

History of New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System

1st Generation

On March 31, 1997, the Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) implemented a new three-tiered quality rating system for licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes. The purpose of this system was to recognize, encourage, and reward child care providers for excellence in providing child care services. Programs were recognized with a Bronze, Silver, or Gold child care license designation. Although Silver and Gold license levels recognized the child care provider's efforts to achieve excellence in child care, the Bronze level did not imply substandard care. All providers were expected to comply with the regulations that required centers or family child care homes to ensure the health, safety, and emotional well-being of the children in their care. Silver and Gold quality criteria focused on Director and Staff Qualifications, and Staff/Child Ratios. Programs at a Silver license level were also required to be in the self-study phase for national accreditation or have a well-developed and written program curriculum document reflecting developmentally appropriate practices. Programs with a Gold license level were required to have obtained and maintained accreditation through one of the CYFD-recognized national accrediting organizations. Higher subsidy reimbursement rates, above the base reimbursement rate, were paid to Silver and Gold programs. Silver programs received an additional \$1.50 per child and Gold programs received an additional \$3.00 per child.



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2nd Generation

It was CYFD's intent to assist as many child care programs as possible to improve the quality of services being provided to low-income children and families. To act on this commitment, beginning July 1, 1999, CYFD implemented the AIM HIGH Program Development Initiative, a voluntary program for licensed child care programs and registered family child care providers. The AIM HIGH Essential Elements of Quality were developed with criteria in five ascending levels that are nationally recognized to enhance the quality of services to young children. Programs serving the highest percentage of children receiving state subsidy were given priority for participation. Programs that were designated as Silver (52 programs) and Gold (54 programs) were automatically included in the AIM HIGH Initiative. Silver programs were considered to be level four and Gold programs were considered to be level five. These programs had one year to demonstrate that they met the AIM HIGH Essential Elements of Quality for Levels 1, 2, and 3 in order to maintain their higher license level.

Federal and state funding was provided to Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) contractors statewide to provide support, training, and technical assistance to interested programs. The on-site support included a task as simple as writing a Family Handbook or as complex as conducting a self-study in preparation for national accreditation.

Level 1 focused on Program and Operation with the premise that the success of the program is dependent upon the leadership of the administration. Level 2 programs received support related to the physical environment and curriculum. The Environment Rating Scales were introduced at this level. Programs were expected to develop and use a developmentally appropriate curriculum, based on the holistic view of each child and meets their needs in all six developmental areas. Programs at Level 3 received assistance in meeting criteria related to professional development. Programs at this level were expected to obtain and maintain higher rated scores on the Environment Rating Scales. Level 4 programs focused on ratios and group size. The focus for Level 5, the highest level in the revised system, was related to the self-study and accreditation process. The purpose of voluntary accreditation was to improve the quality of care and education provided to young children.

Knowing that lower ratios and national accreditation costs real money, CYFD agreed to attach a higher value to the child care vouchers of children who attended programs at higher levels. When funds were available, the Department has periodically increased the subsidy rate for programs operating at the higher levels.

Twice, when at least 70% of child care providers had reached a level, AIM HIGH criteria were moved from the AIM HIGH Essential Elements of Quality into child care licensing regulations. So, in 2005, Level 1 AIM HIGH Essential Elements of Quality were moved into child care licensing regulations. And, the AIM HIGH Levels began being represented by STARS on all child care licenses. This initiative was called Look for the STARS. By 2010, 70% of the licensed programs had reached STAR Level 2, so the child care licensing regulations were again revised to include AIM HIGH/2 STAR quality criteria.

Federal stimulus funds were used to conduct a review of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The CYFD Early Childhood Services Bureau convened a broad group of representatives from the early childhood community to participate in a three-day meeting. The primary responsibility of the group was to review and make recommendations to improve the QRIS. This process was led by an impartial facilitator. The group identified the top priorities in each of the major categories of the QRIS which were presented as recommendations to CYFD. Simultaneously, the federal Office of Child Care set a priority goal to strengthen the quality of early childhood programs, recognizing that states are using quality rating and improvement systems as a framework for organizing, guiding, and gauging the progress of early care and education. By setting high quality benchmarks, the federal government will be able to track investments and measure progress, as well as guide technical assistance and research efforts.



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Recommendations from the early childhood community, quality benchmarks proposed by the federal government, and combined with the tremendous success of the NM PreK Program in licensed child care programs, led to the revision of the state's QRIS standards. In the first half of 2011, an internal workgroup developed the revised the standards. The revised Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS), titled **FOCUS** on young children's learning includes:

- Targeted program and practitioner supports;
- Professional development to increase educator knowledge and skills and program quality;
- Graduated program standards that are closely tied to the **New Mexico Early Learning Guidelines: Birth through Kindergarten** and school readiness expectations;
- Substantive content related to child assessment and curriculum development;
- Health promotion practices and developmental screenings; and
- Emphasis on a program **CQI** process.

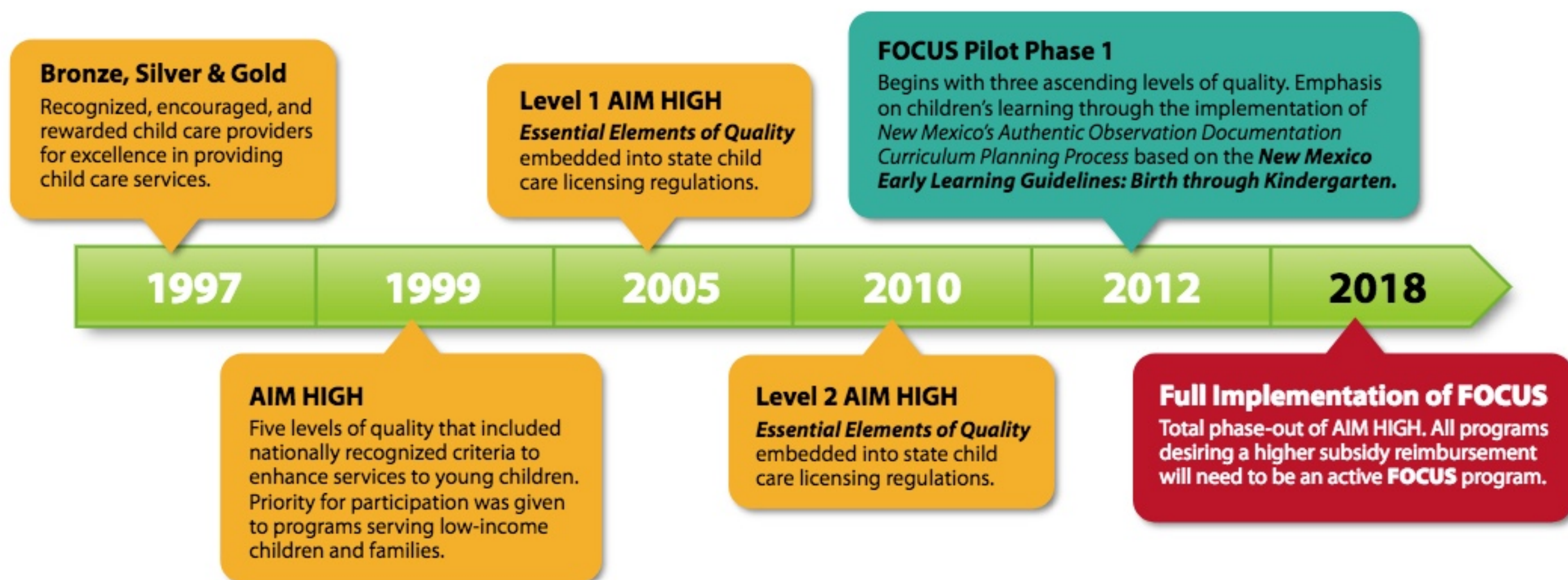
A multiyear process of phasing out the current AIM HIGH TQRIS to phasing in the new **FOCUS** TQRIS began in 2012. During this time, programs will maintain the standards for their current STAR license while they work to meet and maintain the new **FOCUS** criteria.



FOCUS
On Young Children's Learning

History Timeline

History of New Mexico's Tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System (TQRIS)



During this timeline the **Children, Youth and Families Department** has periodically increased the subsidy rate for programs operating at the higher levels of quality.