

Child Care

NEWS BRIEF



Greetings from your Partners at the Tennessee Department of Human Services, Child Care Services Team!

Happy Fall Y'all! This communication is a special edition of the Child Care Services Newsletter to provide new and updated information related to the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) Transition, Reimbursement Rate changes, Training and Personal Safety Curriculum. We greatly appreciate our child care provider partners and all that you do for the children and families of Tennessee.

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

Over the past several years, the Department has been working to improve business efficiencies including implementation of the newly redesigned QRIS that was implemented October 1, 2022. This transition year has allowed our staff and our valued child care agency partners the opportunity to learn the new process, experience how the new QRIS monitoring/evaluation tool is applied, provide feedback on the experience and for us to fully test the functionality in elicensing. As we like to say, this was our “launch, learn and tweak” period to make any needed adjustments. We released two updates to the tool within the cycle that further aligned rules with indicators, and enhanced language under required evidence that clearly defined what is to be demonstrated to meet the indicator.

Based on these transition activities, the Department will not be releasing QRIS scores for the cycle of October 1, 2022 through September 30, 2023. We will continue to freeze the current Star Ratings through September 30, 2024. Providers who currently have a Star Rating will continue to receive the Quality Bonus reimbursement based on the Reimbursement Rate Chart [located here](#). Additionally, for all TDHS Licensed agencies who participate in the Child Care Certificate Program, we are supporting an overall **5% QRIS Transition Bonus** on weekly reimbursement rates for each eligible child for the period of October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024. We greatly appreciate all feedback, input, suggestions, and engagement activities you have provided over the past year and look forward to full implementation beginning October 1, 2023, with new scores released upon the cycle ending September 30, 2024.

New - Reimbursement Rate Adjustments

The Department is committed to increasing access for families approved for child care payment support through the weekly Child Care Reimbursement Rates issued to child care agencies on their behalf. We evaluate the market rates through an annual Market Rate Survey conducted by our partners at the University of Tennessee, Boyd Center for Business & Economic Research (UT-CBER) to inform how we adjust rates to meet the needs of families and within our Child Care Development Fund budget. The current Market Rate Survey (MRS) for 2022-2023 [located here](#), indicated increases in rates for several types of providers and across different care levels. Effective October 1, 2023, we will implement targeted adjustments so all reimbursement rates are at least at the 60th percentile of the MRS, which will increase rates for the majority of the care levels. There are a few exceptions due to some rates that were already at or above the 60th percentile, so these will not change. The MRS indicated changes to the Top Tier designation which includes the 20 most populous counties plus the 20 highest per capita income counties.

UT-CBER has completed a Cost of Quality Care Survey [located here](#) based on a sampling of agency types and locations to determine the cost drivers for providing quality care by exploring how costs vary across the spectrum of QRIS ratings. This survey is a companion resource with the MRS when evaluating reimbursement rates.

Additionally, new child care desert mapping was completed by our partners at the University of Tennessee - Social Work Office of Research and Public Service to identify areas where there is a deficit of 250+ child care slots to meet the demand, based upon the number of children under age 6 with all parents in the labor force. There were many changes to the counties meeting this criteria to receive the 15% Desert differential.

We understand that the costs associated with offering infant and toddler care are higher than other care levels. We want to incentivize child care agencies who offer this care and increase access for families, therefore will be initiating a 15% Infant/Toddler differential effective October 1, 2023.

To view the Reimbursement Rate Chart effective October 1, 2023, [please click here](#). For the purposes of this initial communication, the chart is color coded. The rates highlighted in green indicate an increase. The rates highlighted in yellow indicate no change as these are either at or above the 60th percentile of the Market Rate Study.

Update - Training Information

Over the past several months, we have been engaging our child care agency partners in evaluating how training requirements are displayed within the TNPAL system and based upon feedback, incorporating changes to improve the user experience. We have gained a better understanding of some of the challenges and have worked to address these issues. This work is continuing so that the TNPAL system fully supports child care agency administrators, educators, and our staff in maintaining accuracy of records and in monitoring for compliance with required trainings and viewing credentials. We greatly appreciate the partnership in working to improve the TNPAL system.

The TDHS Licensing Rules revisions that were implemented June 30, 2022, outlined requirements for new agency staff trainings, annual trainings for existing staff and three-year trainings to meet health and safety and rules standards. Some of the training requirement changes, such as rules training for all existing staff were newly added. In July 2023, our Licensing Consultants communicated that "As of 6/21/2023, all (new and previous to this date) educators as defined by Licensure Rules for Child Care Agencies are required to complete the TCCOTS Pro-Solutions Licensure Rules

and Regulations Training found at <https://www.prosolutionstraining.com/tn/> under the tab labeled, TCCOTS Organizational Development and Administration. All sections of the rules and regulations training must be completed to receive credit for the training. A score of 80% correct answers must also be obtained on quizzes at the end of each section to receive credit for completion.” Based on your feedback and needed enhancements to TNPAL, we are extending the deadline for existing child care agency staff to complete the Licensure Rules and Regulations Training to **December 31, 2023**.

We will be releasing a direct communication in October that provides additional guidance on functionality in TNPAL and a structured format for training requirements to be met for new agency staff, annual trainings, and three-year cycles.

TN CCR&R CPR/First Aid Online Training

TDHS is excited to announce that CCR&R now offers **free** online CPR and First Aid training for early childhood professionals who work in TDHS-licensed child care agencies!

This online training covers all components of CPR and First Aid without the skills demonstration required to obtain certification. The training is self-paced so you can stop and start as needed. Completing this training will meet the TDHS licensing requirement for all staff to complete CPR and First Aid training. To sign up for this training:

1. Register for training using the CPR/First Aid training calendar at the CCR&R website, tnccrr.org.
2. Once CCR&R verifies registration, a link to the training will be emailed from info@hsi.com to the email address used to register for the training. If you don't receive an email within 5 business days, please email CPRFirstAid@signalcenters.org
3. Participants will have up to 30 calendar days from date of registration to complete the CPR and First Aid training.
4. When training is completed, an electronic certificate will be immediately issued for training documentation. CCR&R will ensure the training is recorded to TNPAL.

As an added benefit, each participant who completes the CPR and First Aid training through CCR&R will have the option to complete a skills demonstration to achieve free CPR/First Aid Certification within 90 calendar days! We encourage participants to obtain this optional certification as a best practice.

Update - Personal Safety Curriculum

We always want to be certain that our TDHS Licensed child care agency partners have access and multiple options to high quality resources, materials, and training. One of the rules requirements, Rule 1240-04-01-.05 (8), is for agencies to implement a Personal Safety Curriculum in their programs for ages three (3) and up. Based on feedback we have received; additional guidance was requested on what elements or components are specific to implementing this curriculum. We have added a “Personal Safety Curriculum Requirements” document to the Child Care Resources for Providers page located [here](#) to assist you when choosing an appropriate curriculum. The “Keeping Kids Safe Curriculum” remains an option and is available on the website.



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