



**Bright
& Early**
NORTH DAKOTA

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Playbook
2021-2022

Introduction

Bright & Early ND is North Dakota's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS). The QRIS is designed to showcase and support childcare and early education programs that go above and beyond to improve their quality of care.

Bright & Early ND is an initiative led by the North Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) and is part of a national movement to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in childcare and early education programs across our state.

Purpose of the Playbook

The Bright & Early ND Playbook is your go-to guide. It establishes a statewide level of quality and contains four steps proven to deliver positive results for children. Commit to carry out the steps in the Playbook, and children in your program are more likely to enter kindergarten with the skills needed to be successful in school and life.

Use the Playbook as a resource to help you successfully participate in Bright & Early ND. Its purpose is to:

- Help you and your program understand the framework, requirements, support, and benefits associated with Bright & Early ND.
- Provide an overview of the four Bright & Early ND Steps to Quality.
- Serve as an ongoing reference tool for programs participating in Bright & Early ND.



Learn

Bright & Early ND uses a building block approach which incorporates four levels, or steps, to quality. Each of the Bright & Early ND Steps to Quality focuses on a specific component of care and builds upon the others to deliver a higher level of care.

Prepare

You're busy. We get it. Bright & Early ND isn't going to give you more to do, it's going to show you what to focus on to get the maximum results for kids. We take the guesswork out of preparing children for kindergarten. Great school years start with great childcare years—it's that simple. If you are ready to begin your quality improvement journey, let the Playbook guide you!

Join

Since the Bright & Early ND Steps to Quality build upon each other, all licensed programs start at Step 1: Health & Safety. Children need to be healthy and feel safe to learn and grow. It's the first step in preparing children to be ready for school, work, and life.

Programs can apply for a Step 1 Quality Rating at any time. We have partnered with ND Growing Futures to make the application process quick and streamlined.

Benefit

Since day one, Bright & Early ND has made it a priority to recognize and reward providers for going above and beyond! Are you looking to enhance your environment or add new learning materials? Do you want recognition for a job well done? You've got it. You'll have support every step of the way with exclusive benefits at your fingertips.

Bright & Early ND Steps to Quality

For Licensed Child Care and Early Education Programs

Bright & Early ND uses a block system approach which incorporates four standards, or steps, to quality. Each of the Bright & Early ND Steps to Quality focuses on one component of care and is composed of a consistent set of quality indicators that measure the program's practices. The Bright & Early ND Steps to Quality build upon each other to create a framework for continuous quality improvement. The outcome is a program that maximizes a child's readiness for school, work, and life.



Health & Safety

Meeting and maintaining child care licensing regulations is the foundation of the Bright & Early ND Steps to Quality. Licensed child care and early education programs are required to maintain at least minimum standards related to; physical space, safety features, cleanliness, staff qualifications and staff-to-child ratios. Children need to be healthy and feel safe to learn and grow. It is the first step in preparing children to be ready for school, work, and life.



Space & Materials

A safe, responsive, and engaging environment sets the stage for optimal early childhood experiences. An intentionally designed environment allows opportunities for children to experiment, practice their skills, analyze, socialize and problem solve. When the environment supports children's learning and development, they are better prepared for school, work, and life.



Activities & Experiences

Children succeed when their providers know them well, understand their levels of development, and provide meaningful activities and experiences that build upon their strengths and development. When children have meaningful experiences, they are better prepared for school, work, and life.



Relationships & Interactions

All children benefit from being in warm, supportive environments where they can take risks, learn new things, and develop strong relationships with their caregivers and peers. When children experience high-quality interactions, they are better prepared for school, work, and life.

STEP 1

Health & Safety

Meeting and maintaining child care licensing regulations is the foundation of the Bright & Early ND Steps to Quality. These regulations are designed to protect and promote child safety and well-being in all types of settings. Licensed child care and early education programs are required to maintain at least minimum standards related to; physical space, safety features, cleanliness, staff qualifications and staff-to-child ratios. Children need to be healthy and feel safe to learn and grow. It is the first step in preparing children to be ready for school, work, and life.

Step 1



Step 2

Step 3

Step 4

HS.1 Program holds a current license issued by the North Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS).

Meeting and maintaining child care licensing regulations is the foundation of the Bright & Early ND Steps to Quality.

To meet this indicator, evidence of the program's current DHS license must be submitted.

HS.2 The Program Director¹, all Lead Teachers² and/or all Lead Caregivers³ have verified employment in the program's Growing Futures organization account.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification.

To meet this indicator, the Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers must have verified and accurate employment records in the program's Growing Futures organization account.

HS.3 The Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers have a current Growing Futures Career Pathway placement of Category A or Higher.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, the Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers must have a current individual membership in Growing Futures and current Career Pathway placement of Category A or Higher.

¹Program Director: The individual located on site who is responsible for planning, implementing, and evaluating the program. This individual must be present at least sixty percent of the time during operating hours. This individual should be designated as the 'Director of Record' on the Growing Futures organization account, under the Classrooms tab.

²Lead Teacher: The individual assigned to teach a group of children and who is responsible for daily lesson planning, child assessment and curriculum planning. There must be a Lead Teacher assigned to each classroom. This individual may also supervise other members of the teaching team. In some settings, this individual is called the Head Teacher or Teacher. These individuals should be designated as Lead Teachers in the organization profile, under the Classrooms tab. A Lead Teacher cannot be assigned to more than one classroom at a time

³Lead Caregiver: The individual listed on the Family or Group program license that oversees the day-to-day operations of the program. This individual should be designated as the 'Licensee/Owner' in the Growing Futures organization account, under the Classrooms tab.

STEP 2

Space & Materials

A safe, responsive, and engaging environment sets the stage for optimal early childhood experiences. An intentionally designed environment allows opportunities for children to experiment, practice their skills, analyze, socialize and problem solve. When the environment supports children's learning and development, they are better prepared for school, work, and life.

Step 1

Step 2



Step 3

Step 4

SM.1 Program serves nutritious meals and snacks to children.

Child care and early education programs play a critical role in supporting the health and wellness of children through the provision of nutritious foods. Early childhood professionals have an opportunity to instill healthy habits in young children that serve as a foundation for healthy choices throughout life.

To meet this indicator, programs will select one of two options and provide supporting evidence. For more details on nutritious meals, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

SM.2 Environment Rating Scale® (ERS®) observation conducted by an endorsed ERS® Assessor.

The ERS® is a series of reliable, valid, research-based observation tools designed to assess the early childhood environment.

To meet this indicator, evidence must be valid (dated within the previous 3 years) and represent, at minimum, 33% of the classrooms or groups served. For more details on the ERS®, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

SM.3 Program develops a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that:

- Is guided by ERS® assessments,
- Includes both short-term and long-term goals,
- Includes action items to support overall quality improvement.

The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is part of the continuous quality improvement process in which programs assess their strengths and opportunities for growth, set achievable goals, and develop realistic plans for improvement.

To meet this indicator, evidence must reflect all the indicator components above and be dated within the previous 12-months. For more details on the QIP, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

SM.4 The Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers have completed professional development related to learning environments.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, the Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers must complete:

- At least 10 clock hours in Core Competency Area II. Learning Environment and Curriculum

STEP 3

Activities & Experiences

Children succeed when their providers know them well, understand their levels of development, and provide meaningful activities and experiences that build upon children's strengths and development. When children have meaningful experiences, they are better prepared for school, work, and life.

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3



Step 4

AE.1 Program implements a developmentally appropriate curriculum that aligns with the North Dakota Early Learning Standards: Birth to Kindergarten.

The Bright & Early ND Curriculum Alignment Worksheet is designed to help your program determine how your curriculum aligns with the North Dakota Early Learning Standards: Birth to Kindergarten. Bright & Early ND does not require programs to use a specific curriculum.

To meet this indicator, evidence must be evidence must be valid (dated within the previous 3 years). For more details on the Curriculum Alignment Worksheet, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

AE.2 Program utilizes GOLD®, a developmentally appropriate observation-based assessment system.

GOLD® is the authentic, ongoing, observation-based assessment system that helps early childhood professionals, like you, focus on what matters most for children's success.

To meet this indicator, evidence of the program's current GOLD® subscription agreement and receipt of purchase must be submitted. For more details on GOLD®, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

AE.3 Program completes GOLD® checkpoints during the three yearly periods (fall, winter, spring).

Programs will demonstrate ongoing assessment of children using GOLD® checkpoints. A checkpoint period is the timeframe where programs will observe, document, and assess children's development and learning.

To meet this indicator, evidence must reflect the current or previously completed checkpoint period with, at minimum, 70% of checkpoint ratings completed for each classroom or group.

AE.4 Program develops a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that:

- Is guided by GOLD® assessments,
- Includes both short-term and long-term goals,
- Includes action items to support overall quality improvement.

The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is part of the continuous quality improvement process in which programs assess their strengths and opportunities for growth, set achievable goals, and develop realistic plans for improvement.

To meet this indicator, evidence must reflect all the indicator components above and be dated within the previous 12-months. For more details on the QIP, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

AE.5 The Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers have completed professional development related to observation and assessment.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, the Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers must complete:

- Introduction to GOLD® (14 clock hours)

STEP 4

Relationships & Interactions

All children benefit from being in warm, supportive environments where they can take risks, learn new things, and develop strong relationships with their caregivers and peers. When children experience high-quality interactions, they are better prepared for school, work, and life.

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4



RI.1 Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) observation conducted by an endorsed CLASS® Assessor.

The CLASS® is a research-based method of measuring, evaluating, and improving teacher–child interactions. Programs must have a valid CLASS® observation conducted every 3 years. CLASS® observations will be conducted in every classroom or group with the tool that best reflects the age group in care.

To meet this indicator, evidence must be valid (dated within the previous 3 years) and represent every classroom or group served. For more details on CLASS®, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

RI.2 Program develops a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that:

- Is guided by CLASS® assessments,
- Includes both short-term and long-term goals,
- Includes action items to support overall quality improvement.

The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is part of the continuous quality improvement process in which programs assess their strengths and opportunities for growth, set achievable goals, and develop realistic plans for improvement.

To meet this indicator, evidence must reflect all of the indicator components above and be dated within the previous 12-months. For more details on the QIP, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

RI.3 The Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers have a current Growing Futures Career Pathway placement of Category E or Higher.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, the Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers must have a current individual membership in Growing Futures and current Career Pathway placement of Category E or Higher.

RI.4 The Program Director has completed professional development related to business, management, and administration.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, the Program Director must have a verified and current Aim4Excellence Director Credential.

Clarification for FCC and Group Licensed Programs

This indicator is N/A for Family Child Care and Group licensed programs.

Relationships & Interactions Continued

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4



RI. 4a All Lead Caregivers have completed professional development related to business, management, and administration.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, all Lead Caregivers must complete the following:

- At least 10 clock hours in Core Competency Area VIII. Program Planning and Evaluation

Clarification for Preschool and Center Licensed Programs

This indicator is N/A for Preschool and Center Licensed Programs

RI. 5 All Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers have completed professional development related to interactions with children.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers must complete one of the following:

- Introduction to the Infant CLASS® (2 clock hours)
- Introduction to the Toddler CLASS® (2 clock hours)
- Introduction to the Pre-K CLASS® (2.5 clock hours)

STEP 4

Alternate Pathway

The Alternate Pathway or sometimes referred to as the 'accreditation pathway' is for programs that have a current certification of accreditation through one of the following approved organizations: NAEYC, NAFCC, NAC and COA. A certificate of accreditation from one of these organizations serves as confirmation that the program meets or exceeds some of the Bright & Early ND Quality Standards. Programs must have a current Step 1 Quality Rating to pursue the Alternate Pathway.

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4



SM.2 Environment Rating Scale® (ERS®) observation conducted by an endorsed ERS® Assessor.

The ERS® is a series of reliable, valid, research-based observation tools designed to assess the early childhood environment.

To meet this indicator, evidence must be valid (dated within the previous 3 years) and represent, at minimum, 33% of the classrooms or groups served. For more details on the ERS®, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

SM.3 Program develops a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that:

- Is guided by ERS® assessments,
- Includes both short-term and long-term goals,
- Includes action items to support overall quality improvement.

The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is part of the continuous quality improvement process in which programs assess their strengths and opportunities for growth, set achievable goals, and develop realistic plans for improvement.

To meet this indicator, evidence must reflect all the indicator components above and be dated within the previous 12-months. For more details on the QIP, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

RI.1 Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®) observation conducted by an endorsed CLASS® Assessor.

The CLASS® is a research-based method of measuring, evaluating, and improving teacher-child interactions. Programs must have a valid CLASS® observation conducted every 3 years. CLASS® observations will be conducted in every classroom or group with the tool that best reflects the age group in care.

To meet this indicator, evidence must be valid (dated within the previous 3 years) and represent every classroom or group served. For more details on the CLASS®, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

RI.2 Program develops a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) that:

- Is guided by CLASS® assessments,
- Includes both short-term and long-term goals,
- Includes action items to support overall quality improvement.

The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is part of the continuous quality improvement process in which programs assess their strengths and opportunities for growth, set achievable goals, and develop realistic plans for improvement.

To meet this indicator, evidence must reflect all of the indicator components above and be dated within the previous 12-months.

Alternate Pathway to Step 4 Continued

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4



RI.3 The Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers have a current Growing Futures Career Pathway placement of Category E or Higher.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, the Program Director, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers must have a current individual membership in Growing Futures and current Career Pathway placement of Category E or Higher.

RI.4 The Program Director has completed professional development related to business, management, and administration.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, the Program Director must have a verified and current Aim4Excellence Director Credential. For more information on Aim4Excellence, see the [Bright & Early ND Resources](#) page.

Clarification for FCC and Group Licensed Programs

This indicator is N/A for Family Child Care and Group licensed programs.

RI.4a All Lead Caregivers have completed professional development related to business, management, and administration.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, all Lead Caregivers must complete the following:

- At least 10 clock hours in Core Competency Area VIII. Program Planning and Evaluation

Clarification for Preschool and Center Licensed Programs

This indicator is N/A for Preschool and Center Licensed Programs

RI.5 All Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers have completed professional development related to interactions with children.

Growing Futures is the source for training, education, and employment verification. All training must appear on an individual's Growing Futures Learning Record as approved clock hours. Programs that experience turnover in leadership positions must also submit a Professional Development Action Plan.

To meet this indicator, all Lead Teachers and/or all Lead Caregivers must complete one of the following:

- Introduction to the Infant CLASS® (2 clock hours)
- Introduction to the Toddler CLASS® (2 clock hours)
- Introduction to the Pre-K CLASS® (2.5 clock hours)