

How to read the stars.

Understanding YoungStar
child care quality ratings.



Wisconsin's Child Care Quality Rating & Improvement System

At YoungStar, we rate thousands of Wisconsin child care providers—from 1 Star (for programs that do not meet health and safety standards) to 5 Stars (for the highest quality of care). These stars help parents find the right place for their child to learn and grow. They also show caregivers their strengths and points out ways they can improve.

But before you can use the stars, you need to know how to read them.

Can anyone earn a YoungStar rating?

Any Wisconsin child care provider who serves children from birth through school age can join YoungStar, as long as they meet state regulations. (Programs that have had their license or certification revoked, denied or suspended are rated 1 Star.) In fact, providers who receive a Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy *must* participate.

Can a child care provider's rating change?

Absolutely. YoungStar rates participating child care providers every two years. Providers can even request annual evaluations to ensure recent improvements don't go unrecognized. That way everyone has the most up-to-date information about their community's child care options. And YoungStar offers caregivers lots of training opportunities, tools and financial support to help them improve.

We're here to help providers earn the best possible rating—so Wisconsin's kids can get the best possible start in life.



What do the stars measure?

YoungStar's rating system gives parents and providers a snapshot of a program's overall quality. YoungStar measures that quality by evaluating four important areas of care:

The Provider's Education & Training

Children benefit when their teachers and caregivers have a solid foundation in early childhood development. So YoungStar weighs the academic achievements of a program's teachers, administrators and caregivers.

The Learning Environment & Curriculum

Young minds need activity and engaging, meaningful experiences to grow. It's important for healthy brain development. So YoungStar reviews each program's learning materials, activities, lesson plans and more.

The Program's Professional & Business Practices

When a program runs smoothly, it's better able to focus on the needs of children and their families. YoungStar values programs that treat their employees fairly, involve parents fully and manage obligations responsibly.

The Children's Health & Well-Being

Children develop best in nurturing environments that provide well-rounded care—from physical activity and nutrition to playtime with others. So YoungStar rates how programs address the whole needs of a child.

How do the stars add up?

Every YoungStar-rated child care providers goes through a 40-point evaluation process that sets quality standards based on the program's size and structure. (A day camp is rated differently than a group provider, for example. Just as a group provider caring for 40 children must meet different standards than a family provider who cares for only three, for example.) Programs must meet specific quality benchmarks in addition to earning a minimum number of points to meet each star level.



5 Star Program

Program earned 33 to 40 points.



4 Star Program

Program earned 23 to 32 points.



3 Star Program

Program earned 11 to 22 points.



2 Star Program

Program earned 0 to 10 points.



1 Star Program

Program does not meet health and safety standards.

Who awards YoungStar ratings?

Child care programs can earn their stars one of two ways. Most ratings are awarded by a YoungStar staff. They visit providers, conduct on-site reviews and help programs identify areas for improvement.

Providers can also opt for an automatically-generated rating based on standards they've already met, like minimum health and safety state-mandated requirements or accreditations.

YoungStar also automatically grants stars to those providers who participate in programs with exceptionally high education or performance standards (like Wisconsin's federally-spearheaded Head Start programs).



See the difference? When stars are awarded by the Department of Children & Families, YoungStar staff's review of the program is reflected in the rating certificate (top) showing the breakdown of the program's total points. An automatically-generated rating certificate (bottom) only shows the program's stars.



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Using YoungStar is easy:

Call 1-888-713-KIDS (5437) to speak with a local child care resource and referral specialist.

Check out youngstar.wi.gov to compare providers, find resources or locate a YoungStar office.

Visit supportingfamilies.together.org to find helpful advice for parents and providers.



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