

Summary of Changes to the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators

Date: February 13, 2026

The Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families is making updates to Parent Aware to implement the One-Star Rating and remove barriers to participation for child care programs. These updates will begin July 1, 2026.

The department released these changes by posting an update to the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators. See [2026 version of the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators](#), now available on the department's website.

Updates to the Parent Aware Standards and Indicators include:

- One-Star Ratings will be available to all licensed child care programs in good standing with Licensing.
- Change in definition of “in good standing” with Licensing.
- Changes to the way the CLASS® observation and coaching is used in Parent Aware will be phased in over two years.
- Associate’s (AA) degrees will count for points for indicator P2.3b “highly qualified.”
- Increased flexibility in training that counts for Parent Aware to incorporate new Knowledge and Competency Areas.

Below is a table that provides additional details about these changes, including why these changes were made.

Change	How Parent Aware Works Currently	What Will Change Starting July 1, 2026	Why Change Was Made
<p>One-Star Ratings</p>	<p>Licensed child care programs have the option to apply for a One-Star Rating.</p> <p>As part of the Full-Rating Pathway, they can submit evidence and earn a One-Star Rating.</p>	<p>Programs in good standing with Licensing that are not currently Rated or participating will receive a One-Star Rating, unless they opt out.</p> <p>No evidence will be required to receive a One-Star Rating.</p> <p>Programs with a current One-Star Rating will have the option to work toward a higher Rating or accept the new One-Star Rating.</p> <p>See additional information on DCYF One-Star Rating webpage.</p>	<p>DCYF was directed by the Minnesota Legislature to make this change to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align Minnesota’s quality rating and licensing standards Simplify Parent Aware participation Increase access to Early Learning Scholarships for families and providers <p>See Minnesota Statutes, Section 142D.13, Subd. 2.</p>
<p>Change in definition of “in good standing” with Licensing</p> <p>Applies to the Full-Rating and Accelerated Pathways</p>	<p>Licensed child care programs must be in good standing with Licensing to participate in Parent Aware. The definition of “in good standing” is any program that does not have one of the following Licensing statuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conditional Temporary Immediate Suspension Suspension Revocation Maltreatment finding Pending re-opening <p>Programs are not excluded from participating in Parent Aware if the status is under appeal.</p>	<p>Licensed child care programs continue to be required to be in good standing with Licensing to participate in Parent Aware. The definition of “in good standing” will be any program that does not have one of the following Licensing statuses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conditional Temporary Immediate Suspension Suspension Revocation Decertification <p>Or is not:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to a finding of fraud Prohibited from receiving public funds Subject of suspended, denied, or terminated payments 	<p>DCYF was directed to make this change by the Minnesota Legislature to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce incidents of fraud, and <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Align with the definition of “in good standing” provided for the Great Start Compensation Support Payment Program.

		Programs with any of these statuses will be excluded from participation in Parent Aware regardless of whether the action is under appeal.	
<p>CLASS® observation: Indicators T2.3</p> <p>Applies to the Full-Rating Pathway for Child Care Centers only</p>	<p>Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, child care centers participating in Parent Aware were required to meet a minimum cut score on the Classroom Assessment and Scoring System (CLASS) in their preschool classrooms in order to earn a Star Rating of Three or Four Stars.</p> <p>During the COVID-19 pandemic the requirements related to CLASS observations and minimum scores were waived.</p> <p>Since the end of the pandemic, preschool classrooms in licensed child care centers receive a CLASS observation, earn 15 points for the CLASS indicator, and have the option to receive CLASS coaching.</p>	<p>Continuing July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2028, preschool classrooms in licensed child care centers will be required to receive a CLASS observation, earn 15 points for the CLASS indicator, and have the option to receive coaching, while working toward changes that go into effect July 1, 2028.</p> <p>Starting July 1, 2028, programs will receive points if the lead teachers in their preschool classrooms receive CLASS coaching in the past two years. They will receive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 points if all lead teachers received between 1 and 5 hours of CLASS coaching • 10 points if all lead teachers received more than 5 hours of CLASS coaching <p>Programs must also have a goal of receiving at least 2.5 in the CLASS Instructional Support Domain.</p>	<p>The CLASS observation was primarily designed for formative feedback, happening through multiple observations with ongoing opportunities for support and growth. This change is in line with this design, focusing on growth through CLASS coaching.</p> <p>The Parent Aware Evaluation recommended that CLASS observation be used for quality improvement, not in a high-stakes way in the Ratings process.</p> <p>Feedback collected through the engagement process provided significant support for this direction.</p> <p>DCYF will continue to monitor scores and use the data to adjust and improve supports offered.</p>
<p>Associate’s (AA) degree: Indicator P2.3b</p> <p>Applies to the Full-Rating Pathway</p>	<p>All lead early educators must have a bachelor’s degree or higher to earn points for Indicator P2.3b.</p>	<p>All lead early educators must have an associate’s degree or higher (career lattice steps 9B-D, 10B-D, 11B-D, 12B-D) to earn points for Indicator P2.3b.</p>	<p>Indicator P2.3b was rarely used to earn points in Parent Aware. This change was made to expand the relevance of Indicator P2.3b and align it with the higher education degree most pursued through the TEACH® higher education scholarship program.</p>

<p>Increased flexibility for training that counts, including training in the new Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF) Content Areas: Requirements</p> <p>Applies to the Full-Rating and Accelerated Pathways</p>	<p>All lead early educators in Parent Aware Rated programs must meet Star Level training requirements, with 18 hrs. required for Two Stars, and 50 hrs. of training required for Three and Four Stars, within the past five years.</p> <p>Training required related to KCF Content Area II: Developmentally Appropriate Learning Experiences required for Three and Four Stars must be taken in sub-areas A-E.</p> <p>Training required for Two, Three and Four Stars related to KCF Content Area IV: Assessment, Evaluation, and Individualization must be taken in sub-areas A-B.</p>	<p>All lead early educators in Parent Aware Rated programs will continue to be required to meet Star Level training requirements, with 18 hrs. required for Two Stars, and 50 hrs. of training required for Three and Four Stars of training, within the past five years.</p> <p>Training required related to KCF Content Area II: Developmentally Appropriate Learning Experiences required for Three and Four Stars can be taken in any sub-area. This expands the sub-areas that count so that training in the new sub-area, II.F Cultural Responsibility and Practice, will count.</p> <p>Training required related to KCF Content Area IV: Assessment, Evaluation, and Individualization will be expanded so that training in the sub-areas C, Assessing and Using Information to Enhance and Maintain Program Quality, and D, Cultural Responsibility and Practice, will count.</p>	<p>This change was made to make sure the training in the new Knowledge and Competency Framework (KCF) Content Areas that relate to the Cultural Responsibility and Practice count for Parent Aware.</p> <p>The change also simplifies these training requirements by allowing all training in KCF Content Areas II and IV to count for training requirements for Three and Four Stars, providing more flexibility for educators to choose training that meets their program’s needs.</p>
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