Texas Rising Star Revisions Overview – Frequently Asked Questions

# Webinar:

**Question: Will there be another webinar opportunity?**

Response: TWC does not plan to host another webinar at this time; however, the recording for this webinar can be accessed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ebbX9DJ7Oc>

The child care program’s Texas Rising Star mentor or local Workforce Solutions office may offer additional webinars or training opportunities to understand the revisions.

# Protocols:

**Question: Is the deadline to be Texas Rising Star certified September 30?**

Response: This depends on the child care program’s Entry Level designation time frame. A child care program’s 24-month Entry Level designation time frame begins when the CCS Provider Agreement is signed. A large majority of programs providing TWC Child Care Services (CCS) have the 09/30/24, because they were CCS prior to 10/01/2022 when this new requirement took effect.

**Question: Is there a possibility for an increase in CCS payment (reimbursement) for being Texas Rising Star certified?**

Response: Yes. A child care program that achieves Two-, Three-, or Four-Star certification may receive a higher payment rate. Under Texas state law, a Two-Star provider receives a 5% enhanced rate, a Three-Star provider receives a 7% enhanced rate, and a Four-Star provider receives a 9% enhanced rate. However, if your child care program has a lower tuition rate for private-pay parents, (a lower published rate), then TWC will only provide payment at that lower published rate.

To determine what this rate might be, please visit the [Texas Rising Star Revenue Calculator](https://www.twc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/ccel/docs/statewide-revenue-calculator-for-trs-updated-twc.xlsx).

**Question: What happens if a child care program isn’t certified by the end of their Entry Level designation time frame?**

Response: If the child care program is reaching the end of their Entry Level designation time frame and is not yet certified, but eligible and noted as assessment ready, the program can request, through their Board to TWC, an Entry Level designation extension waiver based on the criteria, “outside the program’s control”, as the CAE was not able to assess them prior to their deadline.

**Question: How can a child care program find out who their mentor is or when the program is due for recertification?**

Response: The director can log into their CLI Engage account and review the program’s “School Management” page. This page will note the program’s assigned mentor, their certification status and end dates (if applicable), and other pertinent information about the program that should be updated as needed/applicable.

**Question: What is a local Workforce Board and how do I contact them?**

Response: TWC administers funding, including funding for the Child Care Services (CCS) program, through 28 Local Workforce Development Boards. In addition to overseeing the local CCS program, the local Workforce Board offers free one-on-one services to workers and employers. To find the Board and local office locations, the child care program can search **here**: <https://www.twc.texas.gov/find-locations> or **here**: <https://texaschildcaresolutions.org/financial-assistance-for-child-care/how-to-apply-for-child-care-assistance/>

To contact the Board about Texas Rising Star or CCS questions, please complete the Contact Us form here: <https://texasrisingstar.org/contact-us/>

**Question: What different national accreditation entities are recognized by TWC?**

Response: The current list can be found in the [Texas Rising Star Guidelines](https://texasrisingstar.org/about-trs/guidelines/) (see “TWC-Recognized National Accreditations”) as well as this website: <https://texasrisingstar.org/providers/eligibility/> (scroll down to Department of Defense–Operated Child Care and Early Learning Programs section).

### Screening Forms

**Question: When should the revised Initial Screening Form be used to determine certification eligibility?**

Response: The revised Initial Screening Form is effective 09/01/24 and should be used then to determine certification eligibility.

**Question: If a child care program falls below Two-Star (loss of certification/suspension status), is it for 6 months and if so, does the program lose CCS referrals during those 6 months?**

Response: Yes, the impact for loss of certification (suspension status) is for a minimum of six months and up to 15 months. Throughout the suspension status, the program will retain their current CCS families as long as they continue to meet the Entry Level points threshold (40 total points or less). The program may continue to receive new CCS referrals until the ninth month of suspension. Upon the ninth month of suspension, if the program remains ineligible for certification, then no **new** CCS family referrals will be made.

**Question: For child care programs that are currently certified, when considering the new point threshold, will there be a transition or support with the new rule?** **What if the child care program is now above the 40 point threshold when reviewing the most recent 6-months of CCR history, what happens then? Will the program be provided a notice of when they are getting close to this threshold?**

Response: The revised Certified Screening Form will be effective September 1, 2024. Any impacts to a program based on the revised screening form and the program’s CCR history for the most recent 6 months will be put into place at the time of the screening. Should a program wish to have their impact reviewed, please confer with your assigned mentor about submitting this request.

### Assessments

**Question: If a child care program is nationally accredited which categories are they scored on?**

Response: Programs with a national accreditation will be assessed and monitored on Categories 2 and 4 only. Categories 1 and 3 are given an automatic scoring of 3.0 (highest) which is the equivalent of Four-Star for each category (1 and 3).

**Question: If a child care program has their two-week window for initial assessment, do they need to adjust for those new changes before the evaluation?**

Response: No. If the child care program’s two-week window is prior to October 1, then the program will be observed and assessed on the current assessment record forms (measures).

**Question: If a child care program is currently waiting to be assessed and isn't by 10/01/24, will they be required to complete a new Facility Assessment Record Form (FARF) self-assessment and meet all the revised measures?**

Response: Yes. If the child care program is assessed after 10/01/24, the program will be observed and assessed on the revised assessment record forms. Thus, the program should update their self-assessment to review the revised FARF. The program will be required to meet the structural revised measures; however, any new points-based measures will be scored as applicable.

**Question: When might a child care program expect their initial assessment? How quickly are assessments being conducted?**

Response: The Centralized Assessment Entity (CAE) is scheduling assessments as quickly as they are able. Because of the large number of CCS Entry-Level designated programs with the 9/30/24 deadline to become Texas Rising Star-certified, the CAE is facing a large initial workload, and it is difficult to identify an exact timeline of when an assessment might be conducted. CAE’s goal is to get to a place of conducting initial assessments within 45 days of request, but this will take some time.

TWC will be issuing guidance in the near future regarding a temporary policy change that will allow child care programs to request a simplified Initial Assessment (resulting in a Two-Star certification); these assessments will be conducted by the CAE without an on-site visit.

**Question: Whom can a child care program contact to follow up regarding a request for an assessment visit?**

Response: First the program should speak with the mentor, as they have access to internal communication logs that may provide additional information regarding an assessment request. Should the mentor not be able to support in providing the information needed, then the program can reach out to the CAE via their email: caes@cliengage.atlassian.net

**Question: If a certified child care program added some classrooms, does the program have to apply for another assessment visit for those new classes?**

Response: This depends on if the program is formally expanding their operation with CCR or simply opening up classrooms that were previously closed due to under enrollment. If the program is formally expanding, this would be considered as a Facility Change – Expansion and would need to follow the protocols for this type of change as noted within the [Texas Rising Star Guidelines](https://texasrisingstar.org/about-trs/guidelines/). The child care program’s mentor can provide additional support in the next steps.

**Question: What is the two-week window?**

Response: The two-week window is a time frame provided to the child care program by the CAE to indicate when the program’s assessment will occur. The assessor will show up to the program at any time within those two-weeks.

**Question: If a center has recertification in early 2025 is there a chance that they will have an "unannounced" visit before these changes take affect?**

Response: No. TWC Commission approved extending the current waiving of annual monitoring visits to September 30, 2025. Therefore, any program with an annual monitoring visit due between 10/01/24 – 09/30/25 will not occur.

**Question: How often is the recertification for Four-Star?**

Response: No matter what star level has been achieved (Two, Three-, or Four-Star), recertification occurs every three years.

**Question: If a certified home-based child care program transitions to a center, what would that process look like?**

Response: This type of change is considered a Facility Change – Facility Type. Thus, the program would retain its certification during the change and be reassessed within three months of the change. The program must request this assessment at the time of the change via the [online assessment request form](https://cliengage.atlassian.net/servicedesk/customer/portal/39). For more information about Facility Changes for certified programs, visit the [Texas Rising Star Guidelines](https://texasrisingstar.org/about-trs/guidelines/).

**Question: Are certified child care programs subject to unannounced visits?**

Response: Yes, all visits are unannounced. However, for all assessments a two-week window is provided. Annual monitoring visits are not provided a two-week window.

**Question: When a child care program indicates the up to three blackout dates during their two-week window, will all dates be honored?**

Response: The CAE will do their best to honor all blackout dates noted by the child care program, where the reasoning is apparent that observing a typical day in the majority of the classrooms would not be feasible. Should the program be asking for a date to be blacked out for the reason of the director or one staff member being out, this date may not be honored if it severely impacts the CAE in conducting timely and efficient assessments for programs in that area, as typical daily operations still should occur per Child Care Regulation requirements.

**Question: Which entity is sending the emails for visit confirmation (two-week windows)?**

Response: These emails come from the CAE. Please check junk or spam folders regularly to ensure a communication has not been missed. The child care program’s mentor can review internal communication to determine if the CAE has been attempting to reach a program about their assessment.

**Question: How quickly will a child care program receive their assessment scores?**

Response: Unless a special situation has incurred, the assessment results should be shared via email (electronically) with the child care program and their mentor within 5 business days of the last day of the assessment visit. The child care program’s mentor will meet with the assessor to review those results and address any questions the mentor has, who will then debrief with the program. Additionally, the report will be automatically emailed to the primary and secondary contacts listed within Engage once the assessor finalizes the assessment.

### Entry Level designation extension waiver

**Question: Will current TWC CCS children enrolled at the child care program have to disenroll if the program is not eligible to be certified until after October 1st date?**

Response: This depends on when the program’s Entry Level designation ends and if the program is eligible for an extension waiver.

**Question: How soon can the Entry Level designation extension waiver be requested?**

Response: TWC has provided guidance to Boards about the protocols for requesting this waiver on a child care program’s behalf. It should be requested at least 30 days prior to the end of the program’s Entry Level designation timeline, but could be requested now (as of 08/01/24) if it is apparent the program will NOT qualify for certification by the end of the designation time frame.

**Question: Who will help a child care program request the Entry Level designation extension waiver? Where can more information be found?**

Response: The child care program’s local Workforce Solutions Board will formally request on the program’s behalf per [WD Letter 23-22, change 2](https://www.twc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/wf/policy-letter/wd/23-22-ch2-twc.pdf). The mentor is a great mediator for this communication. Information about these waivers can be found on the Texas Rising Star website, under the Entry Level designation section (<https://texasrisingstar.org/providers/entry-level-designation/>).

**Question: How does a child care program apply for the Entry Level designation extension waiver under the criteria “Outside a program’s control”, if the CAE has not scheduled their assessment?**

Response: During this current timeframe, where we have a large number of programs who need to be assessed prior to their 9/30/24 Entry Level designation timeframe, TWC will authorize Entry Level extension waivers for circumstances outside of the provider’s control. These waivers will be available to programs who meet certification eligibility based on the revised screening form, effective 09/01/24, and are marked as “assessment ready”.

The mentor will need to denote the program as Assessment Ready within Engage and the program must complete the [online assessment request form](https://cliengage.atlassian.net/servicedesk/customer/portal/39), prior to the end of their Entry Level designation time frame. Then the Board will submit to TWC for the Entry Level designation extension waiver on the program’s behalf.

**Question: What if the child care program is still in the mentoring process? Does a waiver need to be submitted?**

Response: Entry Level designation extension waivers are only needed for programs whose Entry Level designation is ending (within the next 30 days) and the program is either assessment ready (eligible for certification) and has not yet had their assessment **or** is not assessment ready (eligible for certification) and meets one of the other criteria (child care desert or unserved population).

**Question: If a child care program has to move locations suddenly, would that count as needing an Entry Level designation extension waiver**?

Response: No – a move does not count as an eligible reason for an Entry Level extension waiver. However, depending on the change the program’s Entry Level designation timeline may start over. The child care program’s mentor (or local Workforce Solutions Board) can inform the program of next steps for their situation.

**Question: Is there a listing of which areas are considered a child care desert?**

Response: Yes. To view a listing of child care deserts please visit: <https://www.twc.texas.gov/sites/default/files/ccel/docs/child-care-desert-by-zip-code-2024-twc.xlsx>

# Category 1: Director/Staff Qualifications and Training

**Question: When the Workforce Registry is noted, does this refer to a TECPDS account?**

Response: Yes, the Workforce Registry is part of the Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS).

**Question: Clarify how other degrees (not in the early childhood field) will be weighted.**

Response: The measure P-CQT-01 (for centers) reviews all teaching staff’s qualifications and based on the percentage of staff that meets one of the 7 qualifiers, the program is awarded up to 3 points. Staff that have associate or bachelor degrees in a field not related to early childhood will not count as meeting one of the qualifiers, unless that degree is coupled with a current state teaching credential.

**Question: Clarify the definition for after school director.**

Response: Child care programs licensed under Minimum Standards 744 are required to identify either a Program Director or an Operation Director. This person will be the staff scored for all Category 1 measures specific to the After School (School-Age) programs.

**Question: Are directors required to have 6 hours of college business credits yearly?**

Response: When considering the scoring for P-DEQT-01, the 6 college credit hours does not have to be obtained annually.

**Question: Does a CDA count as a college credit hours?**

Response: No. A CDA does not count as college credit hours. However, the courses attended to achieve the CDA might, if they were attended through a community or four-year college

**Question: Is a Director's Credential Certification still acceptable?**

Response: When considering the scoring for measure P-DEQT-01 a Non-expiring Director’s credential aligns with the scoring criteria for the score of 2.

**Question: Does Director's Certificate count as hours?**

Response: When considering the scoring for measure P-DEQT-01 a Non-expiring Director’s credential aligns with the scoring criteria for the score of 2.

**Question: Does putting all of a child care program’s staff in TECPDS Workforce Registry (in addition to students in CLI for child progress monitoring) allow for the public school system to take a child care program’s staff or children?**

Response: No. The Workforce Registry is simply an online repository of a child care educator’s professional development and education. This record can only be shared with the child care program the staff links to and the assessor for scoring purposes only. Should the child care educator choose to share their profile with anyone else, is up to them as it is their personal record. Additionally, CLI does not share child information from Engage with any other entities, to include TEA (public schools).

**Question: Will teachers that are in or have completed the Texas School Ready program get the same points as someone who has a CDA?**

Response: When considering the scoring for measure P-CQT-01, staff that have completed the Texas School Ready program can be indicated as meeting one of the qualifiers to support scoring. Current participation will not be counted. This measure is scored based on the percentage of staff the program has that meets one of the numerous education qualifiers, not based on each qualification.

# Category 3: Program Administration

**Question: What is child progress monitoring?**

Response: Child Progress Monitoring is a tool that assesses children’s academic performance and assessment of instruction. CIRCLE Progress monitoring tools are available for FREE on CLI Engage for those that participate in Texas Rising Star.

**Question: Does Ages and Stages Questionnaire Editions 2 and 3 count as formal tools? What other tools are considered formal child progress monitoring tools?**

Response: Yes, any edition of Ages and Stages Questionnaire is considered a formal tool. Other formal tools include, but not limited to, the [TEA PreK Child Assessment List](https://tea.texas.gov/academics/early-childhood-education/24-27commissionerslistpk.pdf), CIRCLE Child Progress Monitoring, and Teaching Strategies: GOLD. Note: the TEA PreK list is for 3-5 years and any of these specific tools cannot be used for children under the age of 3 years.

**Question: Where are the developmental milestone checklists available at?**

Response: Child care programs can access versions of developmental milestone checklists from the CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/LTSAE-Checklist_COMPLIANT_30MCorrection_508.pdf>)

**Question: If a child care program is assessed after October 1, 2024, and does not have the required new developmental milestone checklists done for the ages served, what happens?**

Response: Programs that are assessed after October 1, 2024, will be assessed on the revised Assessment Record Forms, which includes the new structural measure for developmental milestone checklists. If the child care program is unable to show evidence that these checklists are completed at least annually and shared with families, the measure will be scored as not met and the program will not be certified.

**Question: Besides developmental checklists, should child care programs be doing an additional formal assessment annually for the children they serve?**

Response: Best practice is to provide teachers with the tools and resources to conduct formal child progress monitoring or assessments on the children they care for. However, this is not required to be certified, but may provide the child care program with additional points to support them in achieving a higher star rating.

**Question: When should a child care program complete the annual developmental milestone checklists or other child progress monitoring or assessment tools?**

Response: This may depend on how the child care program wants to. Many programs will mimic the traditional school year when updating classroom enrollments, so the natural time of year may be around September for the beginning of the school year reviews, around December for mid-year and around May for end of year. A program only needs to complete the developmental milestone checklists annually, however best practice would be a few times throughout the year.

**Question: What is meant by “share the developmental milestones checklist”? Is this simply providing a copy of the completed checklist or does it require proof with family signature?**

Response: The child care program would have to show evidence of how these completed developmental milestones checklists are shared with families. This could vary in ways and dependent on how the child care program chooses to share them should be described in the parent handbook. For example, if the child care program indicates that these annual checklists are shared with families via email, then the program would need to show a sample of email correspondence related to sharing the completed checklists.

**Question: What would be considered an informal tool?**

Response: Informal child progress monitoring tools include, but not limited to, checklists, child portfolios, anecdotal notes, and program-created assessment tools.

**Question: Is the developmental milestone checklist measure applicable to school age children that are in an after school program?**

Response: No. This measure is not applicable for school-age classrooms within programs who serve children up to 12 years, nor is it applicable to programs who are governed under Minimum Standards 744.

# Category 4: Indoor/Outdoor Learning Environments

**Question: If a child care program uses an extracurricular program such as Tumblebus, will that program be recognized in scoring the measure P-OLE-03?**

Response: No. This measure, P-OLE-03, is looking at the program’s outdoor learning environment and the materials provided to support active (gross motor) play.

# Miscellaneous:

**Question: Please provide information on how to partner with the local public/charter schools.**

Response: For more information about Prekindergarten Partnerships, please visit: <https://www.twc.texas.gov/programs/child-care-prekindergarten-partnerships>

**Question: Are there trainings on how to operate/utilize CLI Engage?**

Response: There are numerous online trainings provided on CLI Engage that support a child care program in utilizing the CIRCLE tools as well as How-To Guides (<https://public.cliengage.org/training/support/how-to-guides/>). Additionally, the child care program’s Texas Rising Star mentor can provide some technical assistance as it relates to the program’s school management page and other features on the website. For any technology issues, please submit a Help Ticket: <https://cliengage.atlassian.net/servicedesk/customer/portals>