



Ohio Revised Code

Section 5104.29 Step up to quality program.

Effective: September 30, 2025

Legislation: House Bill 96

(A) There is hereby created in the department of children and youth the step up to quality program, under which the department of children and youth, in cooperation with the department of education and workforce, shall develop a tiered quality rating and improvement system for all early learning and development programs in this state. The step up to quality program shall include all of the following components:

- (1) Quality program standards for early learning and development programs;
- (2) Accountability measures that include tiered ratings representing each program's level of quality;
- (3) Program and provider outreach and support to help programs meet higher standards and promote participation in the step up to quality program;
- (4) Financial incentives for early learning and development programs that provide publicly funded child care and are linked to achieving and maintaining quality standards;
- (5) Parent and consumer education to help parents learn about program quality and ratings so they can make informed choices on behalf of their children.

(B) The step up to quality program shall have the following goals:

- (1) Increasing the number of low-income children, special needs children, and children with limited English proficiency participating in quality early learning and development programs;
- (2) Providing families with an easy-to-use tool for evaluating the quality of early learning and development programs;
- (3) Recognizing and supporting early learning and development programs that achieve higher levels



of quality;

(4) Providing incentives and supports to help early learning and development programs implement continuous quality improvement systems.

(C) Under the step up to quality program, participating early learning and development programs may be eligible for grants, technical assistance, training, and other assistance. Programs that maintain a quality rating may be eligible for unrestricted monetary awards.

(D) The tiered ratings developed pursuant to this section shall be based on an early learning and development program's performance in meeting program standards in the following four domains:

(1) Learning and development;

(2) Administration and leadership practices;

(3) Staff quality and professional development;

(4) Family and community partnerships.

The ratings developed under this section shall not take into consideration whether an administrator or employee of an early learning and development program holds or obtains a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree.

(E) The director of children and youth, in collaboration with the director of education and workforce, shall adopt rules in accordance with Chapter 119. of the Revised Code to implement the step up to quality program described in this section.