



Frequently Asked Questions

1. Q – What is Grow NJ Kids?

A – Grow NJ Kids is New Jersey’s new quality rating and improvement system. It is a system designed to create a universal standard of quality for all early care and education programs (Head Start, child care, public preschool, etc.) throughout New Jersey.

Grow NJ Kids utilizes a strength-based approach to provide support to early care and education programs to make continuous improvements on the quality of care they provide.

Grow NJ Kids has three goals: to help providers of all types of early learning and child care to enhance program quality; to educate parents on why quality care is important and to give parents the tools to find a quality program.

2. Q – Will Grow NJ Kids help me increase staff salaries?

A – Grow NJ Kids will bring resources to your agency. For example, staff will be eligible for scholarships to increase their credentials and grants will be available for classroom materials. These incentives are available during the grant cycle. Grow NJ Kids does not provide funding specifically to increase salaries.

3. Q – What is involved in the three consecutive day mandatory orientation?

A – The three-day orientation is 15 professional development hours that will provide a deeper understanding of the Grow NJ Kids framework. The orientations are intended for directors and administrators only.

4. Q – Where will the orientation be held?

A – Based on programs enrolled in Grow NJ Kids, trainings will be held regionally and are a requirement of enrollment.

5. Q – Will I have access to the Grow NJ Kids Self-Assessment before the orientation?

A – Currently, the tool is being revised based on feedback from the test-drive (pilot study). When finalized, the Self-Assessment will be posted on www.GrowNJKids.com

6. Q – Is there anything I can be working on until the orientation?

A – Register at Professional Impact New Jersey (PINJ) www.pinjregistry.com. Administrators of early child care, directors and instructional staff should all be registered in PINJ. At this time, if you have any questions please contact PINJ at 908-737-4293.

7. Q – When will I get my Grow NJ Kids Rating?

A – Every early care and education program is different, and will go through the process of Grow NJ Kids at their own pace. Before a program can be rated, it must complete the Self-Assessment and complete a quality improvement plan. Programs will work with their Quality Improvement Specialist to determine when they are rating ready.

8. Q – What materials will be provided to me for promoting my Grow NJ Kids Rating?

A – The state is developing a comprehensive education/advertising campaign that will include materials to post and share with parents. In addition, the campaign will include paid advertising directed at parents about the benefits of high quality preschool and child care and how the rating system works.

9. Q – Will training be available before my Grow NJ Kids Rating is given?

A – Yes. Training will be available and will be based on the training needs identified in the program’s quality improvement plan.

10. Q – How often will I get rated?

A – If you are rated at a level 3, 4, or 5, you will be required to go through the process every 3 years.

11. Q – What kind of rating system will be in place?

A – Ratings will be based on verification of evidence for each standard through a documentation review and scores on the Environmental Rating Scales (e.g., ECERS-R and ITERS), and the Classroom-Level Assessment Scoring System (CLASS).

12. Q – What if I don’t agree with my rating?

A –The Grievance Policy and Procedure will be reviewed during orientation.

13. Q – Who will be conducting the ratings?

A – William Paterson University will serve as the independent rating entity and will conduct the various assessments as well as verify the documentation of evidence to validate the standards are being met.

14. Q– How long will the rating process take?

A – The time the raters spend on-site is dependent on the size of the program.

15. Q – Are pilot programs rated already?

A – No, they are still in the Self-Assessment phase. They are working closely with their Quality Improvement Specialist on their quality improvement plan.

16. Q – Can I contact one of the pilot programs to talk to them about their involvement so far?

A – Yes, if you are interested in reaching out to someone who is participating in the Test Drive, please contact Andrea Breitwieser@ andrea.breitwieser@dhs.state.nj.us.

17. Q – Will I get more funding if I have a higher Grow NJ Kids Rating?

A – Currently, there is no funding attached to a higher rating. However, free professional development and classroom enhancement grants, such as materials and supplies or other items to improve the quality and services that will strengthen the learning environment are available. In addition, there is financial assistance available for scholarships and to pay substitute teachers so staff can attend training.

18. Q – Will there be a website that lists all the programs involved in Grow NJ Kids?

A – Yes, this information will be available on www.GrowNJKids.com. However, ratings will not be made public until 2016.

19. Q – How long does it take to move from one level to the next?

A – The system is self-paced. It depends on the program’s willingness and motivation to meet the standards in each level.

20. Q – How long can you be on a certain level?

A – A program can remain on any level they want, but if you are rated at Level 3, 4, or 5, then the program must go through the process every 3 years. Grow NJ Kids is a way to showcase a program’s commitment to continuous quality improvement to families and the community. Over the next few years as the Grow NJ Kids program grows, it will become more and more consumer driven.

21. Q – Do I have to enroll all of my classrooms?

A – Yes, the rating is a site-level rating.

22. Q – What are the fees associated with Grow NJ Kids?

A – Currently, there is no fee associated with Grow NJ Kids.

23. Q – How will the rating work in a school setting that has grade levels other than prek?

A – Only preschool classrooms receive ratings.

24. Q – How will parents be informed of the rating in preschool settings based in schools?

A – There will be a parent education campaign that will inform parents about Grow NJ Kids and where to go to locate the rating of their child’s preschool program once ratings are made public.

25. Q – Is the rating cycle the same for schools as centers?

A – Yes

26. Q – Is the appeals process different for schools versus centers and Head Start?

A – No

27. Q – Is there an advisory board providing feedback?

A – There are 57 pilot sites who are currently going through the process and providing feedback. This feedback is given to the four core state departments: NJ Departments of Children and Families, Education, Health, and Human Services.

28. Q – Ten years down the road, do you expect to have everyone enrolled?

A – Currently, the process is voluntary. However, the climate of federal and state investments is being made towards proven quality programs.

29. Q – If it is voluntary, what happens if I decide to drop out?

A – If you decide to drop out, nothing happens, unless you or your staff are receiving scholarship supports and or financial assistance for substitutes. In addition, your program will not be eligible for classroom enhancement grants.

30. Q – Do I have to get Accreditation first?

A – No, you don't have to go through Accreditation or be accredited to participate in Grow NJ Kids. However, the Self-Assessment tool is aligned with The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA), and Head-Start Standards.

31. Q – How does the incentives work?

A – Incentives are based on the Quality Improvement Plan that is developed once the self-assessment is complete. The program's individual Quality Improvement Specialist will work with the program on completion of the Request for Funding document. The approvals for the enhancements are completed by the Incentives Coordinator at the Department of Humans Services Division of Family Development.

32. Q – At what point can I tap into incentives?

A – Incentives are based on the program's Quality Improvement Plan. Specific guidance is provided to the program and the Quality Improvement Specialist. This will be reviewed during the Grow NJ Kids orientation.