

STARS Application Process

NOTE: Revisions to the STARS program are underway. To learn more about these changes and updates that impact your program's renewal timeline, please review these [STARS FAQs](#).



STARS participation is available to all providers who are regulated and have a full license or registration from the Child Development Division (CDD). This includes registered and licensed family child care homes, as well as licensed center-based programs, such as early childhood, preschool, afterschool, and non-recurring care programs.

Are we ready to apply?

You may apply for 2 or more STARS at any time. Even if you feel your program is not yet operating at its ideal level, do not hesitate to apply. STARS is designed to recognize providers' achievements in the arenas in which they are strongest, while they continue to improve in other arenas. Receiving even two stars is an accomplishment and indicates that you have gone above and beyond Vermont's basic regulatory standards.

How do I get an application form?

You can get access the [STARS Application online](#) or contact the STARS team at STARS@vermont.gov or at 800-649-2642, option 8. No application fee is required.

Is help available?

If you would like to help with the application process, please contact the STARS team at STARS@vermont.gov or 800-649-2642, option 8. Be sure to let them know the best ways to reach you.

How STARS levels are earned

There are four arenas in which points can be earned. The points from these arenas are then added together to determine your star level.

ARENAS

Staff Qualifications and Annual Professional Development	1 to 3 possible points
Families and Community	1 to 3 possible points
Program Practices	1 to 5 possible points
Administration.....	1 to 3 possible points

STAR LEVEL

1 Star Program.....	Regulated program in good standing*
2 Star Program.....	1 to 4 points total
3 Star Program.....	5 to 8 points total
4 Star Program.....	9 to 11 points total
5 Star Program.....	12 to 14 points total

* A program is in good standing when its license status is "licensed." The following license statuses are not in good standing: Denied or Withdrawn, Provisional, Intent to Suspend or Suspended, Intent to Revoke or Revoked.

Understanding the application process

The STARS program is paused for a revision period which extends to July 2023. During this pause, only programs seeking to increase their STARS level or Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) programs with STARS certificates that expire between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, are required to submit applications. Requesting programs may submit via the online application located on the STARS website: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/providers/care/STARS>.

All other program renewals will be due one year after their STARS expiration date. For example, if your program's STARS expiration date is October 1, 2022, your renewal application will be due on October 1, 2023.

The STARS process is continuous. As a STARS program, you actively assess your services to identify strengths and areas for improvement. You plan and implement improvements as an ongoing part of your work.

STARS Certificate

Once the STARS Revision period ends in July 2023, programs with two or more stars must reapply to STARS every three years. After a program's application is approved, they will receive a STARS certificate

that is valid for three years. Should a program's star level change during this three year period, a new certificate will be issued but the certificate expiration date will remain the same.

Programs are required to complete a STARS Annual Report to maintain their STARS status in the interim years before the STARS Certificate expires. During the STARS revision period, only UPK programs are required to submit their Annual Report.

Tips for submitting the application

- Clearly identify the documents supporting each arena.
- Please keep a copy of your application for your records.

How to complete your application

- Access the online application or contact the STARS team to request materials at STARS@vermont.gov or 800-649-2642, option 8. No application fee is required.
- Read through the online application and calculate how many STARS points your program is eligible for in each arena. You can earn up to 5 points in program practices and up to 3 points in all other arenas. Also, determine the number of points you plan to apply for and what documentation you will need to submit.
- Keep these instructions open in a separate window or print them so that you can use the calculation tables, definitions, and guidelines below with more ease.
- The online application allows you to attach electronic files for documentation including photos, videos, documents and spreadsheets (supported file types include PDF, DOC, DOCX, XLS, XLSX, CSV, TXT, RTF, HTML, ZIP, MP3, WMA, MPG, FLV, AVI, JPG, JPEG, PNG, and GIF).
- Import your program's information in the appropriate sections. The application form saves your work so that you can return to it later. You are not required to apply for points in all arenas.
- Electronically sign and submit your application.
- A CDD STARS coordinator reviews your application and supporting documents and awards a certificate for the points/STARS earned. Your STARS certificate is valid for three years, and annual report submissions are required each year of participation.
- During the STARS revision period (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023), only UPK programs are required to renew their STARS certificates and submit Annual Reports. Certificates for all other programs not seeking an increase in STARS level during this time will be extended one year from their expiration date. Annual Reports submissions for all non-UPK programs are not required during

the revision period. Contact the STARS coordinators about possible changes in star level at any point.

Application Instructions

Please leave these instructions open in separate window or print them to make it easier to use the calculation charts, definitions, and guidelines below as you fill out your application.

Professional Development Arena

Instructions for Staff Qualifications Worksheet

The Staff Qualifications Worksheet assigns a numerical value to educational level, experience in the field and hours of participation in relevant professional development.

If you are the sole proprietor with no additional employees:

1. Use Charts A, B and C below to determine your score in each category.
2. Add the scores in columns A, B and C to determine a total individual score.
3. Convert your total individual score using Chart D below. This is the number of points you should request for this arena.

For programs that employ additional staff (*e.g. teachers, teaching assistants, or classroom aides who work at the program 10 or more hours per week*):

Complete steps 1 and 2 above for both you and your staff.

3. Convert the scores using Chart D below.
4. Add all the converted staff scores together from Column D, and then divide by the number of staff. Use the staff's average converted score with Chart E on below to determine the point level to request for this arena.

Chart A: Educational Attainment

Score	Education
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Career Ladder Level I Certificate <i>OR</i> Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals course (or NL approved equivalent) <i>OR</i> On-the-Job Training Certificate (for afterschool staff) <i>OR</i> Afterschool Essentials Certificate
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Career Ladder Level II Certificate <i>OR</i> Current CDA credential <i>OR</i> 12 related college credits <i>OR</i> Vermont Afterschool Professional Credential
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Career Ladder Level IIIA Certificate <i>OR</i> Certificate of Completion of Registered Child Care Apprenticeship <i>OR</i> 21 related credits in at least two of the VT core knowledge areas <i>OR</i> CCV Child Care Certificate
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Career Ladder Level IIIB Certificate <i>OR</i> Early Childhood Family Mental Health Credential <i>OR</i> Program Director Credential Step 3 <i>OR</i> Associates degree in a related field, or associates degree with 21 related credits in at least 3 VT core knowledge areas
16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Level IVA Certificate <i>OR</i> Bachelor degree in related field <i>OR</i> Bachelor degree with 30 related college credits in at least three of the VT core knowledge areas
20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Level IVB Certificate <i>OR</i> Educator license with an endorsement in Early Childhood Education or Early Childhood Special Education or Elementary Education <i>OR</i>
25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Lights Level V or VI certificate <i>OR</i> Master's Degree or PhD in related field

Northern Lights Levels

Descriptions of the Early Childhood Career Ladder levels can be found on the Northern Lights at CCV website:

<http://northernlightsccv.org> under "Career Development"

College Degrees and Related Fields

To be eligible, the degree earned must reflect a major or concentration in one of the following fields:

- Early Childhood Education
- Child or Human Development
- Child and Family Studies (including home economics)
- Elementary Education
- Special Education

Related Credits

Related credits are college courses that must earn a grade of C- or higher and directly relate to one or more of the Early Childhood or Afterschool Core Knowledge Areas:

- Child and Youth Development
- Curriculum/Teaching and Learning
- Healthy and Safe Environments
- Partnering with Families and Communities
- Professionalism and Program Organization

Important note: All degrees and college coursework must be from an approved and accredited higher education institution. If you have any questions about eligible professional development, contact Northern Lights at CCV.

Chart B: Professional Development in the past year*

* The past year is defined as the year prior to the STARS Office's receipt of your STARS application. For example, if we receive your application in December 2021, we will consider professional development for the period December 2020–December 2021.

Score	Professional Development Hours for Registered Family Child Care Centers, Licensed Early Childhood Education Programs, Public Pre-K Programs
1	18–20 hours
2	21–23 hours
3	24–26 hours
4	27–30 hours
5	3 credit college course

Score	Professional Development Hours for Afterschool Programs
1	11–13 hours
2	14–16 hours
3	17–19 hours
4	20–23 hours
5	3 credit college course

Required criteria for professional development:

- Training approved by Northern Lights, including online trainings.
- Documented in an individual's BFIS Quality and Credential Account.

Typical sponsors of professional development include:

Community Child Care Support Agencies, the Agency of Education, Head Start and Let's Grow Kids.

These and other approved trainings are listed on the Northern Lights at CCV website:

<https://northernlightscv.org/training/training-calendar/>

Chart C: Experience working in Early Childhood Education or related field

Length of Experience (does not have to be continuous)	Score
12 to 23 months	1
2 to 5 years	2
5 years or more	3

Related Fields

- Child or Human Development
- Child and Family Studies (including home economics)
- Elementary Education
- Special Education

Chart D: Conversion Table

If the staff member's total individual score is:	Their converted score is:
0–4	0
5–11	1
12–20	2
21–33	3

Chart E: Program Points

If the staff's average converted score is:	The program's point level in the arena is:
0–0.3	Not Rated
.31–1.3	1
1.31–2.3	2
2.31–3.0	3

Families and Community Arena

Use the following examples to help you fill in the evidence charts for Professional Networking, Community Support and Advocacy activities, and Leadership Documentation.

Professional Networking Examples

Professional networking activities are defined as activities where program staff had the opportunity to engage face-to-face with other professionals in the field to share ideas, information, and knowledge.

- Provider or director network meetings
- Meetings with expert consultants, such as health consultants
- Families and Community related training
- Face-to-face mentoring (may count for up to two of the four activities)
- IEP Meetings, CIS Meetings
- Conference attendance
- Professional Development Training (as long as it is not being used to earn points on the Staff Qualifications Worksheet)

Community Support and Advocacy Activities Examples

These examples are suggestions and other activities may apply to your program. If you have a question about an event or evidence to document your participation, call or email the STARS office for clarification at 800-649-2642, option 8 or STARS@vermont.gov

Activity	Example	Evidence
Children in the program are involved in community service	Fundraise for charitable organization, donate to food shelf, participate in Green Up Day	Photo, written description, or article
Program participates in the CACFP		Copy of Day Care Home Application or online program agreement with AOE
Program staff receive formal mentoring	Apprenticeship, Vermont Birth to Five or VAEYC Quality Project mentoring	Copy of mentoring agreement or other verification from mentor agency
Children receive special services while attending the program	Service providers or special educators provide services to children while in attendance at the program	Meeting notes, description of services provided, sample dates and time of service
Participation in community activities on behalf of the program	Program participates in the community events like parades or Dabble Day.	Sign-up lists, planning meeting notes, photos, narrative description, contact person
Attend recognition or advocacy events	Week of the Young Child, Let's Grow Kids or Alliance events, attend a conference	Copy of announcement, narrative description, photo
Program engages with a public institution or organization in their community	A firefighter visits the program to provide fire safety information, the program participates in library story hour	Photo, copy of written communication with organization

Leadership Documentation Examples

These examples are suggestions and other activities may apply to your program. If you have a question about an event or evidence to document your participation, call or email the STARS office for 800-649-2642, option 8 or STARS@vermont.gov.

Activity	Example	Evidence
Attending meetings of statewide or national organization.	Attending VAEYC, VCCPA or other statewide meetings, NAEYC, NAFCC or other national conferences	Copy of conference registration confirmation or receipt of registration payment
Supporting the Profession	Presenting at a statewide or regional meeting, keynote or workshop training	Copy of agenda or workshop schedule
	Teaching a college level course	Copy of course syllabus or course description
	Participating in the Instructor Registry	Copy of Instructor certificate
	Providing formal mentoring, participating in the MATCH registry	Copy of mentor agreement or MATCH certificate
Participate in statewide committees reviewing state policies/practices/grants	STARS Oversight, Evaluation, Blue Ribbon Commission	Copy of meeting notes or agenda
Legislative Advocacy	Testifying before a committee, representing Let's Grow Kids at a community or legislative event	Description of activity, photo, article
Author a professional article		Copy of table of contents for publication, or first page of article
Organize or host a community event, collaboration or initiative	Starting points or directors network leader, host professional conference or community event	Copy of event announcement, meeting notes, description of activities, photo

Strengthening Families Focus Instructions

These instructions should be used to complete the Strengthening Families Focus for three points in the Families and Community Arena. *Your report to STARS will include a detailed description of the self-assessment process you used and a copy of the action plan.*

Locating the program self-assessment tool

Visit the Center for the Study of Social Policy website at:

<https://cssp.org/resource/strengthening-families-self-assessment-for-family-child-care-programs/>

Completing the Self-Assessment

1. Create a self-assessment team that represents a number of different perspectives at your program. You will include parents, direct service staff and administrative staff, depending on the type of program that is conducting the self-assessment. Home providers need only include yourself and parents as instructed on the self-assessment form.
2. Each member of the team should fill out the self-assessment form individually.
3. The team convenes to share and compare assessments. Each team member should have the chance to explain why they gave the rating they did. The team will make a final decision based on broad input.

Completing the Action Plan

1. The team will identify areas where the program scored highly.
2. Create a sustainability plan to make sure those areas stay strong. Specify key reasons for success, what needs to be done to ensure continued strength and who will be responsible for maintaining successful outcomes in the area.
3. Highlight the areas that a majority of the team rated as needing improvement.
4. Decide whether the practices needing improvement should be addressed immediately, over time, or not at all.
5. For the items that the team decides should be addressed immediately, teams should brainstorm plans to improve associated area outcomes, specifying the expected results, all resources, a timeline, who is responsible, check-in points and how and when longer term action steps will be addressed/implemented.

We encourage participants to spend time learning about Strengthening Families by accessing information from the website, which is a rich resource for providers. The STARS office also provides technical assistance with this process and can be reached at stars@mjcvt.org or (802) 398-2037.

Program Practices Arena

Please use the following charts to help you determine your eligible Program Practices points based on your program's ERS and/or CLASS assessment scores.

Age Group Assessed	CLASS Scores Received	Program Practices Points
Preschool	Mid-range scores (3, 4 or 5) in the Emotional Support, Classroom Organization and Instructional Support Domains	3
Preschool	High scores (6 or 7) in the Emotional Support and Classroom Organization Domains and mid-range scores (3, 4 or 5) in the Instructional Support Domain	4
Toddler	Mid-range scores (3, 4 or 5) in both domains	3
Toddler	High scores (6 or 7) in the Emotional and Behavioral Support Domain and mid-range scores (3, 4 or 5) in the Engaged Support for Learning Domain	4
Infants	Mid-range scores (3, 4 or 5) in the Responsive Caregiving Domain	3
Infants	Score between 6 and 7 in the Responsive Caregiving Domain	4

ERS Scoring Requirements for points in the Program Practices Arena

The chart below outlines the number of Program Practices points a program can earn based on the score they receive on their ERS assessment.

ERS Score Received	Program Practices Points
The program achieves a score below 4.00.	2
The program achieves a score between 4.00 - 4.99.	3
The program achieves a score of 5.00 or above.	4

CLASS Scoring Requirements for points in the Program Practices Arena

The chart below outlines how many Program Practices points a program will be eligible for, based on the score(s) they receive on their CLASS assessment. **Please note:** Programs that do not meet the scoring thresholds listed below will be eligible for 2 points in the Program Practices Arena

Programs with more than one observed age-group:

The Assessor will determine the appropriate CLASS tools for the ages represented in the program.

Program Practices points will be assigned based on the CLASS Score(s) achieved with each tool. The

Program Practices points will then be added together and averaged in order to determine the overall

Program Practices point eligibility for the program. Averages will be rounded to the nearest point total.

Please note: Programs that do not meet the scoring thresholds listed in the chart above will be eligible for 2 points in the Program Practices Arena

Need assistance or have questions?

Call the STARS Coordinators at 800-649-2642, option 8 or email STARS@vermont.gov

To learn more about STARS please visit:

<http://dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/providers/stars>

