

InfoLine

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The **Center for Early Learning Professionals' InfoLine** helps early learning programs and professionals improve their quality by answering questions and providing resources related to best practice in the field of early childhood.

This document lists some of the most frequently asked questions—as well as the answers—that the InfoLine has received from Rhode Island's early learning community. The questions are organized by common categories. To submit your own question, call 401-734-1292 or email info@center-elp.org.

Professional Development

1. Can I count my college courses toward the 20 hours of required annual professional development?

Credit-bearing courses at an approved or accredited institution of higher education that align with any of the domains in *Rhode Island Workforce Knowledge and Competencies* relevant to an employee's role will meet the DCYF 20-hour professional development (PD) requirement. General studies courses do not meet the PD requirement. All individuals needing annual PD hours must keep records of their hours by saving certificates of attendance or transcripts for course work.

2. Does the DCYF requirement of 20 hours of annual PD run on a calendar year, licensing year, or school year?

According to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), programs are given flexibility in deciding how they track PD hours within their program. For example, if an early learning program indicates they track PD hours by calendar year, DCYF will look at the last calendar year when monitoring for required PD. If an early learning program indicates they track PD by school year, the department will ask to see records for the last school year. Programs must specify their means of tracking.

3. Who is responsible for tracking the PD hours that have been completed by staff?

The program administrator and the education coordinator are responsible for developing an Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) with each staff member and for tracking each staff member's PD hours. When DCYF licensing workers conduct a site visit, they will check each staff member's personnel file to determine compliance.

4. Are substitute teachers required to have 20 hours of PD if they only work irregularly and are not permanently on the schedule?

Substitutes are not required to obtain 20 hours of PD each year.

Immunization Regulations

1. What are Rhode Island’s new immunization requirements for child care workers?

The Rhode Island child care worker immunization regulations require that all child care workers (with the exception of child care workers who receive a medical exemption) provide evidence of immunity against:

- Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis: Evidence of immunity is one (1) dose of Tdap vaccine.
- Measles, Mumps and Rubella: Evidence of immunity is two (2) doses of MMR vaccine.
- Chickenpox: Evidence of immunity is two (2) doses of Varicella vaccine.
- Influenza: Annual influenza vaccination, administered between July 1 and December 31 of each year, is required for all child care workers.

The immunization requirements can also be met in the following ways:

- Students and child care workers do not need to get the immunizations listed above if they have already received them. This can be demonstrated with an immunization record, a medical passport, or any other official record that shows the month, day, and year of the vaccinations.
- Students and child care workers do not need to get the immunizations listed above if they cannot receive them for medical reasons. A health-care provider can provide paperwork stating that a person cannot be vaccinated against a particular disease for medical reasons.
- Child care workers do not need to get varicella (chickenpox) vaccine if they had varicella (chickenpox or shingles) in the past. This can be demonstrated with a signed statement from a licensed health-care provider acting within his/her scope of practice (e.g., physician, physician assistant, nurse practitioner).
- If a child care worker is already immune to a disease, vaccination against that disease is not required. Immunity must be demonstrated with laboratory evidence (also called a “titer”).
- Child care workers born before 1957 are not required to get the MMR vaccine.
- Child care workers born before 1980 are not required to get the varicella (chickenpox) vaccine

For more information, view the Department of Health’s FAQ on Rhode Island’s Child Care Worker Immunization Regulations at exceed.ri.gov/Docs/ChildCareVaccinations_UpdatedMay2015.pdf.

2. Does the completion of the Department of Health *Religious Immunization Exemption Certificate* apply to staff members, as it does to children/students?

The *Religious Immunization Exemption Certificate* is only available for children/students. Under the rules and regulations pertaining to immunization, religious exemption is not available to child care workers.

3. Do the new immunization regulations require a Tuberculosis (TB) skin test or evidence of being TB-free (as shown by a physician's certification) within the six-month period preceding the hire/start date for child care workers?

The immunization regulations do not require a TB skin test or evidence of being TB-free within the six-month period preceding the hire/start date for a child care worker. However, according to the Rhode Island Department of Health, the 2015 immunization changes are the minimum standard. The Department of Health encourages school departments, agencies, and programs working with at-risk populations to include the Tuberculosis Skin Test as part of the hiring process.

DCYF Child Care Regulations

1. What procedures or recommendations does my program need to follow when parents are not able to pick up their sick child right away?

According to DCYF's Child Care Program Regulations for Licensure, "A child who gives any evidence of suspicious symptoms is removed from the group and attended to by staff until the parent, or an adult authorized by the parent, can come for the child." This means you need to remove the sick child to a space away from the other children, where he or she can be attended by an adult in your program.

For additional information on how to care for a sick child in your program, DCYF suggests the following resources:

- *Healthy Young Children: A Manual for Programs* (www.naeyc.org/store/Healthy-Young-Children-5th-Ed) — This NAEYC publication, by Susan S. Aronson, MD, provides best-practice guidance for providers. The guidance includes: "Exclusion of ill children forces parents to make alternative arrangements on short notice. When a child's illness meets the criteria for exclusion, the family will then need to use a preplanned, alternative care arrangement. Each child's family should identify at least two emergency contact people who are usually available to take the child home if the parent cannot be reached or is not available. The program's plan should address care provided during the time the child must wait until pickup occurs (p.14)." NAEYC suggests that the child should be kept comfortable in a quiet space—separate from the rest of the children—where the child can be supervised and receive care from someone who is competent and familiar with the child.

- *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, Third Edition* (cfoc.nrckids.org/)

2. Are there any regulations on safe temperatures for outdoor play? I have not been able to find state or national regulations on this for young children.

No regulations exist regarding this issue. Children are very durable and, when dressed appropriately, can go outdoors in all types of weather. Child care center administrators and education coordinators must use their professional judgment with regard to the weather and outdoor play.

For guidelines, we recommend you use *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standard, Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, Third Edition*, developed collaboratively by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. Page 94 includes *Standard 3.1.3.2: Playing Outdoors*. This document can be found at cfoc.nrckids.org/.

BrightStars Standards

1. Is there a BrightStars standard that prohibits using food for art projects and in sensory tables?

While BrightStars does not prohibit using food like rice or cornmeal as a sensory material in a preschool classroom, edible materials should not be considered art materials. BrightStars aligns with the ECERS-R in this matter, and *All About the ECERS-R* explains (p. 201):

“Foods are not counted as art materials for the following reasons:

First, children usually eat the foods used in art projects (even hard macaroni). This food is not eaten under the necessary sanitary conditions. Second, using foods for art is confusing to children, who are trying to learn the proper uses of food and art materials (one is to eat, the other is not; one is for messy play, the other is not.) Finally, food is in short supply in many children’s families, and should not be wasted, but eaten.”

Keep in mind that health and safety concerns can arise around using edible items for sensory materials, especially if children are observed mishandling them (e.g., placing beans in their mouth).

For infant and toddler classrooms, BrightStars aligns with the ITERS-R recommendation that food products not be used as art materials or in sensory tables. With this age group, using food items for such purposes would definitely be considered unsafe and could negatively impact health and/or safety scores.

2. If a center has a variance with DCYF, can it apply for a higher star rating?

A program with a variance may not increase beyond a 1 Star Rating; however, programs are encouraged to work on individual BrightStars standards through self-assessment and their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), while the variance issues are sorted out. Once a program’s variance is lifted, the program will then be well positioned to move up the rating scale.

3. Can a program apply for a BrightStars star increase by standard?

Yes, programs can apply for a star increase by standard. To do this, programs need to provide BrightStars with the following:

- BrightStars Child Care Center and Preschool Application
- Program Overview
- Program Classroom Summary Sheet
- The pages of the application that apply to the standard the program wishes to increase
- The signature page

To obtain a *Request to Amend Star Rating Instructions and Forms for Centers and Preschools*, please contact BrightStars at (401) 739-6100 and ask to have a copy of this form sent to you.

Rhode Island Department of Education

1. Is a curriculum outline the same as a curriculum framework?

A curriculum outline and a curriculum framework are not the same. In fact, a curriculum outline precedes a curriculum framework and provides evidence that a program is making progress towards developing a comprehensive curriculum framework.

BrightStars requires a curriculum outline for programs seeking Star Levels 3 and 4. Most program administrators and education coordinators learn about the curriculum outline and framework during their participation in a RIELS and RIELDS training. In fact, drafting a curriculum outline is a required assignment of the administrators’ training, “Implementing a Standards-Based Program”, and the previous RIELS Level III training.

Programs use their curriculum outline to create the content of their curriculum framework. The curriculum framework is required of programs seeking a BrightStars Level 5 Star Rating.

To learn more about curriculum outlines and curriculum frameworks, consider the following resources:

- The Center for Early Learning Professionals offers a Tip Sheet on *Developing a Program-Level Curriculum Framework*. The Tip Sheet can be accessed on the Center website at center-elp.org. Click on the **Tip Sheet/Forms** Tab at the top of the home page to access the Exceed Tip Sheets. You can also access the Tip Sheet directly at center-elp.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Exceed-Tip-Sheet_Curriculum-Framework.pdf
- The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has put together a *Next Steps* training for administrators and education coordinators who have taken the administrators' training, "Implementing a Standards-Based Program," or the RIELS Level III training and could use a refresher and updated information on the curriculum outline and framework. To register for a *Next Steps* session, please contact Elaine Remillard at Elaine.Remillard@ride.ri.gov or 222-8993. You may also register online by visiting www.eride.ri.gov/workshopReg/main.aspx.

2. If our program wants to apply to be a Pre-K program approved by RIDE under the Comprehensive Early Childhood Education (CECE) standards, do we need to already have a particular BrightStars rating?

According to RIDE, a Pre-K program does not need to have a particular star rating to apply for CECE approval. However, it is highly recommended that programs first achieve a BrightStars rating and then work on CECE approval. Per CECE regulations, programs must submit an application to BrightStars within one year of submitting an application for CECE approval.

3. I am interested in taking the RIELDS training. When are these classes offered?

All current RIELDS training schedules can be found on RIDE's eRIDE website, which may be accessed at www.eride.ri.gov/workshopReg/main.aspx .

RIDE regularly updates this schedule, so if you see a course you are interested in taking and it is full or you require alternate dates, we encourage you to check the site regularly. Additionally, if you have specific questions or need assistance with registering, you may contact RIDE's Professional Development Coordinator, Elaine Remillard, at Elaine.Remillard@ride.ri.gov or at (401) 222-8993.