Overview of Parent Aware

Parent Aware is Minnesota’s Quality Rating and Improvement System, providing quality ratings to child care and early education programs based on a One- to Four-Star scale. These ratings, shared on ParentAware.org, provide information for families, encouraging them to select higher rated programs when searching for a child care and early education program for their child. Parent Aware also provides a common set of best practices for child care and early education, and offers supports to help programs to work toward best practices. This allows a program to evaluate its quality, and make targeted improvements to better support child development and learning.

Programs eligible to be rated include public school prekindergarten sites meeting School Readiness Standards, Head Start/Early Head Start sites, licensed child care centers, and family child care programs.

Growth of Parent Aware Rated programs

Some types of child care and early education programs have been participating in Parent Aware statewide since 2012, including public school prekindergarten sites meeting School Readiness Standards, Head Start/Early Head Start sites and accredited child care programs. The majority of these programs hold a Parent Aware Rating.

For non-accredited child care programs, Parent Aware was available in eight counties in 2012. In subsequent years, counties were incrementally added, with all counties eligible to participate in January 2015. Both the staggered start and voluntary nature of Parent Aware has impacted the growth pattern for non-accredited programs.

Since 2012, the number of programs with Parent Aware Ratings has increased from 458 center-based and 71 family child care programs to 1,646 center-based and 1,181 family child care programs as of December 2018. As of December 2018, 27% of eligible programs in Minnesota held a Parent Aware Rating.
### Table 1: Growth of Rated programs over time: Number of Parent Aware Rated programs at the end of each calendar year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public school prekindergarten</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>680</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>729</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n≈746 sites/324 districts)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head Start/Early Head Start</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=291 sites/33 grantees)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited child care centers</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>330</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=469)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accredited family child care</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=22)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-accredited child care centers</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=1,110)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-accredited family child care</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>1040</td>
<td>1049</td>
<td>1164</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=7,905)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N≈10,543)</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>1320</td>
<td>1855</td>
<td>2396</td>
<td>2635</td>
<td>2705</td>
<td>2834</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. Estimate of public school prekindergarten sites is from the Minnesota Department of Education, February 2019.
2. The 739 public school prekindergarten sites meeting School Readiness Standards represent 324 school districts (including charter schools). Of the 739 rated sites, 15 are licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services as child care centers.
3. The number of Head Start/Early Head Start sites is from the Minnesota Department of Education, February 2019.
4. The 288 Head Start/Early Head Start sites represent 31 Head Start grantees. Of the 288 rated sites, 184 are licensed by the Minnesota Department of Human Services as child care centers, 19 are licensed by the department as family child care providers, and nine are tribally licensed.
5. The number of accredited child care programs is from NACCRRAware, data system from Child Care Aware of America, Sept. 18, 2018, serving children birth-5. (School age programs eliminated.) Accredited child care count of Parent Aware Rated programs as of Jan. 7, 2019.
6. The number of non-accredited child care programs is from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Licensing Lookup on Jan. 14, 2019, minus the number of accredited programs, licensed Head Start/Early Head Start, licensed public school prekindergarten, and adding in known tribally licensed programs by type (family/center).
7. Non-duplicative count of programs.
Future growth projections

Based on current participation patterns, the Minnesota Department of Human Services (department) expects that the majority of currently rated child care programs will continue to hold a Parent Aware Rating, with steady, but slower growth. While new programs continue to join, attrition and the state closure rate of licensed family child care programs continues to impact overall growth. The Targeted County Initiative is having some positive impact on growth for centers, while increased funding for One-, Two- and Three-Star Rated programs has shown positive impact on growth for family child care providers and smaller centers. As part of continuous quality improvement, department staff is monitoring ongoing initiatives and using feedback from both participating and non-participating programs, and other stakeholders, to determine how best to ensure increased growth of quality child care and early education throughout Minnesota.

Support to programs

Changes occurred in July 2017 for non-accredited child care programs rated through the Full-Rating Pathway, which included:

- **Opportunities for increased quality coaching.**
  Building Quality is a coaching model through which each program receives up to 30 hours of support over the course of six months to help increase quality, and prepare to be rated or re-rated. Prior to July 2017, this opportunity was only available to programs once. Programs are now able to participate in Building Quality multiple times, including the option of participating in two consecutive six-month coaching periods, or cohorts, prior to being rated.

- **Increase in funding of Parent Aware grants.**
  Parent Aware grants are offered once eligibility requirements are met, and must be used by child care programs for activities, materials or equipment to improve quality. This includes:
  - Building Quality: Programs that participate in a minimum of 20 hours of coaching services during a Building Quality cohort are eligible to receive a grant of $1000, an increase of $500 from previous years.
  - Full-Rating grants: Programs earning a One-, Two-, or Three-Star Rating are eligible to receive a grant of $2,500, an increase of $1,500 from previous years.

The Targeted County Initiative started in 2018 in 61 counties which:

- Increased funding amounts of Parent Aware grants, which resulted in greater participation of family child care providers.
- Resulted in efforts to increase the supply of Parent Aware Rated child care centers serving low income children; 61 counties were selected that had a higher birth to 5 child poverty level than the state average, and lower Parent Aware participation. A $3,500 grant was offered to child care centers once earning a One-, Two-, or Three-Star Rating.

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8 A Parent Aware Rating is for two years. At the end of this period, programs need to reapply for a new rating, submitting required information by Pathway type to ensure ongoing quality and renew their rating.
9 In 2018, 298 new programs received their first Parent Aware Rating.
Impact of licensed child care closures

In 2018, 1,204 licensed child care programs closed in Minnesota, 9% of these programs held a Parent Aware Rating. Program types included:

- 1,036 family child care providers closed, with 76 holding a Parent Aware Rating (7%)
- 92 child care centers closed, with 27 holding a Parent Aware Rating (29%).

Rated programs

Parent Aware offers four Pathways to earn a Rating: Automatic, Accelerated, Expedited and Full-Rating. Programs using the Automatic or Accelerated Pathways receive a Four-Star Rating. Expedited Pathway programs receive either a Three- or Four-Star Rating. Programs using the Full-Rating Pathway are eligible to earn a One-Star (lowest) to Four-Star (highest) Rating; more than half (51%) of all these programs are rated via the Full-Rating Pathway. Overall, 61% of all Parent Aware Rated programs hold a Four-Star Rating, a slight decline from the previous year.

Chart 1: Program Type by Star Rating Level

Pathways of Rated programs

Prior to 2017, programs could be rated either in the Accelerated Pathway\textsuperscript{10} for public school prekindergarten sites meeting School Readiness Standards, Head Start/Early Head Start sites, and licensed accredited child care programs; or the Full-Rating Pathway for non-accredited licensed child care programs.

Two new pathways were added in 2017: Automatic Pathway, which is only available for Head Start/Early Head Start programs meeting federal Head Start requirements and their partners, and for voluntary prekindergarten programs; and the Expedited Pathway, for newly opened centers that have an owner who is legally responsible for multiple licensed child care centers, and employs experienced directors of Highly-Rated programs as the

\textsuperscript{10} This pathway previously was often referenced as APR.
director of a newly opened center. The affiliated programs must hold a Three- or Four-Star Rating; this Rating level transfers to a newly opened program for six months. Within six months, programs on the Expedited Pathway must meet certain requirements, or the Rating expires. Due to the unique eligibility requirements for this Pathway, eight programs have earned a Rating through the Expedited Pathway to date.

**Full-Rating Pathway**

Of all programs participating in the Full-Rating Pathway, the most common rating is currently a Three-Star or Two-Star (28%), with 23% of programs earning a Four-Star Rating, and 21% earning a One-Star Rating.

Over the past three years, child care centers continued to increase the percentage of programs achieving a Four-Star Rating. Family child care providers have shifted patterns, with fewer programs choosing and earning a Four-Star Rating, and more earning a Three-Star.

**Chart 2: Rating patterns of non-accredited programs by program type over time**

![Chart showing rating patterns](image)

**Increasing Star levels: One-, Two- or Three-Star Rated programs**

Of programs that held a previous Rating,\textsuperscript{11} at One-, Two-, or Three-Star Level:

- 43% increased their Star Level
- 47% maintained their Star Level
- 10% decreased their Star Level

This pattern changes greatly depending on a program’s current Star Level. One-Star Rated programs have the highest probability of moving up Star Levels, with 67% moving up from their last Parent Aware Rating. Two-Star Rated programs move up with less frequency, at 37%; Three-Star Rated programs are least likely to increase their Parent Aware Rating, with only 29% electing to become Four-Star.

\textsuperscript{11} Data set includes any programs with two or more Ratings: One-, Two- and Three-Star N value = 670; Four-Star N Value = 278.
Chart 3: Previously Rated One-, Two- or Three-Star patterns of growth over time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previously Rated Star Level</th>
<th>Increased Star Level</th>
<th>Maintained Previous Rating Level</th>
<th>Decreased Star Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Previously Rated One-Star (n = 153)</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previously Rated Two-Star (n = 284)</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previously Rated Three-Star (n = 217)</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Full-Rating Pathway: Maintaining Star Levels for Four-Star Rated programs

Of programs that held a previous Rating\(^2\) of Four-Star Level, 59% maintained their Rating, a decrease from the previous year, in which 77% maintained their Four-Star Rating. This varies by program type, with just under half of family child care providers maintaining their Rating, whereas almost all child care centers maintained their Four-Star Rating. As part of the Rating process, each program must set a Star Rating goal; in 2018, the great majority (95%) of programs achieved or exceeded their requested Parent Aware Rating Level.

Chart 4: Non-accredited child care programs by type that maintained their previous Four-Star Rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Type</th>
<th>Decreased Rating</th>
<th>Maintained Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family child care</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center child care</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Children in care

To reach their full potential, all young children should have access to quality early learning opportunities. Parent Aware has increased the quality of programs, and on ParentAware.org, families are able to search for Rated programs, helping to increase access. Department staff estimates there are 307,274\(^{12}\) children birth to 5 years old regularly cared for in some form of non-parental care. As of December 2018, an estimated 33% of all young children in Minnesota were attending a Rated program, with 29% of young children attending a Highly-Rated program (with either a Three- or Four-Star Rating). This is likely an underestimate of children served since the number served is unknown for some types of Rated programs.

Table 2: Children in Parent Aware Rated programs (all Rating Levels), and high quality programs (Three- or Four-Star Rating)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Quality Programs (all Rating levels)</th>
<th>High Quality Programs (Three- or Four-Star Rating)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young children attending Rated programs(^{13})</td>
<td>99,493 33%(^{14})</td>
<td>86,613 28%(^{14})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young children attending a Rated licensed child care program</td>
<td>53,994 18%(^{15})</td>
<td>44,536 14.5%(^{15})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young children attending a Rated program receiving CCAP funds(^{16})</td>
<td>10,360 54%(^{16})</td>
<td>9,050 43%(^{16})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 5: The number of children served in Parent Aware programs over time


\(^{13}\) All program types include tribally or department licensed child care programs, Head Start/Early Head Start and public school prekindergarten.

\(^{14}\) Data compiled from: Minnesota Department of Education as of November 2018 for all Head Start/Early Head Start and public school prekindergarten, and licensed program data as of Jan. 14, 2019, as reported in Develop.

\(^{15}\) Data on the number of children served in each age setting/classroom of licensed programs, excludes any licensed Head Start/Early Head Start or public school prekindergarten sites as of Jan. 14, 2019, as reported in Develop.

\(^{16}\) Data is from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Child Care Assistance Program, Dec. 31, 2018. N value is 17,540.