pathway:

- Type 1: Licensed family child care program in partnership with a public school-based program
- Type 2: Licensed child care center in which all classrooms or the whole program is in partnership with a public school-based program

- Type 3: Licensed child care center in which some classrooms or part of the program is in partnership with a public school-based program.

2.2.4 Family child care programs in partnerships can choose to earn their own Rating

Family child care programs cannot hold two Parent Aware Ratings. The family child care provider in partnership with a public school-based program may choose to be Rated as a site of the public school-based program, or to earn their own Rating.

There are two options for the family child care program to earn/maintain their own Rating:

- **Accelerated Pathway:** If the family child care program is accredited by the National Association of Family Child Care, it can apply for its own Rating through the Accelerated Pathway.
- **Full-Rating Pathway:** If the family child care program is not accredited, it can apply to participate in a Full-Rating Cohort and earn its own Rating.

2.2.5 Type 1: Family child care partnership

A family child care program seeking an Accelerated Rating as a site of a public school-based program must:

- Be currently licensed and in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or Tribal government and not have one of the following licensing violations: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding
- Meet all the requirements for the Accelerated Rating.

Once the Accelerated Rating is earned through the public school-based program's application, the Rating applies to the licensed family child care program under partnership with the public school-based program.

2.2.6 Child care centers in partnerships can choose to earn their own Rating

There are two options for the licensed child care center to earn/maintain their own Rating if they choose.

- **Accelerated Pathway:** If the center holds a current accreditation from an approved accrediting body, it can participate in the Accelerated Pathway to earn a Rating.
- **Full-Rating Pathway:** If the center is not accredited, it can apply to participate in a Full-Rating Cohort to earn a Rating.

2.2.7 Type 2: Child care center with all classrooms or whole program in partnership

A licensed child care center where all classrooms or the whole program is in partnership with a public school-based program that is seeking an Accelerated Rating as a site of the public school-based program must:

- Be currently licensed and in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or Tribal government and not have one of the following licensing violations: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding – facility responsible

- Meet all the requirements for the Accelerated Rating.

Once the Accelerated Rating is earned through the public school-based program’s application, the Rating applies to the licensed child care center program under partnership with, and as a site of, the public school-based program.

Per Policy 2.2.2: A child care center in a full partnership cannot have two Ratings; the program must determine which path they want the Rating to fall under.

2.2.8 Type 3: Child care center with some classrooms or part of the program in partnership

A licensed child care center where some classrooms, or part of the program, is in partnership with a public school-based program that is seeking an Accelerated Rating as a site of the public school-based program must:

- Be currently licensed and in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or Tribal government and not have one of the following licensing violations: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding – facility responsible
- Meet all the requirements for the Accelerated Rating.

Once the Accelerated Rating is earned through the public school-based program’s application, the Rating applies only to the licensed child care center classrooms under partnership with, and included as a site of, the public school-based program. If they choose, the child care center may pursue a Dual Rating through the Full-Rating Pathway or the Accelerated Pathway, if accredited, for the rest of its program (See Policy 2.3.9).

2.2.9 Child care centers in Type 3 partnerships can choose to earn their own Rating for the whole program

To earn a Rating for the whole child care center to cover classrooms that are not included in the partnership Rating, the program may participate in the Full-Rating Pathway, or they may participate in the Accelerated Pathway, if accredited. However, the program is not required to submit evidence for the classrooms and lead teachers in partnership classroom(s).

- The program must submit evidence for all classrooms and all lead teachers in the Quality Documentation Portfolio that **are not** included in the partnership. This means when a program is seeking a Three- or Four-Star Rating through the Full-Rating Pathway, all the preschool and preschool/toddler classrooms that are not included as a site of the public school-based program as part of the partnership will be in the pool of classrooms to receive a CLASS observation. This does not apply to accredited programs that seek to earn a Four-Star Rating through the Accelerated Pathway. Programs are responsible for accurately reporting and labeling their classrooms on the Classrooms Tab in Develop. Classrooms in partnership with a public school-based program must be labeled with the word “Partnership.”
- Classrooms that show they are in partnership with a school-based program and included in the Accelerated Rating as a site of the public school-based program are not eligible for a CLASS observation.

Note: This will result in a Dual Rating (two Ratings) for one licensed child care center. The classroom or classroom(s) in partnership with the public school-based program and included as a site in the Accelerated Rating will have one Rating for the services offered in that classroom, and the whole program will have another Rating. The Rating earned through the public school-based program partnership will be displayed on

ParentAware.org.

2.2.10 Program financial supports

License-exempt public school-based programs that earn a Rating through the Accelerated Pathway receive financial supports, training, technical assistance and monitoring from the Department of Education. These programs supported by the Department of Education are not eligible to receive Quality Coaching or technical assistance supports from the Child Care Aware of Minnesota system or receive Parent Aware Grants funded by the Department of Human Services.

Eligibility for licensed child care program partners to receive Parent Aware Grants is as follows.

- ***Child care center and family child care partners that earned their own Rating through the Full-Rating Pathway, or Accelerated Pathway*** (as described in Sec. 2.2.4) if accredited, are eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants. See Part 2: Full-Rating Pathway and/or Part 3: Accelerated Rating Pathway.
- ***Family child care partners included in the Accelerated Pathway Rating*** (as described in Sec. 2.2.5) as a named site of the public school-based program with a controlling individual who is legally responsible for the program and License Holder Entity Identification Number separate from the school district that have not earned their own Rating are eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants.
- ***Child care center partners with Dual Ratings*** (as described in Sec. 2.2.9) are eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants. These grants must be used to support quality improvement activities and services offered in the classrooms specifically named in the Rating earned through the Full-Rating Pathway or Accelerated Rating Pathway if accredited.
- ***Child care center partners included in the Accelerated Pathway Rating*** (as described in Sec. 2.2.8) as a named site of the public school-based program that have not earned their own Rating are not eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants.

Note: Programs may only earn one Parent Aware grant per Rating cycle; i.e. if a child care program earned a Full-Rating Grant, they will not earn a second grant from the partnership Rating.

2.3 Voluntary prekindergarten and child care partnerships

2.3.1 Definition

License-exempt public school-based programs meeting voluntary prekindergarten requirements ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.151](#)) may contract with licensed child care programs and Head Start programs to deliver prekindergarten programming to eligible children. These agreements are referred to as voluntary prekindergarten and child care partnerships. The partners must sign a joint Statement of Assurance at the time of application. In addition, partners must have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on file with the Minnesota Department of Education by the time children begin attending the program. The signed MOU defines each partner's roles and responsibilities related to voluntary prekindergarten, assuring that all statutory requirements will be met. The Minnesota Department of Education provides guidance and sample templates upon request.

2.3.2 Rating options

It is the child care program's choice – if it is in a full partnership – as to whether it earns/maintains its own

Parent Aware Star Rating, or is included in the Rating as a site of the voluntary prekindergarten program.

- Family child care programs cannot have more than one Rating.
- Child care centers can hold more than one Rating in certain conditions (see policies below).

2.3.3 Three partnership models eligible for Automatic Rating as a site of the voluntary prekindergarten program

There are three models of voluntary prekindergarten and child care partnerships that are eligible for Rating through the Automatic Pathway, if the school-based program submits evidence on behalf of the child care partner as part of the public school voluntary prekindergarten application for the Automatic Pathway:

- Licensed family child care program in partnership with a public school-based voluntary prekindergarten program
- Licensed child care center in which all classrooms or the whole program is in partnership with a public school-based voluntary prekindergarten program
- Licensed child care center in which some classrooms or part of the program is in partnership with a public school-based voluntary prekindergarten program.

2.3.4 Family child care programs can choose to earn their own Rating

Family child care programs cannot hold two Parent Aware Ratings. The family child care provider in partnership with a voluntary prekindergarten program may choose to be included in the Automatic Rating as a site of the voluntary prekindergarten program, or may choose to earn/maintain their own Rating.

There are two options for the family child care program to earn/maintain its own Rating if it chooses.

- **Accelerated Pathway:** If the family child care program is accredited by the National Association of Family Child Care, it can apply for its own Rating through the Accelerated Pathway.
- **Full-Rating pathway:** If the family child care program is not accredited, it can apply to participate in a Full-Rating Cohort and earn its own Rating.

2.3.5 Type 1: Family child care partnership

A family child care program seeking an Automatic Rating as a site of the voluntary prekindergarten program must:

- Be currently licensed and in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or Tribal government and not have one of the following licensing violations: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding
- Meet all the requirements for the Automatic Rating.

Once the Automatic Rating is earned through the public school-based program's application, the Rating applies to the licensed family child care program under partnership with, and as a site of, the voluntary prekindergarten program.

2.3.6 Type 2: Child care center with all classrooms or whole program in partnership

A licensed child care center where all classrooms or the whole program is in partnership with a public school-based voluntary prekindergarten program may choose to be included in the Automatic Rating as a site of the voluntary prekindergarten program, or may choose to earn its own Rating.

A program seeking an Automatic Rating as a site of the voluntary prekindergarten program must:

- Be currently licensed and in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or Tribal government and not have one of the following licensing violations: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding – facility responsible
- Meet all the requirements for the Automatic Rating.

Once the Automatic Rating is earned through the public school-based program’s application, the Rating applies to the licensed child care center program under partnership with, and as a site of, the voluntary prekindergarten program.

2.3.7 Child care centers in Type 2 partnerships can choose to earn their own Rating

There are two options for the licensed child care center to earn/maintain its own Rating if it chooses.

- **Accelerated Pathway:** If the center holds a current accreditation from an approved accrediting body, it can participate in the Accelerated Pathway.
- **Full-Rating Pathway:** If the center is not accredited, it can apply to participate in a Full-Rating Cohort and earn a Rating.
- Per Policy 2.2.2: A child care center in a full partnership cannot have two Ratings; the program must determine which path they want the Rating to fall under.

2.3.8 Type 3: Child care center with some classrooms or part of the program in partnership

Licensed child care center where some classrooms or part of the program is in partnership with a voluntary prekindergarten program.

- Be currently licensed and in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or Tribal government and not have one of the following licensing violations: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding – facility responsible
- Meet all the requirements for the Automatic Rating.

Once the Automatic Rating is earned through the voluntary prekindergarten program’s application, the Rating applies only to the licensed child care center classrooms under partnership with, and as a site of, the voluntary prekindergarten program.

2.3.9 Child care centers in Type 3 partnerships can choose to earn their own Rating for the whole program

To earn a Rating for the whole child care center, the program must participate in the Full-Rating Pathway, or the Accelerated Pathway, if accredited. However, the program is not required to submit evidence for the classrooms

and lead teachers in partnership classroom(s).

- The program must submit evidence for all classrooms and all lead teachers in the Quality Documentation Portfolio that **are not** included in the partnership as a site of the voluntary prekindergarten program. This means when a program is seeking a Three- or Four-Star Rating through the Full-Rating Pathway, all the preschool and preschool/toddler classrooms that are not included in the Automatic Rating of the voluntary prekindergarten program will be in the pool of classrooms to receive a CLASS observation. This does not apply to accredited programs seeking a Four-Star Rating through the Accelerated Pathway. Programs are responsible for accurately reporting and labeling their classrooms on the Classrooms Tab in Develop. Classrooms in partnership with a voluntary prekindergarten program must be labeled with the word “Partnership.”
- Classrooms that show they are included in the Automatic Rating as a site of the voluntary prekindergarten program are not eligible for a CLASS observation.

Note: This will result in two Ratings for one licensed child care program. The classroom or classroom(s) in partnership with the voluntary prekindergarten program and included as a site in the Automatic Rating will have one Rating for the services offered in that classroom, and the whole program will have another Rating. The Rating earned through the partnership will be displayed on ParentAware.org.

2.3.10 Program financial supports

Voluntary prekindergarten programs that earn a Rating through the Automatic Pathway receive financial supports, training, technical assistance and monitoring from the Minnesota Department of Education. These programs supported by the Department of Education are not eligible to receive quality coaching or technical assistance supports from the Child Care Aware of Minnesota system or receive Parent Aware Grants funded by the Department of Human Services.

Eligibility for child care program partners to receive Parent Aware Grants is as follows:

- **Child care center and family child care partners that earned their own Rating through the Full-Rating Pathway, or Accelerated Pathway** if accredited (as described in Sec. 2.3.4), are eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants. See Part 2: Full-Rating Pathway and/or Part 3: Accelerated Rating Pathway.
- **Family child care partners included in the Automatic Pathway Rating** (as described in Sec. 2.3.5) as a named site of the voluntary prekindergarten program with a controlling individual who is legally responsible for the program and License Holder Entity Identification Number separate from the school district that have not earned their own Rating are eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants.
- **Child care center partners with Dual Ratings** (as described in Sec. 2.3.9) are eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants. These grants must be used to support quality improvement activities and services offered in the classrooms specifically named in the Rating earned through the Full-Rating Pathway or Accelerated Rating Pathway, if accredited.
- **Child care center partners included in the Automatic Pathway Rating** (as described in Sec. 2.3.8) as a named site of the voluntary prekindergarten program that have not earned their own Rating are not eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants.

Note: Programs may only earn one Parent Aware grant per Rating cycle; i.e. if a child care program earned a Full-Rating Grant, they will not earn a second grant from the partnership Rating.

2.4 Head Start or Early Head Start — Child Care Partnerships

2.4.1 Definition

Licensed and license-exempt center-based Head Start and Early Head Start programs may formally contract with licensed (by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, or a Tribal government) child care programs meeting Head Start Program Performance Standards to provide center-based Head Start or Early Head Start services meeting all federal regulations. These agreements are referred to as Head Start or Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships.

2.4.2 Rating options

- It is the child care program’s choice – if it is in a full partnership – as to whether it earns/maintains its own Parent Aware Star Rating, or is included in the Automatic Pathway Rating as a site of the center-based Head Start or Early Head Start program. (Note: child care programs need to be informed on the specific requirements to participate in their local Head Start or Early Head Start partnership(s) as these may differ from statewide policy). Family child care programs cannot have more than one Parent Aware Rating.
- Child care centers can hold more than one Parent Aware Rating under certain conditions (see policies below).

2.4.3 Three partnership models eligible for Automatic Rating as a site of the center-based Head Start or Early Head Start program

There are three models of Head Start or Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership that are eligible for Rating through the Automatic Pathway.

In these types of partnerships, the Parent Aware application is always initiated by the Head Start or Early Head Start program.

- Licensed family child care program in partnership with a Head Start or Early Head Start program.
- Licensed child care center in which all classrooms or the whole program is in partnership with a Head Start or Early Head Start program.
- Licensed child care center in which some classrooms or part of the program is in partnership with a Head Start or Early Head Start program.

2.4.4 Family child care programs can choose to earn their own Rating

Family child care programs cannot hold two Parent Aware Ratings, therefore the provider can choose to either hold their own Rating through the appropriate pathway or, if eligible, be included in the Head Start or Early Head Start Automatic Pathway.

There are two options for the family child care program to earn its own Rating if the provider chooses:

- **Accelerated Pathway:** If the family child care program is accredited by the National Association of Family Child Care, it can apply for its own Rating through the Accelerated Pathway.
- **Full-Rating Pathway:** If the family child care program is not accredited, it can apply to participate in a

Full-Rating Cohort and earn its own Rating.

2.4.5 Type 1: Family child care partnership

A family child care program seeking an Automatic Rating as a site of a Head Start or Early Head Start program must:

- Be currently licensed and in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or Tribal government and not have one of the following licensing violations: conditional license; temporary immediate suspension; suspension; revocation; or a maltreatment finding
- Meet all the requirements for the Automatic Rating
- Be included as a site/location in the Head Start Program Plan which is initiated and completed annually by the Head Start or Early Head Start program through the Minnesota Department of Education.

Once the Automatic Rating is earned through the Head Start or Early Head Start program's application, the Rating applies to the licensed family child care program under partnership with the Head Start or Early Head Start program.

2.4.6 Child care centers in Type 2 partnerships can choose to earn their own Rating

There are two options for the licensed child care center to earn its own Rating if the provider chooses:

- **Accelerated Pathway:** If the center holds a current accreditation from an approved accrediting body, it can participate in the Accelerated Pathway.
- **Full-Rating Pathway:** If the center is not accredited, it can apply to participate in a Full-Rating Cohort and earn a Rating.
- Per Policy 2.2.2: A child care center in a full partnership cannot have two Ratings; the program must determine which path they want the Rating to fall under.

2.4.7 Type 2: Child care center with all classrooms or whole program in partnership

In these types of partnerships, the Parent Aware application is always initiated by the Head Start or Early Head Start program. A child care center where all classrooms or the whole program is in partnership with a Head Start or Early Head Start program and seeking an Automatic Rating as a site of the Head Start or Early Head Start program must:

- Be currently licensed and in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or Tribal government and not have one of the following licensing violations: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding
- Meet all the requirements for the Automatic Rating
- Be included as a site/location in the Head Start Program Plan which is initiated and completed annually by the Head Start or Early Head Start program through the Minnesota Department of Education.

Once the Automatic Rating is earned through the Head Start or Early Head Start application, the Rating applies to the licensed child care center under partnership with the Head Start or Early Head Start program.

2.4.8 Type 3: Child care center with some classrooms or part of the program in partnership

In these types of partnerships, the Parent Aware application is always initiated by the Head Start or Early Head Start program. A licensed child care center where some classrooms or part of the program is in partnership with a Head Start or Early Head Start program that is seeking Automatic Rating as a site of the Head Start or Early Head Start program must:

- Be currently licensed and in good standing with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or Tribal government and not have one of the following licensing violations: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding
- Meet all the requirements for the Automatic Rating
- Be included as a site/location in the Head Start Program Plan, which is initiated and completed annually by the Head Start or Early Head Start program through the Minnesota Department of Education.

Once the Automatic Rating is earned through the Head Start or Early Head Start program application, the Rating applies only to the licensed child care center classrooms in formal partnership with, and monitored by, the Head Start or Early Head Start program.

2.4.9 Child care centers in Type 3 partnerships can choose to earn their own Rating for the whole program

To earn a Rating for the whole child care center, the program must participate in the Full-Rating Pathway, or the Accelerated Pathway, if accredited. However, the program is not required to submit evidence for the classrooms and lead teachers in partnership classroom(s).

- The program must submit evidence for all classrooms and all lead teachers in the Quality Documentation Portfolio that **are not** included in the Automatic Rating earned through the partnership. This means when a program is seeking a Three- or Four-Star Rating through the Full-Rating Pathway, all the preschool and preschool/toddler classrooms that are not part of the Head Start or Early Head Start partnership will be in the pool of classrooms to receive a CLASS observation. This does not apply to accredited programs seeking a Four-Star Rating in the Accelerated Pathway. Programs are responsible for accurately reporting and labeling their classrooms on the Classrooms tab in Develop. Classrooms in partnership with a Head Start or Early Head Start program must be labeled with the word “Partnership.”
- Classrooms that show that they are included in the Automatic Rating as a site of a Head Start or Early Head Start program are not eligible for a CLASS observation.

Note: This will result in two Ratings for one licensed child care program. The classroom or classrooms in partnership with the Head Start or Early Head Start program and included as a site in the Automatic Rating will have one Rating for the services offered in those classrooms, and the whole program will have another Rating. The Rating for the whole program will be displayed on ParentAware.org.

2.4.10 Program financial supports

Head Start and Early Head Start programs that earn a Rating through the Automatic Pathway receive financial supports, training, technical assistance and monitoring from the federal Office of Head Start. These programs supported by the Minnesota Department of Education are not eligible to receive quality coaching or technical assistance supports from the Child Care Aware of Minnesota system, or receive Parent Aware Grants funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Eligibility for Head Start or Early Head Start child care program partners to receive Parent Aware Grants is as follows:

- **Child care center and family child care partners that earned their own Rating through the Full-Rating Pathway, or Accelerated Pathway** if accredited (as described in Sec. 2.4.4), are eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants. See Part 2: Full-Rating Pathway and/or Part 3: Accelerated Rating Pathway.
- **Family child care partners included in the Automatic Pathway Rating** (as described in Sec. 2.4.5) as a named site of the Head Start or Early Head Start program with a controlling individual who is legally responsible for the program and License Holder Entity Identification Number separate from the Head Start/ Early Head Start that have not earned their own Rating are eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants.
- **Child care center partners with Dual Ratings** (as described in Sec. 2.4.9) are eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants. These grants must be used to support quality improvement activities and services offered in the classrooms specifically named in the Rating earned through the Full-Rating Pathway or Accelerated Rating Pathway, if accredited. Classrooms included in the Head Start/Early Head Start Automatic Pathway Rating are not eligible for Parent Aware Grants.
- **Child care centers in full partnership with a Head Start or Early Head Start and included in the Automatic Pathway Rating** (as described in Sec. 2.4.7) as a named site of the Head Start or Early Head Start program and have not earned their own Rating are not eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants. Note: Programs may only earn one Parent Aware grant per Rating cycle, i.e. if a child care program earned a Full- Rating Grant, they will not earn a second grant from the partnership Rating.

Section 3: Data use

There are five parts of the data use policy:

- Privacy of children
- Sharing information about active Ratings
- Data release – Non-accredited licensed child care
- Data release – Accredited licensed child care, license exempt school-based prekindergarten, Head Start
- Data retention

3.1 Privacy of children

3.1.1 Photos of children

Photos that show identifying features of children (names and faces) should not be used unless no other proof of services are available. Any identifying features must be blocked.

Prior to submitting as part of the Quality Documentation Portfolio any items that could potentially identify a child, the participating program must obtain, and have on file, the consent of parents/guardians.

3.2 Sharing information about active Ratings

3.2.1 Sharing Ratings

Program Ratings are not shared until the Rating status is finalized, indicated by the status of “Active (Open to Review)” or “Active (Final)” in the Develop data system. Any persons working with a Parent Aware case should instruct program staff to log into Develop for updates regarding the program's Rating status.

3.3 Data release – Non-accredited licensed child care

3.3.1 Program consent

By signing the Participation Agreement, you are granting permission for Parent Aware staff (including Recruiters, Professional Development Advisors, Quality Coaches, CLASS coaches and Raters) to view your Organization Profile in Develop, including viewing the Learning Records of your staff.

You are granting permission for Parent Aware staff to view the:

- Organization Profile of your program
- Organization Profile of all sites included in the application, on the Develop database.
- Learning Records of your staff, if applicable.

3.3.2 Sharing information

By signing the Participation Agreement, you are granting permission for the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Department of Education to share your information with:

- Each other
- Contractors who need this information to do their jobs
- Researchers conducting evaluations of Parent Aware and related programs.

The following data may be shared with the aforementioned agencies and contractors:

- All data submitted, on paper or via the Develop database, related to your program’s Parent Aware participation and Parent Aware quality documentation, including all information in your Organization Profile
- All data collected about the supports your program and staff received, both financial and otherwise, during Parent Aware participation
- Data on CLASS observations, scores and CLASS feedback report, if applicable.

3.3.3 Making information public

By signing the Participation Agreement, you are granting permission for the Minnesota Department of Human Services to make certain information about your program publicly available on the Parent Aware website.

The following data about your program will be made public:

- Your program’s name, address, contact person and phone number
- Your program’s participation status in Parent Aware, including participation in Building Quality

- Your program’s accreditation status
- Your program’s current Star Rating, and, if applicable, the reason a Rating was revoked
- The curricula used by your program
- The assessment tool(s) used by your program
- Your program’s philosophy statement.

3.4 Data release – Accredited licensed child care, license exempt school-based prekindergarten, Head Start

3.4.1 Program consent

By signing the Participation Agreement, you are granting permission for Parent Aware staff (including Recruiters, Professional Development Advisors, Quality Coaches, CLASS Coaches and Raters) to view your Organization Profile in Develop, including viewing the Learning Records of your staff.

You are granting permission for Parent Aware staff to view the:

- Organization Profile of your program
- Organization Profile of all sites included in the application, on the Develop database
- Learning Records of your staff, if applicable.

3.4.2 Sharing information

You are granting permission for the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Department of Education to share your information with:

- Each other
- Contractors who need this information to do their jobs
- Researchers conducting evaluations of Parent Aware and related programs.

The following data may be shared with the aforementioned agencies and contractors:

- All data submitted, on paper or via the Develop database, related to your program’s Parent Aware participation and Parent Aware quality documentation, including all information in your Organization Profile and the Organization Profiles of all sites included in the application
- All data collected about the supports your program and staff received, both financial and otherwise, during Parent Aware participation.

3.4.3 Making information public

You are granting permission for the Minnesota Department of Human Services to make certain information about your program, and all sites included in the application, publicly available on the Parent Aware website.

The following data will be made public:

- The name, address, contact person and phone number of your program

- The Parent Aware participation status of your program, and all sites included in the application
- The current Star Rating of your program and all sites included in the application, and if applicable, the reason a Rating was revoked
- The curricula used by your program, and by all sites included in the application
- The assessment tool(s) used by your program, and by all sites included in the application
- Your program’s accreditation status
- Your program’s philosophy statement.

3.5 Data retention

3.5.1 Data retention items

Certain documents must be retained for six years and then destroyed, including:

- Parent Aware Rating Application documentation (paper and electronic Participation Agreements, applications, accreditation certificates)
- Participation Termination Notice (if applicable)
- Request to Change Participation Status forms
- Classroom Information form (if applicable)
- Program information page of the Quality Documentation Portfolio
- Reconsideration documentation.

A program’s Parent Aware Rating history is maintained in the Develop database for 10 years and then destroyed.

For any records not indicated, please confirm with the Minnesota Department of Human Services contract manager before destruction to ensure all state policies are followed.

Section 4: Professional Development – Training

This section includes professional development policies for all pathways, including policies related to:

- **Develop – Requirements for licensed child care**
- **Achieve – The MN Center for Professional Development approved training**
- **Training, coaching, consulting, mentoring and college coursework within five years**
- **Learning Record**
- **Documenting coaching, consultation, and mentoring form**
- **Learning Record discrepancies**
- **Appealing a Career Lattice Step determination.**

Refer to the Rating Pathway sections of the manual to see pathway specific policies.

4.1 Develop – Requirements for licensed child care

4.1.1 Achieve approved training and verifying form

Training approved by Achieve that appears on the individual’s Learning Record, and any Verifying and Documenting Coaching, Consulting and Mentoring forms, will be accepted as evidence to meet Parent Aware training requirements or Indicators in the professionalism category. This means that training listed in the “other training” section on a Learning Record is not accepted as evidence.

4.2 Training, coaching, consulting, mentoring and college coursework within five years

4.2.1 Training time frame – all programs

To meet Parent Aware training requirements, lead teachers and/or providers of child care programs must have completed all training, coaching, consulting, mentoring and coursework according to the look back date as described by Pathway below. When determining if coursework has taken place in the last five years, the dates when actual college coursework was completed will be used, not the date of graduation.

Five-Year look back dates per Pathway Type:

- Full-Rating: Within five years of the Rating Cohort start date and up until the QDP submission deadline
- Accelerated Rating: Within five years of when the program goes into “Submitted” status in Develop
- Expedited Rating: Within five years of the six-month review date

4.2.2 Teaching licenses recognized in lieu of training

Achieve verifies Minnesota teaching licenses on Learning Records. A current, age-appropriate Minnesota teaching license can be applied in lieu of most required training when the information verified on the Learning Record matches the exact title and function code from the options below. Individuals will still need to show approved training in Knowledge and Competency Framework IV and/or IV.B that are required based on the Star-Rating goal.

Function code	Minnesota Department of Education teaching license title
180102	Prekindergarten
180103	Prekindergarten and kindergarten
180105	Pre-primary
180150	Early childhood education
180402	Family education/early childhood educator
190500	Early childhood special education
090000	Home economics
090100	Family and consumer sciences
090101	Consumer and homemaking occupations
090112	Consumer and homemaking/family life

4.2.3 Directors credentials

Achieve recognizes the director/administrator credentials recognized by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.

4.2.4 National Child Development Associate credential in lieu of training

Individuals who have a current national Child Development Associate credential earned within three years of the look-back date and verified by Achieve listed on their Individual Learning Record will meet Parent Aware training requirements. For Child Development Associate renewal:

- Training must be approved, on the Individual Learning Record and aligned with the required Minnesota’s Knowledge and Competency Frameworks for Early Childhood Professionals to meet Parent Aware requirements
- Renewals that do not have coursework reflected on the Individual Learning Record will not be counted towards Parent Aware training requirements.

4.2.5 Montessori diploma in lieu of training

Individuals who have a current Montessori diploma earned within five years of the look-back date and verified by Achieve listed on their Individual Learning Record will meet Parent Aware training requirements.

4.3 Learning Record

4.3.1 Learning Record verifies training

The Knowledge and Competency Framework Learning Record is the only source of evidence the Minnesota Department of Human Services uses to verify training, college coursework, age-appropriate Minnesota teaching licenses, degrees, director credentials and Career Lattice Steps for a Parent Aware Rating. The Minnesota Department of Human Services has access to electronic versions of all Learning Records; programs do not need to submit copies of Learning Records.

4.4 Documenting coaching, consultation and mentoring form

4.4.1 Meeting Parent Aware training requirements

Coaching, consulting and mentoring hours can be used to meet the Parent Aware training requirements and Indicators in the professionalism category.

Hours can be tracked through approved Relationship-Based Professional Development Events on an Individual’s Learning Record, or by completing the Verifying and Documenting Coaching, Consulting and Mentoring in Parent Aware form.

If using the form, each instance needs to be documented and labeled with the Knowledge and Competency Framework content area. A signature from the coach, consultant or mentor who delivered the hours is required. The form may not be used by currently endorsed Relationship-Based Professional Development Specialists, including Quality Coaches. See the instructions on the Verifying and Documenting Coaching, Consulting and Mentoring in Parent Aware form for additional guidance and policies.

4.5 Learning Record discrepancies

4.5.1 Errors in Learning Records

If a program or individual believes there is an error or discrepancy on an individual's Learning Record, the individual must request assistance to resolve the issue by contacting Achieve at support@mncpd.org. It is the responsibility of the individual to resolve discrepancies by the Quality Documentation Portfolio submission due date. Information on the appeals process can be found on the Achieve website (<https://www.mncpd.org/>).

4.6 Appealing a Career Lattice Step determination

4.6.1 Career Lattice appeal process

If a program disagrees with an individual's assigned Career Lattice Step, the individual must contact Achieve to complete the appeals process prior to the deadline for submitting the Quality Documentation Portfolio.

If the appeals process is completed after the deadline, the Rating will be processed using the Career Lattice Step that appears on the individual's Learning Record on the due date. Information on the appeals process can be found at the Achieve website (<https://www.mncpd.org/>).

Section 5: Financial supports for families

There are two financial supports available to children from families with low incomes who attend Parent Aware Rated programs:

- Early Learning Scholarships
- Higher Child Care Assistance Program rates.

5.1 Early Learning Scholarships

The Early Learning Scholarships program was established in order to close the opportunity gap by increasing access to high-quality early childhood programs ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.165](#)). For more information on Early Learning Scholarships, visit the [Minnesota Department of Education website](#) or contact MDE.ELScholarships@state.mn.us.

5.1.1 Pathway I

Early Learning Scholarships – Pathway I are awarded directly to eligible children by an area administrator. Pathway I Scholarships are awarded to a child for 12 months; once awarded, a child remains eligible to renew until they are age-eligible for kindergarten.

Scholarship amounts are determined by family need and Parent Aware Star Rating of the early childhood program serving the child, up to the limit (cap) of \$12,000 - \$15,000, based on program type and the Parent Aware Rating, per scholarship year. The scholarship cap may be subject to increases and will be communicated if changes are made.

Programs pursuing an Accelerated, Automatic or Expedited Rating are not eligible for scholarships until they have received a Rating. Starting early in 2024, all eligible programs that have signed a Parent Aware Participation Agreement, including programs in Building Quality, are eligible for scholarships.

More information is posted on the [Minnesota Department of Education website](#). Email questions to MDE.ELScholarships@state.mn.us. To learn more, call 888-291-9811.

5.1.2 Pathway II

Pathway II Scholarships are awarded to families through an eligible Four-Star Rated Program that has applied for and has been awarded Pathway II dollars. Programs include Head Start, school district, charter school, and family- and center-based child care programs in Minnesota. Programs that have been allocated Pathway II funds award Pathway II Scholarship funds to children for 12 months, and children are eligible to renew until they are kindergarten age. More information is posted on the [Pathway II Program Resources for Awardees webpage](#). Email questions to MDE.PathwayII@state.mn.us.

5.2 Higher Child Care Assistance Program rates

Family child care providers and child care centers that achieve a Three- or Four-Star Parent Aware Rating are eligible for higher Child Care Assistance Program rates for quality.

- Providers with a Three-Star Parent Aware Rating are eligible for up to 15% above the standard maximum rate, not to exceed the provider charge.
- Providers with a Four-Star Parent Aware Rating are eligible for up to 20% above the standard maximum rate, not to exceed the provider charge.

More information is posted on the [Minnesota Department of Human Services website](#).

Section 6: Financial supports for programs

6.1 Parent Aware Grants

Parent Aware Grants are offered to licensed child care programs that meet the eligibility requirements in their Rating Pathway. Refer to the Parent Aware Grants policies in each specific pathway for eligibility requirements. Parent Aware grants are intended to support, sustain and increase quality, and require completion of a Quality Improvement Plan and approval of eligible expenditures.

6.1.1 Approved uses of Parent Aware Grants

Early care and education programs serving young children are engaged in a continuous process of building their quality. Grants must be used for strategies and activities that enhance or sustain quality, and increase the capacity of programs to prepare young children for school and life.

The program's Quality Improvement Plan developed in partnership with their Quality Coach and Professional Development Advisor should inform how the program uses the grant. Quality Coaches will work with programs to identify appropriate goals and purchases, including those for the dedicated physical child care space that will help them sustain or improve their quality. Any items purchased with this grant must be used in accordance with licensing requirements. Programs should contact their licensor if they have questions about this. Eligible items that are for 100% child care program business use will be funded at 100%. Items that are shared with a household or organization (such as a church) are funded at 50%. Programs should seek guidance and expense approval from their Quality Coach prior to making any purchases if they plan to request reimbursement.

District Grant Administrators uphold the payment and reimbursement processes to ensure appropriate

accounting practices are used. Grant Administrators do not provide oversight to coaches on the use of Parent Aware Grants, however they may collaborate with coaches to discuss decisions and guidance.

In addition, Quality Coaches are encouraged to utilize the Grants Decision Guidelines document which supports collaboration with peer coaches and the Quality Improvement team at Child Care Aware of Minnesota to determine appropriate use of Parent Aware Grants. Janet Peterson, Grants Coordinator at the Child Care Aware Minnesota coordinating office (janetp@childcareawaremn.org), may provide additional support when necessary.

6.1.2 Eligible expenses

The program's Quality Improvement Plan should be used to determine how the program uses the grant, and programs should request approval from their Quality Coach prior to making purchases if they plan to request reimbursement.

Approved uses include items like professional development training, curriculum, assessment tools and environmental improvements, in programs' efforts to adopt additional best practices to maintain program quality or earn a higher Rating when they Re-Rate.

The following list offers some recommended uses for grants, but does not include all approved uses.

- **Minor construction projects:** Grants may be used towards the cost of materials for outdoor play area fencing or other minor construction or renovations to the spaces used for child care as required by licensing to ensure child health and safety, and/or to meet state or local child care program standards.
 - Required is the Quality Improvement Plan that is developed in partnership with the provider and the coach. *Documentation is not required from licensing.*
 - All materials must be new, and must be purchased from a retail store, not a private party.
 - In the event that a child care program wishes to have the cost of assembly and/or installation covered by a grant, the labor must be performed by a contractor following applicable state and local laws and regulations regarding registration and licensure. See dli.mn.gov/business/residential-contractors-remodelers-roofers for more information.
- **Technology:** Programs may use grants for technology and software to create, enhance and maintain business management systems. This includes costs associated with accessing the internet, such as installation or equipment, and website costs for start-up, maintenance or ongoing subscription fees.
- **Education:** Grants may be used for higher education expenses during the grant timeframe, and to cover the costs of supporting a T.E.A.C.H. recipient.
- **Wages:** Grants may be used to pay wages for staff to attend required professional development trainings and/or to cover the costs of substitute teachers or providers.
- **Curricula and assessment tools/learning activities:** All books, toys, learning materials, equipment or items related to assessment tools and learning activities must be new, and must be purchased from a retail store, not a private party.

6.1.3 Excluded purchases

In accordance with federal law, grant funds may *not* be used for:

- **Major construction or renovations**, defined as structural changes to the foundation, roof, floor, exterior or load-bearing walls of a facility, or the extension of a facility to increase its floor area; or extensive alteration of a facility such as to significantly change its function and purpose, even if such renovation does not include any structural change
- **Religious-based curricula, activities, materials or counseling**
- **Expendable supplies (diapers, wipes, soap, paper products)**, except as it pertains to Personal Protective Equipment (cleaning products, hand sanitizer, masks) used for recommendations from the Minnesota Department of Health to keep children and staff safe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, Parent Aware Grants (Building Quality Grants and Full-Rating Grants) are not allowed to be spent on items prohibited by Licensing, child care tuition (scholarships), or expenses considered to be part of the cost of doing business, including:

- Office supplies (ink, paper, etc.) used for business operations such as invoicing
- Accounting and legal fees
- Advertising
- Bank service charges
- Cleaning
- Equipment assembly other than by original manufacturer
- Food
- Insurance and warranties
- Licenses
- Rent or mortgage
- Taxes
- Transportation
- Used and/or non-new items
- Utilities.

6.1.4 Closed license

Once a program's license is closed, the program is not allowed to expend funds. A closed program may be reimbursed for expenses that were incurred while the program had an active license.

6.1.5 Repayment

Programs must repay Parent Aware Grants or the value of services received in lieu of dollars, including training or coaching under, but not limited to, conditions in the Parent Aware Participation Agreement, including:

- If the program participated in Building Quality and did not submit a Quality Documentation Portfolio according to the scheduled timeline
- If for any reason, participation is terminated while preparing for a Rating
- If the program knowingly provides false or fraudulent information during participation in Parent Aware.

Section 7: Revocation

The Minnesota Department of Human Services will end participation in Parent Aware and revoke a Parent

Aware Rating under any of the following conditions:

- Licensing actions
- Maltreatment determination (facility responsible)
- False information
- Change in licensing
- Loss of accreditation
- Termination of partnerships.

7.1 Licensing actions and participation

7.1.1 Participation

To participate in Parent Aware, licensed child care centers and family child care programs licensed with the Minnesota Department of Human Services must not have the following licensing sanctions: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, or revocation. Programs with a “Pending Reopening,” “Temporary Provisional,” or “Temporary Change in Ownership” license may participate only in certain conditions.

Programs with a substantiated conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation or a maltreatment finding will have their Rating revoked or their participation in Parent Aware ended. Parent Aware responses to licensing sanctions and changes in licensing status are described below.

Once a licensing action is substantiated, the duration of a licensing action is determined by the Minnesota Department of Human Services Licensing Division or a Tribal government. Programs with questions about licensing actions or maltreatment determinations should contact their child care licensor.

The program must submit a new application and Participation Agreement to participate in Parent Aware. A child care program that previously held a Parent Aware Rating and had a licensing action expire is eligible to participate in Parent Aware. The program must submit a new application and Participation Agreement to participate in Parent Aware.

Licensed child care centers with a “Pending Reopening” license status cannot earn a Rating, maintain a Rating or participate in Parent Aware until the license is “Active” on ParentAware.org. If a program has earned a Rating, or is participating in Parent Aware and the license status changes to “Pending Reopening,” the Rating will be revoked and removed from ParentAware.org. The program cannot participate in Parent Aware until the license is “Active.” Once the program’s license is “Active” (and the license number remains the same), the program’s Rating will be reinstated with the original expiration date, or if not Rated, they may participate and earn a Rating.

Licensed child care centers are issued a “Temporary Provisional” license prior to the expiration of a license that has been revoked or suspended while the program is operating under appeal of the license revocation or suspension.

- A program with a “Temporary Provisional” license status that holds a current Parent Aware Rating and has appealed may continue to operate, pending the outcome of an appeal process. The program’s Parent Aware Rating will be displayed on the website and participation will continue until the appeal process is complete.

- A program with a “Temporary Provisional” license status that applies for a Parent Aware Rating cannot participate in Parent Aware until the license is “Active.” Once the program’s license is “Active” (and the license number remains the same), they may participate and earn a Rating.

7.1.2 Revocation of license

Revocation means the license has been taken away due to serious or chronic licensing violations.

Revocation — subject to appeal

The license has been revoked due to serious or chronic violations of licensing requirements. Pending a decision to appeal, the license holder may continue to operate. The program’s Parent Aware Rating will be displayed on the website and it is allowed to continue participation during the period which the license revocation is subject to appeal.

Revocation — under appeal

The license has been revoked due to serious or chronic violations of licensing requirements. The license holder has appealed and may continue to operate, pending the outcome of an appeal process. The program’s Parent Aware Rating will be displayed on the website and participation will continue until the appeal process is complete.

Revocation

The license has been revoked due to serious or chronic violations of licensing requirements. The license holder may not operate and the program cannot be granted a license for five years. The program’s Rating is removed from the Parent Aware website, its Rating is revoked and participation is terminated. The program will receive a written notice of Rating revocation.

7.1.3 Suspension of license

Suspension of a license requires the license holder to stop operating.

Suspended — subject to appeal

The license has been suspended due to violations of licensing requirements. Pending their decision to appeal, the license holder may continue to operate. The program’s Parent Aware Rating will be displayed on the website and it is allowed to continue participation until the appeal process is complete.

Suspended

The license has been suspended due to violations of licensing requirements. The license holder may not operate until they meet certain conditions. Once conditions are met, the suspension may be lifted by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, allowing the program to begin operating again. The program’s Rating is removed from the Parent Aware website, its Rating is revoked and participation is terminated. The program will receive a written notice of Rating revocation.

7.1.4 Temporary immediate suspension of license

The license has been suspended immediately, based upon imminent risk of harm, and the license holder may not operate.

Temporary immediate suspension — subject to appeal

The license has been suspended immediately, based upon imminent risk of harm, and the license holder may not operate. The period during which the program may appeal has not passed. The program's Rating is removed from the Parent Aware website, its Rating is revoked and participation is terminated. The program will receive a written notice of Rating revocation.

Temporary immediate suspension — under appeal

The license has been suspended immediately, based upon imminent risk of harm, and the license holder may not operate. The program has appealed. The program's Rating is removed from the Parent Aware website, its Rating is revoked and participation is terminated. The program will receive a written notice of Rating revocation.

If the temporary immediate suspension is reversed or lifted by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the license is no longer suspended and the provider may operate. Parent Aware participation and Rating will be reinstated, and the program's Rating is added back to the Parent Aware website. The program will receive a written notice of Rating reinstatement.

Temporary immediate suspension

The license has been suspended immediately, based upon imminent risk of harm, and the license holder may not operate. A final sanction may be issued after the investigation is complete. If the final sanction is a licensing action (suspension, conditional, revocation) or a maltreatment determination finding (facility responsible), the program will not be eligible to participate or be Rated even while the licensing action or maltreatment is under appeal. The program's Rating is removed from the Parent Aware website, its Rating is revoked and participation is terminated. The program will receive a written notice of Rating revocation.

7.1.5 Conditional license

A conditional license requires the license holder to comply with special terms to continue to operate.

Conditional license — subject to appeal

The license has been placed on conditional status and the holder may continue operating under special terms. The period during which the program may appeal has not passed. The program's Parent Aware Rating will be displayed on the website and it is allowed to continue participation during the period which the conditional status is subject to appeal.

Conditional license — under appeal

The license has been placed on conditional status and the holder may continue operating under special terms. The license holder has appealed the order of conditional license. The program's Parent Aware Rating will be displayed on the website and it is allowed to continue participation until the appeal process is complete.

Conditional license

The license has been placed on conditional status and the holder may continue operating under special terms. The program's Rating is removed from the Parent Aware website, its Rating is revoked and participation is terminated. The program will receive a written notice of Rating revocation.

7.1.6 Fines

Fines will not disqualify a program from participating.

7.1.7 Tribal licenses in good standing

For each Tribally licensed program, the Minnesota Department of Human Services confirms with the Tribal child care licensor that a program has a Tribal license in good standing. The Tribal child care licensor is responsible for informing the Minnesota Department of Human Services if the program is no longer in good standing under Tribal licensing standards. The Minnesota Department of Human Services will end participation in Parent Aware and revoke the Rating if a program is not in good standing with a Tribal government.

7.2 Maltreatment determination

Maltreatment is defined as any of the following acts or omissions: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, or mental injury of a child. A child care provider or staff person is required to report maltreatment if that person knows or has reason to believe a child is being maltreated.

Determination of maltreatment of a child against the facility — subject to appeal

The program has been notified of the maltreatment determination and may continue operating. The period during which the program may appeal has not passed. The program's Parent Aware Rating will be displayed on the website and it is allowed to continue participation until the appeal process is complete.

Determination of maltreatment of a child against individual staff for family child care — subject to appeal

The program has been notified of the maltreatment determination and may continue operating. The period during which the program may appeal has not passed. For licensed family child care, the program's Parent Aware Rating will be displayed on the website and it is allowed to continue participation until the appeal process is complete. For child care centers, there is no impact on participation or Rating.

Determination of maltreatment of a child against the facility — under appeal

The program has been notified of the maltreatment determination and may continue operating. The Licensing Division is conducting the appeal process. The program's Parent Aware Rating will be displayed on the website and it is allowed to continue participation until the appeal process is complete.

Determination of maltreatment of a child against individual staff for family child care — under appeal

The program has been notified of the maltreatment determination and may continue operating. The Licensing Division is conducting the appeal process. The program's Parent Aware Rating will be displayed on the website

and it is allowed to continue participation until the appeal process is complete. For child care centers, there is no impact on participation or Rating.

Final determination of maltreatment of a child against the facility

The program has been notified of the maltreatment determination and may continue operating. The program's Rating is removed from the Parent Aware website, its Rating is revoked and participation is terminated for one year from the date of determination. The program will receive a written notice of Rating revocation.

Final determination of maltreatment of a child against individual staff for family child care

This applies only to licensed family child care, not to licensed child care centers. For child care centers, there is no impact on participation or Rating.

The program has been notified of the maltreatment determination and may continue operating. The program's Rating is removed from the Parent Aware website, its Rating is revoked and participation is terminated for one year from the date of determination. The program will receive a written notice of Rating revocation.

7.3 Minnesota Court of Appeals process

The program has the option to pursue legal action through the Minnesota Court of Appeals. If the program files an appeal within the allowed time period, Parent Aware participation and Rating will be reinstated with the original expiration date, and the program's Rating is added back to the Parent Aware website. The program will receive a written notice of Rating reinstatement and is allowed to continue participation until the appeal process is complete.

7.4 False information

7.4.1 False or fraudulent information

Programs must submit evidence that accurately reflects their current use of best practices. Individuals and organizations that knowingly provide false or fraudulent information during participation in Parent Aware, or while Rated, will not be allowed to continue participating.

The program's Rating will be revoked and removed from the website; it will be required to repay any Parent Aware Grants received and will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services reserves the right to investigate any suspected fraud in documentation submitted to Parent Aware. Parent Aware Rating staff, at their discretion, may require additional documentation which they believe is pertinent to verify the information provided, prior to completing the application process and after a Rating is issued.

All forms of fraud will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Those who are found to have given fraudulent information to obtain a Rating will not be allowed to participate or be Rated in Parent Aware.

7.5 Change in licensing

Participation and Ratings are based on programs meeting health and safety requirements through child care licensing. When a program's licensing status or entity changes, participation is ended or its Rating is revoked.

7.5.1 Closed

When a program's license is closed, the Parent Aware Rating is revoked or participation is ended.

7.5.2 Expired

When a program's license is expired, the Parent Aware Rating is revoked or participation is ended. The Minnesota Department of Human Services Parent Aware Rating team will monitor an expired license for 90 days and reinstate a program's Parent Aware participation or Rating if the license status changes from "Expired" to "Active."

7.5.3 Change in child care center ownership

Licensed child care centers with an application for change in ownership show an "Active" status. The buyer and seller enter into an agreement in which the seller is responsible for the license and all licensing actions until the buyer is issued a new license and has sole legal responsibility. (Minn. Stat. § 245A.043, subd. 4)

- A program with an application for change in ownership that holds a current Parent Aware Rating will maintain the Parent Aware Rating until the new owner is issued a new license and new license number. The new owner must reapply for Parent Aware with the new license number.
- A program with a new owner and new license number that wants to earn a Parent Aware Rating cannot participate in Parent Aware until the new license is "Active." Once the program's license status is "Active," they may apply to participate and earn a Rating.

7.5.4 Changes to license number — child care center moves location

- **When a Rated or participating child care center changes location and there is no change to the original license number**, there is no change to the program's Parent Aware Rating or participation status.
- **When a Rated or participating child care center changes location and a license number changes**, the program's Rating will be revoked or participation will end.

7.5.5 Changes to license number — family child care moves location

When a Rated or participating family child care program changes location and a license number changes, the program may submit the Change of Location and License Number for Rated Family Child Care form to Parent Aware at the Minnesota Department of Human Services. Once a completed form is received, the Rating will be retained or reinstated, and/or the program will be allowed to continue to participate in the rating process, as long as the license holder's name is exactly the same as the license holder's name on the child care license at the time the Rating was issued. This policy applies only to family child care.

7.6 Change in certification

The commissioner may decertify a center if a certification holder failed to comply with an applicable law; or knowingly withheld relevant information from, or gave false or misleading information to the commissioner in connection with an application for certification, in connection with the background study status of an individual, during an investigation, or regarding compliance with applicable laws. When considering decertification, the commissioner must consider the nature, chronicity or severity of the violation of law.

7.6.1 Decertified

When a center is decertified, the center is ineligible to receive payments from the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) under [Minnesota Statutes 119B](#), and Parent Aware Rating status will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

7.7 Change in accreditation

The Accelerated Pathway for licensed child care is based on a program meeting the standards of an approved accrediting body, as verified through its accreditation status. Therefore, accreditations that expire or are revoked during the Rating process, or once the Rating has been issued, result in loss of eligibility for the Accelerated Pathway or the revocation of Rating, respectively.

7.7.1 Expired during Rating process

During the Rating process, Parent Aware Raters will request current accreditation verification. If the accreditation of a child care program has expired, the Rating will not be processed or issued. The program has the option to pursue a Rating through the Full-Rating Pathway.

7.7.2 Expired after Rating issued

Once a Rating is issued, the Minnesota Department of Human Services will contact the program one month prior to accreditation expiration requesting updated accreditation information. If an accreditation of a child care program expires, and a new certificate confirming current accreditation is not received from the program within 30 business days of the accreditation expiration date, the Rating is revoked and the program's Rating is removed from the Parent Aware website. The program has the option to pursue a Rating through the Full-Rating Pathway, or a Rating through the Accelerated Pathway once it receives its new accreditation certificate.

7.7.3 Accreditation revoked by accrediting body

If an accrediting body revokes the accreditation of a Rated or participating licensed child care program, the Rating will be revoked or Parent Aware participation ended. The program must inform the Minnesota Department of Human Services by mail or email of the change in accreditation status within 30 days of the date that the accreditation was revoked.

Notification can be scanned and sent by email to:

support@parentaware.zendesk.com

Or sent by mail to:

Child Care Aware of Minnesota
Attn: Parent Aware Rating Team
10 River Park Plaza, Suite 820
St. Paul, MN 55107

7.8 Termination of child care partnerships

A licensed child care program included as a partner site in an Accelerated Rating or Automatic Rating holds a formal partnership agreement with one of the following entities:

- Public school-based prekindergarten program meeting School Readiness standards ([Minn. Stat. § 124D.15, Subd. 3](#));
- Voluntary prekindergarten program (meeting [Minn. Stat. § 124D.151](#)); or
- Early Head Start or Head Start program (meeting Head Start Program Performance Standards).

When a partnership agreement ends, the Minnesota Department of Human Services will revoke the Accelerated or Automatic Rating earned as a site of the partnership.

Licensed child care programs can choose to earn their own Star Rating. See Part 1, Section 2 for more information on child care partnerships.

7.8.1 Termination of public school-based program and child care partnership

When a public school-based program and child care partnership ends, the public school-based program must notify and submit a Parent Aware Addendum application to the Parent Aware Rating team within 30 days of the termination date of the contract. The Parent Aware Rating for the child care partner will be revoked.

The Parent Aware Addendum application can be scanned and sent by email to:
support@parentaware.zendesk.com

Or sent by mail to:

Child Care Aware of Minnesota
Attn: Parent Aware Rating Team
10 River Park Plaza, Suite 820
St. Paul, MN 55107

The child care program partner can then choose to earn its own Star Rating:

- **Full-Rating Pathway** – A licensed child care program that is not accredited can apply to join a Full-Rating Cohort to earn its own Rating.
- **Accelerated Pathway** – A licensed child care program partner that is accredited can apply for a Rating through the Accelerated Pathway.

See Part 1, Section 2.2 for additional policies on public school-based program and child care partnerships.

7.8.2 Termination of voluntary prekindergarten program and child care partnership

When a voluntary prekindergarten program and child care partnership ends, the public school-based program must notify and submit a Parent Aware Addendum application to the Minnesota Department of Education within 30 days of the termination date of the contract. The Parent Aware Rating for the child care partner will be revoked.

The child care program partner can then choose to earn its own Star Rating:

- **Full-Rating Pathway** – A licensed child care program that is not accredited can apply to join a Full-Rating Cohort to earn its own Rating.
- **Accelerated Pathway** – A licensed child care program partner that is accredited can apply for a Rating through the Accelerated Pathway.

See Part 1, Section 2.3 for additional policies on voluntary prekindergarten and child care partnerships.

7.8.3 Termination of Head Start or Early Head Start - Child Care Partnership

When a Head Start or Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership ends, the Head Start grantee must notify and submit a Parent Aware Addendum application to the Minnesota Department of Education within 30 days of the termination date of the contract. The Parent Aware Rating for the child care partner will be revoked. The child care program partner can then choose to earn its own Star Rating:

- **Full-Rating Pathway** – A licensed child care program that is not accredited can apply to join a Full-Rating Cohort to earn its own Rating.
- **Accelerated Pathway** – A licensed child care program partner that is accredited can apply for a Rating through the Accelerated Pathway.

See Part 1, Section 2.4 for additional policies on Head Start or Early Head Start – Child Care Partnerships.

Part 2: Full-Rating Pathway

Section 1: Full-Rating Pathway – Participation and Rating

This section includes:

- **Overview**
- **Participation**
- **Rating**
- **Evidence**
- **Issuing a Rating**
- **Post Rating**

1.1 Overview

The Parent Aware Standards and Indicators, Quality Documentation Portfolio and Rating Guide, and additional resources for programs seeking a Rating in the Full-Rating Pathway, are available on ParentAware.org at [Full-Rating Resources - Parent Aware](#) .

1.1.1 Standards and Indicators

Parent Aware Standards and Indicators represent Minnesota’s common set of program standards and best practices. The ultimate goal of these practices is individualized teaching and learning for every child. Programs seeking a Rating in the Full-Rating Pathway are required to submit evidence and meet requirements in every category of the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators.

1.1.2 Four Rating levels

Programs can earn one of four Ratings: One-, Two-, Three- or Four-Star. Programs that do not meet the One-Star requirements will receive a No Rating. The Quality Documentation Portfolio fully describes the requirements for each Star Rating. The Parent Aware Rating Guide: Full-Rating Pathway Quality Documentation Portfolio can be found on [ParentAware.org](#). Programs participating in the Full-Rating Pathway will receive a Quality Documentation Portfolio from their assigned Quality Coach.

Programs must meet these requirements to earn Star Ratings:

- To earn a **One-Star Rating**, programs must meet all the basic requirements for Star Ratings, One-Star training requirements and One-Star Indicators.
- To earn a **Two-Star Rating**, programs must meet all the basic requirements for Star Ratings, Two-Star training requirements and One- and Two-Star Indicators.
- To earn a **Three- or Four-Star Rating**, programs must meet all the basic requirements for all Star Ratings, Three- and Four-Star training requirements, Indicator requirements for the Rating they are seeking, and earn at least the minimum points for a Three- or Four-Star Rating.

1.1.3 Eligible programs

To be eligible to participate in Parent Aware, licensed child care programs must meet basic child safety and health standards, either by being in good standing with state or county licensing, or with a Tribal government.

Three types of programs are eligible to participate:

- Tribally licensed child care programs
- Child care centers licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services
- Family child care programs licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Programs that are required to repay Parent Aware Grants and have not repaid the full amount are not eligible to participate in Parent Aware.

See additional information on eligibility in Part 1, Section 1.3: Eligible programs.

1.1.4 Recruitment

All Child Care Aware districts employ a Parent Aware Recruiter. Parent Aware Recruiters are responsible for marketing and communicating Parent Aware to eligible programs that have not yet volunteered for Parent Aware, and programs that are interested in Re-Rating.

1.1.5 Priority programs

Recruiters must prioritize marketing Parent Aware to programs that are registered for the Child Care Assistance Program.

1.2 Participation

1.2.1 Choosing a track

There are two tracks to Full-Rating for participating programs. Programs select either the **Full-Rating** track, or the **Full-Rating with Building Quality** track.

Full-Rating – This track offers technical assistance to prepare for Rating.

Full-Rating with Building Quality – This track includes coaching to improve program quality and offers more support, and more time to prepare for Rating.

Each track offers a different set of supports. Programs must choose one track based on the goals of their program, and indicate their chosen track on their application form or in Develop when they apply. Programs cannot participate in both tracks at the same time.

1.2.2 Full-Rating and Building Quality Cohorts

Ratings are determined and issued in two cycles per year called Full-Rating Cohorts.

- The January Cohort begins on Jan. 1 and ends on June 30. Ratings for programs participating in the January Cohort are issued on June 30.
- The July Cohort begins on July 1 and ends on Dec. 31. Ratings for programs participating in the July Cohort are issued on Dec. 31.
- Building Quality Cohorts run on the same cycles and have the same start and end dates. Programs do not earn a Rating during the Building Quality Cohort.

1.2.3 Participation Agreement and application

Programs must submit a completed application and Participation Agreement to be eligible for a Rating. Paper applications will not be processed without a completed and signed Participation Agreement. Both forms must be submitted no later than Dec. 10 to participate in a January Cohort, and no later than June 10 to participate in a July Cohort.

Programs applying online in Develop must also submit a signed paper Participation Agreement to support@parentaware.zendesk.com so the signature can be verified. Program staff who apply for Parent Aware online should print, complete and email the Participation Agreement form as soon as possible after applying. Application deadlines are noted below in Section 1.2.4.

Programs that want to continue Parent Aware participation in a second sequential Building Quality Cohort are required to complete, sign and submit a new application and Participation Agreement.

Programs that continue Parent Aware participation by entering the Full-Rating Cohort following Building Quality, are required to complete, sign and submit a new Participation Agreement.

A program's participation in Parent Aware (Full-Rating or Building Quality track) will be canceled if a signed Participation Agreement is not received by Jan. 31 for the January cohort, or by July 31 for the July cohort.

1.2.4 Time frame to join

Programs must complete an application (online through Develop, or with a paper copy) and sign a Participation Agreement (paper copy) to participate.

- To participate in the **January** Full-Rating Cohort or Building Quality Cohort, programs must complete an application and sign a Participation Agreement by Dec. 10. The earliest a program can apply is June 11.
- To participate in the **July** Full-Rating Cohort or Building Quality Cohort, programs must complete an application and sign a Participation Agreement by June 10. The earliest a program can apply is Dec. 11.

Programs that continue Parent Aware participation in a second sequential Building Quality Cohort, or by entering the Full-Rating Cohort following Building Quality, are required to complete, sign and submit a new Participation Agreement by the deadlines noted above in Section 1.2.3, or their application will be canceled.

1.2.5 Changes to participation

There are four possible changes in participation:

- Termination

- Move cohort
- Change track
- Change pathway

1.2.6 Termination

After signing a Parent Aware Participation Agreement, a program may choose to terminate participation by completing and submitting a Request to Change Participation Status form. The form must be fully completed and received by the Minnesota Department of Human Services by the following deadlines:

- April 30 for programs participating in a January Full-Rating Cohort
- Oct. 31 for programs participating a July Full-Rating Cohort.

After this process is complete, the program is no longer participating in Parent Aware, and must repay any Parent Aware Grants received.

Programs that follow the termination process above may apply to participate in the next Full-Rating Cohort by completing and submitting a new application and Participation Agreement by the stated deadlines in Section 1.2.4.

1.2.7 Move Cohort

After signing a Parent Aware Participation Agreement, a program may request to move to the next Full-Rating Cohort by submitting a completed Request to Change Participation Status form and a new Participation Agreement.

All required documents must be received at the Minnesota Department of Human Services by the following deadlines:

- April 30 for programs participating in a January Full-Rating Cohort
- Oct. 31 for programs participating a July Full-Rating Cohort.

After this process is complete, the program will be officially participating in the next Cohort.

If the deadline is not met, the program's request to move to the next Full-Rating Cohort will be denied. The program's participation in the current Cohort will be canceled if the Quality Documentation Portfolio submission was not received by the Full-Rating Pathway's submission deadlines. A program will be eligible to participate six months after the end of the current Cohort.

1.2.8 Change track

Programs in the January Cohort that choose to change track must submit the required materials by Feb. 28, while programs in the July Cohort must do so by Aug. 31. The program must submit a completed Request to Change Participation Status form and a new Participation Agreement by the due date. The program must submit all required evidence and documentation as described in the Quality Documentation Portfolio by the deadline

that corresponds to its goal Rating and cohort. The move can be from Building Quality to Full-Rating, or from Full-Rating to Building Quality.

1.2.9 Change Pathway

Programs may choose to change pathways in order to earn a Parent Aware Rating. For example, a program that is participating in the Full-Rating Pathway and earns a national accreditation may choose to change to the Accelerated Pathway once that accreditation certificate is issued. The program must submit a completed Request to Change Participation Status form and a new Participation Agreement by any applicable deadlines.

1.3 Rating

1.3.1 Document review and on-site observation

The primary method of determining a Parent Aware Rating is document review. Programs must submit information and documentation to the Minnesota Department of Human Services as evidence that the program is currently using the best practice for each Parent Aware Indicator. The Quality Documentation Portfolio and Rating Guide includes information on preparing for a Rating and the evidence requirements for each Indicator.

Another method of determining a Rating is on-site observation. Child care centers with preschool classrooms that are seeking a Three- or Four-Star Rating must also receive a CLASS observation from the University of Minnesota Center for Early Education and Development.

1.3.2 Goal Rating

Programs must choose a Star-Level goal: One-, Two-, Three- or Four-Star. Programs are required to select the Indicators that they want to seek credit for. Raters will only review evidence of the Indicators that are identified in Develop, or on the Indicator checklist.

1.3.3 Quality Documentation Portfolio and deadlines

Each program's Quality Documentation Portfolio due date is determined by its Star-Level goal and cohort.

The due date for programs participating in the **January Cohort** is:

- March 31 for programs seeking a Three- or Four-Star Rating
- April 30 for programs seeking a One- or Two-Star Rating.

The due date for programs participating in the **July Cohort** is:

- Sept. 30 for programs seeking a Three- or Four-Star Rating
- Oct. 31 for programs seeking a One- or Two-Star Rating.

Programs that submit a complete Quality Documentation Portfolio by the deadline will receive a Rating in the mail within 15 business days of the last day of the Cohort: June 30 (January Cohort) or Dec. 31 (July Cohort).

1.3.4 Critical documents

Every program must select Indicators for review and provide the required program information to receive a Star Rating. Programs submitting their Quality Documentation Portfolio by paper should complete the forms listed below and include with their submission. Programs submitting their Quality Documentation Portfolio online will complete this information in Develop.

The critical documents for paper Quality Documentation Portfolio submission are:

- Indicator checklist page
- Completed program information page.

If a program does not submit the critical documents or provide the information in Develop that is needed to process a Rating, the Rating may be delayed. When critical documents are missing from a program's Quality Documentation Portfolio, the Rating team will contact the program. The program will have 15 business days to respond and provide missing critical documentation.

If a program does not submit necessary critical documents or information within 15 business days, the application will be canceled and the program will be required to submit a new application, Participation Agreement and Quality Documentation Portfolio. Programs must sit out one complete Cohort before participating again.

1.3.5 Incomplete evidence

If a program submits evidence to meet their goal Rating that is not complete or does not meet the requirements of the Indicator, the Rating may be delayed.

1.3.6 Incomplete evidence — Rater evaluation

When a program provides evidence that does not meet the requirements for its goal Rating the following procedure is used by the Parent Aware Rating team. These are the steps after a program sends a Quality Documentation Portfolio in the U.S. mail or uploads it via Develop.

- Rater evaluates the evidence submitted for each Indicator.
- Programs must specify which Indicators they want to meet. Only the Indicators that the program has checked on the Indicator Checklist Page or in Develop will be scored.
- If a program has submitted by paper and has included evidence for an Indicator that is not checked on the Indicator Checklist Page, the Rater will mark that Indicator incomplete and request additional clarification.
- If the program has submitted in Develop and has uploaded documentation to an Indicator that they have opted out of, the Rater will mark that Indicator incomplete and request additional clarification.
- If any evidence is found to not meet the requirements of an Indicator the program is seeking to meet, the Rater scores the Indicator "Incomplete." The Rater also provides feedback as to what is missing and what must be submitted to meet the Indicator.
- When the Rater is finished scoring the Quality Documentation Portfolio, Develop automatically changes the program's status to "Incomplete."

- Programs will receive an automatic email notifying them of their incomplete status. Programs are directed to use Develop to view their Quality Documentation Portfolio and the Rater’s notes regarding the incomplete Indicator(s). The program’s Quality Coach is also copied on this email.
- Program staff work with their Quality Coach and Professional Development Advisor to submit additional documentation in Develop, by email or U.S. mail, within 15 business days. Regardless of what method the program uses to respond, the response must be sent within 15 business days. If the program does not respond within that time frame, the Rating is issued based on the initial documentation that was sent in the Quality Documentation Portfolio.

1.3.7 Incomplete evidence — Rater responses

Upon receiving a response, the Rater evaluates all documentation sent for an incomplete Indicator(s). The Rater rescores the Indicator(s) and determines if they are or are not met.

The Rater again provides feedback; either an Indicator has been met with additional documentation, or a brief explanation of why the Indicator is not met is provided.

Indicators are not marked incomplete a second time; programs have one opportunity to submit documentation to supplement what was sent in the original submission of the Quality Documentation Portfolio.

1.3.8 Point-in-time Rating

Parent Aware is a point-in-time Rating.

If a program submits complete, on-time documentation, the Rating is issued based on the documentation submitted by the deadline.

If a program submits incomplete information, the Rating is issued based on the documentation submitted by the deadline and the documentation submitted within 15 business days of receiving an incomplete notification.

Documentation sent outside of these time frames will not be considered for a Rating.

1.4 Evidence

1.4.1 Lead teacher and lead providers

Each child care center must select and identify one lead teacher for each infant, toddler and preschool classroom. A lead teacher is the highest-qualified teacher who works in a classroom for at least 50% of the program’s operating hours.

Each family child care program must select and identify one lead provider. A lead provider is the highest-qualified provider who works in the program for at least 50% of the program’s operating hours.

If there are team teachers in a classroom or team providers in a family child care program where the teachers or providers are equally qualified, it is the choice of the program who will be considered the lead.

Lead teachers and lead providers for Parent Aware are identified by assigning the individual to the classroom in

the Classrooms tab of their Develop Organization Profile.

1.4.2 Lead teacher turnover

For child care centers, when there is lead teacher turnover between the beginning of the Full-Rating Cohort and the due date for the Quality Documentation Portfolio, the evidence submitted for the Quality Documentation Portfolio will be handled as follows.

- When there is no turnover of lead teachers, submit evidence for all lead teachers.
- When there is turnover between one lead teacher and 25% of lead teachers, submit evidence for at least 75% of lead teachers.
- When there is turnover of more than 25% of lead teachers, submit evidence for at least 75% of lead teachers, or move to the next Cohort.

When calculating the average Career Lattice Step of a program, only the Career Lattice Steps of lead teachers that have been assigned as a lead teacher to a classroom in the Classrooms tab will be included in the calculation. When the turnover policy applies to a program, programs are responsible for writing a note in the text box in the Basic Requirements section of Develop that clearly explains the turnover, including dates the turnover occurred in the program, and clearly states which lead teachers should be considered when calculating the average Career Lattice Step.

- Lead teacher turnover does not impact Indicator-related classroom practices.
- If a new classroom opens between the beginning of the Full-Rating Cohort and due date for the Quality Documentation Portfolio, then no evidence is needed for that classroom.

1.4.3 Curriculum

Programs must use an approved curriculum to be Rated Three Stars or higher. An updated list of aligned curricula can be found on ParentAware.org. If a program does not use a curriculum on the aligned list and has not had its site-designed or bundled curriculum approved after July 1, 2014, the program may choose to submit its curriculum for approval, or use an aligned curriculum. Programs that had a site-designed curriculum approved using the Curriculum Alignment with Early Childhood Indicators of Progress form prior to July 1, 2014, will need to seek approval for its site-designed curriculum using the Curriculum Nomination form, or use a Parent Aware aligned curriculum (list posted on ParentAware.org).

1.4.4 Curriculum review process

Programs may choose to submit a curriculum for review by completing the Curriculum Nomination form. The Minnesota Department of Human Services, in coordination with the Minnesota Department of Education, Early Learning Services, meets regularly to review curricula that have been nominated.

The team creates, with the help of a consultant, a written review of each curriculum, capturing the extent to which it meets the Parent Aware definition of curriculum and is aligned with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. Final decisions about published tools are posted on ParentAware.org. For unpublished, site-designed curricula that have been approved, the program will receive an approval notification letter from the Minnesota Department of Human Services. The process can take up to seven weeks to complete.

1.4.5 Deadlines for submitting curriculum nominations

Programs are encouraged to submit curriculum nominations as early as possible. However, in order for the curriculum review decision to count toward a Rating:

- Programs in the **January Cohort** must submit a nomination by **March 31**
- Programs in the **July Cohort** must submit a nomination by **Sept. 30**.

1.4.6 Assessment

Programs must use an approved assessment tool to be Rated Three Stars or higher. An updated list of approved assessment tools can be found on [ParentAware.org](https://parentaware.org).

1.4.7 Assessment review process

Programs may choose to submit an assessment for review by completing the Assessment Nomination form. The Minnesota Department of Human Services, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education, Early Learning Services, meets regularly to review assessments that have been nominated.

With the help of a consultant, the team creates a written review of each assessment, capturing the extent to which the assessment tool meets the approval criteria and is aligned with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. Final decisions about published tools are posted on ParentAware.org. For unpublished, site-designed assessment tools that have been approved, the program will receive an approval notification letter from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

1.4.8 Deadlines for submitting assessment nominations

Programs are encouraged to submit assessment nominations as early as possible. However, in order for the assessment review decision to count toward a Rating:

- Programs in the **January Cohort** must submit a nomination by **March 31**.
- Programs in the **July Cohort** must submit a nomination by **Sept. 30**.

1.4.9 CLASS observation and scoring

The only evidence accepted for child-adult interaction (T2.3, T2.4) and classroom transitions (T1.3b) Indicators are the scores from a CLASS observation conducted by the Center for Early Education and Development at the University of Minnesota. The Center for Early Education and Development is responsible for scheduling the on-site CLASS observations. This observation is required for child care centers with preschool classrooms that are seeking a Three- or Four-Star Rating. The scores from CLASS observations will not be used to calculate the program's Parent Aware Rating. This temporary policy applies to programs in the Jan. and July 2023 and Jan. and July 2024 Full-Rating Cohorts.

Preschool classrooms that are not included in an Automatic Rating partnership are eligible to receive CLASS Coaching and a CLASS observation.

Child care centers that only serve infants and toddlers are not eligible to receive CLASS coaching or a CLASS

observation. The Rating will be scored using family child care point ranges for Three- and Four-Star Ratings.

1.4.10 CLASS observation process

This is the observation process.

- After the Quality Documentation Portfolio is submitted and reviewed, the Center for Early Education and Development will be notified that a CLASS observation is needed.
- The Center for Early Education and Development contacts programs within two weeks of receiving a request for a CLASS observation.
- Observations are scheduled between the date of Quality Documentation Portfolio submission and the end of the cohort.

Note: The observation must occur during the Cohort. If the lead teacher is not available during the Cohort, the classroom must be observed with a substitute teacher.

1.4.11 CLASS observation process — classroom definition

A classroom is defined as an educational space with a lead teacher who spends at least two and a half hours of instructional time with a group of children. If a lead teacher provides more than one session of instructional time (must be at least two and a half hours), only one of the sessions will be an eligible classroom for the CLASS observation.

The classroom observed must be the longest session of instructional time that the lead teacher provides.

1.4.12 CLASS observation process — observation requirements

CLASS observations are only required and available to preschool classrooms in child care centers where approximately half or more of the children in the classroom are 36 months through 5 years old.

1.4.13 CLASS observation process — CLASS scores

A child care center with preschool classrooms seeking a Three- or Four-Star Rating is required to have a CLASS observation, but the scores from CLASS observations will not be used to calculate the program's Parent Aware Rating. This temporary policy applies to programs in the Jan. and July 2023 and Jan. and July 2024 Full-Rating Cohorts.

NOTE: The following policy that was in place prior to 2020 may be reinstated in 2025.

CLASS scores are used to determine the program's scoring for Indicators T2.3, T2.4 and T1.3b. If more than one classroom is observed, points will be awarded for Indicators based on the average of scores awarded.

Individual CLASS scores for each classroom observed must also meet the following criteria: Each classroom must receive a minimum of 2.0 in the Instructional Support domain to achieve a Three-Star Rating; and each classroom must receive a minimum of 2.5 in the Instructional Support domain to achieve a Four-Star Rating.

1.4.14 Career Lattice Step calculation

Each lead teacher and/or provider must have a Career Lattice Step (Foundational Awareness through Level 12). The Career Lattice Step is displayed on the summary page of the Individual Profile and on the Individual's Learning Record.

Career Lattice Steps achieved by lead teachers are used to determine the program's scoring for Indicator P2.3a. If there is more than one lead teacher, points will be averaged and awarded for Indicator P2.3a.

All lead providers or lead teachers must earn at least a Step 1 on the Minnesota Career Lattice to achieve Three Stars or higher.

For each lead provider or lead teacher, points are awarded based on their steps on the Minnesota Career Lattice as follows: one point for Step 1, two points for Step 2, and so on through 12 points awarded for Step 12, then averaged.

If the average of Career Lattice Steps for lead teachers, or the Career Lattice Step for a single lead provider is:

- 1.99 or fewer = zero points
- Between 2.00 and 2.99 = two points
- Between 3.00 and 3.99 = three points
- Between 4.00 and 4.99 = four points
- Between 5.00 and 5.99 = five points
- Between 6.00 and 7.99 = six points
- Between 8.00 and 9.99 = seven points
- Between 10.00 and 10.99 = eight points
- 11.00 or higher = nine points

1.5 Issuing a Rating

1.5.1 Receiving a Rating certificate

Once a program earns a Rating, a Parent Aware certificate is mailed to the program. The certificate includes two dates: date issued and expiration date. For the Jan. Cohort, the date issued is June 30.

For the July Cohort, the date issued is Dec. 31. Programs that submit a complete, on-time Quality Documentation Portfolio will receive a Rating certificate in the mail within 15 business days of the date issued.

1.5.2 Having the Rating delayed

Ratings may be delayed if the program does not submit a complete and on-time Quality Documentation Portfolio.

If a program submits a late and/or incomplete Quality Documentation Portfolio, the date issued on the Rating

certificate will be consistent with the program's Cohort.

1.5.3 Reconsideration

Programs can request a reconsideration of their Parent Aware Rating in Develop within 30 days after the date the Rating is marked "Active (Open to Review)" in Develop.

1.5.4 Reconsideration — time frame

If program staff believes the program warrants a different and higher Rating, the program must request reconsideration within 30 days of the date the Rating is marked "Active (Open to Review)" in Develop.

Parent Aware provides a point-in-time Rating; the Rating is determined by the quality documentation submitted by the program's Quality Documentation Portfolio deadline, and the additional information or clarification that is submitted within 15 business days of receiving an incomplete notification. During the reconsideration process, a program will not be able to upload new documentation. When requesting reconsideration, programs should refer to specific Parent Aware Indicators as appropriate.

1.5.5 Submitting a Rating reconsideration

Requests for reconsideration must be made by the program within its Develop Organization Profile. If a Rating reconsideration is submitted, the Minnesota Department of Human Services will complete another review and process another Rating of the program's Quality Documentation Portfolio. The program will receive a decision from the Minnesota Department of Human Services within 45 days of receipt of the reconsideration request.

1.6 Post Rating

1.6.1 Receiving quality improvement technical assistance

Parent Aware Quality Coaches provide technical assistance on quality improvement to all programs that participate in a Full-Rating Cohort. Programs that received No Rating, or a One-, Two-, Three- or Four-Star Rating must receive a minimum of three hours of technical assistance following the Rating. See Instructions for Entering Relationship-Based Professional Development events for guidelines on the method these hours can be offered. The goal of continuous quality improvement is to assist the provider in creating a plan with goals to accomplish before their next Rating. There is no limit to the number of technical assistance hours a program can receive before the program enrolls in another Building Quality or Full-Rating Cohort.

The program and Quality Coach will work together to refine the goals in the Electronic Quality Improvement Plan that will guide the program between Ratings. A program cannot receive Parent Aware technical assistance and coaching during Building Quality at the same time.

1.6.2 Re-Rating

Re-Rating means that a Rated program is seeking another Rating. The Re-Rating process is not different from the initial Rating process. Each time a program seeks a Rating, it is recommended that the program keeps a copy of the Quality Documentation Portfolio submitted. During the Re-Rating process, programs may refer to previous Quality Documentation Portfolio submissions to inform the new Rating, when appropriate. Programs must follow the guidance in the current Full-Rating Cohort Quality Documentation Portfolio, and only submit

documentation that are legitimate representations of actual events that occurred within the 12 months immediately preceding the current Quality Documentation Portfolio submission date.

- Programs that earn No Rating, or One-, Two- or Three-Star Ratings are eligible to seek a Re-Rating six months after the issuance date of their Rating. See Section 5.3.1 Full-Rating Grant for grant eligibility policies.
- If a program chooses to seek a Re-Rating before its Rating expires, the most recent Rating issued will be valid and the previous Rating will be invalid.
- Programs that earn a Four-Star Rating are eligible to earn a Re-Rating only when their Rating expires. To avoid a lapse in Rating, Four-Star Rated programs must sign up for the Full-Rating Cohort that begins six months prior to their Rating expiration date. Four-Star Rated programs are eligible to participate in Building Quality up to two times before their Full-Rating Cohort.

If programs do not seek a Re-Rating, the Rating will be invalid on the expiration date on the Parent Aware certificate.

1.6.3 Building Quality

Programs can begin participating in Building Quality six months after the issuance date of their Rating.

1.6.4 Full-Rating Cohort

Programs that earn No Rating, or One-, Two- or Three-Star Ratings can participate in a Full-Rating Cohort six months after the issuance date of their Rating.

Section 2: Develop data system

This section includes:

- **Develop data system**
- **Develop — Requirements for licensed child care**

2.1 Develop data system

2.1.1 Data system requirements and communication by email only

Develop is a web-based data system, and a tool for quality improvement and professional development that supports early learning and school-age care. See developtoolmn.org.

Programs are required to use Develop to earn a Parent Aware Rating. There are many features of Develop that programs are not required to use but have the option to use during participation.

The Parent Aware Rating team will communicate with programs only through email during the Rating process. The email address associated with the program's Organization Profile will be used. To update the email address, programs log into Develop via their Individual Profile to access the Organization Profile and update the contact information.

For assistance with an Organization Profile or Individual Profile, programs may contact the Develop Help Desk at support@develophelp.zendesk.com or 833-605-6938.

For assistance in Hmong, Somali or Spanish, programs may contact the Language Access Line provided through Child Care Aware of Minnesota at 888-291-9811 or 651-655-0150.

2.2 Develop – Requirements for licensed child care

User guides are available for many of the following steps at developtoolmn.org/guides.html.

2.2.1 Organization Profile

All programs must register their Organization Profile in Develop. This must be done prior to verifying employees.

2.2.2 Current Individual Membership for lead providers and lead teachers of classrooms

For a program seeking a Rating, each lead teacher and/or provider must have a current Individual Membership in Develop as of the Quality Documentation Portfolio deadline.

Membership status date must not be expired and the membership status must be current. The expiration date is displayed on the summary page of the Individual Profile and on the individual's Learning Record.

2.2.3 Current Individual Membership for directors and education coordinator

For a program seeking a Rating, each director and education coordinator must have a current Individual Membership in Develop as of the Quality Documentation Portfolio deadline.

Membership status date must not be expired and the membership status must be current. The expiration date is displayed on the summary page of the Individual Profile and on the individual's Learning Record.

2.2.4 Verifying employment

Each lead teacher and/or provider must have accurate employment records, meaning that the individual accurately identifies their employer by license number, by using the Employment tab on their Individual Profile in Develop.

Lead teachers, providers, directors and education coordinators who are employed in a tribally licensed program should contact Parent Aware support, support@develophelp.zendesk.com, to find out the organization's ID number. This number can be used to accurately identify their employer.

The organization must verify the employment of lead teachers.

2.2.5 Classrooms tab

All programs must make sure the Classrooms tab in Develop is accurate and up-to-date at the time of the Quality Documentation Portfolio submission. If the program submits its Quality Documentation Portfolio in advance of the deadline, it is the program's responsibility to ensure the information is still accurate at the Quality Documentation Portfolio submission deadline for the Star Rating they are seeking.

The program must assign one lead provider or lead teacher to each group or classroom created in the Classrooms tab. The number of groups or classrooms created must match the total number listed in the Enrollment section.

2.2.6 Electronic Quality Improvement Plan (EQUIP)

For Parent Aware Indicators T3.3 and H2.3c, which require the use of the self-assessment tools on cultural responsiveness practices or nutrition and physical activity practices, goals are required as evidence. The Electronic Quality Improvement Plan in Develop is the single source for documenting these goals.

2.2.7 Reconsideration of Rating

Programs must use Develop to seek a reconsideration of their Rating. See Section 1.5.3 Reconsideration for additional reconsideration request policies.

2.2.9 Philosophy statement

Programs are strongly encouraged to update their philosophy statement in Develop.

Section 3: Professional Development – Training

See Part 1, Section 4 Professional Development – Training for policies applicable to all licensed child care programs. This section includes policies specific to earning a Full-Rating.

3.1 Training, coaching, consulting, mentoring and college coursework within five years

3.1.1 Training time frame

To meet Parent Aware training requirements, a lead teacher and/or providers of non-accredited licensed child care must have completed all training, coaching, consulting, mentoring and coursework within five years of the first day of the Full-Rating Cohort (either Jan. 1 for the January Cohort or July 1 for the July Cohort) and up until the Quality Documentation Portfolio deadline. When determining if coursework has taken place in the last five years, the dates when actual college coursework was completed will be used, not the date of graduation.

Refer to the current Full-Rating Pathway Quality Documentation Portfolio located on ParentAware.org at parentaware.org/programs/full-rating-resources for the training requirements for each Star-Level goal.

Section 4: Relationship-Based Professional Development Specialists - Coaching, technical assistance and professional development

This section includes:

- Relationship-Based Professional Development
- Coaching during Building Quality
- CLASS coaching
- Parent Aware technical assistance

- Post-Rating technical assistance on quality improvement

4.1 Relationship-Based Professional Development support for programs

4.1.1 Types of Relationship-Based Professional Development

There are many different types of Relationship-Based Professional Development available to early childhood providers, including those participating in Parent Aware. Providers of Relationship-Based Professional Development go through an approval process in Develop. More information about the various types of Relationship-Based Professional Development can be found at mncpd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/RBPD-Endorsements-1.pdf.

4.1.2 Minimum hours

Each Relationship-Based Professional Development type has requirements that include a minimum number of hours that programs agree to receive when they sign the Parent Aware Participation Agreement. Parent Aware Quality or CLASS Coaches must ensure that programs understand the agreement and receive the minimum hours. For more information, please see the Parent Aware Implementation Manual.

4.1.3 Relationship-Based Professional Development approval

Parent Aware Quality Coaches, CLASS Coaches and professional development advisors must be approved as Relationship-Based Professional Development Specialists before starting work with child care providers.

If the Relationship-Based Professional Development Specialist's endorsement expires, work can continue with child care providers until status is renewed, but they will not have access to a program's Organization Profile in Develop. If this occurs, the Relationship-Based Professional Development Specialists should track their hours manually, then enter them into Develop once the renewal is completed.

4.2 Coaching during Building Quality

4.2.1 Purpose, time frame and design

Building Quality is a six-month period of coaching to help programs use best practices. Programs may start receiving coaching during Building Quality in January or July. Building Quality is designed to support programs in using best practices in the six or 12 months before they join a Full- Rating Cohort and seek a Rating.

A program cannot receive technical assistance on quality improvement and coaching during Building Quality at the same time. CLASS Coaching can take place during the same time period as Building Quality.

4.2.2 Priority programs

Regional Child Care Aware offices must prioritize programs that serve children with high needs for participation in Building Quality.

Child Care Aware staff are required to design and implement a plan to ensure that agency policies and services are responsive and accessible, particularly to underserved priority populations. This includes communities of color, migrants, Tribes, immigrants, refugees, rural communities, low socio-economic status, English language Learners

and children with disabilities.

4.2.3 Terms of participating in Building Quality

When programs sign a Participation Agreement and choose to participate in Building Quality, they are agreeing to:

- Meet with their Coach, in person, within the first month of their Cohort (this is before Jan. 31 if they participate in the January Building Quality Cohort, and before July 31 if they participate in the July Building Quality Cohort); programs are not required to meet with their coach within the first month if they are participating in a second sequential Building Quality Cohort (known as “stacking” Building Quality)
- Receive a minimum of 20 hours and a maximum of 30 hours of Parent Aware Quality Coaching over a six-month period, either January through June, or July through December
- Seek and earn a Parent Aware Rating in the Cohort immediately following the completion of six or 12 months of Coaching during Building Quality.

Programs in Building Quality may not request to move Cohorts. If a program ends participation in Building Quality coaching services prior to the end of the Cohort, the program will not receive the Building Quality grant unless the 20-hour minimum coaching hours requirement has been met. A program can choose to discontinue coaching services without terminating participation. The programs’ options are to:

- Submit an application to complete another six-months of Building Quality in the next Cohort, if eligible, and then enter the Full-Rating Cohort to earn a Rating, or
- Apply for the next Full-Rating Cohort.

4.2.4 Flexible services

At the end of a Building Quality Cohort (in June or December), programs have two options.

- **Programs ready to earn Ratings** are automatically entered into the Full-Rating Cohort immediately following Building Quality and will receive technical assistance on submitting the Quality Documentation Portfolio. The program is required to complete and submit a new Participation Agreement by Jan. 31 for participation in the January Full-Rating Cohort and by July 31 for participation in the July Full-Rating Cohort. No application is needed by the program.
- **Programs that are not ready to seek Ratings** and that want at least 20 more hours of Coaching over six months can choose to participate in another consecutive six months of Coaching during Building Quality. Prior to the end of the Cohort, programs must submit an application and signed Participation Agreements by the deadline (December 10th for the next January Cohort and June 10th for the next July Cohort) to participate in a second Cohort of Building Quality.

At the completion of the second Cohort of Building Quality Coaching, programs must seek and earn Parent Aware Ratings and are automatically entered into the next Full-Rating Cohort. The program is required to complete and submit a new Participation Agreement by Jan. 31 for participation in the January Full-Rating Cohort and by July 31 for participation in the July Full-Rating Cohort. No application is needed by the program.

4.2.5 Financial incentive

After a program receives 20 hours of Coaching over a six-month period (January to June, or July to December) and the 20 hours are documented by its assigned Parent Aware Quality Coach as Relationship-Based Professional Development events in Develop, the program has the option of receiving up to \$1,000 in a Building Quality Grant.

For programs that participate in the **January** Building Quality Cohort:

- Building Quality Grants will be available beginning July 1 and must be spent by Nov. 30.

For programs that participate in the **July** Building Quality Cohort:

- Building Quality Grants will be available beginning Jan. 1 and must be spent by May 31.

4.3 CLASS Coaching

4.3.1 Purpose and design

The purpose of CLASS Coaching is to help lead teachers of preschool classrooms in child care centers use best practices as defined by the CLASS tool.

This Coaching is designed to support programs that choose to seek a Three- or Four-Star Rating to prepare for a CLASS observation that they will receive from the Center for Early Education and Development in order to meet required Indicators in the Teaching and Relationships with Children category.

4.3.2 Time frame

CLASS Coaching can occur at any point in time from the start of the Building Quality or Full-Rating Cohort up until the Rating is earned, except on the day a CLASS observation is conducted by the Center for Early Education and Development.

4.3.3 Terms of participation

CLASS Coaching is not required for participation in Parent Aware. Child care centers may decline CLASS Coaching by selecting the “Decline CLASS Coaching” box on the CLASS Coaching Agreement.

CLASS Coaching is available to child care centers in the Full-Rating Pathway with preschool classrooms where approximately half or more of the children in the classroom are 36 months through 5 years old. Lead teachers in these classrooms may receive CLASS Coaching.

Child care centers with preschool classrooms that seek a Three- or Four-Star Rating can receive up to 15 hours of Coaching per preschool classroom, each time they begin participation in the Full Rating Pathway. If a program participates in the Building Quality Cohort prior to the Full Rating Cohort, CLASS Coaching may begin at the start of the Building Quality Cohort and continue until the Rating is earned. CLASS Coaching cannot occur on the day of the CLASS observation.

- For example, ABC Child Care applies to participate in Building Quality in the January 2023 Cohort. CLASS

coaching begins at the start of that Cohort. The program decides to do a second Cohort of Building Quality and the coaching can continue. Once the program enters the Full-Rating Cohort in January 2024, the Coaching can continue (except for on the day of the observation), but not to exceed 15 hours per classroom over that 18-month span.

4.3.4 Eligible classrooms

A classroom is defined as an educational space with a lead teacher who spends at least two and a half hours of instructional time with a group of children. If a lead teacher provides more than one session of instructional time (must be at least two and a half hours) only one of the sessions will be an eligible classroom for the CLASS observation. The classroom observed must be the longest session of instructional time that the lead teacher provides.

- All the preschool classrooms that meet this definition are in the pool of classrooms to receive a CLASS observation from the Center for Early Education and Development unless the classroom is included in a Partnership Rating. Classrooms in Partnership must be labeled in the Classrooms tab (see Partnership section for more details).
- At least one-third of all eligible classrooms will be observed. Eligible classrooms will be selected at random for observation. The selection of classroom(s) for observation will be done after the Quality Documentation Portfolio has been submitted and reviewed.

CLASS Coaching is not available to family child care programs, infant classrooms in centers or toddler classrooms in centers.

4.4 Parent Aware technical assistance

4.4.1 Purpose, time frame and design

Parent Aware Quality Coaches provide technical assistance to programs participating in a Full-Rating Cohort to help them understand the requirements and deadlines of Parent Aware, set their Star-Level goal, and assemble evidence for the program's Quality Documentation Portfolio. Coaches also help programs respond to requests by the Parent Aware Rating team for additional or clarified evidence. Technical assistance is required and takes place for a six-month period, either the January Cohort or the July Cohort. Programs have the option to receive CLASS Coaching while also participating in a Full-Rating Cohort.

4.4.2 Participation deadlines

A program must sign up for a Parent Aware Full-Rating Cohort on time. The deadline to sign up for a Full-Rating Cohort that begins in January is Dec. 10. The deadline to sign up for a Full-Rating Cohort that begins in July is June 10.

June 11 is the earliest date a program can apply and sign a Participation Agreement for the January Cohort. Dec. 11 is the earliest date a program can apply and sign a Participation Agreement for the July Cohort.

4.4.3 Terms of participation

When programs sign a Participation Agreement and choose to participate in Full-Rating technical assistance, they are agreeing to:

- Receive a minimum of three hours and a maximum of 15 hours of technical assistance over a six-month period, either January through June (January Cohort) or July through December (July Cohort); see the document titled, “Instructions and Business Rules for Creating RBPD Events” for telephone or email limits
- Seek and earn a Parent Aware Rating during the Cohort
- Meet with their Coach in person before Jan. 31 if they are participating in the January Cohort, or before July 31 if they are participating in the July Cohort; this initial meeting at the start of the Cohort is still required for programs that completed six or 12 months of Building Quality immediately preceding the Full-Rating Cohort
- Consult with their Coach on the documentation they have selected to submit for their Quality Documentation Portfolio at least once prior to submission
- Consult with their Coach, or Professional Development Advisor, following an “Incomplete” and prior to resubmission of documentation.

Programs that participate in the Full-Rating Cohort are required to receive technical assistance. Programs cannot receive both Building Quality Coaching and technical assistance at the same time. Programs can receive CLASS Coaching during technical assistance.

4.5 Post-Rating technical assistance on quality improvement

4.5.1 Technical assistance on quality improvement

Parent Aware Quality Coaches provide technical assistance on quality improvement to all programs that participated in a Full-Rating Cohort. Programs that received No Rating, or a One-, Two-, Three- or Four-Star Rating must receive at least three hours of technical assistance following the Rating. The goal of continuous quality improvement is to assist the provider in creating a plan with goals to accomplish before their next Rating. There is no limit to the number of technical assistance hours until the program enrolls in another Building Quality or Full-Rating Cohort. See the document titled, “Instructions and Business Rules for Creating RBPD Events” for telephone or email limits.

The program and Coach will work together to refine the goals in the Electronic Quality Improvement Plan that will guide the program between Ratings. A program cannot receive Parent Aware technical assistance and Coaching during Building Quality at the same time.

Section 5: Financial supports

5.1 Parent Aware Grants

Parent Aware Grants are offered to programs to achieve and sustain quality. For Parent Aware Grants information pertaining to all pathways, including approved uses of grants and eligible and ineligible expenses, see Part 1, Section 6: Financial supports to programs. The following policies pertain to programs participating in the Full-Rating Pathway.

5.1.1 Financial support eligibility and types of grants

Programs that participate in the Full-Rating Pathway may be eligible to receive a Building Quality Grant, a Full-

Rating Grant, or both types of grants to sustain or improve their quality.

Programs will work with their Coach and Professional Development Advisor as appropriate to identify goals and purchases that will support programs to sustain quality, or succeed in improving their quality as they work toward achieving a higher Star Rating.

5.1.2 Building Quality Grant

After a program receives 20 hours of Coaching over a six-month period (January to June, or July to December) and the 20 hours are documented by its assigned Parent Aware Quality Coach as Relationship-Based Professional Development events in Develop, the program has the option of receiving up to \$1,000 in a Building Quality Grant.

For programs that participate in the **January** Building Quality Cohort:

- Building Quality Grants will be available beginning July 1 and must be spent by Nov. 30.

For programs that participate in the **July** Building Quality Cohort:

- Building Quality Grants will be available beginning Jan. 1 and must be spent by May 31.

5.1.3 Full-Rating Grant

Programs that earn a Star Rating are eligible to receive a Full-Rating Grant if they meet one the following conditions:

- The program has earned a Rating for the first time.
- The program has a prior Rating history and earned a new Rating following a lapse in Rating.
- The program was Re-Rating on the normal two-year schedule, and earned a new Rating.
- The program elected to Re-Rate earlier than required and earned a higher Star Rating level than their current Rating.

Grants are offered in a tiered structure according to Star Level as follows:

Star Level	Grant amount
One-Star Rating	\$1,500
Two-Star Rating	\$2,000
Three-Star Rating	\$3,500
Four-Star Rating	\$4,000

- For programs that earn a Rating June 30, following the January Full-Rating Cohort, grants will be available July 1 and must be spent by Nov. 30.
- For programs that earn a Rating Dec. 31, following the July Full-Rating Cohort, grants will be available Jan. 1 and must be spent by May 31.

5.1.4 Rating levels not eligible for grants

Programs that earn a No Rating are not eligible for Full-Rating Grants.

One-, Two- or Three-Star Rated programs that elect to Re-Rate earlier than required are not eligible for Full-Rating Grants if they earn the same Star Rating level, or a lower Star Rating level as their current Rating.

Part 3: Accelerated Pathway

Section 1: Participation and Rating

This section includes:

- **Overview**
- **Participation**
- **Rating**
- **Evidence**
- **Issuing a Rating**

1.1 Overview

The Parent Aware Standards and Indicators, Quality Documentation Portfolio and Rating Guide, and additional resources for programs seeking a Rating in the Accelerated Pathway are available on ParentAware.org at Accelerated Pathway Resources (parentaware.org/programs/accelerated-pathway-resources).

1.1.1 Standards and Indicators

Parent Aware Standards and Indicators represent Minnesota’s common set of program standards and best practices. The ultimate goal of these practices is individualized teaching and learning for every child. For the Accelerated Pathway, eligible programs must meet two training requirements and two Indicators.

1.1.2 Rationale

The Accelerated Pathway is available because accredited child care and public school-based prekindergarten programs meet many of the Parent Aware Indicators through national accreditation requirements as overseen by national accrediting bodies, or requirements in state law for public school-based programs that are overseen by school boards and the Minnesota Department of Education.

1.1.3 Accountable entity for quality monitoring

For Standards and Indicators not met through Parent Aware, national accrediting bodies are responsible for ensuring that quality requirements are met for accredited child care, and school boards are responsible for ensuring that school readiness standards as described in state law are met.

1.1.4 One Rating level

Four Star is the only Star Level earned in the Accelerated Pathway. Accredited, licensed child care programs are eligible to participate in the Full-Rating Pathway, if they choose.

1.1.5 Eligible programs

To be eligible to participate in Parent Aware, licensed child care programs must meet basic child safety and health standards as monitored by public school-based programs, or be licensed and in good standing.

Eligible programs include:

- Licensed accredited child care centers (see list of approved accreditations in Section 1.1.6)
- Licensed accredited family child care (see list of approved accreditations in Section 1.1.6)
- Public school-based prekindergarten programs meeting school readiness statute or voluntary prekindergarten statute and their partners
- License-exempt charter school early learning programs, officially recognized by the Minnesota Department of Education.

1.1.6 Approved accreditations

Licensed child care centers with a current approved accreditation (see below) and licensed family child care with a current approved accreditation (see below) are eligible to earn a Rating in the Accelerated Pathway. To be eligible, programs must be licensed and have no current licensing actions or maltreatment determinations with the Minnesota Department of Human Services or a Tribal government.

Accepted accreditation for child care programs (center-based and family child care):

- Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment (APPLE) for Early Childhood Education Programs
- American Montessori Society (AMS) School Accreditation
- Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) – Montessori School Recognition
- Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) Accreditation
- Cognia Early Learning Accreditation
- Council on Accreditation (COA) – Child and Youth Development - Early Childhood Education (CYD-ECE) Accreditation
- Council on Accreditation (COA) – Private Early Childhood Education
- Green Apple Accreditation of Children’s Services (GAACS) – Early Education Center (EEC) Accreditation
- Lumen Accreditation from the Catholic University of America
- Minnesota Nonpublic School Accrediting Association - Preschool Accreditation (MNSAA)
- National Accreditation Commission (NAC) for Early Care and Education Programs Accreditation
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation
- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) Accreditation
- National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA)

Accepted accreditation for family child care providers:

- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)

1.1.7 Accreditation approval process

The Minnesota Department of Human Services conducts a process for approving accreditations. The list of approved accreditations is used by both Parent Aware and the Child Care Assistance Program. Parent Aware

uses the list to determine which accreditations for child care centers are accepted for programs pursuing a Rating through the Accelerated Pathway. The Child Care Assistance Program uses the list to determine which accreditations qualify centers for the 15% higher reimbursement rates for quality.

If you have questions about the approval process for accreditations for Parent Aware, contact Michelle Lenhart at the Minnesota Department of Human Services at michelle.lenhart@state.mn.us.

1.1.8 Case-by-case decisions on School Readiness Standards

The Minnesota Department of Education will decide on a case-by-case basis whether a public school-based program (licensed or licensed-exempt) meets [Minnesota Statute 124D.15](#) program requirements. If the program does meet the requirements, but does not receive School Readiness funding, the program is eligible for the Accelerated Pathway.

The Minnesota Department of Education will contact districts and identify if the program meets the School Readiness statute requirements for the proposed public school-based program. If yes, the public school-based program Early Childhood Coordinator licenses are checked by a Parent Aware Rater, using [Minnesota's educator license lookup](#). If no, the program is ineligible to apply for the Accelerated Pathway.

Public school-based prekindergarten programs that are accredited and licensed, but do not meet the statute requirements, are eligible for the Accelerated Pathway through the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Public school-based prekindergarten programs that are accredited but not licensed, and do not meet the statute requirements, are not currently eligible to receive a Parent Aware Rating. For eligibility determination and technical assistance, programs should contact the Minnesota Department of Education.

1.1.9 Adding sites during a Rating

When adding a site to an Accelerated Pathway Rated program, public school-based programs must submit an application form on behalf of only the new site. When the public school-based program seeks a Re-Rating, all sites will reflect the same date their Rating was issued, even if they originally had a later issuance date.

1.1.10 Recruitment

Child Care Aware of Minnesota is responsible for recruiting accredited child care, and the Minnesota Department of Education is responsible for recruiting public school-based programs meeting school readiness standards.

1.1.11 Priority programs

Child Care Aware must prioritize marketing Parent Aware to licensed and accredited programs that are registered for the Child Care Assistance Program.

1.2 Participation

1.2.1 Participation Agreement and application

Programs must submit a completed application and Participation Agreement. Programs applying online must

also submit a signed paper Participation Agreement to support@parentaware.zendesk.com so the signature can be verified.

Programs must submit a completed Participation Agreement by the time of Quality Documentation Portfolio (QDP) submission. A program will not be issued a Rating until a signed Participation Agreement has been received.

1.2.2 Time frame to join — first Rating

For a program's first Rating, Accelerated Pathway applications are accepted at any time.

1.2.3 Time frame to join — Re-Rating

Programs that earn a Four-Star Rating are eligible to seek a Re-Rating only when the Rating is expiring. Programs that have applied for the Accelerated Pathway are required to submit documentation within six months of the application date. Programs that do not meet the six-month deadline will have the application canceled. Programs that meet the eligibility requirements may reapply at any time.

1.2.4 Time frame for submission of documentation

After the first Rating, to avoid a lapse in Rating, programs must submit documentation for Re-Rating eight weeks prior to the expiration of the Rating. Documentation submissions are not accepted more than eight weeks prior to the Rating expiration date.

1.3 Rating

1.3.1 Document review

The primary method of determining a Parent Aware Rating is document review. Programs must submit information and documentation to the Minnesota Department of Education or Minnesota Department of Human Services as evidence that the program is currently using the best practice for each Parent Aware Indicator. The Accelerated Pathway Rating guide (for licensed, accredited child care only) includes information on how to prepare for a Rating and the evidence requirements for each Indicator.

1.3.2 Critical documents and required information for accredited child care

Critical documents and required information for accredited child care programs include:

- Program information
- Accreditation certificate
- Participation Agreement
- Evidence of Indicators being met

1.3.3 Incomplete evidence

If the Participation Agreement, application or Quality Documentation Portfolio evidence submitted is incomplete, the Rating will be delayed.

When a program sends evidence that does not meet the requirements for the Accelerated Pathway, the

following procedure is used by the Parent Aware Rating team. Below are the steps after a program sends a Quality Documentation Portfolio in the U.S. mail or completes it via the Develop website.

- Rater evaluates the evidence sent for each Indicator.
- If any evidence is found to not meet the requirements of an Indicator the program is seeking to meet, the Rater scores the Indicator “incomplete.”
- Rater also provides feedback as to what is missing and what must be submitted to meet the Indicator.

The program will have 45 business days from the date its Quality Documentation Portfolio moves to submitted status in Develop to earn a Rating.

If a program chooses to submit its Quality Documentation Portfolio electronically, it will go into submitted status when the program selects “Submit for Rating” on the Confirm Status Change page in Develop. If the program chooses to submit its Quality Documentation Portfolio via U.S. Postal Service, Parent Aware staff will select the “Submit for Rating” option on behalf of the program after the portfolio is received, date stamped, scanned and uploaded electronically to Develop.

Accelerated Pathway programs in “Incomplete” status can resubmit evidence an unlimited number of times within 45 business days from the date they submitted for a Rating. If a program does not submit complete evidence within 45 business days, its application will be canceled and it will be required to submit a new application, Participation Agreement, Quality Documentation Portfolio and accreditation certificate if not already verified in Develop. If a program is in the process for curriculum or assessment nomination, and the rest of the documentation is complete, the 45-day policy may be waived until the nomination review process has been completed.

1.4 Evidence

1.4.1 Curriculum

Programs must use an approved curriculum to be Rated Three Stars or higher. An updated list of aligned curricula can be found on ParentAware.org. If a program does not use a curriculum on the aligned list and has not had its site-designed or bundled curriculum approved after July 1, 2014, the program may choose to submit its curriculum for approval, or use an aligned curriculum. Programs that had a site-designed curriculum approved using the Curriculum Alignment with Early Childhood Indicators of Progress form prior to July 1, 2014, will need to seek approval for its site-designed curriculum using the Curriculum Nomination form, or use a Parent Aware aligned curriculum (list posted on ParentAware.org).

1.4.2 Curriculum review process

Programs may choose to submit a curriculum for review by completing the Curriculum Nomination form. The Minnesota Department of Human Services, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education, Early Learning Services, meets regularly to review curricula that have been nominated.

The team creates, with the help of a consultant, a written review of each curriculum, capturing the extent to which it meets the definition of curriculum and is aligned with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. Final decisions about published tools are posted on ParentAware.org. For unpublished, site-designed curricula that have been approved, the program will receive an approval notification letter from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

1.4.3 Deadlines for submitting curriculum nominations

Programs may submit curriculum nominations with their applications or in advance of applying for Parent Aware.

1.4.4 Assessment tool

Programs must use an approved assessment tool to be Rated Three Stars or higher. A list of approved assessment tools is available on ParentAware.org. If a program uses an assessment tool that is not approved, they can choose to nominate their assessment tool for approval by Parent Aware, or choose an approved assessment from the current list.

1.4.5 Assessment review process

Programs may choose to submit an assessment for review by completing the Assessment Nomination form. The Minnesota Department of Human Services, in partnership with the Minnesota Department of Education Early Learning Services, meets regularly to review assessments that have been nominated.

With the help of a consultant, the team creates a written review of each assessment, capturing the extent to which the assessment tool meets the approval criteria and is aligned with the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. Final decisions about published tools are posted on ParentAware.org. For unpublished, site-designed assessment tools that have been approved, the program will receive an approval notification letter from the Minnesota Department of Human Services. This review process can take up to seven weeks to complete.

1.4.6 Deadlines for submitting assessment nominations

Programs may submit assessment nominations with their applications or in advance of applying for Parent Aware.

1.4.7 Lead teacher and lead providers

Each child care center must select and identify one lead teacher for each classroom that serves infant, toddler and preschool children. A lead teacher is the highest-qualified teacher who works in a classroom for at least 50% of the program's operating hours.

Each family child care program must select and identify one lead provider. A lead provider is the highest-qualified person who works in the program for at least 50% of the program's operating hours.

Each public school prekindergarten program must select and identify one lead teacher per preschool classroom. A lead teacher is the highest-qualified teacher who works in a classroom for at least 50% of the program's operating hours. If there are team teachers in a classroom, or team providers in a family child care program where the teachers or providers are equally qualified, it is the choice of the program who will be considered the lead.

Lead teachers for Parent Aware are identified by assigning the individual to the classroom in the Classrooms tab of their Develop Organization Profile.

1.4.8 Training time frame — all programs

To meet Parent Aware training requirements, lead teachers and/or providers of accredited licensed child care and public school prekindergarten programs must have completed all training, coaching, consulting, mentoring and coursework within five years of the date the program submits for a Rating (and is in “Submitted” status in Develop). When determining if coursework has taken place in the last five years, the dates when actual college coursework was completed will be used, not the date of graduation.

Refer to the Accelerated Pathway Rating Guide for training requirements.

1.4.9 Lead teacher turnover for Re-rating programs

For accredited, licensed child care centers, when there is lead teacher turnover within six months prior to a program’s submission date for a Re-Rating, the evidence submitted for the Quality Documentation Portfolio will be handled as follows.

- When there is no turnover of lead teachers, submit evidence for all lead teachers.
- When there is turnover between one lead teacher and 25% of lead teachers, submit evidence for at least 75% of lead teachers.
- When there is turnover of more than 25% of lead teachers, submit evidence for at least 75% of lead teachers or wait until newly hired lead teachers have the memberships and required training.
- When this turnover policy applies to a program, programs are responsible for writing a note in the text box of the training requirements section of Develop that clearly explains the turnover, the date on which it occurred, and clearly states which lead teachers should be considered for the training requirements and Individual Memberships. The Classroom tab must be accurate by the date the complete Quality Documentation Portfolio is received and marked as submitted in Develop.
- Lead teacher turnover does not impact Indicators related to classroom practices.
- If a new classroom opens within six months prior to the submission date for a Re-Rating, then no evidence is needed for that classroom.

1.5 Issuing a Rating

1.5.1 Eight weeks

Once a complete Participation Agreement, application, current accreditation certificate and a Quality Documentation Portfolio (for accredited child care only) are received at the Minnesota Department of Education or Department of Human Services, a Parent Aware Rating will be processed and mailed within eight weeks.

1.5.2 Rating certificate

Once a program earns a Rating, a Parent Aware Rating certificate is mailed to the program. The certificate includes two dates: the date issued and an expiration date.

1.5.3 Having the Rating delayed

Ratings will be delayed if programs do not submit complete information at the time of submission. For Re-Rating

programs, this will result in an expired Rating until all required documentation is received, reviewed and processed.

Section 2: Develop data system – Accredited licensed child care only

This section includes:

- **Develop data system**
- **Develop – Requirements for licensed child care**

2.1 Develop data system

2.1.1 Data system requirements and communication by email only

Develop is a web-based data system, and a tool for quality improvement and professional development that supports early learning and school-age care. See developtoolmn.org.

Programs are required to use Develop to earn Parent Aware Ratings. There are many features of Develop that programs are not required to use but have the option to use during participation.

The Parent Aware Rating team will communicate with programs only through email during the Rating process. The email address associated with the program’s Organization Profile will be used. To update an email address, providers must log into Develop via their Individual Profile to access their Organization Profile and update the contact information. For assistance with an Individual Profile or Organization Profile, contact the Develop Help Desk at support@develophelp.zendesk.com or 833-605-6938.

For assistance in Hmong, Somali or Spanish, contact the Language Access Line provided through Child Care Aware of Minnesota at 888-291-9811 or 651-655-0150.

2.2 Develop – Requirements for accredited child care only

User guides are available for many of the following steps at developtoolmn.org/guides.html.

2.2.1 Organization Profile

All programs must have a registered Organization Profile in Develop. This must be done prior to verifying employees.

2.2.2 Current Individual Membership for lead providers and teachers connected to classrooms

For a program seeking a Rating, each lead teacher and/or provider must have a current Individual Membership in Develop as of the date the complete Quality Documentation Portfolio is received and marked as submitted in Develop by the Rating team.

Membership status must not expire at any point during the eight-week Rating process. In Develop, the expiration date is displayed on the summary page of the Individual Profile and the Individual’s Learning Record.

2.2.3 Current Individual Membership for directors and education coordinator

For a program seeking a Rating, each director and education coordinator (if applicable) must have a current Individual Membership in Develop as of the date the complete Quality Documentation Portfolio is received and marked as submitted in Develop by the Rating team.

Membership status must not expire at any point during the eight-week Rating process. In Develop, the expiration date is displayed on the summary page of the Individual Profile and the Individual's Learning Record.

2.2.4 Verifying employment

Each lead teacher and/or provider must have accurate employment records, meaning that the individual accurately identifies their employer by license number, by using the Employment tab in their Individual Profile in Develop.

Lead teachers and/or providers who are employed in a Tribally licensed program should contact Parent Aware support at support@parentaware.zendesk.com to find out the organization's ID number. This number can be used to accurately identify their employer.

The organization must verify the employment of lead teachers.

2.2.5 Classrooms tab

All programs must update the Classrooms tab in Develop on their Organization Profile with accurate information by the date the complete Quality Documentation Portfolio is received and marked as submitted in Develop. The program must assign one lead provider or lead teacher to each group or classroom created in the Classrooms tab. The number of groups or classrooms created must match the total number listed in the Enrollment section.

2.2.6 Electronic Quality Improvement Plan

Programs are required to use EQUIP to set goals in the post-Rating grant period.

2.2.7 Philosophy statement

Programs are strongly encouraged to update their philosophy statement in Develop

Section 3: Professional Development - Training

See Part 1, Section 4 for professional development and training policies for all pathways. This section includes policies for specific to programs earning a Rating through the Accelerated Pathway.

3.1 Training, coaching, consulting, mentoring and college coursework within five years

3.1.1 Training time frame

To meet Parent Aware training requirements, lead teachers and/or providers of accredited licensed child care must have completed all training, coaching, consulting, mentoring and coursework within five years of the date

the program goes into “Submitted” status in Develop. When determining if coursework has taken place in the last five years, the dates when actual college coursework was completed will be used, not the date of graduation.

Section 4: Relationship-Based Professional Development Specialists - Technical assistance and professional development

4.1 Technical assistance and professional development advising

There are three sources of support provided to Parent Aware participants:

- Technical assistance provided to accredited child care programs by Child Care Aware of Minnesota
- Technical assistance provided to public school prekindergarten programs and charter schools provided by the Minnesota Department of Education
- Professional development advising to accredited child care programs provided by Child Care Aware of Minnesota.

4.2 Technical assistance on quality improvement following Rating

Accredited licensed child care programs that earned a Four-Star Rating are eligible for technical assistance following the Rating. This includes continued work with their Quality Coach and Professional Development Advisor and creating a continuous Quality Improvement Plan with goals to accomplish before their next Rating. There is no limit to the number of technical assistance hours until the program enrolls to Re-Rate.

The program and Quality Improvement Coordinator will work together to refine the goals in the Electronic Quality Improvement Plan that will guide the program between Ratings.

Section 5: Financial supports

5.1 Parent Aware Grants

Parent Aware Grants are offered to licensed, accredited child care programs that earn a Four-Star Rating, and licensed family child care programs in formal partnerships with public school-based programs that include the program in their Accelerated Rating. Parent Aware Grants are intended to support, sustain and increase quality and require completion of a quality improvement plan and approval of eligible expenditures. Items used exclusively for the awarded child care program are reimbursed at 100% of the cost. Items that are shared with another group (such as the family of a family child care provider or a church congregation) are reimbursed at 50% of the cost. For Parent Aware Grant information pertaining to all Pathways including approved uses of grants and eligible and ineligible expenses, see [Part 1, Section 6: Financial supports for programs](#).

5.1.1 Financial support eligibility

Licensed, accredited child care programs that earn a Rating through the Accelerated Pathway are eligible to receive a \$2,000 Accelerated Rating Grant.

License-exempt public school-based programs that earn a Rating through the Accelerated Pathway receive

financial supports, training, technical assistance and monitoring from the Department of Education. These programs supported by the Department of Education are not eligible to receive quality coaching or technical assistance supports from the Child Care Aware of Minnesota system or receive Parent Aware Grants funded by the Department of Human Services.

Eligibility for licensed child care program partners to receive Parent Aware Grants is as follows.

- **Family child care partners included in the Accelerated Pathway Rating** (as described in Part 1, Sec. 2.2.5) as a named site of the public school-based program with a controlling individual who is legally responsible for the program and License Holder Entity Identification Number separate from the school district that have not earned their own Rating are eligible to receive \$2,000 Accelerated Rating Grants.
- **Child care center partners included in the Accelerated Pathway Rating** (as described in Part 1, Sec. 2.2.8) as a named site of the public school-based program that have not earned their own Rating are not eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants.

Programs are required to complete a Quality Improvement Plan and use funds for purchases that will help them succeed in meeting their quality goals in the Electronic Quality Improvement Plan and maintain the requirements of their Four-Star Rating.

Availability of grants:

- For programs that earn a Rating between Jan. 1 and June 30, grants will be available July 1 and must be spent by Nov. 30.
- For programs that earn a Rating between July 1 and Dec. 31, grants will be available the following Jan. 1 and must be spent by May 31.

Note: Programs are eligible to earn one Parent Aware grant per Rating cycle; i.e. an accredited child care program that earns an Accelerated Rating and \$2,000 grant is not eligible for a partnership Rating grant.

Part 4: Automatic Pathway

Section 1: Participation and Rating

This section includes:

- **Participation**
- **Issuing a Rating**

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 Standards and Indicators

Parent Aware Standards and Indicators represent Minnesota’s common set of program standards and best practices. The goal of these practices is individualized teaching and learning for every child. For Automatic Pathway eligible programs, no documentation is required to meet the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators.

1.1.2 Rationale

The Automatic Pathway is available because Head Start and Early Head Start partners must meet federal regulations, and voluntary prekindergarten programs meet state law which meet or exceed the Parent Aware Indicators. To ensure compliance with federal regulations, Head Start and Early Head Start programs are rigorously monitored on an ongoing basis. To ensure compliance with state law, voluntary prekindergarten programs submit an annual Measuring Impact Plan. Head Start and voluntary prekindergarten programs submit a signed statement of assurances to the Minnesota Department of Education guaranteeing all Parent Aware requirements are met.

1.1.3 Accountable entity for quality monitoring

For Standards and Indicators not met through Parent Aware, the Office of Head Start monitors are responsible for ensuring Head Start and Early Head Start standards are met as described in the federal Head Start Program Performance Standards. Public school districts and the Minnesota Department of Education are responsible for ensuring that voluntary prekindergarten standards are met as described in state law.

1.1.4 One Rating level

Four Star is the only Rating level earned in the Automatic Pathway.

1.1.5 Eligible programs

Eligible programs include:

- Head Start center-based programs and their partners
- Early Head Start center-based programs and their partners
- Voluntary prekindergarten programs ([Minn. Stat. 124D.151](#)) and their partners

1.1.6 Program financial supports

Voluntary prekindergarten programs that earn a Rating through the Automatic Pathway receive financial supports, training, technical assistance and monitoring from the Minnesota Department of Education. Head Start and Early Head Start programs that earn a Rating through the Automatic Pathway receive financial supports and training through the federal Office of Head Start. These programs supported by the Minnesota Department of Education are not eligible to receive Quality Coaching or technical assistance supports from the Child Care Aware of Minnesota system or receive Parent Aware Grants funded by the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Eligibility for licensed child care program partners to receive Parent Aware Grants is as follows.

- **Family child care partners included in the Automatic Pathway Rating** (as described in Part 1, Sec. 2.4.5) in formal partnerships with voluntary prekindergarten programs or Head Start or Early Head Start and included as a named site of the program with a controlling individual who is legally responsible for the program and License Holder Entity Identification Number separate from the school district or Head Start/Early Head Start that have not earned their own Rating are eligible to receive \$2,000 Parent Aware Grants.
- **Child care center partners included in the Automatic Pathway Rating** (as described in Part 1, Sec. 2.4.8) in formal partnerships with voluntary prekindergarten programs or Head Start or Early Head Start as a named site of the public school-based program that have not earned their own Rating are not eligible to receive Parent Aware Grants.

Parent Aware grants are intended to support, sustain, and increase quality; and require completion of a quality improvement plan and approval of eligible expenditures. Grant-eligible programs are required to complete a Quality Improvement Plan in partnership with Minnesota Department of Education staff to identify appropriate goals and purchases, including those for the dedicated physical child care space. Funds must be used for purchases that will help them succeed in meeting their quality goals in the Electronic Quality Improvement Plan and maintain the requirements of their Four-Star Rating. Items used exclusively for the awarded child care program are reimbursed at 100% of the cost. Items that are shared with another group (such as the family of a family child care provider or a church congregation) are reimbursed at 50% of the cost. Programs should seek guidance and expense approval from the Minnesota Department of Education prior to making any purchases if they plan to request reimbursement.

Availability of grants:

- For programs that earn a Rating between Jan. 1 and June 30, grants will be available July 1 and must be spent by Nov. 30.
- For programs that earn a Rating between July 1 and Dec. 31, grants will be available the following Jan. 1 and must be spent by May 31.

Note: Programs are eligible to earn one Parent Aware grant per Rating cycle; i.e. an accredited child care program that earns its own Full-Rating or Accelerated Rating and grant is not eligible for a second grant from the partnership Rating.

For Parent Aware Grant information pertaining to all pathways, including approved uses of grants and eligible

and ineligible expenses, see [Part 1, Section 6 Financial supports for programs](#).

1.2 Participation

1.2.1 Participation Agreement and application

Head Start and Early Head Start grantees will complete this process as part of their annual program plan application.

Voluntary prekindergarten programs will not be issued a Rating if required information is incomplete.

1.2.2 Time frame to join — first Rating

For a program's first Rating, an Automatic Rating Application is accepted at any time; there are no due dates.

1.2.3 Time frame to join — Re-Rating

Programs that earn a Four-Star Rating are eligible to seek a Re-Rating. This process is completed by the Minnesota Department of Education on behalf of the Head Start program or voluntary prekindergarten program. The Re-Rating process for Head Start programs will occur when the program completes their annual Head Start program plan. The Re-Rating process for voluntary prekindergarten programs will occur after the program submits their annual funding application.

1.3 Issuing a Rating

1.3.1 Eight-week processing time

Once a complete Participation Agreement and application are received at the Minnesota Department of Education or the Minnesota Department of Human Services, a Parent Aware Rating will be processed and mailed within eight weeks.

1.3.2 Rating certificate

Once a program earns a Rating, a Parent Aware certificate is mailed to the program. The certificate includes two dates: the date issued and an expiration date.

1.3.3 Rating delayed

A Rating will be delayed or may be expired if the program does not include complete information at the time of submission.

Section 2: Technical assistance

2.1 Technical assistance

2.1.1 Technical assistance

Technical assistance is provided to Head Start and Early Head Start grantees and voluntary prekindergarten programs by the Minnesota Department of Education.

Part 5: Expedited Pathway

Section 1: Participation and Rating

This section includes:

- **Participation**
- **Rating**
- **Evidence**
- **Issuing a Rating**

1.1 Overview

The Parent Aware Standards and Indicators, Quality Documentation Portfolio and Rating Guide, and additional resources for programs seeking a Rating in the Expedited Pathway are available on ParentAware.org. See Choose Your Path (parentaware.org/programs/choose-your-path) and Full-Rating Resources (parentaware.org/programs/full-rating-resources).

1.1.1 Standards and Indicators

Parent Aware Standards and Indicators represent Minnesota’s common set of program standards and best practices. The goal of these practices is individualized teaching and learning for every child. The Expedited Pathway requires a CLASS Observation and 50 hours of training for each lead teacher. These requirements are consistent with Parent Aware Standards and Indicators.

1.1.2 Two Rating levels

Programs can earn one of two Ratings: Three or Four Star. Programs that do not meet the Three-Star requirements will not receive a Rating. The Expedited Pathway Quality Document Portfolio describes the requirements for each Star Level.

Programs must meet requirements noted in [Subsection 1.3.2 Requirements](#) to earn Star Ratings.

1.1.3 No Rating

The Minnesota Department of Human Services will revoke the Rating of programs that do not meet the Three- or Four-Star requirements within six months of the issuance date of their Rating. Programs will receive a letter of notification from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

1.1.4 Eligible programs

Expedited Ratings are available to licensed child care centers that:

- Are newly opened and actively serving at least one child, meaning the program’s license start date is less than six months before the program submits a Parent Aware application in Develop, or less than six months before the date the Rating team enters the application into Develop on behalf of the program

- Have a controlling individual who is legally responsible for multiple licensed child care centers with the same License Holder Entity Identification Number(s); at least one of these centers must be Three- or Four-Star Rated
- Employ a director with at least one year of experience as a director, assistant director or education coordinator in a Three- or Four-Star Rated child care center; this experience must be documented by verified employment in the person's Individual Profile in Develop; this experience can be a combination of different roles and does not need to be a consecutive 12 months of experience
- Have a license in good standing, meaning the program has no licensing actions or maltreatment findings
- Ensure all lead teachers, directors and education coordinators have applied for an Individual Membership in Develop with an accurate employment record
- Maintain an accurate Classrooms tab in Develop, with currently employed lead teachers listed
- Use a curriculum and assessment tool approved by Parent Aware.

1.1.5 Newly opened

Newly opened programs are eligible for the Expedited Pathway. A newly opened program means that the child care center's license start date as determined by the Minnesota Department of Human Services is no more than six months before the date that the Parent Aware Participation Agreement was signed and submitted. Programs must apply for an Expedited Rating within six months of becoming a licensed child care center for the first time.

1.1.6 Controlling individual and License Holder Entity Identification Number

The controlling individual is the person that is legally responsible for a multi-site child care center business. To be eligible for an Expedited Rating, the program must have a controlling individual. This individual is responsible and accountable for the consistent implementation of quality practices across all of the child care centers under their ownership. For instance, the controlling individual ensures that all programs use the same curriculum and assessment tool. Each controlling individual is assigned a License Holder Entity Identification Number by the Minnesota Department of Human Services Licensing Division. The newly opened program must have the same License Holder Entity Identification Number as a child care center with a current Three- or Four-Star Rating.

1.1.7 Affiliated program

A program is eligible to participate if another program with a current Three- or Four-Star Rating shares the same License Holder Entity Identification Number at the time of application. If there is more than one currently Rated program that share the same License Holder Entity Identification Number, the program will receive the Rating of the highest currently Rated program.

1.1.8 One year of verified employment

The program must employ a director with at least one year of experience as the director, assistant director or education coordinator in a Three- or Four-Star Rated child care center. This experience must be documented by verified employment in the Individual Profile in Develop.

This means at the time of employment, the program's director must have a total of 12 months of verified employment as a director, assistant director or education coordinator in a program or programs that were Rated Three or Four Stars within 10 years of the Expedited Pathway application. This experience can be a combination of different roles and does not need to be a consecutive 12 months of experience.

1.1.9 License in good standing

The program is eligible if it is currently licensed with the Minnesota Department of Human Services and does not have any of the following licensing actions: conditional license, temporary immediate suspension, suspension, revocation, or a maltreatment finding. The program is also eligible if it is currently licensed and in good standing with a Tribal government.

1.1.10 Not eligible

If all of the requirements are not met on the date of application, the program is not eligible and the application will not be processed.

1.1.11 Recruitment and technical assistance

The Quality Improvement Team at Child Care Aware of Minnesota is responsible for recruiting programs eligible for the Expedited Pathway and providing technical assistance to applicants and participants.

1.2 Participation

1.2.1 Participation Agreement and application

Programs must submit a completed application and Participation Agreement to be eligible for a Rating either by paper or by applying online using Develop. Programs applying online via Develop must also submit a signed paper Participation Agreement to support@parentaware.zendesk.com so the signature can be verified.

Programs will not be issued a Rating until paper Participation Agreements are signed and received.

1.2.2 Processing time

Programs that have applied as indicated above and demonstrated that they are eligible for an Expedited Rating will have a Rating processed within five business days. This means programs will receive their Rating in the mail with the postmark date five business days after their application was entered into Develop.

1.3 Rating

1.3.1 Document review and on-site observation

The primary method of determining a Parent Aware Rating is document review. Programs must submit information and documentation to the Minnesota Department of Human Services as evidence that the program is currently using the best practice for each Parent Aware Indicator. Document review is not used in the Expedited Rating process because programs do not need to submit documentation. Two indicators, as described in the Expedited Pathway Quality Documentation Portfolio, must be met at the six-month review of the Expedited Rating:

- All lead teachers, directors and education coordinators must have a current Individual Membership in Develop, and each lead teacher listed in the Classrooms Tab at the time of the six-month review must have 50 hours of training requirements for a Three- or Four-Star Rating described in the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators within the past five years. To meet Parent Aware training requirements, lead teachers must have completed all training, coaching, consulting, mentoring and coursework within five

years of the date the six-month review is completed. When determining if coursework has taken place in the last five years, the dates when actual college coursework was completed will be used, not the date of graduation.

- All eligible preschool classrooms at the time of application must receive a CLASS observation conducted by the Center for Early Education and Development at the University of Minnesota.

1.3.2 Requirements

To participate in the Expedited Pathway, a program must:

- Apply online through Develop, or
- Complete and submit a paper application form.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services also requires the following on the date of application:

- Completed and submitted Participation Agreement
- An updated Classrooms tab and accurate Employees tab in the Organization Profile on Develop; individuals should report employment at the organization in their Individual Profile, and the organization should verify their employment; the director's employment history, documented in the Individual Profile, should show 12 months of employment at a program with a Three- or Four-Star Rating during the director's employment
- Confirmation that the director, education coordinator, and all lead teachers have applied for an Individual Membership in Develop with an accurate employment record
- An accurate Classrooms Tab in Develop, with currently employed lead teachers listed
- A curriculum and assessment tool approved by Parent Aware.

If all the eligibility requirements are not met on the date of application, the program is not eligible, and the application will not be processed.

Programs must meet evidence requirements noted in [subsection 1.4 Evidence](#) to maintain Star Ratings.

1.3.3 Point-in-time Rating

Parent Aware is a point-in-time Rating.

The Rating is issued based on the documentation submitted upon application. The Rating is contingent on the successful completion of training requirements and CLASS Observation scores six months from the date the Rating is issued.

Six months after the Rating is issued, the Rating team will verify that each lead teacher listed in the Classrooms Tab at the time of the six-month review has completed 50 hours of training in select Knowledge and Competency Framework content areas within five years of the six-month review date, and that the CLASS Observation has been completed. . If any of the requirements have not been met, the Rating will end six months after the issuance date. No Rating will be issued. The program may choose to pursue a Rating through the Full-Rating Pathway, or the Accelerated Pathway once they earn an accreditation through an approved accrediting body.

1.4 Evidence

1.4.1 CLASS observation and scoring

Each program with a preschool classroom at the time of application and at the time of the six-month review must receive a CLASS observation conducted by the Center for Early Education and Development at the University of Minnesota (CEED). CEED is responsible for scheduling the on-site CLASS observations.

- **To maintain a Three- or Four-Star Rating** earned through the Expedited Pathway, child care programs with preschool classrooms at the time of the six-month review are required to have a CLASS observation, but the scores will not be used when calculating the program’s Rating. NOTE: This temporary policy applies to programs in the Jan. and July 2023, and Jan. and July 2024 Full-Rating Cohorts, and programs with an Expedited Rating that will approach the six-month review prior to Dec. 31, 2024.
- In addition, all lead teachers listed in the Classrooms Tab at the time of the six-month review must meet the 50 hours of training requirements for a Three- or Four-Star Rating described in the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators.
- If there are no preschool classrooms at the time of application and at the time of the six-month review, the program will not receive a CLASS observation.

1.4.2 CLASS observation process

This is the observation process:

- After a Rating is issued, the Center for Early Education and Development will be notified that a CLASS observation is needed.
- The Center for Early Education and Development contacts programs within two weeks of receiving a request for a CLASS observation.
- Observations are scheduled within six months of the Rating issuance date.

Note: The observation must occur within six months of the issuance date for the Rating. If the lead teacher is not available during the observation, the classroom must be observed with a substitute teacher.

1.4.3 CLASS observation process — classroom definition

A classroom is defined as an educational space with a lead teacher who spends at least two and a half hours of instructional time with a group of children. If a lead teacher provides more than one session of instructional time (must be at least two and half hours), only one of the sessions will be an eligible classroom for the CLASS observation.

The classroom observed must be the longest session of instructional time that the lead teacher provides.

1.4.4 CLASS observation process — observation requirements

CLASS observations are only required and available to preschool classrooms in child care centers where approximately half or more of the children in the classroom are 36 months through 5 years old.

1.4.5 CLASS observation process — CLASS scores

A child care center with preschool classrooms seeking a Three- or Four-Star Rating is required to have a CLASS

observation, but the scores from CLASS observations will not be used to calculate the program's Parent Aware Rating.

NOTE: This temporary policy above applies to programs in the Jan. and July 2023 and Jan. and July 2024 Full-Rating Cohorts and programs with an Expedited Rating that will approach the six-month review prior to Dec. 31, 2024. The following policy that was in place prior to 2020 may be reinstated in 2025.

CLASS scores are used to determine the program's scoring for Indicators T2.3, T2.4 and T1.3b. If more than one classroom is observed, points will be awarded for Indicators based on the average of scores awarded. Individual CLASS scores for each classroom observed must also meet the following criteria: Each classroom must receive a minimum of 2.0 in the Instructional Support domain to achieve a Three-Star Rating; and each classroom must receive a minimum of 2.5 in the Instructional Support domain to achieve a Four-Star Rating.

1.4.6 Lead teacher and lead providers

Each child care center must select and identify one lead teacher for each infant, toddler and preschool classroom that is open at the time of application. A lead teacher is the highest-qualified teacher who works in a classroom for at least 50% of the program's operating hours.

At the six-month review of the Expedited Rating, each lead teacher listed in the Classrooms Tab at that time must show the completion of 50 hours of specified Knowledge and Competency Framework content area training sometime within the last five years.

If there are team teachers in a classroom or team providers in a family child care program where the teachers or providers are equally qualified, it is the choice of the program who is considered the lead.

1.4.7 Lead teacher turnover

For newly licensed centers in the Expedited Pathway, when there is lead teacher turnover within six months of the initial Rating, the evidence for the six-month review will be handled as follows:

- When there is no turnover of lead teachers, submit evidence for all lead teachers.
- When there is turnover between one lead teacher and 25% of lead teachers since the initial Rating date, submit evidence for at least 75% of lead teachers. If evidence for at least 75% of lead teachers cannot be verified, the Rating will end six months after the issuance date. No Rating will be issued. The program may choose to pursue a Rating through the Full-Rating Pathway, or the Accelerated Pathway once they earn an accreditation through an approved accrediting body.
- When this turnover policy applies to a program, programs are responsible for writing a note in the text box of the training requirements section of Develop that clearly explains the turnover, the date on which it occurred, and clearly states which lead teachers should be considered for the training requirements and Individual Memberships. The Classrooms Tab must be accurate on the six-month review date.
- Lead teacher turnover does not impact Indicators related to classroom practices.
- If a new classroom opens within six months of the initial Rating, then no evidence is needed for that classroom.

1.5 Issuing a Rating

1.5.1 Receiving a Rating certificate

Once a program applies, is verified eligible, and is issued a Rating, a Parent Aware Rating certificate is mailed to the program. The certificate includes two dates: date issued and expiration date. The Rating is valid for two years if the program has a CLASS Observation and all lead teachers listed in the Classroom Tab meet the Three- and Four-Star training requirements. If the requirements are not met, the Rating will be valid for six months.

1.5.2 Re-Rating

Programs that have an Expedited Rating need to plan ahead for Re-Rating. If the program is not accredited, it will need to join either a January or July Full-Rating Cohort to Re-Rate. The program is also eligible to enroll in the Building Quality track.

- For example, if a Rating is issued Sept. 27, 2022, and all the requirements are met, it will expire on Sept. 27, 2024. To avoid a lapse in Rating, the program can apply to participate in the January 2024 Full-Rating Cohort and earn a Rating on June 30, 2024. If the program would like to receive Quality Coaching prior to Re-Rating, it can join Building Quality beginning in January 2023 (for 12 months of Quality Coaching), or July 2023 (for six months of Quality Coaching), and then participate in the Full-Rating Cohort in January 2024.
- If the program becomes accredited a minimum of eight weeks prior to their expiration date, the program can apply and submit for a Rating through the Accelerated Pathway.

Section 2: Develop data system

This section includes:

- **Develop data system**
- **Develop — Requirements for licensed child care**

2.1 Develop data system

2.1.1 Data system requirements and communication by email only

Develop is a web-based data system, and a tool for quality improvement and professional development that supports early learning and school-age care.

Programs are required to use Develop to earn Parent Aware Ratings. There are many features of Develop that programs are not required to use, but have the option to use during participation.

The Parent Aware Rating team will communicate with programs only through email during the Rating process. The email address associated with the program's Organization Profile will be used. To update the email address, program staff can log into Develop via their Individual Profile to access the Organization Profile and update the contact information.

For assistance with an Individual Profile or Organization Profile, contact the Develop Help Desk at support@develophelp.zendesk.com or 833-605-6938. For assistance in Hmong, Somali or Spanish, contact the Language Access Line provided through Child Care Aware of Minnesota at 888-291-9811 or 651-655-0150.

2.2 Develop — Requirements for licensed child care

2.2.1 Organization Profile

All programs must register their Organization Profile in Develop. This must be done prior to verifying employees.

2.2.2 Current Individual Membership for teachers connected to classrooms

For a program seeking a Rating, each lead teacher must have a current Individual Membership in Develop as of six months after the date the Rating was issued.

Membership status must be active and not expired.

The expiration date is displayed on the summary page of the Individual Profile and on the Individual's Learning Record.

2.2.3 Current Individual Membership for directors and education coordinator

For a program seeking a Rating, each director and education coordinator (if applicable) must have a current Individual Membership in Develop within six months of earning the initial Expedited Rating.

Membership status must be active and not expired.

The expiration date is displayed on the summary page of the Individual Profile and on the individual's Learning Record.

2.2.4 Verifying employment

Each lead teacher must have accurate employment records, meaning that the individual accurately identifies their employer by license number, by using the Employment tab on their Individual Profile in Develop.

Lead teachers, directors and education coordinators who are employed in a Tribally licensed program should contact Parent Aware support, support@parentaware.zendesk.com, to find out the organization's ID number. This number can be used to accurately identify their employer.

The organization must verify the employment of lead teachers.

2.2.5 Classrooms Tab

All programs must make sure the Classrooms Tab in Develop is accurate and up to date on the date of application and at the time of the six-month review.

2.2.6 Philosophy statement

Programs are strongly encouraged to update their philosophy statement in Develop.

Section 3: Professional Development – Training

Professional development policies for all programs are in Part 1, Section 4. This section includes policies that are specific to the Expedited Pathway.

3.21 Training, coaching, consulting, mentoring and college coursework within five years

3.1.1 Training time frame

Each lead teacher listed on the Classroom Tab at the time of the six-month review must show the completion of 50 hours of specified Knowledge and Competency Framework content area training within five years of the application date, through the six-month review date. When determining if coursework has taken place in the last five years, the dates when actual college coursework was completed will be used, not the date of graduation.

See the Expedited Pathway Quality Documentation Portfolio Parent Aware Rating Guide (parentaware.org/programs/choose-your-path) for detailed training requirements.

Section 4: Relationship-Based Professional Development Specialists - Coaching, technical assistance and professional development

This section includes:

- **Technical assistance**
- **CLASS Coaching**
- **Professional Development Advising**

4.1 Technical assistance and advising

4.1.1 Two sources

There are two sources of support provided to Parent Aware participants in the Expedited Pathway:

- Technical assistance provided to programs by Child Care Aware of Minnesota
- Professional development advising to programs provided by Child Care Aware of Minnesota.

4.2 CLASS Coaching

4.2.1 Purpose and design

The purpose of CLASS Coaching is to help lead teachers of preschool classrooms in child care centers use best practices as defined by the CLASS tool.

This Coaching is designed to support programs that choose to seek a Three- or Four-Star Rating to prepare for a CLASS observation they will receive from the Center for Early Education and Development in order to meet

CLASS score requirements.

4.2.2 Time frame

CLASS Coaching can occur at any point in time, except on the day a CLASS observation is conducted by the Center for Early Education and Development.

4.2.3 Terms of participation

CLASS Coaching is not required for participation in Parent Aware. Child care centers declining CLASS Coaching must sign the CLASS Coaching Waiver form.

Child care centers with preschool classrooms that seek a Three- or Four-Star Rating through the Expedited Pathway can receive up to 15 hours of Coaching per preschool classroom, per Expedited Pathway Rating cycle. “Rating cycle” for the Expedited Pathway is defined as the six-month period from the date of application for the initial Expedited Rating to the Final Rating earned from completing the requirements outlined in Section 1.3 Rating. CLASS Coaching can occur at any time in the six-month period with the exception of the day of the CLASS observation.

- For example, a child care center applies for an Expedited Pathway Rating on Oct. 1, 2023. CLASS coaching could begin once the initial Expedited Rating is issued, and the Quality Coach is assigned. The coaching can continue (except for on the day of the observation), but not to exceed 15 hours per preschool classroom over a six-month span until all requirements are met and verified on April 1, 2024, to maintain the Rating.

A classroom is defined as an educational space with a lead teacher who spends at least two and a half hours of instructional time with a group of children. If a lead teacher provides more than one session of instructional time (must be at least two and half hours), only one of the sessions will be an eligible classroom for the CLASS observation. The classroom observed must be the longest session of instructional time that the lead teacher provides.

All the preschool classrooms that meet this definition are in the pool of classrooms to receive a CLASS observation from the University of Minnesota’s Center for Early Education and Development.

CLASS Coaching is not available to family child care programs, infant classrooms in centers or toddler classrooms in centers.

Section 5: Financial supports

5.1 Parent Aware Grants

Parent Aware Grants are offered to licensed child care programs that earn a Three- or Four-Star Rating through the Expedited Pathway and that have met the requirements described in Section 1.3 as verified by the Rating team. Parent Aware grants are intended to support, sustain, and increase quality; and require completion of a quality improvement plan and approval of eligible expenditures.

5.1.1 Financial support eligibility

Programs that earn a Rating through the Expedited Pathway may be eligible to receive an Expedited Rating Grant to sustain or improve their quality.

Eligibility is contingent on the successful completion of all Rating requirements within six months of the Rating issuance date as described in Section 1.3 and verified by the Rating team. If the requirements are not met and the Rating ends, the program is not eligible for a grant. The program may choose to pursue a Rating and earn a grant through the Full-Rating Pathway, or the Accelerated Pathway once they earn an accreditation through an approved accrediting body.

Programs are required to complete a Quality Improvement Plan and use funds for purchases that will help them succeed in meeting their quality goals in the Electronic Quality Improvement Plan and maintain the requirements of their earned Three- or Four-Star Rating.

Expedited Rating Grants are offered in a tiered structure according to Star Level as follows:

Star Level	Grant amount
Three-Star Rating	\$3,500
Four-Star Rating	\$4,000

Availability of grants:

- For programs that earn a Rating between Jan. 1 and June 30, grants will be available July 1 and must be spent by Nov. 30.
- For programs that earn a Rating between July 1 and Dec. 31, grants will be available the following Jan. 1 and must be spent by May 31.

For Parent Aware Grant information pertaining to all pathways, including approved uses of grants and eligible and ineligible expenses, see Part 1, Section 6: Financial supports to programs.

Part 6: Automatic One-Star Pathway

Section 1: Participation and Rating

This section includes:

- **Overview**
- **Participation**
- **Rating**

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 Standards and Indicators

There are not Standards and Indicators for programs participating in the Automatic One-Star Pathway, and a completed Quality Documentation Packet is not required to receive a Rating.

1.1.2 Rationale

The Automatic One-Star Pathway will be available because the Minnesota Legislature passed a law which states that starting July 1, 2026, all licensed child care providers that are in good standing with the state or their Tribe will automatically receive a One-Star Parent Aware Rating unless they are already Rated or choose to opt out ([Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.142, subdivision 2](#)).

This change does not take effect until July 1, 2026 and will only impact providers who are not Parent Aware Rated at that time. This change is to better align our licensing and quality rating and improvement systems, better support families, and prepare for the future development of a simplified statewide funding stream to help families pay for child care.

Early in calendar year 2024 the option to commit to accepting the Automatic One-Star will be available.

1.1.3 Eligible programs

Unrated, licensed child care providers that are in good standing with the state or their Tribe will be eligible for the Automatic One-Star Rating, and will be eligible to commit to accepting this Rating when it is available in early 2024. See [Part 1](#) for more information about participation requirements, monitoring and eligible programs.

1.1.4 One Rating level

One-Star will be the only Rating level available in the Automatic One-Star Pathway.

1.1.5 Program financial supports

There are no Parent Aware Grants associated with committing to accepting the Automatic One-Star Rating option. Programs can earn Parent Aware Grants by participating in a Building Quality Cohort or by volunteering to earn a higher Parent Aware Star Rating. Unaccredited licensed programs are encouraged to join a Building Quality or Full-Rating Cohort, and work with a Quality Coach and Professional Development Advisor to earn a higher Parent Aware Star Rating and receive Parent Aware Grants. Accredited programs are encouraged to apply for a Four-Star Rating through the Accelerated Pathway.

Programs that commit to accepting the One-Star Rating through the Automatic One-Star Pathway are eligible to serve children who receive Early Learning Scholarships, a financial support for families offered by the Minnesota Department of Education. See information on [Early Learning Scholarships](#).

[See Part 2: Full-Rating Pathway](#) and/or [Part 3: Accelerated Pathway](#) or contact a Parent Aware Recruiter for more information or to apply for a different Pathway.

1.2 Participation

1.2.1 Participation Agreement and application

In early 2024, a new option will be available that allows child care programs in good standing with the state or their Tribe to sign an agreement committing to accept the Automatic One-Star Rating when it is available July 1, 2026. By signing this participation agreement, child care programs will be immediately eligible to serve children receiving Early Learning Scholarships.

1.3 Rating

1.3.1 Issuing a Rating

The process for receiving or opting out of the Automatic One-Star Rating effective July 1, 2026, is in development. Further information will be added to this policy manual when available.

More information about the option to commit to accepting the Automatic One-Star Rating will be announced in early 2024.

Section 2: Technical assistance

2.2 Technical assistance

2.2.1 Technical assistance

Technical assistance is provided to unrated programs by the Parent Aware Recruiters located in Child Care Aware Districts throughout the state. Programs can [contact a Parent Aware Recruiter](#) to learn more about the One-Star Automatic Rating process, the benefits of earning a Rating earlier or for other assistance, or [read this FAQ](#).