

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

VERIFICATION OF 2-STAR, 3-STAR and 4-STAR STATUS

For Licensed Programs NOT PARTICIPATING in the AIM HIGH Program

- 1) **Where can I get the information I need to prepare for a verification visit?**
 - If you have access to the internet, go to www.NewMexicoKids.org, click on the Caregivers link, then click on “Look for the Stars”, or;
 - Pick up a packet at the licensing office or at your local Training and Technical Assistance Program. The packet includes:
 - a) Child Care Licensing Application Form
 - b) Frequently Asked Questions and Answers Sheet regarding the process
 - c) Flow Chart of the Process
 - d) Verification Tools for each STAR level
 - e) Current AIM HIGH Essential Elements, the criteria used to verify STAR status
 - f) List of all Training and Technical Assistance Programs funded by CYFD
 - g) List of required documents needed for the validation visit
 - h) Application for Reconsideration
 - i) STAR Verification Process Survey

- 2) **What written resources/publications are helpful to use in preparing for a verification visit?**
 - Developmentally Appropriate Practice – Revised
NAEYC 1-800-424-2460
 - New Mexico’s Best Practices: Essential Elements of Quality
Contact the Office of Child Development at 505-827-7946
 - Current AIM HIGH Essential Elements – A document containing the criteria your program must meet for the STAR license for which you are applying
 - Environmental Rating Scales (Infant/Toddler, Early Childhood, School-Age Care, or Family Day Care) To order the scales, contact Teachers College Press at 1-212-678-3929

PLEASE NOTE THAT THESE RESOURCE MATERIALS MAY BE AVAILABLE FOR CHECK OUT FROM YOUR LOCAL TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

3) **How do I know I'm ready?**

- Your program should be meeting the following standards prior to applying for verification of a STAR status:
 - As stated in 8.16.2.11 of the Child Care Licensing Regulations:
 - If you are applying for verification of 2-STAR status, your program must meet licensing standards, and **all** criteria for 2- STAR.
 - If you are applying for verification of 3-STAR status, your program must meet licensing standards, **all** criteria for 2-STAR and **all** criteria for 3-STAR.
 - If you are applying for verification of 4-STAR status, your program must meet licensing standards, **all** criteria for 2-STAR, **all** criteria for 3-STAR and all criteria for 4-STAR.
 - Read and understand the current AIM HIGH Essential Elements for each level.
 - Read and review additional resource materials, especially the appropriate environmental rating scale/s.
 - Conduct a self-study to insure evidence of meeting criteria in the current AIM HIGH Essential Elements, and the appropriate environment rating scale. This is optional, but strongly suggested. Conducting a self-study will increase the likelihood that your program is truly meeting all the necessary criteria and is ready for verification.
 - Review required documents to ensure they are up-to-date and available for the verification visits.

4) **How do I apply?**

- Submit the completed application to the Child Care Services Bureau, Licensing Unit.
- If you are applying for verification of a 2-STAR, 3-STAR or 4-STAR license, the Licensing Unit will forward your application to your local Training and Technical Assistance Program who will conduct the verification visit/s for these levels.

5) **Is there a fee to apply?**

- If you are applying for a higher STAR level at the time of your annual license renewal, the standard child care licensing fee will apply. However, if you are applying to amend your license at any other time, an amendment fee of \$20.00 is required as stated in the Child Care Licensing Regulations, 8.16.2.11 A.(3).
- There is *no cost* for the TTAP verification visit/s.

6) **How long is the process once I send in my application?**

- It is almost impossible to know for sure. If everything is in place, expect a minimum of four months from the time a completed application is submitted to the Child Care Licensing.

- Keep in mind that the number of classrooms, and the STAR License level for which you are requesting verification will impact the length of time needed to complete the process.

7) What should I expect?

- You will receive a call from the Training and Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) within five (5) weeks after the application is received to schedule the first visit and pick up required documents. The TTAP will assign a staff member/s to complete the verification process for programs requesting verification of 2-STAR, 3-STAR, and 4-STAR status.
- Your program will be visited over a period of three months to ensure that quality is demonstrated over time.
- Visits could include making observations of each classroom for an extended period of time; administering the appropriate Environment Rating Scale for each classroom, interviewing staff, and reviewing required documentation.
- If it is determined that your program is not meeting all the required criteria, the program will have a one-time opportunity of 45 additional days to revisit and correct the missing criteria. If it is determined at the follow-up visit that all items were corrected, the verification process will continue. If it is determined that the program did not correct the missing criteria, the verification process will end. The program may re-apply after six months.
- Expect some non-announced visits.
- The TTAP staff member is expected to keep all program verification information confidential.

8) What is the TTAP staff member's role during the on-site visits?

- The TTAP staff member's role is only to verify that the program is meeting all criteria for the 2-, 3- or 4-STAR level. They do not receive funding to provide on-site technical assistance to non-AIM HIGH programs.

9) How is the decision made?

- Within a three-month period of time, the assigned TTAP staff member will conduct on-site visits to review all required documents, observe in each classroom, and interview staff of your facility to verify that all criteria has been met for the requested STAR level.
- If it is determined that your program is not meeting all the required criteria, the program will be have a one-time opportunity of 45 additional days to revisit and correct required criteria. If it is determined at the follow-up visit that all items were corrected, the verification process will continue. If it is determined that the program did not correct the missing criteria, the verification process ends. The program may re-apply in six months.
- If it is determined at the end of the verification process that all required criteria has been met, a STAR Level Change Form will be submitted to Child Care Licensing.

The Level Change Form provides notification to the Child Care Services Bureau of the STAR status change. The increase in the child-care subsidy reimbursement rate will go into effect on the 1st day of the following month.

- You will receive an official letter once a decision is made.

10) How long is the STAR rating valid?

- The STAR status is valid until the next annual licensing survey as long as the program continues to meet licensing requirements, and maintains **all** STAR level/s criteria.
- **NOTE: It is the program's responsibility to ensure that they have the most current version of the AIM HIGH Essential Elements. The most current version is available at www.NewMexicoKids.org**

11) How do I maintain my Program's STAR License?

- Continue to maintain basic licensing requirements and continue to adhere to **all** the current AIM HIGH Essential Elements for the STAR level your program has attained.
- Apply for renewal of STAR status through your annual Child Care Licensing application. An on-site visit by a Training and Technical Assistance staff member will be scheduled to verify continued adherence to required Essential Elements criteria.

12) Can I ask for reconsideration of the decision if my requested STAR status is denied?

- Yes, the Children, Youth and Families Department has a process in place if you decide to ask for reconsideration of the decision. The Application For Reconsideration is included in the verification packet.