

10A NCAC 09 .3224 RECOGNITION OF QUALITY INITIATIVES

(a) A child care operator may choose to request one or more areas of recognition to accompany the issuance of a two through five-star rated license earned through compliance with any licensure pathway requirement of this Section. Quality initiatives shall not be used to earn a star rating. Verification of requirements for each recognition shall be reassessed at least every three years, at the time of reassessment for a two through five-star rated license.

(b) The Division shall issue recognition of quality initiatives upon verification of the requirements set forth in this Rule.

(c) An Education Recognition may be requested when at least one of the following requirements are met:

- (1) 75 percent of teachers employed by a child care facility have earned an AAS degree or higher in early childhood education, child development or related field.
- (2) 75 percent of lead teachers employed by a child care facility have earned a BA/BS degree or higher in early childhood education, child development, or related field.
- (3) All lead teachers employed by a child care facility have earned an AAS degree or higher in early childhood education, child development or related field.
- (4) The operator of a family child care home has earned a BS/BS degree in early childhood education, child development or related field.
- (5) The operator of a family child care home has earned an AAS degree in early childhood education, child development or related field and is enrolled in a BA/BS degree program in early childhood education or child development.
- (6) 75 percent of teachers employed by a child care facility have an active Child Development Associate (CDA).
- (7) The operator of a child care facility participates in the T.E.A.C.H. program or other education initiative that supports employed staff that want to enroll in or who are enrolled in college coursework.
- (8) 75 percent of lead teachers and educators, as defined in this Section, have an active certification in the NC Early Care and Education Professional Certification Scale at https://www.ncidp.org/documents/EEC_EDE_Scale.pdf.
- (9) The operator of a family child care home has an active certification in the NC Early Care and Education Professional Certification Scale at https://www.ncicdp.org/documents/EEC_ECE_Scale.pdf.

(d) A Professional Development Recognition may be requested when at least one of the following requirements is met:

- (1) The operator of a family child care home completes 20 training hours annually, in addition to training hours required for their licensure level as set forth in this Section and in addition to ongoing training requirements set forth in Rule .1703 of this Chapter and education requirements set forth in Rule .3217 of this Section.
- (2) The operator of a family child care home is an approved trainer for an established course as set forth in Rule .1703 of this Chapter and provides at least one training course for early childhood professionals in their community annually or when the operator develops a training course, obtains approval for training as set forth in Rule .1703 of this Chapter, and provides at least one training course for early childhood professionals in their community annually.
- (3) A center administrator or operator of a family child care home provides evidence of active membership in a professional or community organization.
- (4) A child care facility operator compensates staff members for time spent completing professional development activities.
- (5) A child care facility operator compensates staff members for the cost of professional development activities.
- (6) A child care center operator pays for at least 50 percent of staff members to have an active membership in a professional or community organization and provides evidence of the paid costs and memberships.
- (7) A child care center operator employs at least one staff member who is an approved trainer for an established training course as set forth in Rule .1103 of this Chapter and the approved trainer provides at least one training course for all employees annually or when the child care center operator, administrator or staff member develops a training course, obtains approval for training as set forth in Rule .1103 of this Chapter, and provides at least one training course annually for employed staff members.

- (8) A child care facility allows early childhood education practicum students to complete required activities in their facility when the individuals are not employed by the facility.
- (e) A Longevity and Experience Recognition may be requested when at least one of the following requirements is met:
- (1) The operator of a family child care home has been in operation for at least five years with a compliance history score of 90 percent or higher.
 - (2) The operator of the family child care home has been in operation for at least five years with a four or five-star rated license.
 - (3) A center administrator has at least 10 years of child care administrative work experience in a licensed child care facility.
 - (4) 75 percent of lead teachers and teachers have at least 10 years of early childhood work experience in a licensed child care facility.
 - (5) All lead teachers and teachers have at least five years of early childhood work experience in a licensed child care facility and have been employed by no more than two different child care facilities.
 - (6) The child care center has a combined turnover rate of 20 percent or less for the administrator, lead teacher and teacher positions over the last 12 months.
 - (7) In stand-alone school age care facilities, 75 percent of group leaders have at least five years of school age care work experience in a licensed or unlicensed school age program and have been employed by no more than two different child care facilities.
- (f) A Staff Supports and Benefits Recognition may be requested when at least one of the following requirements is met:
- (1) A child care facility offers a staff benefits package that includes at least three of the following benefits: paid time off for vacation, sick and/or personal leave, paid family and medical leave, fully or partially paid health insurance, retirement contribution or annual bonuses.
 - (2) A child care facility offers two hours of paid planning time for lead teachers on a weekly basis, during a time when the lead teacher is not responsible for supervising children.
 - (3) A child care facility offers at least two mental health supports such as training offered on-site, paid time off for wellness, mental health coverage as part of health benefits or assistance in obtaining access to other services as requested.
 - (4) A child care center pays for costs associated with enrolling in and completing early childhood education or child development coursework.
- (g) A Program Features Recognition may be requested when at least one of the following requirements is met:
- (1) A child care facility implements an approved curriculum for all age groups served as defined in Rule .0102(11) of this Chapter when not required for licensure level or pathway.
 - (2) A child care facility uses a program assessment tool for self-study, self-assessment and continuous quality improvement when not required for licensure level or pathway.
 - (3) A child care center earns a 5.0 on every classroom assessed with ERS-3 and SACERS-U.
 - (4) A child care facility uses an approved formative assessment tool for all age groups served as defined in Rules .3205 or .3206 of this Section when not required for licensure level or pathway.
 - (5) A child care facility implements all family and community engagement practices as set forth in Rules .3219 and .3220 of this Section, rather than only the practices required for licensure level or pathway.
 - (6) A child care administrator or operator of a family child care home participates in a coaching or mentoring process as set forth in Rules .3205 and .3206 of this Section when not required for licensure level or pathway.
- (h) A Health & Wellness Opportunities Recognition may be requested when at least one of the following requirements is met:
- (1) A child care facility provides support to staff members and families regarding challenging behaviors using community, regional or state resources.
 - (2) A child care center has a licensed or registered nurse on staff for at least half of the operating hours of the program.
 - (3) A child care facility offers oral health education and opportunities such as dental screenings and outreach with community, regional and state resources.

- (4) A child care facility offers supplemental programs or contracts with external vendors to provide opportunities for growth in specialty areas, including but not limited to tumbling, art, bookmobile, sports, dance, music or yoga.
- (5) A child care facility completes REACH Healthy Child Care recognition. Information for this program is Available at <https://reach-recognition.org/>.
- (6) A child care facility completes Be Active Kids/Go NAPSACC Program. Information for this program is available at <https://www.beactivekids.org/>.
- (7) A child care facility participates in Farm to Early Education. Information for this program is available at <https://cefs.ncsu.edu/food-system-initiatives/nc-farm-to-early-care-and-education/>.
- (8) A child care facility engages with a Child Care Health Consultant by participating in one cycle of assessments using the NC Health and Safety Assessment Tool annually.
- (9) A child care facility implements five of six of the following educational opportunities regarding green environment practices:
 - (A) Provides outdoor learning environments that have areas of shade provided by trees that use heat tolerant /drought resistant plant material.
 - (B) Provides an indoor play space allowing gross motor play, running, jumping and physically active games in an air conditioned/heated environment.
 - (C) Paints walkways and pavement in heat reflecting colors in an effort to decrease surface temperatures and associated burn hazards.
 - (D) Ensure use of non-toxic cleaning products throughout the facility
 - (E) Creates and maintains a pollinator and/or a vegetable garden as a method to educate and emphasize ecofriendly change and lifestyle.
 - (F) Implement teaching practices that support reducing and recycling such as ensuring use of recyclable products when reusable products are unavailable, providing reusable food service products for meals and/or snacks, and installing a system of recycling in the facility where trash and recyclables are in separate containers and disposed of properly.
- (i) A Language Concentration Recognition may be requested when at least one of the following requirements is met:
 - (1) Children enrolled in a child care facility are participating in use of languages other than English on a regular basis.
 - (2) A child care facility is a language immersion program.
 - (3) A child care facility is a bilingual program.
- (j) A Culinary Emphasis Recognition may be requested when at least one of the following requirements is met:
 - (1) An operator of a family child care home has completed a food handler program training or certification, such as ServSafe.
 - (2) A chef or cook position at a child care center has completed culinary classes or has completed food handler program training or certification, such as ServSafe.
 - (3) A child care facility utilizes farm-to-table practices as part of their food and nutrition program.
- (k) A Ratio, Group Size, and Enrollment Practices Recognition may be requested when at least one of the following requirements is met:
 - (1) A child care center reduces staff to child ratios or group sizes when not required for licensure level or pathway.
 - (2) An operator of a family child care home voluntarily reduces enrollment when not required for licensure level or pathway.
- (l) A Supplemental Environments Recognition may be requested when at least one of the following areas are provided within a child care center or family child care home: gyms, active play area, sensory focused environments, gardens or naturalized outdoor play environments.
- (m) A NC Breastfeeding-Friendly Child Care Designation Program Recognition may be requested when this designation is earned by meeting program requirements set forth at <https://fs27.formsite.com/nutritionnc/xghrnuq0td/index.html>, incorporated by reference and available for free.
- (n) A Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood – PLUS Recognition may be requested by child care facilities participating in the free assistance program for military families after meeting the eligibility requirements set forth at <https://www.childcareaware.org/fee-assistancerespice/feeassistancerespiceproviders/feeassistance>, incorporated by reference and available for free.

History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85(3); 110-88(7); 110-90(4); 143B-168.3; S.L. 2024-34; 42 U.S.C. 9858e; 45 CFR 98.45;
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