



FACT SHEET: Wake County SmartStart's Quality Enhancement and Maintenance Initiative

What is Wake County SmartStart?

Founded in 1996, Wake County SmartStart is a public-private, non-profit organization that partners with organizations in Wake County to provide comprehensive early childhood services for preschool children ages birth to 5 and their families. Partners receive funding from Wake County SmartStart and provide direct services for children and their families.

What is the Quality Enhancement and Maintenance Initiative?

The Quality Enhancement and Maintenance Initiative (QEI and QMI) is a department within Wake County SmartStart, Inc. Through QEI, Quality Enhancement Specialists (QES) work with one to three star child care centers and family child care homes (hereafter called facilities) to improve both the quality and level of care for children, and the level of education for staff in those facilities. Through QMI, Quality Enhancement Specialists work with four and five star facilities to maintain their higher level of care and licensure. Facilities must apply to participate in the program and participating facilities receive a variety of services including consultation, training, and technical assistance at no cost to the facility.

Once facilities have been accepted into either the QEI or QMI activity, the facility is assigned a QES who will work with the facility to design an improvement plan based on the ratings from the Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS-R), the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-R) or the Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCERS). The QES then provides or coordinates the training, resources, and guidance for facility employees as required by the improvement plan. The QES is available to work with the facility up to the point where the facility has met its goals and receives its star rating review. Once the facility receives its star rating review, the QES will begin work with another facility.

What is a Quality Enhancement Specialist (QES)?

A QES is a Wake County SmartStart employee who provides consultation to child care facilities. Every QES has prior experience in the child care industry.

How can my facility participate in the Quality Enhancement and Maintenance Initiative?

Facilities interested in receiving support through QEI or QMI must fill out an application. The application must be completed by the facility director or owner. Wake County SmartStart sends out applications in June and facilities that apply by the end of June are given priority.

Applications received after the deadline are considered on a rolling basis throughout the year. The application must be completed in its entirety, or it cannot be considered, and the applicant must include the facility's current license and most recent child subsidy reimbursement sheets. Each June, the application and supporting information are available via the Wake County SmartStart Web site.

Once a facility is chosen to participate, the facility director or owner must attend a mandatory orientation session in July at the Wake County SmartStart office.

Once a facility applies, how does Wake County SmartStart decide which facilities will participate in the Quality Enhancement and Maintenance Initiative?

Applications that are received are reviewed and scored using a rating system that considers the facility's star licensure, percentage of enrolled children receiving subsidy for their care, number of enrolled children with identified special needs, and projected facility re-licensure dates. All facilities must be willing to serve children who receive subsidy for their care, have at least a 75% compliance history over the past 18 months, and be in good standing with the Office of the State Auditor and the Division of Child Development.

Does the Quality Enhancement or Maintenance Initiative provide consulting or funding if I want to start a child care facility?

Quality Enhancement or Maintenance Initiative works with established child care facilities only. The [Child Care Services Association](#) and the [North Carolina Division of Child Development](#) provide information about starting a child care facility. The [Center for Community Self-Help](#) provides [start-up funding](#) for child care facilities, and has [resource information available](#) on how to run your child care center.

How can I get more information about the Quality Enhancement or Maintenance Initiative?

Contact Sharon Clauss, (919) 851-9550 or sclauss@wakesmartstart.org, if you have additional questions or would like to apply to the program.