

Quality First Revision FAQs

Thank you for your continued interest and participation in Quality First. While we do our best to keep you informed, we know it can be tough to remember everything, all at once. So we've compiled a quick guide to help answer your questions about the upcoming revisions.

Still have questions? Contact us.

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Program Revision

Where can I learn about what is changing in Quality First?

For an overview of the coming changes, visit our Quality First Revision brochure at QualityFirstAZ.com/programupdates.

When do the changes start?

The changes go into effect July 1, 2023.

How do I know which level of support I will be placed in?

All participants will be placed in a level of support based on their current star rating/program type as of April 1, 2023. Participants will receive an individualized letter to notify them of their program's level of support. Please refer to the chart below for level placement:

Level of Support	Who Qualifies
Pursuing Quality	Participants with a 1-star or 2-star rating
Achieving Quality	Participants with a 3-star rating
Continuing Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Participants with a 4-star or 5-star ratingAll Head Start ProgramsParticipants with Existing Internal Quality Supports (e.g., coaching, health and safety support, etc.) that have achieved a 3-star or higher rating.

How can I learn more about the levels of support?

To learn more about the levels of support, visit www.qualityfirstaz.com/programupdates.

Coaching

How will I use my coaching hours? Are hours required, optional or flexible?

It depends. At the Pursuing Quality and Achieving Quality levels, annual coaching hours are a regular, ongoing part of your quality improvement journey. At the Pursuing Quality level, monthly minimum coaching hours are required to be met. This supports continuous progress toward your goals. Flexibility is included at these levels, so you can schedule more hours when you need them and less when you don't. At the Continuing Quality level of support, coaching is available upon request.

Will 4-star or 5-star rated programs at the Continuing Quality level need to submit goals or quality improvement plans regularly?

All participants will have access to the quality improvement plan form. Participants at the Pursuing Quality and Achieving Quality levels will continue to work with their coaches to create quality improvement plans. Participants at the Continuing Quality level will have access to the quality improvement plan form but will not be required to submit or upload the form. Although the form is not required at this level, we encourage participants to use this form to support their continuous quality improvement efforts.

Do coaching hours include collaboration meetings?

Yes, coaching hours will include collaboration meetings that involve your coach and other technical assistance professionals.



Financial Incentives

How often will my program receive financial incentives?

It depends on your level of support. Participants in the Pursuing Quality and Achieving Quality levels of support receive financial incentives annually, for up to two assessment cycles, beginning July 1, 2023. Participants in the Continuing Quality level of support receive incentives following their star rating achievement. This incentive is paid out the fiscal year following their assessment. All participants will receive financial incentives in state fiscal year 2024 (July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024).

If my program moves down in levels, what will happen?

If you experience a change in star rating that causes you to move down a level, don't worry; you will continue to have a place in Quality First. You will move to the new level, and you will receive all the support at the new level, except financial incentives.

If my program is in the Continuing Quality level and we are in a school district that does not allow staff bonuses, what are the guidelines for spending the financial incentives?

Your program will receive an incentive payment that you will be able to use, in accordance with your program's policies, for staff recognition. You are not required to pay a staff bonus. You may choose to use the funds for professional development opportunities, a staff recognition event or special purchases, etc. Further policy guidance will be provided that includes a more comprehensive list of allowable expenditures.

Regarding the financial incentives available up to two assessment cycles (at the Pursuing Quality and Achieving Quality levels), does that take into consideration past years?

No. All participants will move into a level of support on July 1, 2023. This is "day one" of the new levels of support. The two assessment cycles refer to assessment cycles *after* July 1, 2023. Participants at the Pursuing Quality and Achieving Quality levels will have access to financial incentives at their current level for up to two assessment cycles. Once they move up in star rating to a new level, they will be able to access financial incentives at the new level.

My program has a 3-star rating, and we have our own internal quality supports. Can I opt into the Continuing Quality level of support?

Yes, you will be able to opt into this level. More information on the process for opting into this level will be coming soon.

Will I still receive financial incentives if I drop from a 5-star to a 4-star rating?

Yes. Your program will still receive financial incentives because you will still be in the Continuing Quality level. Instead of receiving a payment of \$1,000 per staff member (5-star incentive), you would receive a payment of \$500 per staff member (4-star incentive).

Assessment

How often do Quality First participating programs receive assessment and star rating?

Participants are assessed and receive a star rating at the beginning of participation and approximately every two years (every 24-26 months) after that. This updated assessment timeline was approved by the First Things First board in July 2021 in order to provide ongoing assessment for quality improvement efforts for Quality First participants statewide.

Child Care Health Consultation

What support will I receive from a Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC)?

Child Care Health Consultation will continue to be part of the Quality First system of support. CCHCs will continue to provide assistance in the areas of health and safety, nutrition, physical activity, disease prevention, sanitation and more. CCHCs will also provide services based on the three levels of support. More details will be coming soon.

Inclusion and Early Childhood Mental Health

Will inclusion coaching be funded in the same way as early childhood mental health consultation?

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs (Inclusion Coaching) is funded separately from Quality First. It is available based on regional funding.

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (Smart Support) is also funded separately from Quality First. It is available based on regional funding.

Additionally, through expansion funded by pandemic relief federal dollars, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation is available through state fiscal year 2024 to programs in any FTF region. Consultation will be prioritized for regulated programs that serve:

- Children in Department of Child Safety (DCS) care
- Children receiving Department of Economic Security (DES) child care subsidy

Is it true that a program with a 4-star or 5-star rating will not receive the same amount of support from Inclusion and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (Smart Support) as a program with a 1-star or 2-star rating?

Eligibility for Inclusion Coaching and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation is not based on star rating. If your program is eligible for these supports (based on funding and the population you serve), you will receive services based on the specific needs of your program.

How to Stay Informed

How can I stay connected with these updates and changes?

Stay connected by visiting our website and social media accounts. We will continue to share information, resources and webinars.

QualityFirstAZ.com

[Facebook.com/QualityFirstAZ](https://www.facebook.com/QualityFirstAZ)

[Instagram.com/QualityFirstAZ](https://www.instagram.com/QualityFirstAZ)

Subscribe to the Quality First Update monthly newsletter at: <http://bit.ly/QFUpdate>

Still have questions? Contact us or enroll today.

Email: QualityFirst@FirstThingsFirst.org

Phone: 602.771.5000

Enroll your program at: QualityFirstAZ.com/apply