

## 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.

<sup>1</sup> Environment Rating Scale

<sup>2</sup> Continuous Quality Improvement Plan

<sup>3</sup> Classroom Assessment Scoring System (for ages 3–5 only)

**1** <sup>4</sup> To be prepared for ERS or CLASS assessment the program administrator and 50% of teaching staff have completed ExceleRate-approved training on the use of the scale verified by Gateways Registry

### 1A. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

**Program demonstrates commitment to quality improvement of classroom environment by completing a self-assessment of classroom quality**

**AND**

**Verification of classroom quality by state-approved assessor**

#### LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER

Documentation of ERS<sup>1</sup> self-assessment and CQIP<sup>2</sup> to address any subscales below 4.5 and/or any classroom score below 4.0; ERS<sup>1</sup> average overall score of 3.25-4.5 with no classroom below 3.0; verified by state-approved assessor<sup>4</sup>

*OR*

CLASS<sup>3</sup> Emotional Support and Classroom Organization average score: 4.0-5.0 with no classroom below 3.0; CQIP<sup>2</sup> developed to address scores below 4.0; verified by scores submitted from state-approved assessor<sup>4</sup>

*OR*

Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body

#### PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

ERS<sup>1</sup> average overall score: 3.25-4.5 with no classroom below 3.0; CQIP<sup>2</sup> developed to address any subscale below 4.5 and/or any classroom overall score below 4.0; verified by scores submitted from state approved assessor

*OR*

CLASS<sup>3</sup> Emotional Support and Classroom Organization average score: 4.0-5.0 with no classroom below 3.0; CQIP<sup>2</sup> developed to address scores below 4.0; verified by on-site assessment by state-approved assessor

#### HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START

In compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards

## 1. Teaching & Learning

### 1B. CURRICULUM

**Program implements a curriculum that is aligned with the IELG<sup>5</sup>/IELDS<sup>6</sup> with at least 50% of teaching staff receiving training on the identified curriculum**

#### LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER

Identification of selected curriculum that aligns with IELG<sup>5</sup>/IELDS<sup>6</sup>  
*AND* \_\_\_\_\_  
Evidence that at least 50% of teaching staff have completed ExceleRate-approved training or other ISBE-approved training in that curriculum verified by Gateways Registry  
*OR* \_\_\_\_\_  
Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body

#### PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

In compliance with Preschool for All grant requirements at the Gold Circle of Quality

#### HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START

In compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards

<sup>5</sup> IELG Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age Three Years

<sup>6</sup> IELDS Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for Preschool 3 years old to Kindergarten Enrollment Age

1. Teaching & Learning

1C. INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

**Program demonstrates developmentally appropriate instructional practices as verified by state approved assessor**

LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER

Documentation of ERS<sup>1</sup> self-assessment and CQIP<sup>2</sup> to address any classroom with less than 3.0 on “Interactions and Language Reasoning/Listening and Talking” subscales. ERS<sup>1</sup> average score of 4.0 on these subscales; verified by state-approved assessor<sup>4</sup>

*OR* \_\_\_\_\_  
CLASS<sup>3</sup> Instructional Support average score: above 2.5 with a CQIP<sup>2</sup> developed for classrooms with less than 2.0 score on this subscale; verified by scores submitted from state-approved assessor

*OR* \_\_\_\_\_  
Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body

PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

ERS<sup>1</sup> average score: 4.0 on “Interactions” and “Language Reasoning/ Listening and Talking” subscales; CQIP<sup>2</sup> developed to address any classroom with less than 3.0 on these subscales; verified by scores submitted from state-approved assessor

*OR* \_\_\_\_\_  
CLASS<sup>3</sup> Instructional Support average score: above a 2.5 with a CQIP<sup>2</sup> developed for classrooms with less than a 2.0 score on this subscale; verified by on-site assessment by state-approved assessor

HEAD START/  
EARLY HEAD START

In compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards

<sup>1</sup> Environment Rating Scale

<sup>2</sup> Continuous Quality Improvement Plan

<sup>3</sup> Classroom Assessment Scoring System (for ages 3–5 only)

## 1. Teaching & Learning

### 1D. CHILD SCREENING

**Program has policies and procedures in place to ensure that all children (birth-5 years) are screened at least annually for the purpose of identifying special needs and parents are provided screening results and information on where they can go for additional evaluation and services**

#### LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER

Self-assessment of screening policies and practices  
*AND* \_\_\_\_\_  
Verification by state-approved assessor  
*OR* \_\_\_\_\_  
Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body

#### PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

In compliance with Preschool for All grant requirements at the Gold Circle of Quality

#### HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START

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## 1. Teaching & Learning

### 1E. CHILD ASSESSMENT

#### Program chooses aligned child assessment tool

##### LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER

Identification of selected  
assessment tool(s) that aligns with  
IELG<sup>5</sup>/IELDS<sup>6</sup>

*AND* \_\_\_\_\_

Verification by state-approved  
assessor

*OR* \_\_\_\_\_

Accredited sites: Evidence from  
state-approved accrediting body

##### PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

In compliance with Preschool  
for All grant requirements at  
the Gold Circle of Quality

##### HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START

In compliance with the  
Head Start Program  
Performance Standards

<sup>5</sup> IELG Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for Children Birth to Age Three Years

<sup>6</sup> IELDS Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards for Preschool 3 years old to Kindergarten Enrollment Age

## 1. Teaching & Learning

### 1F. INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

**Program has policies and procedures in place for supporting inclusion of children with special needs**

**AND** \_\_\_\_\_

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

#### LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER

Self-assessment of policies and procedures

**AND** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**OR** \_\_\_\_\_

Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body

#### PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

In compliance with Preschool for All grant requirements at the Gold Circle of Quality

#### HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START

In compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards

## 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 implements at least five family supports (see list in PAS<sup>7</sup> item #17) and two parent-staff conferences per year**

LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER	PRESCHOOL FOR ALL	HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START
Self-assessment of family engagement practices <i>AND</i> _____ Verification by state-approved assessor <i>OR</i> _____ Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body	In compliance with Preschool for All grant requirements at the Gold Circle of Quality	In compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards

## 2. Family & Community Engagement

### 2B. TRANSITIONS

**Program implements policies and practices to provide general information about transitions and engages families in discussions and/or activities addressing child and family transitions**

#### LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER

Self-assessment of transition activities  
*AND* \_\_\_\_\_  
Verification by state-approved assessor  
*OR* \_\_\_\_\_  
Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body

#### PRESCHOOL FOR ALL

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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 demonstrates commitment to quality improvement of administrative practices**

LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER	PRESCHOOL FOR ALL	HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START
<p>Documentation of PAS<sup>7</sup> self-assessment with a CQIP<sup>2</sup> to address any subscales below 4.5<sup>8</sup></p> <p><i>AND</i></p> <p>Verification of three program selected subscales (excluding Child Assessment, Family Partnerships and Staff Qualifications) by state-approved assessor</p> <p><i>OR</i></p> <p>Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body</p>	<p>In compliance with Preschool for All grant requirements at the Gold Circle of Quality</p>	<p>In compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards</p>

<sup>2</sup> Continuous Quality Improvement Plan

<sup>7</sup> Program Administration Scale

<sup>8</sup> To be prepared for PAS self assessment the program administrator completes ExceleRate—approved training on the use of the scale verified by Gateways Registry

### 3. Leadership & Management

#### 3B. GROUP SIZE AND STAFF/CHILD RATIOS

**Program meets State of Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licensing standards**

LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER	PRESCHOOL FOR ALL	HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START
<p>Meets State of Illinois DCFS licensing standards on ratios and group size</p> <p><i>OR</i></p> <p>Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body</p>	<p>In compliance with Preschool for All grant requirements at the Gold Circle of Quality</p>	<p>In compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards</p>

#### 3C. CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

**Program develops and implements Continuous Quality Improvement Plan using self-assessment results**

LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER	PRESCHOOL FOR ALL	HEAD START/ EARLY HEAD START
<p>Submit Continuous Quality Improvement Plan and annual report</p> <p><i>OR</i></p> <p>Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body</p>	<p>In compliance with Preschool for All grant requirements at the Gold Circle of Quality</p>	<p>In compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards</p>

### 3. Leadership & Management

#### 3D. LINGUISTICALLY AND CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICE

**Program completes a self-assessment of its Linguistically and Culturally appropriate policies and practices, using a recommended tool**

*AND*

**Creates a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan based on assessment results**

*AND*

**Children are encouraged to use their home language in play and learning experiences and, wherever possible, program communicates with families in their home language**

##### LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER

Self-assessment results of support for linguistic/cultural diversity verified by state-approved assessor

*AND*

Continuous Quality Improvement Plan

*OR*

Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body

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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 to engage with children and families in their assigned age groups.

### 4A. DIRECTOR QUALIFICATIONS\*

**Gateways Illinois Director Credential Level I or higher**

OR

**Illinois Principal Endorsement**

#### LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER

Director qualifications verified by Gateways Registry  
OR  
Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body

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### 4B. STAFF QUALIFICATIONS\*

**At least 30% of teaching staff have a minimum of a Gateways ECE Credential Level 3**

AND

**30% of teaching staff in infant-toddler classrooms have a Gateways Infant Toddler Credential Level 2**

#### LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER

Staff qualifications verified by Gateways Registry  
OR  
Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body

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\*ExceleRate system administrators recognize that achieving the required Credentials in some cases is a major leap in an environment where programs are struggling to maintain DCFS qualified teachers, managing staff turnover, and more. For this reason, we have continued to delay the enforcement of Standards 4A and 4B. Programs must continue completing a Continuous Quality Improvement Plan (CQIP) including concrete, achievable goals and action steps the program is making towards meeting the Credential requirements.

## 4. Qualifications & Continuing Education

### 4C. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

**Program has individualized, written staff development plans developed for all classroom staff**  
**AND** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Minimum of 20 hours of professional development per year**

#### LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTER

Staff development plans and hours of professional development verified by state-approved assessor  
*OR* \_\_\_\_\_  
Accredited sites: Evidence from state-approved accrediting body

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