

## Virginia Star Quality Initiative FACT SHEET

### WHAT IS VSQI?

The Virginia Star Quality Initiative (VSQI) is a voluntary program to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings. VSQI was developed to provide a consistent method to distinguish and improve the quality in early care and education programs, empowering families to make informed choices about the care of their young children. In addition, VSQI provides opportunities and incentives for early learning providers to continually improve the quality of their services.

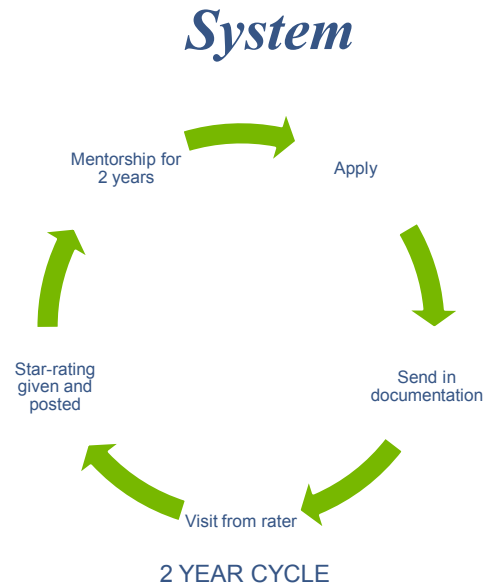
VSQI is administered through a partnership between the Virginia Early Childhood Foundation (VECF) and the Virginia Office of Early Childhood and Development (OECD), referred to as the “hub”. Local agencies or local early childhood agencies work with the hub to coordinate the rating process and program activities. Currently, there are 15 local early childhood coalitions across Virginia implementing VSQI. Over 300 programs have been rated and there are more currently being evaluated. Visit [smartbeginnings.org](http://smartbeginnings.org) to find out who is participating.

VSQI is right for your community if your objectives are:

- To increase overall program quality
- To recognize the quality programs that already exist
- To increase families’ knowledge and awareness of quality child care programs
- To improve training of early childhood professionals
- To increase access to high quality programs for children

### HOW DOES VSQI WORK?

By participating in VSQI, early care and education programs in your community show that they understand the importance of quality early care in preparing children to be ready for and successful in school and life. Participating early care and education programs are evaluated by professionally trained raters. After a thorough review of documentation and on-site observation(s), the participating program is given a star rating on a scale of 1 to 5. The rating and evaluation process not only recognizes a program’s strengths and weaknesses, it provides an opportunity and method for improvement. Once an early care and education program is rated, the program receives a detailed rating summary report and a trained mentor to facilitate improvements.



The benefits of participating in VSQI include:

- Establishing a network of support and outreach for early childhood professionals
- Providing incentives linked to achieving and maintaining quality standards
- Providing families with a consumer tool to distinguish quality elements
- Supporting the local economy
  - Quality, dependable child care reduces absenteeism, increases worker productivity, and contributes to the local economy
  - Investing in school readiness yields a high rate of return in a skilled workforce
- Recognizing child care provider achievements and quality improvements
- Ensuring that all families have access to quality child care

## GETTING STARTED

Once your community has made a commitment to identify and improve quality in early care and education settings, you should begin to address the following questions:

- What types of programs do we want to target? (Center-based programs, home-based programs, VPI, Head Start)
- Have any early care and education providers expressed an interest in participating in the ratings process?
- Do we have good contacts/relationships with providers or will there need to be time for trust and relationship building before providers will participate?
- What resources do we have to pay for staff, ratings, mentors and incentives?
- What programs can we collaborate with to achieve cost savings? (Head Start, VPI, public school systems, Smart Beginnings coalitions)

- Do we have someone who can serve as the VSQI Local Coordinator?
- Do we have qualified people from our community to serve as raters and mentors? Are they willing and able to participate in the multi-day state training to become an approved rater or mentor?
- What type of support can be expected from the private sector for this initiative? Are our communities' major companies, investors and foundations aware of the importance of early education as a workforce development issue? As a school readiness issue?

## INITIAL ACTIVITIES

A good first step is to host informational sessions for providers and other stakeholders to learn more about VSQI. Other potential activities:

- Send early childhood professionals who conduct training for child care providers in your area to Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) training. You can find out more about CLASS training on the Teachstone website: <http://www.teachstone.org/>
- Offer training opportunities focused on the VSQI standards to child care providers including:
  1. Overview of the CLASS
  2. Overview of the Environment Rating Scales (ECERS-R, ITERS-R, FCCERS-R)
  3. CLASS: Language Modeling
  4. CLASS: Quality of Feedback
  5. CLASS: Concept Development
  6. CLASS: Instructional Learning Format
  7. CLASS: Productivity
  8. CLASS: Behavior Management
  9. CLASS: Regard for Student Perspectives
  10. CLASS: Teacher Sensitivity
  11. CLASS: Positive & Negative Climate
  12. Kindergarten Transition Activities
  13. Inclusive Practices
  14. Fine Motor Activities
  15. Art Activities
  16. Music & Movement Activities
  17. Block Play
  18. Dramatic Play
  19. Math Activities
  20. Nature/Science Activities
- Provide applicable equipment and materials to child care providers in combination with training (ex. provide unit blocks to providers attending a Block Play training)
- Train early childhood professionals in your area to be mentors or raters. Master Star Quality Raters are available to conduct this training and charge \$120/hour plus travel expenses. Mentor training is four 7-hour days and rater training is seven 7-hour days.

- Rating and Mentoring programs – please note that these activities have to be conducted by a state approved rater or mentor. For a list of state approved raters and mentors, email a request to [VSQI@dss.virginia.gov](mailto:VSQI@dss.virginia.gov).
- Provide resource materials linked to VSQI to early childhood professionals and programs in your area. Resource materials include:
  - *All About the ECERS-R* by Cryer, Harms, and Riley – available at <http://www.kaplanco.com/>
  - *All About the ITERS-R* by Cryer, Harms, and Riley – available at <http://www.kaplanco.com/>
  - ECERS-R, ITERS-R, and FCCERS-R DVD and Training Workbook – available at <http://www.kaplanco.com/>
  - *Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) Manual* by Pianta, La Paro, and Hamre – available at <http://www.brookespublishing.com/>
  - CLASS Dimensions Guide – available at <http://www.teachstone.org/>
  - CLASS Video Library – available at <http://www.teachstone.org/>
  - *Consultation in Early Childhood Settings* by Buysse and Wesley available at <http://www.brookespublishing.com/>

## POTENTIAL EXPENSES

VSQI costs vary by community and activities. VSQI expenses may include:

- Training: varies based on topic and trainer
- Ratings: average rate of \$250/classroom or family child care home
- Mentoring: average rate of \$35/hour for approximately 30 hours/program
- Local Coordinator: varies based on number of programs served
- Quality Improvement Materials and Equipment
- Resource Materials
- Mileage Reimbursement for Raters, Mentors, and Local Coordinator

## PUBLIC AWARENESS

Until you have a functioning local VSQI infrastructure (VSQI coordinator, raters, mentors, financing) and the buy-in of your community's child care providers, public awareness efforts should focus on the importance of quality child care in general. Specific outreach and education about quality care can be directed at and tailored to parents, child care providers and the business community. Basic fact sheets and promotional materials about quality can be found on the Smart Beginnings website, [www.smartbeginnings.org](http://www.smartbeginnings.org).

