

## Procedure Letter 24

**TO:** Early Care and Education Stakeholders

**FROM:** Kara B. Wente, Director

**DATE:** July 8, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Step Up To Quality Expedited Rating Process for Early Head Start, Head Start, and programs accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children

### **Background**

Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) is a three-tier quality rating and improvement system for Ohio's early care and education (ECE) programs. SUTQ recognizes and promotes programs that meet quality program standards. SUTQ program standards are based on national research identifying practices that lead to improved outcomes for children.

Substitute House Bill No. 7 of the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly directed the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) to review the standards for Early Head Start, Head Start, and programs accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in order to determine a corresponding rating in SUTQ. This review will occur on a periodic basis. Based on the most recent review, these programs meet many of the SUTQ program standards in addition to the national performance and accreditation standards.

Chapter 5180:2-17 of the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) allows new programs to receive a corresponding rating if a program owner follows the requirements to obtain an expedited rating. A non-rated Head Start grantee and NAEYC-accredited program can obtain an expedited rating by submitting a request in the Ohio Child Licensing and Quality System (OCLQS).

### **Implementation**

Beginning July 9, 2025, DCY will award an expedited bronze, silver, or gold rating for Early Head Start, Head Start, and NAEYC-accredited and accredited+ programs that submit an expedited registration in OCLQS and verify the following:

**Early Head Start/Head Start Programs:**

- Notice of Head Start Grantee Award Letter confirming that the program is a Head Start Grantee; not a Head Start Partner.
- Name of curriculum obtained and implemented for all infant, toddler, and preschool-aged children. Curriculum is to be comprehensive, research-based, and aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) and Science of Reading.
- Administrator and lead teacher qualifications.

**NAEYC Accredited Programs:**

- Accreditation and Accreditation+ Status Documentation.
- Name of curriculum obtained and implemented for all infant, toddler, and preschool-aged children. Curriculum is to be comprehensive, research-based, and aligned with the Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) and Science of Reading.
- Administrator and lead teacher qualifications.

To access instructions on submitting an expedited registration click here: [Ohio Child Licensing and Quality System \(OCLOS\) Job Aids](#).

Programs will be awarded the highest rating based on curriculum and staff qualifications; the rating is effective the Sunday after the rating is approved. To continue the bronze, silver, or gold rating, the program is to submit an ongoing registration within one hundred twenty days of the rating begin date and comply with the on-site verification visit. If the program fails to comply, the rating is discontinued one hundred twenty days after the rating begins.

OAC Rule 5180:2-17-03 will be updated in the future to reflect this requirement.

**Contact**

Please contact the Family and Customer Support Center at [childcarepolicy@childrenandyouth.ohio.gov](mailto:childcarepolicy@childrenandyouth.ohio.gov) or 1-844-234-5437, option 2, if you have any questions.

<b>OAC Rules</b>	<b>DCY Forms</b>
5180:2-17-03	N/A