

Bronze Circle of Quality

Developed for Licensed Child Care Centers

1. Teaching & Learning

Daily activities and interactions within early learning and development programs are indicators that a program is providing an environment and experiences that are safe, healthy and stimulating for children. This includes offering both indoor and outdoor activities to support varied learning experiences. To ensure that young children's experiences are developmentally appropriate, applicants are expected to incorporate a comprehensive curriculum and child assessment system that are aligned with the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Birth to Three and Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for Age Three to Five. Providing necessary adaptations to a child's experience and environment allows all children, including those with special needs, to learn, grow and develop.

1A. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Program administrator and at least 50% of teaching staff have completed ExceleRate-approved training on the use of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) for program design and continuous improvement

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on ERS verified by Gateways Registry

1B. CURRICULUM

Program administrator and at least 50% of teaching staff have completed ExceleRate-approved training on:

Illinois Early Learning Guidelines (IELG)¹ / Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)² verified by Gateways Registry

AND _____

Either overview of aligned curricula

OR _____

Training on a specific curriculum that is aligned to the IELG/IELDS

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on IELG¹/IELDS² and either aligned curricula or specific curriculum verified by Gateways Registry

¹ IELG Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age Three Years

² IELDS Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for Preschool 3 years old to Kindergarten Enrollment Age

1. Teaching & Learning

1C. INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

Program administrator and at least 50% of teaching staff have completed ExceleRate-approved training on:

Illinois Early Learning Guidelines (IELG)¹ / Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards (IELDS)²
AND _____

Either overview of aligned curricula

OR _____

Training on a specific curriculum that is aligned to the IELG¹/IELDS²

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on IELG¹/IELDS² and either aligned curricula or specific curriculum verified by Gateways Registry

1D. CHILD SCREENING

Program administrator has completed ExceleRate-approved training on screening tools

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on screening tools verified by Gateways Registry

¹ IELG Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age Three Years

² IELDS Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for Preschool 3 years old to Kindergarten Enrollment Age

1. Teaching & Learning

1E. CHILD ASSESSMENT

Program administrator has completed ExceleRate-approved introductory training on assessment tools

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on assessment tools verified by Gateways Registry

1F. INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Program administrator and at least 50% of teaching staff have completed ExceleRate-approved training on inclusion of children with special needs

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on inclusion of children with special needs verified by Gateways Registry

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2. Family & Community Engagement

Engaging and building strong partnerships with families fosters a child's learning and development both in and out of the child's home. That's why it is critical to involve families in authentic opportunities to promote quality experiences and environments for children. There are four hallmarks for effective family and community engagement: regular, effective two-way communications; opportunities for families to get to know one another; education about child growth and development; and making connections to available community resources. Helping families navigate transitions also provides meaningful support to children so that they can continue to succeed as they progress in their learning, growth and development.

2A. FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Program administrator has completed ExceleRate-approved training on family engagement strategies

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on family engagement strategies verified by Gateways Registry

2B. TRANSITIONS

Program administrator has completed ExceleRate-approved training on transition strategies

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on transition strategies verified by Gateways Registry

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3. Leadership & Management

Research has demonstrated that strong leadership and management practices make a tangible difference in the quality of care and education provided. This is accomplished by incorporating high-quality administrative practices, regularly assessing overall program operations and establishing program goals to continually improve the quality of the program. Careful attention to staff-to-child ratios and the size of the groups within classrooms are additional critical factors to ensure the program maintains a high quality environment where all children can balance individual attention with group activities and social development. The program also recognizes the diversity of families and children by ensuring that all policies and practices are linguistically and culturally appropriate.

3A. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

Program administrator has completed ExceleRate-approved introductory training on the Program Administration Scale (PAS)

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on PAS verified by Gateways Registry

3B. GROUP SIZE AND STAFF/CHILD RATIOS

State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licensing standards on group size and staff/child ratio

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Meets State of Illinois DCFS licensing standards on ratios and group size

3. Leadership & Management

3C. CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Program administrator has completed ExceleRate-approved training on continuous quality improvement planning

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on continuous quality improvement planning verified by Gateways Registry

3D. LINGUISTICALLY AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

Program administrator and at least 50% of teaching staff have completed ExceleRate-approved training on diversity that addresses the relationship between culture, race, and language development and usage

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on linguistic/cultural/racial diversity verified by Gateways Registry

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4. Qualifications & Continuing Education

High-quality programs are directed by administrators who have the formal education and professional preparedness to manage the program and lead all staff in providing the most up-to-date practices for educational development. Staff that work with children are also expected to have appropriate education and professional training (in their assigned age groups) to engage with children and families.

4A. DIRECTOR QUALIFICATIONS

Program meets State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licensing standards on director qualifications

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Meets State of Illinois DCFS licensing standards on director qualifications

4B. STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

At least 30% of teaching staff have a minimum of Gateways ECE Credential Level 2*

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Staff qualifications verified by Gateways Registry

*Initial ExceleRate Illinois applications receive an extension related to staff qualifications. Program staff are required to apply for the Gateways Credentials. Program staff must achieve the Gateways Credentials within the first year of the program's eligibility.

4. Qualifications & Continuing Education

4C. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Program administrator or the staff member responsible for professional development planning has completed ExceleRate-approved training on developing Individualized Professional Development Plans

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Documentation of completion of ExceleRate-approved training on individualized professional development planning verified by Gateways Registry