



## Policy Updates and Frequently Asked Questions

As we all navigate through the challenges and limitations resulting from COVID-19, we recognize that our Bright & Early ND community may have questions and concerns about moving forward in this process. While some operations may be disrupted, our goal is to mitigate any negative outcomes for programs and providers.

For this reason, we have created the following temporary policy changes to offer support and guidance during this challenging time. These changes allow programs to maintain their Bright & Early ND Quality Rating or participate in a Bright & Early ND cohort while temporarily closed or otherwise affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The following policy changes are effective as of March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

**Bright & Early ND Quality Rating Expirations** will be extended during the COVID-19 pandemic. Any program that has a Quality Rating set to expire between March 15<sup>th</sup>-December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020, will receive a 6-month extension to their expiration date. This will go into effect immediately and will be reflected in the program's ND Growing Futures Organization Profile.

**Bright & Early ND Incomplete Status** will be extended during the COVID-19 pandemic to accommodate programs. Programs that are currently in 'Incomplete' will receive an additional 45 days to complete the requirements.

**Bright & Early ND Quality Standards Inventory (QSI) Submission Dates** will remain the same. Programs participating in a Bright & Early ND cohort are encouraged to work closely with their Coach to evaluate their timeline. If you are experiencing a temporary closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic or are unsure that you can meet the requirements of the step you are pursuing, please consider moving to the next Bright & Early ND cohort to extend your timeline. Programs can acquire the 'Change In Cohort Status Form' from their Coach and email the completed form to the Bright & Early ND Team at [QRIS@brightnd.org](mailto:QRIS@brightnd.org).

**Bright & Early ND Teaching Strategies GOLD Checkpoints** that have been waived include: Winter 2019/2020 Checkpoint (1/1/20-4/30/20) and Spring 2019/2020 (5/1/20-8/31/20). These checkpoints will be waived for programs that did not have an opportunity to complete it during the COVID-19 pandemic. This waiver applies to programs that are maintaining a Step 3 or Step 4 Quality Rating. Bright & Early ND will be evaluating future checkpoints and will update this document as needed.

**Bright & Early ND Quality Rating Observations** using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS<sup>®</sup>) and Environment Rating Scales<sup>®</sup> (ERS<sup>®</sup>) will resume as of September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

Due to the unique nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is unknown how additional health and safety measures will impact Quality Rating observation outcomes. In alignment with this, Bright & Early ND will not use average program scores as a high stakes measure and instead use average program scores to support learning opportunities for growth and professional development. Programs eligible for a Quality Rating observation through June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 will be impacted by the details that follow.

Programs that receive a Quality Rating observation that do not meet the required threshold, as stated in the [Bright & Early ND Playbook](#), will be required to complete the following Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Framework:

For observations using the Environment Rating Scales®, Bright & Early ND will collaborate with LearnERS to integrate professional development opportunities that support continuous quality improvement. LearnERS is currently available for the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale® and the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale®. Bright & Early ND will use the LearnERS modules as proxy for programs that receive a FCCERS-R™ observation. All Lead Caregivers and/or Lead Teachers will need to complete the required LearnERS professional development in the allotted timeframe.

### ITERS-3™ and ECERS-3™

Average Program Score	LearnERS Module Requirement	Timeframe to Complete	Additional Observation Required?
3.25-3.49	2 Modules*	3 months	Yes, 6-months from rating issue date.
3.00-3.24	4 Modules*	6 months	Yes, 9-months from rating issue date.
Below 2.99	6 Modules*	9 months	Yes, 12-months from rating issue date.

### FCCERS-R™

Average Program Score	LearnERS Module Requirement	Timeframe to Complete	Additional Observation Required?
3.75-3.99	2 Modules*	3 months	Yes, 6-months from rating issue date.
3.50-3.74	4 Modules*	6 months	Yes, 9-months from rating issue date.
Below 3.49	6 Modules*	9 months	Yes, 12-months from rating issue date.

\*The 'LearnERS Introduction' module is a pre-requisite, therefore in addition to the LearnERS module requirement.

For observations using the CLASS®, Bright & Early ND will collaborate with myTeachstone to integrate professional development opportunities that support continuous quality improvement. All Lead Caregivers and/or Lead Teachers will need to complete the required CLASS® professional development in the allotted timeframe.

### Infant CLASS®

#### Domain: Responsive Caregiving

Average Program Score	myTeachstone Requirement	Timeframe to Complete	Additional Observation Required?
3.00-3.99	Infant Pathway	3 months	Yes, 6-months from rating issue date.
Below 2.99	Infant Pathway	6 months	Yes, 9-months from rating issue date.

### Toddler CLASS®

#### Domain: Engaged Support for Learning

Average Program Score	myTeachstone Requirement	Timeframe to Complete	Additional Observation Required?
2.50-3.49	Toddler Pathway	3 months	Yes, 6-months from rating issue date.
Below 2.49	Toddler Pathway	6 months	Yes, 9-months from rating issue date.

### Pre-K CLASS®

#### Domain: Instructional Support

Average Program Score	myTeachstone Requirement	Timeframe to Complete	Additional Observation Required?
2.00-2.99	Pre-K Pathway	3 months	Yes, 6-months from rating issue date.
Below 1.99	Pre-K Pathway	6 months	Yes, 9-months from rating issue date.

Please note, programs that are participating in the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Framework, as stated above, are not eligible to pursue the next step until the threshold requirement, as stated in the [Bright & Early ND Playbook](#), has been met.

Programs that choose not to pursue their Quality Rating observation at this time will be subject to the following policy. The program will receive a grace period of 9-months (*from the Quality Standard Inventory submission date.*) Once the grace period has ended, the Bright & Early ND case status will be moved to 'Selected'. This will allow the program an opportunity to re-verify the indicators in their Quality Standards Inventory (QSI) and submit for Quality Rating.

## FAQ's

*My program is closed due to COVID-19. How does this impact my Quality Rating?*

Quality Rated programs that are experiencing a temporary closure, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, are allowed to maintain a Bright & Early ND Quality Rating as long as they hold an active North Dakota Department of Human Services license in good standing.

*If I submit for my Quality Rating and must wait an extended time for my observation can I still have access to coaching? I'm going to have turnover going into summer and will need help getting all my new staff on track.*

Yes, we want you to have the support and resources you need. All Bright & Early ND coaching and technical assistance will be offered by virtual delivery (ex. Skype, phone, email, etc.) until further notice.

*Due to the modified operating practices put in place, I am unable to meet all of the environment standards for Step 2. How will this impact my Quality Rating?*

These modified operating practices have been put in place to protect you and the families you serve. We understand that they may impact your program's space and access to materials. We encourage you to do what you can to offer engaging materials and experiences during this time. Then, once the modified operating practices have been lifted, you will be able to implement the Step 2 environment standards fully.

*Have the authors of the assessment tools that Bright & Early ND uses for observations released any statements?*

The Environment Rating Scales Institute (ERSI) has released a statement regarding how the Environment Rating Scales should be used during the COVID-19 pandemic:

*"ERS assessments should be completed, wherever programs are serving children, to help inform us about the pandemic's effect on health and safety, but also on the quality of care and learning for children. This information can guide us on how best to maximize the good and minimize the bad within each program. Without information provided by ERS assessments, we are not able to make intelligent, well-informed decisions under these difficult conditions. We want to keep quality standards high, but recognize that it is not appropriate to use the scores on ERS instruments during the pandemic in high stakes decisions about childcare reimbursement rates or on program ratings. ERS assessment scores can and should be used to inform and guide best practices."*

To read the statement in full, please visit the [ERS Institute website](#).

Teachstone has released a statement regarding the use of the CLASS during COVID-19:

*"Interactions matter, now more than ever. Teachstone recommends the continued use of CLASS to ensure the quality of classroom interactions and to support educators in their professional development. During these stressful times, children need supportive interactions, and teachers will benefit greatly from helpful feedback around those interactions."*

To read the statement in full, please visit the [Teachstone Blog](#).