



DCY Guidance Letter 24-022 DIVISION OF POLICY

TO: County Department of Job and Family Services Directors

FROM: Gina Speaks-Eshler, Deputy Director

DATE: July 8, 2024

SUBJECT: Changes to Step Up To Quality Verification Visits for Family Child Care Providers

Background:

Step Up To Quality (SUTQ) is Ohio's rating system that allows programs to be recognized for exceeding minimum health and safety standards. The SUTQ rating system provides parents access to a program's rating level and the standards that the program is meeting to assist them in the selection of a high-quality early care and education program. Programs participating in SUTQ and providing Publicly Funded Child Care (PFCC) are eligible to receive enhanced payments. Programs participating in Preschool Special Education or the Early Childhood Education program must be considered highly rated in order to provide these services.

During the last year, the Ohio Department of Children and Youth (DCY) has been working with providers and stakeholders to modify the standards to focus on improving the percentage of children demonstrating readiness during kindergarten and reduce the administrative burden for providers. One of the most significant changes to the standards is the requirement for ALL rated programs, including Bronze (previously 1-Star and 2-Star) level programs to implement a curriculum that is aligned to the Early Learning and Development Standards and the Science of Reading.

Prior to June 30, 2024, the County Departments of Job and Family Services completed SUTQ verification visits for Family Child Care providers applying for or maintaining a 1-Star or 2-Star rating (now Bronze level) with the DCY Staff completing the verification visits for all centers and Family Child Care providers applying for or maintaining a 3-Star, 4-Star or 5-Star rating (now Silver and Gold level).

Change:

Based on the additional requirements associated with implementing a curriculum at all rating levels in SUTQ, effective July 7, 2024, the Department of Children and Youth will complete all SUTQ verification visits for all Family Child Care providers seeking to apply for or maintain a Bronze, Silver or Gold level rating. Because licensing visits will still be conducted by the CDJFS, DCY Regulatory staff will work to coordinate SUTQ visits with county agency staff completing licensing inspections.



New SUTQ Registrations:

Beginning July 7, 2024, DCY will contact the county agency staff to determine if a licensing visit needs to be scheduled for any new SUTQ registrations. If a licensing visit is going to be scheduled, a DCY licensing specialist will attempt to schedule a SUTQ visit the same day.

On-going Visits:

Beginning Tuesday, July 1, 2025, DCY licensing specialist will share with the county agency staff the providers needing a SUTQ visit during the months of that quarter and will attempt to coordinate the licensing and SUTQ visits. If a licensing visit was already completed, a DCY licensing specialist will wait at least 30 days before the SUTQ visit will be completed. If the licensing visit is not scheduled within the next 30 days, the SUTQ visit will be completed.

Questions:

For questions regarding these changes, please contact the Child Care County Technical Assistance team at child_care_county_technical_assistance@childrenandyouth.ohio.gov.