
WHO CARES FOR TENNESSEE'S CHILDREN?

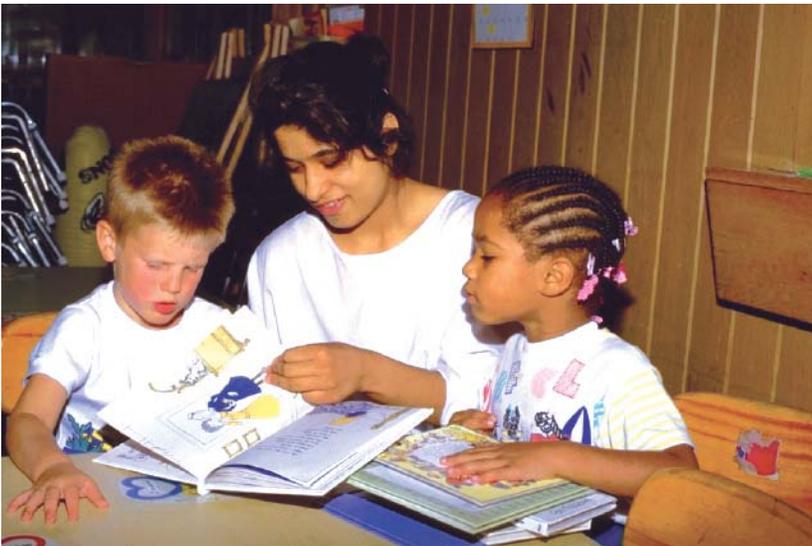


A REVIEW OF TENNESSEE'S
CHILD CARE EVALUATION
REPORT CARD
PROGRAM



PREPARED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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The Quality of Child Care Counts!



Sixty percent of the children in Tennessee under 6 years of age and 68 percent of those 6 to 17 years of age live in households in which both parents are working. Across the state, thousands of these

young Tennesseans spend hours every day in child care centers or homes being cared for by someone other than their parents. The quality of the care these children receive matters now and for the future.

What is quality child care?

- ★ Children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive needs are recognized and addressed
- ★ Controlled group size and adult-child ratios promote interactions and relationships
- ★ A well-designed curriculum and learning environment enhances school readiness
- ★ Well-trained and fairly compensated staff participate in ongoing professional development
- ★ Parents, families, and staff are involved and working together as partners in the child's development and education

Why does child care quality matter? A growing body of research has found links between the quality of child care and children's healthy development and readiness for and later performance in school. It appears more and more certain that high-quality child care may mean the difference between later success or failure for children. (Visit the website of the National Association for the Education of Young Children for a review of the critical research: www.naeyc.org.)

Research has found that children who have attended higher quality child care programs have greater social skills and fewer behavior problems in school. They start kindergarten better prepared for reading, more motivated to learn, and committed to school (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 1999).

Report Card Evaluation and Star-Quality Programs

To give parents more information about the quality of child care in Tennessee, the Department of Human Services (DHS) implemented a rated child care license and report card program in 2001. The program, the Report Card Evaluation and Star-Quality Child Care Program, was mandated by law and is a key component of the state's initiative to improve child care quality. Under this program every child care agency that is licensed and approved by the Department of Human Services is evaluated each year as the agency renews its operating license.

The criteria on which child care agencies are evaluated reflect accepted best practices in child





care assessment and evaluation. Child care centers that care for 13 or more children are evaluated on seven components or areas. Family child care homes that care for 5 to 7 children and group child care homes that care for 8 to 12 children are evaluated on five components. The evaluation covers the qualifications, education, and experience of the caregivers; the agency's compliance with DHS rules and regulations; how the agency involves parents and families in the child care program; the ratio of adult caregivers to children in care; the number of children in each

group; other basic aspects of the agency's operations; and the overall environment of the facility.

DHS Licensing staff members collect all pertinent information on the agency to determine its eligibility for a license and its evaluation results or ratings. An independent Assessor conducts the 3- to 4-hour on-site observation. After the information has been collected, reviewed, and verified, DHS staff members determine the agency's rating on each component and its overall rating, which is the average of the component ratings.

Goals of the Tennessee Report Card Program

- ☆ To encourage and recognize quality child care programs
- ☆ To improve the quality of child care in Tennessee
- ☆ To provide information to parents as they seek to secure quality child care for their children

An agency can receive one of four ratings on each component and as an overall rating —“meets Licensing standards” or 1, 2, or 3 stars. The higher the rating, the higher quality the care. The ratings provide detailed information about the program’s operations and give parents and other consumers a good overall picture of the agency’s quality and a fair way to compare agencies.

The agency receives its rating on its new license and on a poster-sized report card that are to be displayed for parents and others to view.

Education child care facilities) and 1,016 family child care and group child care homes.

The results of the Year 2 report cards indicate that 78.2 percent of the 3,066 evaluated agencies were awarded stars (compared to 68.3 percent of evaluated agencies in Year 1). Specifically, 44.4 percent earned 3 stars, 28.4 percent earned 2 stars, and 5.4 percent earned 1 star.

When results for Year 1 and Year 2 are compared for all agencies, there is evidence of dramatic improvement for both types of agencies—child care centers and family/group child care homes.

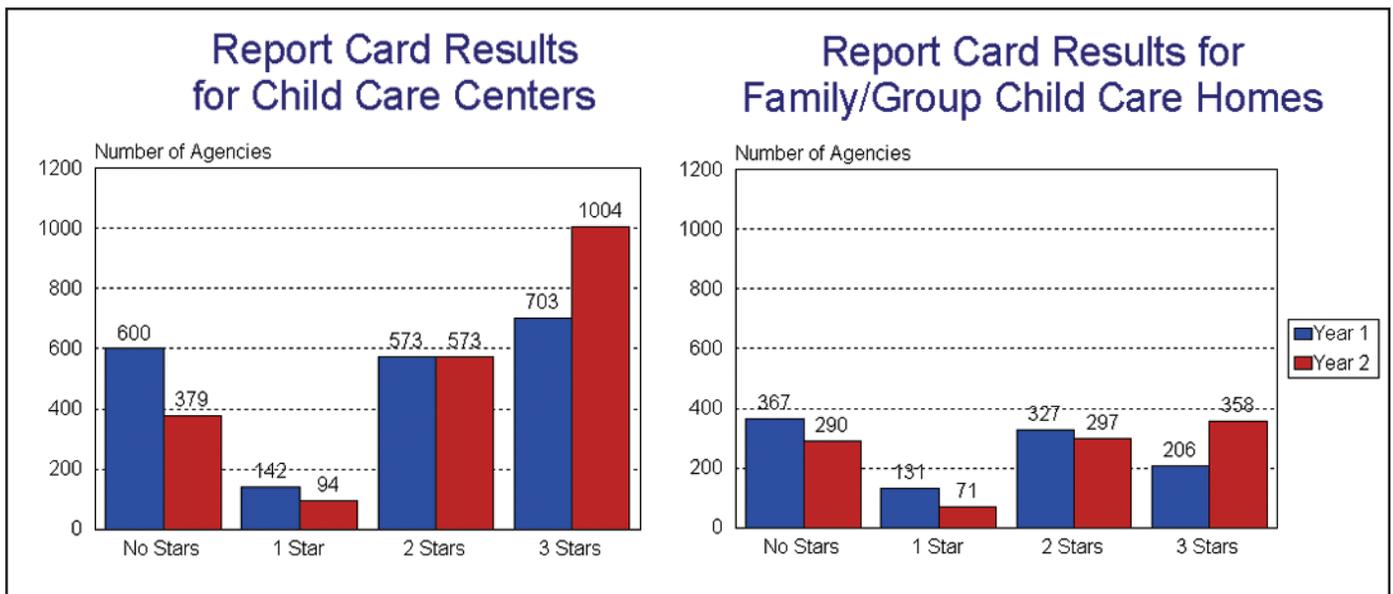
Tennessee Report Card Results

In the second year of the Report Card Program, a total of 3,066 DHS licensed and approved agencies were evaluated across the state. This total consists of 2,050 child care centers (including 45 Department of

More About Program Assessment Results

One of the best overall indicators of the care that children receive is the program assessment score; therefore, it is helpful to discuss the Year 2 results for this one component in more depth.

Briefly, the assessment process is as follows: An Assessor conducts the program assessment or on-site observation of a child care agency. All Assessors are highly trained. They want to make sure that, no



What do the program assessment scores mean?

1 = Inadequate

- ☆ Children's needs for health and safety are not met
- ☆ No warmth or support from adults is observed
- ☆ No learning is encouraged

3 = Minimal

- ☆ Children's basic health and safety needs are met
- ☆ A little warmth and support is provided by adults
- ☆ There are few learning experiences

5 = Good

- ☆ Health and safety needs are fully met
- ☆ Staff are caring and supportive of children
- ☆ Children are learning in many ways through interesting, fun activities

7 = Excellent

- ☆ Everything is good
- ☆ In addition, children are encouraged to become independent
- ☆ The teacher plans for children's individual learning needs
- ☆ Adults have close, personal relationships with each child

Cryer, D. (1999). Defining and Assessing Early Childhood Program Quality. The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 563.

matter what county or city the agency is located in and no matter which Assessor is doing the observation, it is fair. The on-site program assessment consists of three to four hours of classroom observation and assessment at the facility.

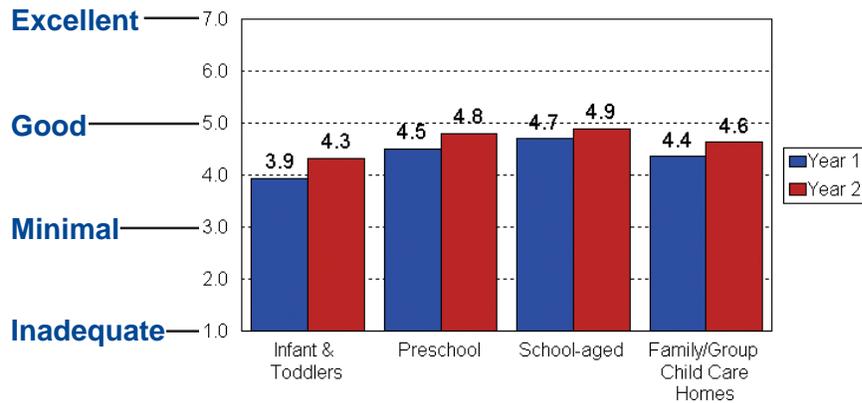
If an agency has more than one classroom, the Assessor will randomly select, observe, and rate one-third of the classrooms. During the observation, one or more Assessors will look at the indoor and outdoor spaces, activities, and materials, and at the interactions among children and between children

and adults. Assessors keep a low profile and try to remain unnoticeable while in the classroom. They do this so the adults and children can interact naturally. The instruments used in the assessment are the Environment Rating Scales, four internationally recognized measures of child care quality. Each of the scales was designed for a specific age group or type of child care program. The Assessor scores each of the items on a scale from 1 to 7, with 7 being the highest score.

The Assessor ends the observation by interviewing

A total of 5,668 observations were conducted across the state in Year 2. The adjoining graph shows that the quality of care rose in each of the three classroom types or homes, from Year 1 to Year 2.

Average Program Assessment Scores for Years 1 and 2



- ☆ Average infant and toddler scores rose 9.9 percent
- ☆ Average preschool scores rose 6.7 percent
- ☆ Average school-age scores rose 4.3 percent
- ☆ Average family/group child care home scores rose 6.2 percent

the caretaker and then uses the information collected during the observation and the interview to complete the scoring. The Assessor assigns a score to each item; the item scores range from 1 to 7 (see box on page 6). The item scores are then averaged to determine the classroom or home child care observation score,

which also ranges from 1 to 7. (The overall assessment score is the average of the classroom scores, unless the program has a classroom for which the score is 2.99 or lower. In that case, the lowest classroom score is used as the overall program assessment score.)

Two-year Results for the Report Card Evaluation and Star-Quality Child Care Programs

- ☆ Child care quality across Tennessee has improved at both centers and homes
- ☆ More of Tennessee’s children received child care that promotes healthy physical, emotional, and social development and school readiness
- ☆ Fewer children were in low-quality care that compromises their development
- ☆ Parents across the state had evaluation results and report cards to help them make more informed child care choices
- ☆ Caregivers received detailed information about what they were doing well and ways to improve their services



Looking back over the past two years of development, training, and assessment, it can be said that Tennessee's Report Card Program has achieved impressive results. In every category evaluated, improvements have been identified. Across our state, child care providers have implemented practices that assure the safety and comfort of

the children of Tennessee while guaranteeing the best chance of success for the development and education of those children. In addition, as Tennessee's successes are being recognized more widely, the state is beginning to serve as a model for other states and regions that share the goal of insuring quality child care for all of their citizens.

References

Peisner-Feinberg, E.S.; Burchinal, M.R.; Clifford, R.M.; Culkin, J.L.; Howes, C.; Kaga, S.L.; Yazejian, N.; Byler, P.; Rustici, J.; and Zelazo, J. (1999). *The children of the cost, quality and outcomes study go to school: Executive summary*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center.