



# Director's Notes

## STARS

- **PENNSYLVANIA'S CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT-  
GUIDE TO BEST PRACTICES**

### **GOOD/BETTER/BEST TOOL**

#### **Keystone STARS: Reaching Higher for Quality Early Learning**

The "Good/Better/Best" document, developed from five years of experience managing the Keystone STARS system, can assist practitioners in assessing their strengths as well as areas needing improvement. Thoughtful assessment using a variety of sources of evidence can lead to the development of a meaningful continuous quality improvement (CQI) plan. This optional tool will support programs in meeting the targeted standards at a level that is the best fit for them. The tool allows programs who may not have a "movement" plan for any one year to consider how to still make incremental improvements within a STAR level or standard. The tool also allows programs to identify areas where they are exceeding the minimum standard. The tool can be used to determine at what point in the spectrum a standard is being met. Understanding the quality continuum of a standard will enable programs to be more focused and specific in quality improvement efforts. Version 2 will be released in October. This document is currently over 70 pages. If you would like a copy of version 2 emailed to you contact your STARS Manager. We will not be printing this document.

- **2010-2011 Merit Award Extension for STAR 2 Providers**

#### **PURPOSE:**

This announcement provides the 2010-2011 STARS Merit Award policy for STAR 2 providers who have received five (5) or more Merit Awards.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Currently, STAR 2 providers meeting Child Care Works Subsidy and Early Intervention participation requirements are eligible to receive a Merit Award once per year for up to three years. Award funding for STAR 2 providers is extended for an additional two years with the submission of a detailed STARS Continuous Quality Improvement Plan.

During 2009-2010, OCDEL granted an additional year of Merit Award funding to STAR 2 providers who had already received a Merit Award for five years based on the feedback from the Regional Keys and the STARS Advisory Committee. This extension was granted in an effort to assist those STAR 2 providers with their continuous quality improvement efforts. In order to receive the additional funding, the providers were required to submit a detailed STARS Continuous Quality Improvement Plan following the established policy.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

For the 2010-2011 fiscal year, STAR 2 providers who meet program participation requirements and who have reached the five-year maximum for Merit Awards are eligible to receive an additional Merit Award. In order to receive the funds, the provider must submit a detailed STARS Continuous Quality Improvement Plan. This includes those STAR 2 providers who received an additional year of funding in 2009-2010; these providers continue to be eligible for a Merit Award in 2010-2011.

This policy is effective for the 2010-2011 fiscal year only. At a future date, OCDEL will release a separate policy regarding STAR 2 providers who have exceeded the five-year limit for Merit Awards.



#### **IN THIS SECTION**

- STARS
- STARS Technical Assistance
- Professional Development
- Early Childhood Mental Health
- Promise for Children Month



## STARS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

### Compliance with Protective Surfacing Requirements by September 22, 2010

On September 22, 2010, all facilities that have embedded outdoor equipment must be in compliance with the new requirements relating to protective surfacing. This marks the end of the two year grandfathering period afforded to facilities that were legally operating when the new requirements for protective surfacing went into effect on September 22, 2008. Those facility operators who were provided additional time to comply with the new requirements should be finalizing their plans in view of the fast approaching September 22, 2010 deadline.

The new requirements that were effective September 22, 2008 are as follows:

Outdoor equipment that requires embedded mounting must be mounted over a loose-fill or unitary playground protective surface covering that meets the recommendations of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (see 55 Pa. Code §§3270.102(c), 3280.102(c) and 3290.102(c)).

Pea gravel and other materials with a diameter of less than 1 inch may not be used in spaces where infants or toddlers receive care (see 55 Pa. Code §§3270.102(e), 3280.102(e) and 3290.102(e)).

A facility that was lawfully operating or registered as of September 22, 2008, was given until September 22, 2010, to comply with the new protective surfacing requirements (see 55 Pa. Code §§3270.233, 3280.215 and 3290.212).

For further information regarding the requirement, please see statement of policy entitled [Playground Protective Surface Covering](#) (pdf).

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Director's Credential  
The PA Director's Credential is valid for five years from the issue date. Upon renewal, your new certificate will have the effective dates.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH

- [Link to CRK EMCH Fact Sheet and Application](#)

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GROUP

- Not Applicable this edition

## SCHOOL AGE PROJECT

- Not Applicable this edition

## Promise For Children Month

Quality Early Education Vital for Brain Development, Literacy, Math, Social Skills

**Get Ready! October is Pennsylvania's Promise for Children Month.**

Did you know that what children learn before kindergarten affects their success in school and in life? The first five years are absolutely essential to brain development and shaping literacy, their mathematical skills, and their social skills - we cannot recreate this opportunity later in life. When it comes to early learning, there are no "second chances." This October, celebrate Pennsylvania's Promise for Children Month and raise awareness about why quality early education is so important for children's success. Also, spend some time during October to motivate Pennsylvanians to promote quality early learning for children in their lives and across the state. Join members of your community to celebrate Pennsylvania's young children and the quality early learning programs and teachers that help them reach their promise every day. Take time during Pennsylvania's Promise for Children Month to show your support for quality early learning.

- Stay tuned for the Pennsylvania's Promise for Children month TV and radio public service announcements - 30 and 60 second PSAs will be posted on the PA Promise YouTube channel to link to your websites and share with your Facebook friends
- Send a PA Promise Month e-card to your favorite teachers, colleagues, parents, friends and families.
- Sign the PA's Promise for Children Declaration at [www.papromiseforchildren.com](http://www.papromiseforchildren.com).
- Volunteer with your local Community Engagement Group (CEG) to help organize local events throughout the month. Contact information for local CEGs may be found at [www.pakeys.org](http://www.pakeys.org) under the Community Engagement area.
- If you are doing something special to celebrate Pennsylvania Promise for Children Month, share the event or activity with your Community Engagement Group or with the Southwest Regional Key (Sharon Enfield @ 1-877-349-48450, ext. 11228).

To find out more, visit the Pennsylvania's Promise for Children website at [www.papromiseforchildren.com](http://www.papromiseforchildren.com).

Pennsylvania's Promise for Children is a campaign to raise awareness about the importance of providing Pennsylvania's young children with access to quality early learning opportunities and is sponsored by the PA Build Initiative, Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality, The Grable Foundation, The Heinz Endowments, and William Penn Foundation, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL).

*Kind Regards,*

*Ricki Ellen Klopp, Program Manager*