

The Guam Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS) **GUIDELINES**

(Formerly called Guam Evaluation and Improvement Rating System)

GCC
10/1/2014

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Guam QRIS Background	3
Guam QRIS Overview	4
Guam QRIS Eligibility and Application Process	4
Guam QRIS Orientation.....	5
Guam QRIS Evaluation Team	6
Observation Visits	7
Guam QRIS Process.....	9
Guam QRIS Report and Star Ratings	10
Guam QRIS Overall Star Rating	11
Overall Star Rating Scale.....	11
Re-evaluations, Appeals, and Noncompliance	13
Incentives.....	13
Next Steps	14
Assessment	14
Recommendations and Conclusion	15
Frequently Asked Questions.....	16
Glossary of Terms.....	18
Appendix A: Guam QRIS Application for Advancement/Renewal	20
Appendix B: Guam QRIS Application for Observation Cancellation Form.....	21
Appendix C: Guam QRIS Table of Categories	22
Appendix D: Guam QRIS Appeal Form.....	24
Appendix E: Guam QRIS Improvement Plan	25
Appendix F: Guam QRIS Exit Interview Form.....	31

Introduction

A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) provides a systematic approach to identify, evaluate and improve the quality of care in early childhood programs based on research and best practices. One of the main reasons states and territories create a QRIS is to provide a means for parents to identify quality childcare for their children. Furthermore, there has been a push at the federal level for the development of a QRIS nationwide by the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Public Health and Human Services.

The QRIS is a strategy for improving the quality of care in early childhood settings and is a voluntary program. Early childhood settings that participate in a QRIS are often eligible for federal funding in addition to other benefits depending on the state or territory. Evaluation of the impact of a QRIS on the quality of care (in states that have implemented a QRIS) indicated improvement on the quality of care despite challenges for participating providers.

Guam QRIS Background

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Child Care must report annually on the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) performance indicators. One of these measures was to increase the number of states that implement a QRIS. Since 2009, states that receive financial assistance from CCDF have been required to include a QRIS in their state plans. Some states and U.S. territories, including Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, are still in the planning stages of a QRIS. Other states have exceeded the planning stage by implementing a pilot program or full statewide adoption of a QRIS. A goal in Guam's CCDF State Plan is to develop and complete a QRIS by 2015. If such a rating system is not implemented, Guam's CCDF funds may be in jeopardy.

Guam Community College (GCC) was granted CCDF funding in 2012 through the Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) to develop a QRIS for Guam's licensed childcare centers. GCC evaluated 32 state QRIS models and referred to Guam's Early Learning Guidelines, Guam's Plan for Professional Development (GPPD) and Public Law 31-73 in the development of a QRIS that met the specific needs of the island and integrated the requirements of the law for licensed childcare centers. An advisory committee comprised of childcare owners/directors and stakeholders of other early childhood settings provided input to strengthen the document.

GCC proposed the Guam Evaluation and Improvement Rating System (GEIRS) as the proposed QRIS model for early childhood settings on Guam. The name for this system has since been changed to the Guam QRIS. In addition, the Guam QRIS was expanded to be inclusive of island early childhood settings.

Guam QRIS Overview

The Guam QRIS was developed to provide a framework of higher standards for early childhood settings to achieve and to allow for a more transparent system when measuring the quality of care throughout the island. Furthermore, the Guam QRIS should serve as a valuable resource to help parents and guardians identify quality early childhood settings for their children. Since the Guam QRIS is a voluntary program, participating early childhood settings would be demonstrating a commitment to provide a higher level of care that would make a positive and significant impact on children and their families.

The Guam QRIS uses a four star rating system. The quality of early childhood settings is determined across four categories:

1. Staff Qualification & Professional Development
2. Curriculum & Environment
3. Family Engagement
4. Administration

The higher amount of stars in each category is indicative of a higher quality of care. One star signifies that the early childhood setting meets the minimum biennial DPHSS licensing requirements.

The categories under the Guam QRIS establish measures that are necessary for quality care during the early childhood years. Ratings in each of the categories are not meant to be fixed or permanent. An early childhood setting's star rating is valid from two to three years, depending on the number of stars it receives. Early childhood settings can request for a re-evaluation after six months from receiving their previous star rating.

Orientation sessions and technical support by qualified professionals are provided to assist early childhood settings in understanding the Guam QRIS process and requirements. Monetary incentives are given for early childhood settings that earn star ratings. In the same way as traditional seafarers on Guam used the stars to navigate and reach their destinations, the Guam QRIS uses star ratings to guide and motivate early childhood settings to work toward higher quality of care for children enrolled in early childhood settings on our island.

Guam QRIS Eligibility and Application Process

Early childhood settings that would like to participate in the Guam QRIS program must meet the requirements of Public Law 31-73: *"An Act to Establish the Administrative Rules and Regulations of the Department of Public Health and Social Services Relative to Child Care Facilities and Group Child Care Homes."* In addition, they must have an active license issued by DPHSS for a minimum of six months from date of issuance. Early childhood settings should be in good standing, compliant with all licensure requirements and have no substantiated complaints or serious issues of noncompliance. Early childhood settings that have an immediate closure or suspension of license or probationary license are not eligible to apply until active licensure is reissued by DPHSS.

A Guam QRIS Application for Advancement/Renewal form (See Appendix A) can be obtained with an information packet at the Guam QRIS Administration Office at DPHSS in Mangilao, Guam. The information packet includes an overview of the Guam QRIS program, policies and procedures guidelines, and information regarding Guam QRIS orientation sessions.

Once completed and signed, the Guam QRIS application can be dropped off or mailed to: Bureau of Management Support (Guam QRIS Administration Office), Department of Public Health and Social Services, 123 Chalan Karenta Route 10, Mangilao, Guam 96913. Programs are notified whether their application was accepted or denied via phone call and a letter by mail within ten (10) working days upon receipt. If an application is denied, the early childhood setting must wait three months upon receipt of the letter before reapplying for the program.

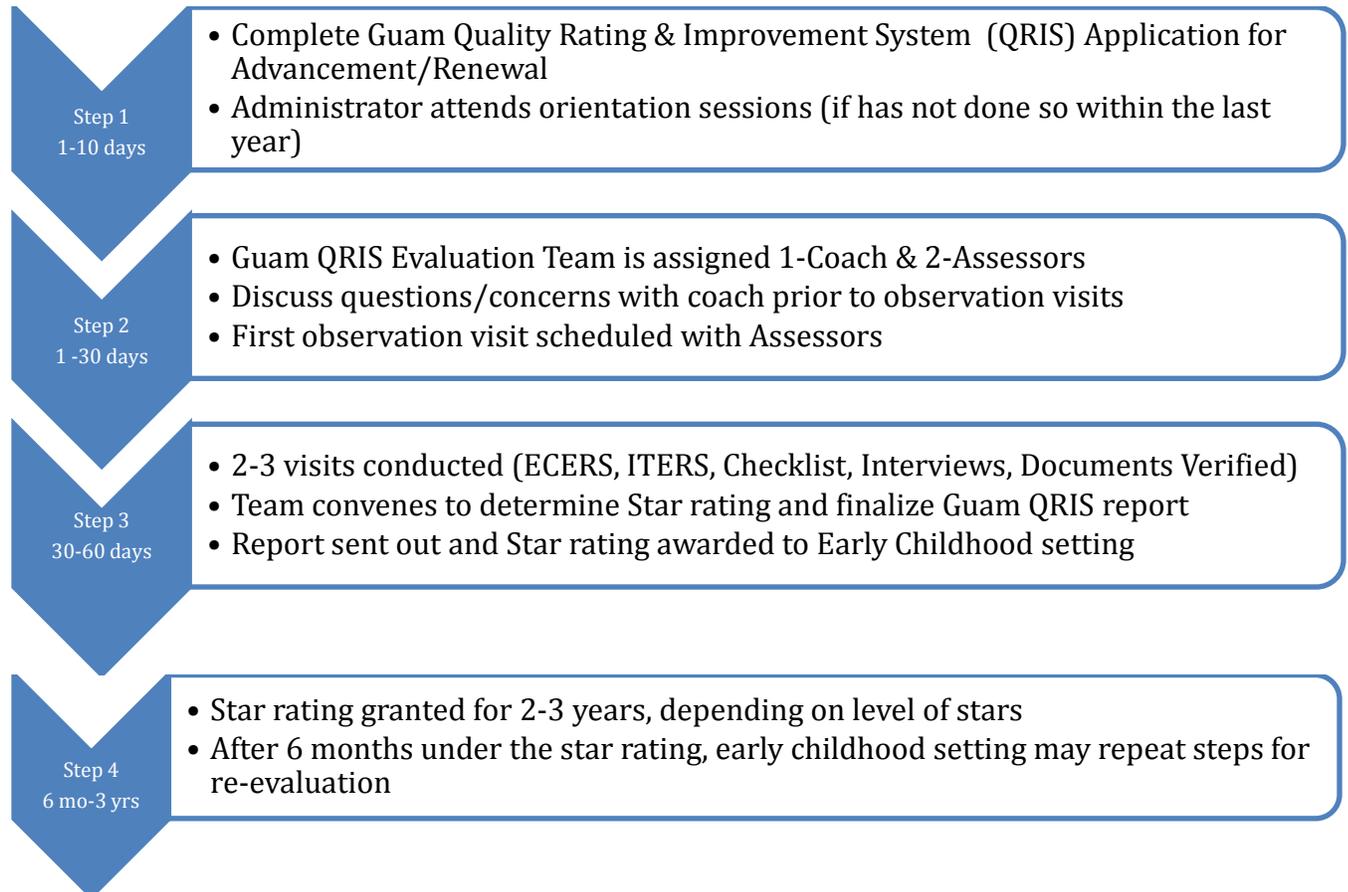
Guam QRIS Orientation

Participation in a Guam QRIS orientation session is mandatory for at least one administrator of early childhood settings during the year in which their applications are accepted. At least two Guam QRIS orientation sessions are held annually and announced to the public. Anyone who may be interested in the Guam QRIS program or have questions regarding the rating process may attend. Early childhood administrators can attend an orientation session prior to applying for the program. Participants are awarded a Certificate of Attendance at the end of the session. Upon completion of a Guam QRIS orientation session, names of participants are recorded in a database for verification purposes.

Once an early childhood setting is accepted into the Guam QRIS program, the early childhood administrator would not be required to attend another orientation session until the early childhood setting's star rating has expired and a new application form has been submitted. Early childhood administrators may encourage staff, parents, and guardians to attend. Technical support would be provided to early childhood settings that have been accepted into the Guam QRIS program and will continue as centers receive and maintain a star rating.

During the orientation session, the following information would be covered: an overview of the Guam QRIS, requirements and deadlines, evaluation process, assessment systems (ECERS and ITERS), preparation for observations, verification and documentation forms, how star ratings are determined, and suggested resources.

The steps and approximate length of time it takes to complete the process for a Guam QRIS star rating is summarized below:



Guam QRIS Evaluation Team

One Coach and two Assessors are assigned as the Guam QRIS Evaluation Team for early childhood settings that are accepted into the program. The Coach initiates communication between the early childhood setting and the Guam QRIS program and executes the following duties:

- Verifies licensure of the early childhood setting if needed or in question.
- Answers questions or concerns regarding the Guam QRIS process and procedures.
- Schedules and/or conducts a Guam QRIS orientation session if the early childhood setting's administrator has not attended one within the past year.
- Ensures that the early childhood setting has necessary paperwork for observation visits.
- Meets with assigned Assessors and discusses pertinent information regarding the assigned early childhood setting.
- Schedules observation visits for the Assessors if needed.
- Follows up with Assessors to verify if observation visits were conducted.

- Collaborates with Assessors after visits are completed and assists in finalizing the early childhood setting's Guam QRIS report and determining the overall star rating.
- Meets with the early childhood setting's administrator and/or owner to deliver Guam QRIS report and award their star rating.
- Keeps in contact with the early childhood setting's administrator to provide technical support, and answer questions regarding advancement/re-evaluation.

Coaches should have an educational background and experience in early childhood education, training in assessment tools used during the observations, and familiarity with the overall Guam QRIS process to include Guam's Early Learning Guidelines and professional development requirements under Guam's Plan for Professional Development (GPPD).

Two Assessors are assigned to evaluate an early childhood setting in order to ensure inter-rater reliability and validity of scores. The Assessors would have a more extensive educational background and experience in early childhood education as to encompass all training required for the implementation of assessment tools. Assessors are highly trained individuals who have successfully completed training in administering ECERS/ITERS and executes the following duties:

- Meets with the Coach and discusses pertinent information regarding the assigned early childhood setting.
- Contacts early childhood setting administrator and/or owner and schedules first observation visit.
- Conducts the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) if applicable.
- Conducts the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS) if applicable.
- Conducts on-site interviews and documents observations as required by the ECERS and ITERS assessment instruments as well as anecdotal observations that may describe incidental events at the early childhood setting.
- Compiles documentation, notes and any supporting evidence for star rating.
- Calculates overall ECERS and ITERS scores.
- Writes up the Guam QRIS report, which includes assessment scores, and collaborates with the Coach to finalize the report and determine the early childhood setting's overall star rating.

Assessors schedule the first observation visit no later than 30 days after the Guam QRIS application has been accepted. The Assessors or Coach will then schedule subsequent observation visits. Both Assessors and Coaches are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner by maintaining confidentiality, demonstrating integrity, and behaving ethically towards all parties involved.

Observation Visits

Two observation visits are conducted in addition to a third follow-up visit, which is considered optional. The third visit may be done to ask any pending questions or interview the administrator or additional staff if needed. It is under the discretion of the early

childhood setting's administrator whether or not their Coach is present during scheduled observations.

The first observation visit is scheduled in collaboration with the early childhood setting's administrator. The Assessors administer the ECERS, which assesses classrooms with children 36 months to kindergarten age, and/or the ITERS, which assesses classrooms with a majority of children from birth to 30 months of age. These assessment instruments have good inter-rater reliability and validity, and were field-tested in over ten childcare centers on Guam. Items on each assessment instrument are organized into seven environmental subscales: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language-Reasoning, Activities, Interaction, Program Structure, and Parents and Staff. The ECERS and ITERS have been revised to be inclusive of children with disabilities and sensitive to cultural diversity. Total observation time to administer both ECERS and ITERS ranges between four to ten hours depending on the scoring option selected. If an early childhood setting does not serve infants/toddlers, the ITERS will not be administered. Likewise, the ECERS will not be administered if the early childhood setting does not serve children 36 months to kindergarten age. All subscales of the ECERS/ITERS are administered with the exception of Parents and Staff.

The second observation visit is unannounced and conducted within two (2) weeks of the initial visit to the early childhood setting. During this visit, the Assessors complete the assessment instruments and take observation notes necessary for determining the early childhood setting's star rating. Interviews of the administrator and staff may also be done during this visit.

An optional third observation visit may be scheduled between Assessors and the early childhood setting's administrator if there are any questions, concerns or assessment areas that still need to be observed. This observation is announced and scheduled within two (2) weeks of the second visit. All three observations should be completed within 60 days from the date of acceptance into the Guam QRIS program.

Prior to the observation visits, the Coach assigned to the early childhood setting meets with the administrator to discuss expectations and information to be made available for the Assessors to review. Administrators should complete the following criteria in order to best prepare for the observation visits:

- Review the Guam QRIS policies and procedures manual and any information provided during the mandatory Guam QRIS orientation session.
- Organize any communication material used with parents and staff.
- Review prior ECERS or ITERS results if applicable.
- Inform staff of visits and assign coverage for classrooms if staff are to be interviewed.
- Ensure that more than half of the enrolled children needed are in attendance on the day of the ECERS and ITERS assessment (first observation visit).

The Coach must be notified by the early childhood setting if the criteria cannot be met during the scheduled observation visit. If a cancellation occurs while the Assessors are onsite, a Guam QRIS Observation Cancellation Form (See Appendix B: Guam QRIS Observation Cancellation Form) is completed and signed by the administrator and/or owner. The reason(s) for the cancellation should be stated on the form.

Guam QRIS Process

The process for completing a Guam QRIS evaluation and achieving a Guam QRIS star rating is further summarized below:

GUAM QRIS Acceptance & Initial Steps	First Observation Visit	Second Observation Visit	Third (Optional) Observation Visit	GUAM QRIS Rating Award	GUAM QRIS Renewal
<p>Guam QRIS Application for Advancement/ Renewal is completed and signed by administrator and/or owner.</p> <p>Application is either accepted or denied and a letter stating this is sent to the early childhood setting within 10 working days of receipt.</p> <p>A Coach and 2 Assessors are assigned to the early childhood setting.</p> <p>Administrator attends mandatory Guam QRIS Orientation Session if have not done so within the last year.</p>	<p>A scheduled (announced) initial observation visit is made no later than 30 days of application acceptance.</p> <p>Assessors use the ITERS and ECERS assessment tools.</p> <p>Coach may be present upon request of the Administrator.</p>	<p>An unscheduled (unannounced) observation visit is conducted within 2 weeks of the first visit.</p> <p>Assessors compile anecdotal notes, interviews and confirm information collected during first visit.</p>	<p>A scheduled (announced) final observation visit is made within 2 weeks after the second visit.</p> <p>Assessors address any questions/ concerns or areas that were not observed during the first and second visits.</p>	<p>A Guam QRIS report and star rating are provided to the early childhood setting no later than 60 days after the first observation visit.</p> <p>Coach meets with early childhood setting administrator and/or owner review results, award star rating, and answer any concerns or questions.</p>	<p>An early childhood setting may submit an application for Guam QRIS Advancement/ Renewal between 6 months to 1 year after receiving a Guam QRIS star rating.</p>

Guam QRIS Report and Star Ratings

A Guam QRIS Report and an overall star rating are provided to the early childhood setting no later than 60 days after the initial observation visit. The report summarizes observation notes, interviews, scoring, and the strengths and areas that may need improvement in the four identified Guam QRIS categories: Staff Qualification & Professional Development, Curriculum & Environment, Family Engagement, and Administration.

Each Guam QRIS category consists of four levels of quality, with one star being the lowest level of quality and four stars being the highest (See Appendix C: Table of Categories). One star is given to early childhood settings that have been evaluated under the Guam QRIS program and meet the minimum DPHSS licensing requirements; these early childhood settings will continue to work towards providing a higher quality of care and will be eligible to apply for re-evaluation within six months. A two, three or four star rating in a category indicates that the early childhood setting is providing a quality of care that is much higher than what is required by DPHSS licensure.

Each level in a category also has a set of indicators, ranging from two indicators to five. All indicators in a level must be met in order to obtain that particular level of quality, or star rating, for the category and must be met in order to advance the next level. The Guam QRIS

report indicates the star ratings of the categories and list recommendations for improvement.

Guam QRIS Overall Star Rating

An overall star rating is also determined and awarded to the early childhood setting. Ratings in each of the categories are combined and then averaged to determine the overall star rating. For example, if an early childhood setting receives 3 stars in each of the four categories, the overall star rating would average out to 3 stars. In the event that the overall star rating does not average out to a whole number, such as if an early childhood setting earns a 2 in one category and a 3 or 4 in another, the total amount will be rounded up or down to the nearest whole digit to represent the final number. Amounts that range from .1 to .4 will be rounded down to nearest whole digit and amounts that range from .5 to .9 will be rounded up to the nearest whole digit. If the overall star rating falls exactly in the middle it will be rounded up to the nearest star. For example, if an early childhood setting received 2 stars in two categories and 3 stars in the other two categories, then the overall star rating will be 2.5 stars. The number will then be rounded up to the nearest whole digit, which will result in the early childhood setting receiving 3 stars for its overall star rating. The following table determines what overall star rating an early childhood setting would be awarded based upon the number of stars it receives from the four categories.

Overall Star Rating Scale

Total Stars (4 categories combined and averaged)	Overall Star Rating
1 to 1.4 stars	1 Star
1.5 to 2.4 stars	2 Stars
2.5 to 3.4 stars	3 Stars
3.5 to 4 stars	4 Stars

The overall star rating is effective for two years for early childhood settings that earn between a one to three star rating, and three years for a four star rating. Scores from assessment instruments such as the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS), observation notes, interviews, and documentation checklists are utilized to determine the overall star rating and then finalized by the Guam QRIS Evaluation Team. The early childhood setting receives a Facility Profile Grid summarizing the results. The following sample of a Facility Profile Grid is for a fictional early childhood setting:

Facility Profile Grid Sample

Stars acquired for each category	A Staff Qualifications & Professional Dev.	B Curriculum & Environment	C Family Engagement	D Administration
★★★★ SUPER 4 Stars Achieved the highest level of quality.	0/3 indicators met	1/5 indicators met	0/4 indicators met	1/3 indicators met
★★★ SHINING 3 Stars Achieved a higher level of quality.	0/2 indicators met	3/3 indicators met	4/5 indicators met	2/4 indicators met
★★ RISING 2 Stars Achieved a level of quality beyond licensing requirements.	2/2 indicators met	4/4 indicators met	3/3 indicators met	4/4 indicators met
★ BRIGHT 1 Star Demonstrates a commitment to improve quality.	Minimum licensing requirements met	Minimum licensing requirements met	Minimum licensing requirements met	Minimum licensing requirements met
Number of Stars:	2	3	2	2

Overall Star Rating: The total number of stars for each column is indicated in the last row above. Add numbers of last row to obtain total number of stars. Divide total number of stars by the number of categories (4). Round number to the closest whole digit to determine overall star rating.

- Category A = 2**
- Category B = 3**
- Category C = 2**
- Category D = 2**
- Total = 9**

9 ÷ 4 (Categories) = 2.25
Round number down = 2 Stars Awarded

Re-evaluations, Appeals, and Noncompliance

Early childhood settings who wish to get re-evaluated before their annual Guam QRIS expiration date may follow the same process as they did during their initial application. They may do this no sooner than six months after receiving their previous star rating.

An early childhood setting may submit a Guam QRIS Appeal Form up to 10 working days after receiving a star rating if they are not in agreement with it (See Appendix D). DPHSS forms a Guam QRIS Appeal Committee, which is comprised of at least three members who were not part of determining the early childhood setting's original rating being contested. This committee is responsible for reviewing the facts and issues stated in the appeal form. The Guam QRIS Appeals Committee conducts an investigation if necessary and determines appropriate actions. The early childhood setting may have to be re-evaluated or wait the required six months to apply for advancement.

An early childhood setting will be in noncompliance if its licensure is suspended or revoked by DPHSS after a Guam QRIS Star Rating has been awarded. From that point on, the star rating is no longer valid. An early childhood setting may apply for a Guam QRIS re-evaluation after it has received active licensure by DPHSS.

Incentives

There are several types of incentive awards available based on the number of stars an early childhood setting earns. There is a one-time \$100 application bonus for the very first time an early childhood setting's application is accepted. Another incentive is the Annual Subsidy Award, which is determined by the number of stars earned and children served by the early childhood setting. The Quality Incentive Award is allotted to early childhood settings that maintain a star rating upon every renewal. Early childhood settings are also eligible to receive tangible awards (upon availability) such as vouchers for supplies, free advertisements and security services.

Rating	Annual Subsidy Award Percent of CCDF Funds Subsidized per Qualifying Child
*	75%
**	90%
***	105%
****	120%
Rating	Quality Incentive Award Awarded Upon Renewal of GUAM QRIS Star Rating (per child enrolled)
*	\$10.00
**	\$20.00
***	\$40.00
****	\$60.00

Next Steps

A voluntary pilot study using the Guam QRIS process will be administered to 10 private child care centers. Other participants, upon request/approval of GDOE, may include: one Head Start Program classroom, one public special education preschool classroom, one Gifted and Talented Education preschool classroom, and one universal preschool classroom (if in existence at the time of the pilot phase). The pilot will enable each participating site to work with an assigned Coach who will assist with the Guam QRIS process and address any questions and concerns. Two Assessors will go out to each early childhood setting to conduct observations and assessments - the ITERS (for sites with infants and toddlers) and/or ECERS (for sites with preschool). The Guam QRIS Evaluation Team will adhere to all tasks and timelines included in the Guam QRIS Manual.

At the end of the pilot phase, each participating site will be issued a Guam QRIS Star Rating which they may contest using the Guam QRIS Appeal Form provided in Appendix D of this manual. All participants (administrators, program administrators, teachers, caregivers, coaches, assessors) will be asked to complete a survey at the end of the pilot phase to help determine what worked well, areas needing improvement, associated costs, and other ideas/suggestions. This information will be compiled and included in a comprehensive report to be presented to the Guam QRIS advisory committee and other stakeholders. If the inclusion of programs other than the private child care centers, such as Head Start, GATE, SPED, and universal preschool, is successful, then further refinements may be needed to align their respective standards with the Guam QRIS Table of Categories.

Assessment

Within the first year of implementation, a Guam QRIS Advisory Committee will be created with the responsibility of conducting an overall assessment of the Guam QRIS program. The three star criteria in each of the four categories will be reviewed to determine how achievable or challenging they may be and what percentage of early childhood settings have met the criteria. The effects of a Guam QRIS star rating on an early childhood setting will be analyzed as well to determine changes to program quality, child enrollment, and educational level of employees. Questions to consider include: Does quality vary within each star level? What level is the easiest or most difficult for early childhood settings to obtain? What obstacles do early childhood settings face in meeting each star level?

This committee will also make suggestions for system-wide improvements and recommendations for short and long term goals related to further improving the quality of care in early childhood settings on Guam. For example, a long-term goal may be to expand the Guam QRIS program by developing criteria and procedures for family home and group care settings. A re-analysis and comparison of other state QRIS models to Guam QRIS may assist in identifying gaps and areas needing improvement. The Committee will continue to re-examine the various components of Guam QRIS to ensure its alignment with current research, federal funding, and childcare and local laws.

Recommendations and Conclusion

This manual provides a basic framework for the implementation of a quality rating system on Guam, known as the Guam QRIS. It is essential that funding be allocated to assist early childhood settings in “reaching for the stars.” Sponsorships by private businesses and nonprofit organizations can provide the additional funding and incentives needed to support the Guam QRIS program in the long run. The committee should also consider enlisting off-island trainers and speakers in specialty areas needing more assistance.

The states of Hawaii and Rhode Island have extensive coaching/mentoring programs whereby assigned coaches work with early childhood settings to create goals that are tracked on written improvement plans. An extensive coaching program would benefit the early childhood settings on Guam; coaches would need to possess education and experience in early childhood education in addition to expertise in coaching adults. Rhode Island’s Bright Stars QRIS includes a worksheet for early childhood settings to use in the development of an improvement plan containing a vision, goals, and task chart in order to help early childhood setting’s successfully accomplish their goals. This was used and modified for Guam QRIS (See Appendix E).

To streamline the Guam QRIS orientation process, a training website should be developed with information on all the relevant topics required in the orientation sessions in addition to links and other resources useful for program improvement. Furthermore, a secure online database will be created to assist DPHSS in tracking the professional development of employees at each early childhood setting and storing information, such as previous star ratings and licensure status.

To help early childhood settings continue to achieve star ratings, an extensive professional development plan will be implemented to include a variety of resources and online materials, training opportunities, and a coaching system. Attention should focus on compensation for caregivers as they increase their education and experience, as well as the administrators who may serve a key role in helping their early childhood settings earn and maintain star ratings. Early childhood settings that wish to exit/withdraw from the Guam QRIS program will be asked to complete a Guam QRIS Exit Interview Form (See Appendix F) in order for the program administrators to review areas needing improvement.

Infants and young children on Guam deserve the best care possible. We are the advocates of our most vulnerable and valuable assets. Quality rating and improvement systems are challenging and require investments in time, resources, and funding. The ultimate goal of the Guam QRIS is to raise the quality of care in early childhood settings, which should make these investments worthwhile.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Is participation in Guam QRIS mandatory?

No, it is a voluntary program designed to improve the quality of care in early childhood settings with built in incentives.

2. If early childhood settings want to continue to receive child subsidies should they participate in Guam QRIS?

Yes, the money for the child subsidies program comes from the federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). States receive this money only if they have, or propose to have, a quality rating and improvement system in place. In 2009, states were required to include quality rating improvement systems in their state plans for CCDF funds. The Guam QRIS is the proposed quality rating and improvement system for Guam. If such a rating system is not implemented in the near future, Guam's CCDF funds may be in jeopardy.

3. Are there incentives for receiving a Guam QRIS Star Rating?

Yes, depending on the number of stars your early childhood setting earned, you will receive a specific percentage of subsidies based on the number of children serviced. The more stars your early childhood setting has earned, the more the subsidy. There are additional incentives such as the Quality Incentive Award for early childhood settings that earn and maintain their star rating and a one-time bonus for an initial Guam QRIS application being accepted.

4. How long is my star rating good for before it expires?

If you received 1 to 3 stars, your rating will expire within two years from the date it was issued. If you received 4 stars, your rating will expire within three years.

5. When can an early childhood setting qualify for a higher star rating?

No sooner than six months after the latest star rating was issued.

6. What is the latest date an early childhood setting submit a Guam QRIS Application for Advancement/Renewal before the expiration date of their star rating?

An early childhood setting may submit a Guam QRIS application between six months to one year from the date of their last star rating.

7. After the observation visits by the Assessors, how long does it typically take to receive a Guam QRIS Star Rating Award?

No later than 60 days after the Assessors' first observation visits.

8. If an early childhood setting moves or opens another early childhood setting, does the Guam QRIS star rating certificate move with them to their new address or additional locations?

No, the early childhood setting would have to reapply.

9. If an early childhood setting's owner changes would the early childhood setting lose their star rating or have to reapply?

No, the star rating stays with the early childhood setting regardless of owner.

10. How is my program evaluated?

While maintaining active licensure under DPHSS, your program will be evaluated using two quantitative assessment tools, The Environmental Rating Scales for preschool classrooms and for infant and toddler settings (ECERS/ITERS).

Anecdotal observation notes, staff interviews, and a checklist of star rating requirements will also be utilized in the evaluation process.

11. When will observation visits occur?

The first scheduled observation visit will take place within 30 days after an early childhood setting receives acceptance into the Guam QRIS program. A second unannounced observation visit will take place no later than two weeks after the first visit and there may be a third visit if the Assessors have any questions or concerns.

12. Who sees my evaluation and overall star rating scores?

The Guam QRIS report, which includes evaluation scores and notes, is kept confidential and only shared between the Guam QRIS Evaluation Committee and an early childhood setting's administrator. Since one of the major goals of Guam QRIS is to help parents and guardians choose high quality programs for their children, the Guam QRIS Star Rating (ranging from 1 to 4 stars) that an early childhood setting receives will be made available to the public. It is beneficial for early childhood settings that earn a star rating to use it to market their programs. One star is still indicative of an early childhood setting that met minimum licensing requirements but may be working towards higher quality.

Glossary of Terms

Assessors: Two Assessors will be assigned to each early childhood setting that is accepted in the Guam QRIS program. These individuals will be highly trained and conduct the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) and/or the Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS). Assessors will document observations done during the visits, compile notes and any supporting evidence for the star rating. They will calculate the overall star rating score and contribute to the Guam QRIS report.

Assessment: Appropriate assessment of young children includes a variety of assessment tools to evaluate a child's abilities and skills over time with respect to developmental domains. Results should use to be used to determine children's strengths and areas in need of more focus. It also should help drive program planning.

Child Care and Development Fund: The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) provides financial assistance to U.S. states and territories to support quality initiatives for early childhood development, such as resource and referral services, training and professional development, and facility improvement for child care programs.

Coach: A Coach will be assigned to each facility that is accepted in the Guam QRIS program. A Coach is experienced with adult learning and familiar with Guam QRIS, Guam's Early Learning Guidelines, Guam's Plan for Professional Development, early childhood education, and training in assessment tools used during the observations. The Coach provides guidance to their assigned early childhood setting's administrator to help them understand the Guam QRIS procedures, answer questions/concerns, and provide ideas for improvement. The Coach may assist in scheduling visits and be present upon the administrator's discretion during observation visits.

DPHSS: Department of Public Health and Social Services

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ECERS): The ECERS is a research based assessment tool designed to evaluate the quality of childcare settings for preschool to kindergarten-aged children, from 2 through 5 years of age. Total scale consists of 43 items divided into seven areas: furnishings and displays for children, personal care routines, listening and talking, learning activities, interaction, program structure, and adult needs.

Guam Quality Rating and Improvement Rating System (Guam QRIS): The Guam QRIS is a voluntary program that uses a one to four star rating system to determine the quality of an early childhood setting across four categories: Staff Qualification & Professional Development, Curriculum & Environment, Family Engagement, and Administration. The higher amount of stars in each category is indicative of higher quality care. One star signifies minimum DPHSS licensing requirements that early childhood settings must meet biannually.

Guam’s Plan for Professional Development (GPPD): GPPD provides a plan for early childhood assistants and teachers in all child care, Head Start, and related early childhood settings to advance in their profession reflecting the competencies, experiences, activities, and learning they engage in that improve performance and ability to provide quality care and education for all of Guam’s children.

Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R): The ITERS is a research-based assessment tool designed to evaluate the quality of childcare settings for infants and toddlers. The total scale consists of 39 items divided into seven areas: furnishings and displays for children, personal care routines, listening and talking, learning activities, interaction, program structure, and adult needs.

Levels of Quality: The number of levels included in the Guam QRIS structure designated by stars. 1 Gold Star is a level considered “Bright”, 2 Gold Stars is a level considered “Rising”, 3 Gold Stars is a level considered “Shining”, and the highest, 4 Gold Stars, is “Super”. 1 Gold Star signifies quality at the level of DPHSS’ minimum licensing requirements and 4 Gold Stars indicate the highest quality of care achievable of the Guam QRIS.

Licensing: Requirements or regulations mandatory for early childhood settings to meet in order to legally operate childcare services.

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS): A method of assessment of the level of quality in early childhood programs, for the purpose of quality improvement and community engagement. A QRIS should include the following: (1) quality standards for programs and practitioners, (2) supports and an infrastructure to meet such standards, (3) monitoring and accountability systems to ensure compliance with quality standards, (4) ongoing financial assistance that is linked to meeting quality standards, and (5) engagement and outreach strategies.

Appendix A: Guam QRIS Application for Advancement/Renewal

Name of Administrator Submitting Application: _____

Early Childhood Setting Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Number: _____

License/Certification #: _____

Application Type: _____

New/Initial Applicant

Renewal/Advancement

If applying for renewal/advancement please state last level of star rating earned and date of most current star rating certificate:

Number of children enrolled: _____ Infants & Toddlers (0-30 months)

_____ Preschool (30-60 months)

_____ School Age (5 years and older)

Number of children receiving subsidies: _____ Under age three

_____ Age three and older

Number of regular staff employed: _____ Caregivers

_____ Administrator(s) & Assistant

Administrators

Administrator Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix B: Guam QRIS Application for Observation Cancellation Form

Name: _____

Early Childhood Setting Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Number: _____

License/Certification #: _____

The above childcare early childhood setting was scheduled for an observation visit on _____ (cite date). On _____ (cite date), _____ (cite name of person requesting cancellation) requested that a GUAM QRIS observation visit be cancelled due to the following reasons:

- illness/death
- Inclement Weather
- Staff Changes
- Relocation
- Enrollment
- Other, please explain

Tentative make-up date:

Administrator Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature of Assessor: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix C: Guam QRIS Table of Categories

One star is indicative of meeting minimum licensing requirements as specified in P.L. 31-73.

Rating	A. Staff Qualification & Professional Development
**	<p>1a. The Administrator and Assistant Administrators meet Level 3 Early Childhood Master Provider, and</p> <p>1b. 50% of early childhood providers employed at the facility meet requirements of Level 2 Early Childhood Lead Provider as indicated in P.L. 31-73.</p>
***	<p>2a. 75% of early childhood providers employed at the facility meet requirements of Level 2 Early Childhood Lead Provider, and</p> <p>2b. At least one early childhood provider (aside from the Administrator and Assistant Administrator) meets the requirements of Level 3 Early Childhood Master Provider as indicated in P.L. 31-73.</p>
****	<p>3a. 90% of early childhood providers employed at the facility meet requirements of Level 2 Early Childhood Lead Provider, and</p> <p>3b. 25% of the early childhood providers (aside from the Administrator and Assistant Administrator) meet the requirements of Level 3 Early Childhood Master Provider as indicated in P.L. 31-73, and</p> <p>3c. 50% of staff are CPR/First Aid Certified.</p>

Rating	B. Curriculum & Environment
**	<p>1a. Written monthly plan of learning activities (such as a calendar of activities) is posted.</p> <p>1b. System for conducting daily health checks on each child as indicated by a form or checklist.</p> <p>1c. Bulletin board/poster for parents with current information.</p> <p>1d. Maintain ECERS and ITERS scores of at least 2.0 or higher.</p>
***	<p>2a. Written plans of daily learning activities posted.</p> <p>2b. Ensure at least 3 out of the 5 developmental domains of Guam’s Early Learning Guidelines are referenced in written lesson plans.</p> <p>2c. Maintain ECERS and ITERS scores of 3.0 or higher.</p>
****	<p>3a. Organize a parent advisory board and/or ways for parents to be actively involved in program planning.</p> <p>3b. Transitions (between age groups) are planned to ease the move from classrooms or educational settings.</p> <p>3c. Children’s home languages are integrated into curriculum.</p> <p>3d. Ensure all 5 of the developmental domains of Guam’s Early Learning Guidelines are referenced in written plans.</p> <p>3e. Maintain ECERS and ITERS scores of 5.0 or higher.</p>

Rating	C. Family Engagement
**	1a. Greet families upon arrival in a professional manner. 1b. Have an informational bulletin board/poster for parents. 1c. Provide parents daily verbal feedback on each child.
***	2a. Distribute a parent newsletter at least quarterly. 2b. Give opportunities for parents to volunteer and share their expertise in hobbies and/or interests. 2c. Provide parents weekly written feedback on each child. 2d. Provide general information of agencies and/or events that is relevant to parents and their children. 2e. Give opportunities for parents to interact with each other or visit the facilities.
****	3a. Provide parents daily written feedback on each child. 3b. Communicate with parents in their home language (such as utilizing a family member or translator) if they are not proficient in English. 3c. Utilize parents as a resource in integrating their home language and culture into daily activities or curriculum. 3d. Hold parent meetings/conferences twice a year to address individual needs and concerns of the children.

Rating	D. Administration
**	1a. Licensure must be in good standing. 1b. Financial record keeping system is in place. 1c. End of year financial statement is provided to families for tax purposes. 1d. At least one employee benefit is offered.
***	2a. Written job descriptions are on file for every position. 2b. A written salary scale is developed. 2c. Policies and procedures for hiring and terminating staff are in place. 2d. At least two employee benefits are offered.
****	3a. A written business plan is developed. 3b. A written vision plan is developed with input from parents and staff. 3c. At least three employee benefits are offered.

Appendix D: Guam QRIS Appeal Form

Name & Title of Person Submitting Form: _____

Early Childhood Setting Name: _____

Address: _____

Contact Number: _____

License/Certification #: _____

This letter is being submitted due to a concern related to our early childhood setting's recent Guam QRIS star rating award, which was given on _____ (cite date of certificate). Issues related to our concern are indicated below (please provide an explanation under each checked item that applies):

Disagreement with overall star rating calculation

Explanation:

Calculation error

Explanation:

Concern in one of the four GEIRS category ratings

Explanation:

Other

Explanation:

Administrator Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix E: Guam QRIS Improvement Plan

What is a Guam QRIS Improvement Plan?

An Improvement Plan (IP) is a tool to help early childhood settings identify goals and activities related to quality and improved outcomes for children and families. It is also an action plan for long-term change that may be monitored to assess progress over time. An early childhood setting's IP is a unique reflection their strengths, challenges and resources.

A Guam QRIS coach is available to support early childhood setting administrators in identifying program strengths and areas for improvement, goals and strategies, and resources to support the creation of their improvement plans. The following guide is designed to assist early childhood settings in the development of an IP. Early childhood settings may use this as a working guide to help reach higher star ratings.

Getting Started

In the development of an improvement plan, early childhood settings may use this as a working guide to help reach higher star ratings.

- Guam QRIS assessment reports
- Feedback and observation visits
- ITERS and ECERS results
- Input from families and staff
- Facility profile grid
- Other published standards/guidelines (GELGS, NAEYS, and so forth)
- Coach suggestions

Step 1: Identify Hopes

All early childhood settings have hopes for the future and ideas about how it can reach its full potential. The Guam QRIS Improvement Plan puts those hopes and ideas onto paper and creates a roadmap for putting them into practice. The first step toward creating change is for early childhood setting administrators to think about why they want to change and what they believe about what is best for their unique early childhood setting. These concepts create an early childhood setting's vision. A vision is a statement of what the early childhood setting wants to be in the future. The vision statement creates a major long-term direction to guide the early childhood setting's planning and represents the outcome to be achieved.

In order to identify a vision, it can be helpful to ask some questions, such as:

- What things do I most appreciate about my early childhood setting? How can I support these characteristics or features?
- In a "perfect world", what changes would I like to see happen within my early childhood

setting by this time next year?

- Why do I run my early childhood setting the way that I do?
- Why did I choose a career in early childhood education?
- What has changed about what is known to be best for young children in the field of early care and education? Have I addressed these changes?
- What are the underlying causes for my early childhood setting issues? What can be changed to resolve these issues?
- In Guam QRIS assessment reports and our Facility Profile Grid, what areas are identified as program strengths?

After identifying your beliefs about hopes for the future, administrators should be able to name an overall vision for their early childhood setting.

Vision:

Step 2: Set Goals

Once an early childhood setting’s vision is written down and agreed upon, they will want to set goals that will help them achieve their vision. A goal is a written statement that defines the end-product that the early childhood setting is working towards. Goals create the focus on the action that is needed to have success.

Once goals are created, administrators should evaluate them to be sure that they follow S.M.A.R.T. principles. This means each goal is:

- **Specific:** the steps to meet the goal are clearly outlined
- **Measurable:** the way that the goal will be met is clear
- **Accountable:** the person/people responsible for achieving this goal is included
- **Relevant:** the goal makes sense for the program and considers the vision
- **Time-bound:** the goal has a deadline for completion or further evaluation

An early childhood setting can have many goals across all important program areas (ex. indoor space, program management, family communication and Engagement). Every early childhood setting’s goals are unique and each early childhood setting determines the total number of goals that are appropriate for their own needs.

Example of a S.M.A.R.T. goal:

“By July 31, 2013 (**Time-bound**), Marie and Ana (**Accountable**) will have completed all the indicators in the GUAM QRIS Level 2 for Family Engagement (**Relevant**) and have implemented newsletters, written feedback, and volunteer opportunities (**Measurable**) from April – July (**Specific**).”

Goal #1:

Goal #2:

Step 3: Determine Steps

Achieving goals requires that they be divided into manageable steps. These will be called action steps. This may require putting ideas in order of most and least important, or most and least likely to happen within the given timeframe. In order to make those steps manageable, the following questions will be helpful:

- What needs to happen first to make progress toward this goal? Second? Etc.
- What resources are available to help achieve the goals?
- When a goal is achieved, what are the next steps? How will I keep track of progress over time?

Step 4: Do the Work

Involve the key players at the early childhood setting who are tasked with helping achieve goals. A Guam QRIS coach is available for support around meeting your goals.

Step 5: Review and Update

An early childhood setting's improvement plan is an ever-changing document. This means that it is regularly monitored and updated to reflect program changes, timeline or goal adjustments, and to log achievements and progress made. Having a schedule for regular monitoring of your early childhood setting's plan will help to ensure that you stay on track toward your goals and celebrate accomplishments.

The early childhood setting is expected to update their GUAM QRIS Improvement Plan and if seeking guidance from an assigned coach, the coach will periodically check-in with an enrolled early childhood setting to provide support around improvement goals and to celebrate or highlight achievements.

The following document is an example of a fictional program's goal on a GUAM QRIS Improvement Plan. It is typical for early childhood settings to have more than one goal.

Possible areas to include in the quality improvement plan:

- Indoor and Outdoor Space
- Inclusive Practices
- Health and Safety
- Learning Context
- Curriculum & Environment
- Child Outcomes and Assessment
- Family Engagement
- Cultural/Linguistic Competence
- Staff Qualifications & Professional Development
- Administration

Sample Item from an Improvement Plan

Early childhood setting Name:	Baby Geckos
Date Guam QRIS Improvement Plan (IP)	March 10, 2013
IP Update Date:	January 1, 2014

Early childhood setting Vision: To provide a developmentally appropriate environment to the children in our care while integrating culturally relevant activities and home languages.

Area: Child Assessment

Goal: Create a system of child assessment for the infants and toddlers in the program.

What action steps will be taken to meet this goal?	What resources will be used?	Who is responsible for this action step?	Step Due Date:	Status of Goal & Date:
1. Research child assessment tools and processes.	NAEYC, GEIS, GCC, UOG, class and workshop notes	Head Caregivers	May 2013	
2. Choose a child assessment tool(s).		Administrator/Head Caregivers	July 2013	2. Choose a child assessment tool(s).
3. Train caregivers in methods of child assessment and in the use of the assessment tool (s).	Staff Meetings, Coach Ed. Consultants	Head Caregivers, Administrator	August 2013	3. Train Caregivers in methods of child assessment and in the use of the assessment tool (s).
4. Inform families about the purpose and use of the assessment.	Newsletters Family Meetings	Head Caregivers	August/September 2013	4. Inform families about the purpose and use of the assessment.
5. Create child files in each classroom.		Classroom Caregivers	August 2013	5. Create child files in each classroom.
6. Begin to use the tool and other forms in all infant/toddler classrooms. Update regularly.		Classroom Caregivers	Oct. & April annually Informal assessment monthly	6. Begin to use the tool and other forms in all infant/toddler classrooms. Update regularly.
7. Incorporate assessment information into parent conferences.			November 2013	

Date this document will be evaluated to assess progress: May, August, November 2013

Improvement Plan

Early childhood setting Name:	
Date Guam QRIS Improvement Plan (IP)	
IP Update Date:	

Early childhood setting Vision: _____

Area(s): _____ Goal: _____

What action steps will be taken to meet this goal?	What resources will be used?	Who is responsible for this action step?	Due Date:
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			

Date this document will be evaluated to assess progress: _____

****This template may be copied for programs that have multiple goals.***

Appendix F: Guam QRIS Exit Interview Form

In order for Guam QRIS to make improvements and beneficial changes we would like you to provide feedback on your experiences with the program.

Name: _____

Name of Early Childhood Setting: _____

Date Early Childhood Setting Enrolled in Program: _____

Please provide a brief explanation for why early childhood setting exited program:

Did early childhood setting earn a star rating? Yes/No

Did you feel participation in Guam QRIS was beneficial? Yes/No

Will your early childhood setting be likely to participate again in the future? Yes/No

Did you find your coach helpful? Yes/No

Did you have sufficient resources and materials to obtain the desired star rating? Yes/No

What resources and/or material would you have needed to be more successful in program?

Other comments:

