

Early Learning Programs Participating in BrightStars

DEFINITION

Early learning programs participating in BrightStars is the percentage of licensed early learning centers and family child care homes in Rhode Island that are participating in BrightStars, Rhode Island's Quality Rating and Improvement System for child care and early learning programs.

SIGNIFICANCE

Research on early care and education reveals a strong relationship between program quality and children's developing skills and well-being. Children who attend high-quality programs score higher on tests of language and cognitive skills and demonstrate stronger social and emotional development than children who attend low-quality programs.^{1,2,3} Programs across the U.S. and in Rhode Island vary markedly in quality and can range from rich learning experiences to mediocre, custodial care.^{4,5,6}

High-quality early care and education is characterized by smaller numbers of children in a classroom or group, fewer children per adult, skilled staff, a language-rich environment with stimulating curricula, warm, nurturing and dependable relationships between staff and children, and a safe environment.⁷ The development and retention of a highly qualified and appropriately compensated workforce

for early childhood programs is critical to improve program quality.⁸

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) are becoming an increasingly common strategy used by states to measure, improve, and incentivize program quality. QRIS incorporate five components: (1) quality standards with incremental steps for programs, (2) a process to assess program quality, (3) strategies to support quality improvement, (4) financial incentives for programs, and (5) a system to share program quality information with parents and the public. Studies have shown that, over time, state QRIS can improve the quality of care available.^{9,10} Many states provide financial incentives to encourage and support achievement of quality standards. Incentives include offering tiered child care subsidy payments with higher rates for higher quality care and providing program improvement grants.¹¹

Launched in 2009, BrightStars conducts program quality assessments using research based standards for licensed centers (including child care, preschool and Head Start), family child care homes, and public schools. Programs participating in BrightStars receive a star rating and develop a quality improvement plan across six quality domains.¹² As of October 2014, all programs serving children participating in the Child Care Assistance Program are required to have a BrightStars rating.¹³

BrightStars Quality Ratings for Licensed Early Learning Programs and Public Schools Serving Preschoolers, Rhode Island, January 2016

	CENTERS & PRESCHOOLS	PUBLIC SCHOOLS	FAMILY CHILD CARE
Unrated	18% (57)	40% (22)	13% (67)
1 Star	31% (99)	15% (8)	59% (293)
2 Stars	20% (64)	27% (15)	24% (121)
3 Stars	14% (43)	5% (3)	1% (7)
4 Stars	12% (39)	13% (7)	2% (8)
5 Stars	5% (15)	0% (0)	<1% (1)
TOTAL	317	55	497

Source: Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children and the RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS), January 2016.

◆ As of January 2016, there were 690 licensed early care and education programs with an active BrightStars quality rating, up from 669 in January 2015 and more than three times as many as were rated in January 2014. Fifty-four (17%) licensed early learning centers had met the benchmarks for a high-quality rating of four or five stars (one more center than in January 2015). Nine (2%) family child care homes had received a high-quality rating of four or five stars (one more home than in 2015).¹⁴

◆ As of January 2016, there were 33 public schools with a BrightStars quality rating (60% of the 55 public schools serving preschoolers in the state). Seven (13%) had a high-quality rating (two more schools than in 2015).¹⁵

◆ Of the 110 early learning programs that applied for a BrightStars rating increase or renewal in 2015, 59% received a star level increase of one or more levels, 35% maintained their star level, and 6% dropped one or more star levels.¹⁶

◆ The Rhode Island Department of Education awards Comprehensive Early Childhood Education approval to preschool classrooms that meet state-defined quality benchmarks. As of January 2016, there were 17 preschool classrooms in 12 licensed centers (seven fewer classrooms in 4 fewer centers than in 2015) and one public school classroom that met approval standards (one more than in 2015).¹⁷

◆ Rhode Island's \$50 million federal Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant, which will end in December 2016, is focused on increasing participation in BrightStars and providing intensive support to programs to meet high-quality benchmarks.¹⁸

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Table 35.

Licensed Early Learning Programs Participating in the BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System, Rhode Island, January 2016

CITY/TOWN	CHILD CARE CENTERS AND PRESCHOOLS					FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES				
	LICENSED PROGRAMS	PROGRAMS WITH A BRIGHTSTARS QUALITY RATING	PROGRAMS WITH A HIGH-QUALITY RATING	% IN BRIGHTSTARS	% WITH HIGH-QUALITY RATING	LICENSED PROGRAMS	PROGRAMS WITH A BRIGHTSTARS QUALITY RATING	PROGRAMS WITH A HIGH-QUALITY RATING	% IN BRIGHTSTARS	% WITH HIGH-QUALITY RATING
Barrington	8	4	1	50%	13%	5	2	0	40%	0%
Bristol	5	4	0	80%	0%	4	1	0	25%	0%
Burrillville	3	3	1	100%	33%	2	1	0	50%	0%
Central Falls	4	3	1	75%	25%	20	20	0	100%	0%
Charlestown	4	4	2	100%	50%	1	1	0	100%	0%
Coventry	7	7	1	100%	14%	2	2	0	100%	0%
Cranston	31	21	2	68%	6%	47	41	0	87%	0%
Cumberland	7	5	2	71%	29%	8	2	0	25%	0%
East Greenwich	12	11	2	92%	17%	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
East Providence	16	12	3	75%	19%	6	4	0	67%	0%
Exeter	2	2	0	100%	0%	1	1	1	100%	100%
Foster	1	1	0	100%	0%	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Glocester	3	3	0	100%	0%	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Hopkinton	2	2	0	100%	0%	3	3	1	100%	33%
Jamestown	1	1	0	100%	0%	1	0	0	0%	0%
Johnston	19	18	2	95%	11%	10	8	0	80%	0%
Lincoln	5	4	1	80%	20%	3	1	0	33%	0%
Little Compton	1	0	0	0%	0%	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Middletown	9	7	2	78%	22%	3	1	0	33%	0%
Narragansett	2	1	0	50%	0%	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
New Shoreham	1	1	1	100%	100%	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
Newport	4	4	1	100%	25%	1	0	0	0%	0%
North Kingstown	7	7	1	100%	14%	3	3	0	100%	0%
North Providence	10	7	1	70%	10%	9	5	0	56%	0%
North Smithfield	1	1	0	100%	0%	4	2	2	50%	50%
Pawtucket	19	17	2	89%	11%	37	34	0	92%	0%
Portsmouth	5	3	0	60%	0%	1	0	0	0%	0%
Providence	48	40	15	83%	31%	291	278	5	96%	2%
Richmond	0	NA	NA	NA	NA	4	0	0	0%	0%
Scituate	1	1	0	100%	0%	5	3	0	60%	0%
Smithfield	9	7	1	78%	11%	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
South Kingstown	12	8	3	67%	25%	5	4	0	80%	0%
Tiverton	3	2	0	67%	0%	1	1	0	100%	0%
Warren	5	3	0	60%	0%	1	1	0	100%	0%
Warwick	27	24	4	89%	15%	10	3	0	30%	0%
West Greenwich	2	2	0	100%	0%	0	NA	NA	NA	NA
West Warwick	5	5	0	100%	0%	2	1	0	50%	0%
Westerly	7	6	0	86%	0%	1	1	0	100%	0%
Woonsocket	9	9	5	100%	56%	6	6	0	100%	0%
Four Core Cities	80	69	23	86%	29%	354	338	5	95%	1%
Remainder of State	237	191	31	81%	13%	143	92	4	64%	3%
Rhode Island	317	260	54	82%	17%	497	430	9	87%	2%

Source of Data for Table/Methodology

Data on the number of licensed early learning programs and family child care homes are from the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families, January 2016. Data on BrightStars quality ratings are from the Rhode Island Association for the Education of Young Children, January 2016. Data matched through the RI Early Care and Education Data System (ECEDS).

High-quality rating means a BrightStars rating of four or five stars.

Core cities are Central Falls, Pawtucket, Providence, and Woonsocket.

References

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