



**Bright
& Early**
NORTH DAKOTA

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Policy Manual

July 2021

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Introduction

About Bright & Early ND

Bright & Early ND is North Dakota's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). It was developed to help child care and early education programs offer high-quality care that supports each child's learning and development. Bright & Early ND is designed to:

- Ensure that children have high-quality early learning experiences that help them develop the skills they need to be successful in school and life.
- Support early learning professionals to provide high-quality care by providing resources such as professional development opportunities, coaching and incentives.
- Help families find high-quality child care and early education programs that fit their needs by providing information about program quality.

Bright & Early ND is an initiative led by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and is part of a national movement to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in child care and early education programs across our state. Bright & Early ND was created under North Dakota law ([NDCC 50-11.1](#)).

National QRIS History

New Mexico piloted the first QRIS in 1997. Oklahoma was the first state to implement a statewide QRIS in 1998.

As of December of 2017, 41 states across the country have fully implemented QRIS. QRIS's were developed as a response to the gap between licensing standards and accreditation standards. QRIS's intention is to help childcare programs improve their quality in manageable steps, in part by offering professional development and financial incentives.

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems share common activities: setting standards and indicators, rating ECE programs, supporting quality improvement with technical assistance, distributing grants and awards, conducting outreach, and determining governance structures. Yet each QRIS was developed in a particular state or local context, and system details are unique to that context. The reach of the QRIS across programs and the families served, the parameters that define how quality is measured, and the scope and intensity of financial and technical assistance vary widely across QRIS.

The Build Initiative & Child Trends. (2016). A Catalog and Comparison of Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) [Data System]. Retrieved from <http://qriscompendium.org/>

North Dakota QRIS History

In 2005, North Dakota's early childhood community released the first draft of the Growing Futures Professional Development Plan. The goal of this plan was to support practitioners in the early childhood field to grow and advance their skills, knowledge, and job opportunities. The well-being of North Dakota's children is at the heart of the plan.

In February 2007, under the direction of the North Dakota Department of Human Services (DHS) and with the support of the Healthy North Dakota Early Childhood Alliance (HENDECA), a 35-member committee was convened to develop a framework and standards for a Quality Rating and Improvement System in North Dakota. The committee's work resulted in a comprehensive set of standards to define quality in early childhood programs. The founding committee established guiding principles to anchor QRIS work in North Dakota, which include:

- All children deserve equal access to high quality early care and education.
- QRIS will make it easier for families to choose the best early childhood setting for their child.

- Sufficient financial support and resources are necessary to support an early care and education infrastructure.
- QRIS strives to define common standards and reflect all early childhood settings including family childcare homes, group childcare programs, center childcare programs, preschool educational facilities, Head Start, Early Head Start, and public-school prekindergarten programs.
- Measurements and processes will be valid, reliable, realistic, and effective.
- A continuum of quality early learning exists. Licensing sets the foundation on the continuum and quality increases from this foundation.
- Quality matters – there is always room for improvement and growth along the continuum of quality, QRIS meets programs where they are and partners with them for continued improvement.
- QRIS is a personal and rewarding journey – it is a voluntary decision to participate.

The vision of a QRIS in North Dakota is to use these principles to guarantee best beginnings for young children in early childhood settings by creating an early learning culture built upon consumer awareness, technical assistance, and financial support for early childhood professionals all based upon measurable standards.

From the original 35-member QRIS committee, 16 individuals served on a standards sub-committee from 2007-2009 and developed five categories of quality standards:

- Health, Safety, & Nutrition: The program is clean and there are practices that help keep children safe and healthy.
- Knowledgeable & Responsible Adult Caregivers: Early educators have the preparation and on-going training needed to best prepare children for school and life.
- Relationships & Interactions: Children's emotional needs are supported, and adults interact with children in a caring and nurturing way.
- Learning Environment & Curriculum: The program uses learning materials and activities to prepare children for school and life.
- Connections with Families & Communities: Early educators involve parents in their child's learning.

In January 2010, Lakes & Prairies received grants from the United Way of Cass-Clay and the Fargo-Moorhead Area Foundation to implement a local pilot to test the standards developed by the North Dakota QRIS committee in the "real world". The goals of the field test were to:

- Define benchmarks and data collection to measure the extent to which programs meet the quality standards.
- Recruit a minimum of 20 programs to achieve a STAR rating by September 2011
- Provide on-site assessment and coaching to a minimum of 20 programs working on achieving their STAR rating.
- Hold, at minimum, 10 QRIS informational training sessions to recruit and support early childhood professionals in meeting STAR standards.
- Award a minimum of 20 financial incentive stipends at STAR 3, 4, & 5 to rated programs.
- Hold a minimum of two focus groups, conduct as least 30 personal interviews, convene a local advisory council, and conduct a survey to inform future QRIS planning.

The ND QRIS Pilot was named the Early Childhood Quality Rating & Improvement Pilot. It went through 2 pilot revisions before moving to the current QRIS, Bright & Early ND.

In 2013 the ND QRIS Pilot, Early Childhood Quality Rating & Improvement System was renamed Bright & Early ND and entered a 'getting started' phase that prepared early childhood programs for Quality Rating.

In January of 2014 Bright & Early ND launched its first cohort for Steps 1 & 2. Four counties were chosen across the state for this cohort. Cass County, Stutsman County, Ward County and Williams County all participated. A total of 54 programs across these four counties participated in this first cohort.

In July of 2014 Bright & Early ND launched Step 1 and Step 2 in Grand Forks County, Ramsey County, Burleigh County, Stark County and Morton County. A total of 48 programs across these five counties participated in this launch.

In 2015 Step 1 and Step 2 were launched statewide. All Department of Human Services (DHS) licensed childcare programs were eligible to participate in Bright & Early ND.

In July of 2016, Bright & Early ND launched Step 3 and Step 4. So, all parts of the Bright & Early ND system were now available to all DHS licensed programs.

Purpose of the Policy Manual

This document is designed to:

- Help programs and stakeholders understand key components of Bright & Early ND
- Provide a detailed overview of Bright & Early ND policies and expectations
- Serve as a reference tool throughout participation

While it is the program's responsibility to read, understand and follow the guidelines in this document, your assigned RBPD Specialist is available to work with you to answer questions or concerns, and help you successfully implement these guidelines. The term **program** will be used throughout this document to indicate child care and early education programs participating in Bright & Early ND.

Updates to the Policy Manual

Policy and procedures will be updated annually in July. The current version of the Policy and Procedure Manual is always available on the Bright & Early ND website. The Policy and Procedure Manual posted on the Bright & Early ND website replaces all former versions of the Policy and Procedure Manual. If a Bright & Early ND policy change is made in between annual updates, the information will be sent to Bright & Early ND participants via an email.

Section 1: Requirements and Eligibility

1.1 Participation Requirements

1.1.1 Voluntary

Participation in Bright & Early ND is voluntary.

1.1.2 Children Served

Programs must be actively providing care to at least one child ranging in age from birth to kindergarten entry.

1.1.3 Location

Programs must be located within the state of North Dakota.

1.1.4 Meet Health and Safety Standards

Programs must meet basic child health and safety standards by being licensed for child care in the state of North Dakota.

1.1.5 License Status

Licensed child care programs must be currently licensed and in good standing with the North Dakota Department of Human Services.

1.1.6 Participation Agreement

Programs must sign a Participation Agreement and complete an application before participating in Bright & Early ND.

1.1.7 Accurate Information

Programs must submit information and evidence that accurately reflects their program's use of best practices. Individuals and organizations that knowingly provide false or fraudulent information during participation in Bright & Early ND, or while Quality Rated, will not be allowed to continue participating. The program's Quality Rating will be revoked and removed from the Bright & Early ND website and will be reported to the appropriate authorities.

1.1.8 Non-Discrimination

The program shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or disability.

1.2 Eligible Programs

The following types of programs are eligible to earn a Bright & Early ND Quality Rating.

1.2.1 DHS Licensed Programs

Non-accredited and accredited child care and early education programs licensed by the North Dakota Department of Human Services.

Section 2: Quality Rating

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 Role of the North Dakota Department of Human Services

The North Dakota Department of Human Services creates the Bright & Early ND Quality Standards and Indicators; assesses program quality using established Quality Standards and Indicators; determines a Quality Rating or determines that no Quality Rating was earned; issues Quality Ratings; and reassesses and revokes Quality Ratings.

2.1.2 Framework

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 a specific component of care and is composed of a consistent set of Quality Indicators that measure your 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. Bright & Early ND is based on the following Quality Standards:

- Health and Safety
- Space and Materials
- Activities and Experiences
- Relationships and Interactions

2.2 Quality Standards

2.2.1 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 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.

2.2.2 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.

2.2.3 Activities & Interactions

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.

2.2.4 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.

2.3 Quality Rating Process

2.3.1 Quality Rating Designations

Programs can earn one Quality Rating designation at a time: Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, or Step 4. Programs that do not meet the Step 1 requirements will receive a 'No Rating' designation. The Quality Standards Inventory fully describes the requirements for each of the Bright & Early ND Steps to Quality.

Programs must meet these requirements to earn a Quality Rating:

- To earn a **Step 1 Quality Rating**, programs must meet all the Step 1 Quality Indicators.
- To earn a **Step 2 Quality Rating**, programs must meet all the Step 1 and Step 2 Quality Indicators.
- To earn a **Step 3 Quality Rating**, programs must meet all the Step 1, Step 2, and Step 3 Quality Indicators.
- To earn a **Step 4 Quality Rating**, programs must meet all the Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, and Step 4 Quality Indicators.

2.3.2 Quality Rating Period

Quality Ratings are valid for three years from the date issued on the Bright & Early ND Quality Rating certificate. If programs do not seek a renewal before their Quality Rating expires, the Quality Rating is invalid on the expiration date on the Bright & Early ND certificate and is removed from the Bright & Early ND website.

2.3.3 Quality Rating Certificate

Once a program earns a Quality Rating, a Bright & Early ND Quality Rating certificate is e-mailed to the program.

2.3.4 Point-In-Time Quality Rating

A Bright & Early ND designation is a point-in-time Quality Rating. If a program submits complete, on-time evidence, the Quality Rating is issued based on the evidence submitted on the deadline.

If a program submits incomplete information, the Quality Rating is issued based on the evidence submitted on the deadline and the evidence submitted within 15 business days of receiving an incomplete notification.

Evidence sent outside of these time frames will not be considered for a Quality Rating.

2.3.5 Withdrawing Quality Ratings

Programs do not have the option to withdraw a Bright & Early ND Quality Rating. All Quality Ratings are publicly available online at <https://www.brightnd.org>.

2.3.6 Most Recent Quality Rating is Valid

For programs that have renewed their Quality Rating designation or pursued a higher step, the new Quality Rating is valid as soon as it is issued, and the previous Quality Rating becomes invalid, even if the previous Quality Rating has not yet expired. If the program receives a designation of 'No Rating', this Quality Rating will not supersede a previous Quality Rating that has not yet expired.

2.4 Participation

2.4.1 Choosing a Pathway

Bright & Early ND has two pathways:

- Full Quality Rating Pathway
- Alternate Quality Rating Pathway (*for accredited programs*)

The **Full Quality Rating Pathway** is based on the complete set of the Bright & Early ND Quality Standards and Indicators.

Programs volunteer to earn a Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, or Step 4 Quality Rating by identifying and documenting ways they meet the Bright & Early ND Quality Standards and Indicators and submitting evidence for validation.

The **Alternate Quality Rating Pathway** is a streamlined process to earn a Step 4 Quality Rating. This option is available because the requirements of child care accreditation mirror or exceed the requirements of the Bright & Early ND Full Quality Rating Pathway process.

DHS Licensed programs with one of the following approved accreditations, are eligible to pursue this pathway:

- National Association for the Education for Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation
- National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) Accreditation
- National Accreditation Commission (NAC) for Early Care and Education Programs accreditation
- Council on Accreditation (COA) – Early Childhood Education Program accreditation

Programs approved by any of the accrediting bodies above must first apply for a Step 1 Quality Rating. Once their Step 1 Quality Rating has been awarded, they are eligible to participate in a Bright & Early ND cohort. Programs following the Alternate Pathway will complete all the required Quality Indicators within that pathway.

2.4.2 Participation Agreement and Application

Programs must submit a completed application and Participation Agreement to be eligible for a Quality Rating. Applications and Participation Agreements must be submitted no later than December 15th to participate in the January cohort, no later than April 15th to participate in the May cohort, and no later than August 15th to participate in the September cohort.

2.4.3 Cohorts

The Bright & Early ND Quality Rating process for Step 1 is implemented on a case-by-case basis when the program applies. Step 1 Quality Ratings will be awarded each month on the 1st day of the month.

The Bright & Early ND Quality Rating process for Steps 2-4 is implemented on three cycles per year, referred to as cohorts. Please see the chart below for cohort specific details.

Application Due By:	Cohort Begins:	Submit QSI By:	Cohort Ends:
December 15 th	January 1 st	September 15 th	September 30 th
April 15 th	May 1 st	January 15 th	January 31 st
August 15 th	September 1 st	May 15 th	May 31 st

2.4.4 Extending Participation

After signing a Bright & Early ND Participation Agreement, a program may request to move to the next cohort by completing and submitting a 'Request to Change Participation Status' form. The form must be fully completed and received by the Bright & Early ND Team by the following deadlines:

- August 1st for programs participating in a January cohort.
- December 1st for programs participating in a May cohort.
- April 1st for programs participating in a September cohort.

After this process is complete, the program will be officially participating in the next cohort.

2.4.5 Terminating Participation

After signing a Bright & Early ND Participation Agreement, a program may choose to terminate participation by completing and submitting a 'Request to Change Participation Status' form. The form must be fully completed and received by the Bright & Early ND Team by the following deadlines:

- August 1st for programs participating in a January cohort.
- December 1st for programs participating in a May cohort.
- April 1st for programs participating in a September cohort.

After this process is complete, the program is no longer participating in the cohort.

2.4.6 Unresponsive Programs

When programs sign a Bright & Early ND Participation Agreement and choose to participate in a Bright & Early ND cohort, they are agreeing to meet with their assigned RBPD Specialist and have continued communication thereafter. If a program becomes unresponsive, the assigned RBPD Specialist must attempt and record, at minimum, three (3) contacts with the program before informing the Bright & Early ND Team. If a program is unresponsive during the first 60 days of the cohort, their Bright & Early ND cohort participation will be ended.

2.5 Assessment Tools

Bright & Early ND utilizes the following assessment tools:

2.5.1 Environment Rating Scales® (ERS®)

The Environment Rating Scales are a series of reliable, valid, research-based observational tools designed to assess the quality of the environment. Bright & Early ND utilizes three scales, each designed for a different segment of the early childhood field.

- [Infant and Toddler Environment Rating Scale®, Third Edition \(ITERS-3™\)](#): This scale is designed to assess the quality of environments serving children birth to 36 months and is predominately used in infant and toddler classrooms located in a center. Observations using this scale will be conducted in 33% of randomly selected classrooms.
- [Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale®, Third Edition \(ECERS-3™\)](#): This scale is designed to assess the quality of environments serving children ages 3 to 5 and is predominately used in preschool classrooms located in a center. Observations using this scale will be conducted in 33% of randomly selected classrooms.
- [Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale®, Third Edition \(FCCERS-3™\)](#): This scale is designed to assess the quality of environments in family child care settings. One observation is conducted per family or group child care program. If the program separates by age groups, multiple observations may be conducted.

2.5.2 ERS Observation Process

Programs seeking a Step 2 Quality Rating are required to have a valid ERS observation conducted every 3 years. This is the observation process:

- Programs will complete an observation request by submitting the 'Program Quality Observation' application in their Growing Futures organization profile.
- The state contracted vendor for assessment services will be notified that an observation is needed and will contact programs within five (5) business days of receiving notice.
- Observations will be scheduled within a six (6) week timeframe.
- Programs will receive detailed summary report(s) within fifteen (15) business days of the completed observation.

2.5.3 ERS Observation Requirements

At minimum, at least 50% of the enrolled children must be present for majority of the observation.

2.5.4 ERS Observation Summary Report

The only evidence accepted for Quality Indicator SM.2 is the summary report(s) received from a Growing Futures approved RBPD Specialist with an ERS Assessor endorsement. Summary reports must be shared with the program within fifteen (15) business days of the completed observation.

2.5.5 Teaching Strategies GOLD®

GOLD is the authentic, ongoing, observation-based assessment system that helps teachers and administrators focus on what matters most for children's success. Programs will access GOLD online through MyTeachingStrategies™.

2.5.6 Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS®)

The CLASS is a research-based method of measuring, evaluating, and improving teacher-child interactions. Bright & Early ND utilizes three tools, each designed for a different segment of the early childhood field.

- [Infant CLASS](#): This tool is designed to assess effective teacher-child interactions in care environments serving children birth to 18 months.
- [Toddler CLASS](#): This tool is designed to assess effective teacher-child interactions in care environments serving children 19 to 35 months.
- [PreK CLASS](#): This tool is designed to assess effective teacher-child interactions in care environments serving children ages 3 to 5 years.

2.5.7 CLASS Observation Process

Programs seeking a Step 4 Quality Rating are required to have a valid CLASS observation conducted every 3 years. This is the observation process:

- Programs will complete an observation request by submitting the 'Program Quality Observation' application in their Growing Futures organization profile.
- The state contracted vendor for assessment services will be notified that an observation is needed and will contact programs within five (5) business days of receiving notice.
- Observations will be scheduled within a six (6) week timeframe.
- Programs will receive detailed summary report(s) within fifteen (15) business days of the completed observation.

2.5.8 CLASS Observation Requirements

At minimum, at least 1 child per classroom or group must be present for majority of the observation. For classrooms or groups serving mixed ages, the endorsed CLASS Assessor will determine which CLASS tool to use based on the majority of children present on the day of the observation.

2.5.9 CLASS Observation Summary Report

The only evidence accepted for Quality Indicator RI.1 is the summary report(s) received from a Growing Futures approved RBPD Specialist with a CLASS Assessor endorsement. Summary reports must be shared with the program within fifteen (15) business days of the completed observation.

Section 3: Data Use

3.1 Privacy of Children

3.1.1 Photos of Children

Programs are responsible for protecting the privacy of the children and families they serve. Photos that show identifying features of children (names and faces) should not be used as evidence.

3.2 Sharing Information About Quality Ratings

3.2.1 Sharing Quality Ratings

Quality Ratings are not shared until the Quality Rating status is finalized, indicated by the status of 'Active' in the Insight data system, otherwise known as Growing Futures. Any persons working with a Bright & Early ND case should instruct program staff to log into Growing Futures for updates regarding the program's Quality Rating status.

3.3 Data Release

3.3.1 Program Consent

By signing the Participation Agreement, you are granting permission for Bright & Early ND staff to view your organization account in Growing Futures, including viewing the Learning Records of your staff. You are granting permission for Bright & Early ND staff to view the:

- Organization account of your program
- Learning Records of your staff, if applicable.

3.3.2 Sharing Information

By signing the Participation Agreement, you are granting permission for the North Dakota Department of Human Services to share your information with:

- Contractors who need this information to do their jobs
- Researchers conducting evaluations of Bright & Early ND and related programs.

The following data may be shared with the aforementioned agencies and contractors:

- All data submitted, on paper or via the Insight database, related to your program's Bright & Early ND participation and Bright & Early ND Quality Standards Inventory, including all information in your Growing Futures organization account
- All data collected about the supports your program and staff received, both financial and otherwise, during Bright & Early ND participation
- Data on ERS® observations, CLASS® observations, scores, and summary reports, if applicable.

3.3.3 Making Information Public

By signing the Participation Agreement, you are granting permission for the North Dakota Department of Human Services to make certain information about your program publicly available on the Bright & Early ND website. The following data about your program will be made public:

- Your program's name, address, contact person, phone number, website, and email address.
- Your program's participation status in Bright & Early ND and current Quality Rating.
- Your program's accreditation status.
- The date on which your Quality Rating was issued and the date on which it will expire.

3.4 Data Retention

3.4.1 Data retention items

Certain documents must be retained for six years and then destroyed, including:

- Bright & Early ND Application documentation (paper or electronic applications or Participation Agreements)
- Change In Cohort Request Forms
- Quality Standards Inventory evidence that is not maintained in the Insight database
- Appeal documentation

A program's Bright & Early ND Quality Rating history is maintained in the Insight database.

For any records not indicated, please confirm with the North Dakota Department of Human Services contract manager before destruction to ensure all state policies are followed.

Section 4: Revocation

The North Dakota Department of Human Services may revoke a Bright & Early ND Quality Rating or end participation in Bright & Early ND due to certain changes in licensing status.

4.1 Licensing Actions

4.1.1 Correction Orders

The license has been issued a correction order due to violations of licensing requirements. The license holder may continue to operate however may experience fiscal sanctions or other outcomes until the license is brought into compliance. The following high-level violations will be investigated by Bright & Early ND.

- Inappropriate or Unsafe infant sleep or care practices,
- Inappropriate discipline used,
- Putting children in imminent danger,
- Multiple and/or serious fire, health, or safety hazards present,
- Unsafe supervision,
- Staff to child ratio is out of compliance.

Correction Orders During the Quality Rating Process

During the Quality Rating process, the QRIS Validation Specialist will review the program's license history. If the program has had any high-level licensing violations within the last six (6) months they will not be eligible for Bright & Early ND and participation will be ended.

Correction Orders After Quality Rating Issued

Once a Quality Rating has been issued, the QRIS Validation Specialist will review the program's license history monthly. If the program has had any high-level licensing violations within the month the program's Quality Rating will be placed 'On Hold' until further review. The program may be required to complete a Reflective Action Plan while 'On Hold'.

4.1.2 Fiscal Sanctions

This type of licensing action does not disqualify a program from participating in Bright & Early ND.

4.1.3 Provisional License

The license has been placed under provisional status and the holder may continue operating under special terms. This type of license does not disqualify a program from participating in Bright & Early ND.

4.1.4 Restricted License

The license has been placed under restricted status and the holder may continue operating under special terms. This type of license does not disqualify a program from participating in Bright & Early ND.

4.1.5 Revocation of License

Revocation means the license has been taken away due to serious or chronic licensing violations.

Revocation- Under Appeal

The license has been revoked due to serious or chronic violations of licensing requirements. The license holder has appealed and may continue to operate. The program's Quality Rating will be placed 'On Hold' during the appeal process.

Revocation

The license has been revoked due to serious or chronic violations of licensing requirements. The license holder may not operate. The Bright & Early ND Quality is revoked or participation is ended.

4.1.6 Suspension of License

Suspension of license requires the license holder to stop operating.

Suspended

The license has been suspended due to violations of licensing requirements. The license holder may not operate until they meet certain conditions. Once conditions are met, the suspension may be lifted by the North Dakota Department of Human Services, allowing the program to begin operating again. The program's Quality Rating will be placed 'On Hold' while under suspension.

4.2 Change In Licensing

Bright & Early ND Participation and Quality Ratings are based on programs meeting health and safety requirements through child care licensing. When a program's licensing status or entity changes, participation is may be impacted.

4.2.1 Closed

When a program's license is closed, the Bright & Early ND Quality Rating is revoked or participation is ended.

4.2.2 Expired

When a program's license is expired, the Bright & Early ND Quality Rating is revoked or participation is ended. The QRIS Validation Specialist will monitor an expired license for 90 days and reinstate a program's Bright & Early ND participation or Quality Rating if the license status changes to 'Active'

4.2.3 Change In Location

When a participating or Quality Rated program changes location, there is no change to the program's Bright & Early ND Quality Rating or participation status.

4.3 Change In Accreditation

The Alternate Pathway for licensed child care and early education programs is based on the program meeting the standards of an approved accrediting body, as verified through their accreditation status. Therefore, accreditations that expire during the Quality Rating process, or once the Quality Rating has been issued, result in loss of eligibility for the Alternate Pathway process or the revocation of Quality Rating, respectively.

4.3.1 Expired During the Quality Rating Process

During the Quality Rating process, the QRIS Validation Specialist will request current accreditation verification. If the accreditation of a child care program has expired, the Quality Rating will not be processed or issued. The program has the option to pursue a Quality Rating through the Full Quality Rating Pathway.

4.3.2 Expired After Quality Rating Issued

If an accreditation of a child care program expires, and a new certificate confirming current accreditation is not received from the program within 30 business days of the accreditation

expiration date, the Quality Rating is revoked and the program's Quality Rating is removed from the Bright & Early ND website. The program has the option to pursue a Quality Rating through the Full Quality Rating Pathway, or a Quality Rating through the Alternate Pathway once it receives its new accreditation certificate.

4.3.3 Accreditation Revoked by Accrediting Body

If an accrediting body revokes the accreditation of a Quality Rated or participating program, the Quality Rating will be revoked, or Bright & Early ND participation ended. The program must inform the North Dakota Department of Human Services, by email, of the change in accreditation status within 30 days of the date that the accreditation was revoked.

Section 5: Insight Data System

5.1 Growing Futures

5.1.1 Requirements

The Insight Data System, otherwise known as Growing Futures, is an online- and email-based data system, a tool for professional development and quality improvement that supports child care and early education programs.

Programs are required to use Growing Futures to earn a Bright & Early ND Quality Rating. There are many features of Growing Futures that programs are not required to use but have the option to use during participation.

The Bright & Early ND Team will communicate with programs only through email during the Quality Rating process. The email address associated with the program's Organization Account will be used. To update the email address, programs log into Growing Futures via their Individual Profile to access the Organization Account and update the contact information.

5.1.2 Organization Account

All programs must register their Organization Account in Growing Futures. This must be done prior to verifying employees.

5.1.3 Current Individual Membership

For a program seeking a Quality Rating, the Program Director, all Lead Teachers, and/or all Lead Caregivers must have a current Individual Membership in Growing Futures as of the Quality Standards Inventory submission date. Membership status date must not be expired and the membership status must be current. The expiration date is displayed on the summary page of the Individual Profile and on the individual's Learning Record.

5.1.4 Verifying Employment

The Program Director, all Lead Teachers, and/or all Lead Caregivers must have accurate employment records, meaning that the individual accurately identifies their employer by license number, by using the Employment tab on their Individual Profile in Growing Futures.

The organization must verify the employment of the Program Director, all Lead Teachers, and/or all Lead Caregivers.

5.1.5 Classrooms Tab

All programs must make sure the Classrooms tab in Growing Futures is accurate and up to date at the time of the Quality Standards Inventory submission. The program must assign one Lead Teacher and/or Lead Caregiver to each group or classroom created in the Classrooms tab. The number of groups or classrooms created must match the total number listed in the Enrollment section.

5.2 Relationship-Based Professional Development

5.2.1 Types of Relationship-Based Professional Development

Relationship-based professional development (RBPDP) is support focused on learning through one-on-one interactions between practitioners and coaches, specialists, and advisors. The goal of this type of individualized support is to improve outcomes for children by increasing the practitioner's knowledge and skills. RBPDP Specialists provide practitioners with competency-based expert guidance and customized support to foster professional growth and career achievement. More information about the various types of RBPDP Specialists can be found at <https://www.ndgrowingfutures.org/rbpd-specialists>.

5.2.2 Relationship-Based Professional Development approval

The Growing Futures Registry administers a statewide approval system for RBPB Specialists. Individuals interested in RBPB approval must be current members of the Registry with a complete professional profile that includes all education, certifications, and other professional qualifications, and employment verification. Training or preparation required for the endorsement must be verified on the Growing Futures Learning Record prior to approval. The application for RBPB Specialist approval is found on the summary tab of the individual Registry account. Approval is for a 12-month period, after which approval must be renewed.

RBPB Specialists are approved in a variety of endorsements, or areas of specialization. An RBPB Specialist must be authorized in one or more endorsement areas before they can be assigned to provide support to the Early Childhood workforce.

5.3 Leadership Roles Defined

5.3.1 Program 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 organization profile, under the Classrooms tab.

5.3.2 Lead Teacher for Licensed Preschool or Child Care Centers

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 person 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.

5.3.3 Lead Caregiver for Licensed Family or Group Child Care Programs

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 organization profile, under the Classrooms tab.

In a Large Group Child Care Program, the Lead Caregivers include the individual listed on the Group program license and any additional employees that oversee a specific classroom or group of children. A Large Group Child Care program must identify a minimum of two Lead Caregivers.

Section 6: Professional Development

6.1 Definitions

Bright & Early ND has adopted the following framework and definitions from the *Early Childhood Education: Professional Development Training and Technical Assistance Glossary*, jointly developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) in 2011.

6.1.1 Early Childhood Education Professional Development

Early Childhood Education Professional Development is a continuum of learning and support activities designed to prepare individuals for work with and on behalf of young children and their families, as well as ongoing experiences to enhance this work. These opportunities lead to improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of early education professionals. Professional development encompasses education, training, and technical assistance.

6.1.2 Training

Training is a learning experience, or series of experiences, specific to an area of inquiry and related set of skills or dispositions, delivered by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills. A planned sequence of training sessions comprises a training program.

6.1.3 Technical Assistance

Technical Assistance (TA) is the provision of targeted and customized supports by a professional(s) with subject matter and adult learning knowledge and skills to develop or strengthen processes, knowledge application, or implementation of services by recipients.

6.2 Training

6.2.1 Growing Futures Approved Training

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.

6.2.2 Training Time Frame

To meet Bright & Early ND training requirements, Program Directors, Lead Teachers and/or Lead Caregivers must have completed all training and coursework within ten (10) years of the date the program submits for Quality Rating review.

6.3 Types of Technical Assistance

Child care and early education programs participating in Bright & Early ND make the greatest improvements when they have access to training, professional development opportunities, and specialized technical assistance. The purpose of technical assistance in the QRIS is to improve the use of best practices in early care and education programs. Programs will receive technical assistance pre- and post- Quality Rating.

6.3.1 Coaching

Coaching is a relationship-based process led by an expert with specialized and adult learning knowledge and skills, who often serves in a different professional role than the recipient(s). Coaching is designed to build capacity for specific professional dispositions, skills, and behaviors and is focused on goal setting and achievement for an individual or group.

6.3.2 Consultation

Consultation is a collaborative, problem-solving process between an external consultant with specific expertise and adult learning knowledge and skills and an individual or group from one program or

organization. Consultation facilitates the assessment and resolution of an issue-specific concern—a program-/organizational-, staff-, or child-/family-related issue—or addresses a specific topic.

6.4 Step 1 Technical Assistance

6.4.1 Duration

Technical assistance can occur at any point in time from the application acceptance date up until the Quality Rating issue date.

6.4.2 Delivery

Technical assistance can be delivered via onsite (in-person), email, phone, or video.

6.4.3 Frequency

A minimum of one (1) contact per month, with no more than three (3) months of technical assistance.

6.4.4 Accountability

The assigned RBPD Specialist(s) will document all technical assistance events in Growing Futures. RBPD events should be entered into Growing Futures by the 5th day of the following month.

6.5 Step 2-4 Technical Assistance

6.5.1 Duration

Technical assistance can occur at any point in time from the start of the Bright & Early ND cohort up until the Quality Rating issue date, except on the day(s) a formal observation is conducted by an endorsed ERS® or CLASS® Assessor.

6.5.2 Delivery

Technical assistance can be delivered via onsite (in-person), email, phone, or video.

6.5.3 Frequency

A minimum of two (2) hours per month, with no more than half (.5) an hour delivered via email.

6.5.4 Accountability

The assigned RBPD Specialist(s) will document all technical assistance events in Growing Futures. RBPD events should be entered into Growing Futures by the 5th day of the following month.

6.6 Maintaining Quality Technical Assistance

6.6.1 Duration

Technical assistance can occur at any point in time from the Quality Rating issue date up until the program has been accepted into a Bright & Early ND cohort; the expiration date of the Quality Rating has passed; or revocation of the Quality Rating has occurred.

6.6.2 Delivery

Technical assistance can be delivered via onsite (in-person), email, phone, or video.

6.6.3 Frequency

A minimum of one (1) hour quarterly, with no more than half (.5) an hour delivered via email.

6.6.4 Accountability

The assigned RBPD Specialist(s) will document all technical assistance events in Growing Futures. RBPD events should be entered into Growing Futures by the 5th day of the following month.

Acronyms Used in Bright & Early ND

A4X	Aim4Excellence Center Director Credential
CACFP	Child and Adult Care Food Program
CCDBG	Child Care Development Block Grant
CCDF	Child Care Development Fund
CDA	Child Development Associate
CLASS®	Classroom Assessment Scoring System®
COA	Council on Accreditation
COP	Community of Practice
DAP	Developmentally Appropriate Practice
DHS	Department of Human Services
DPI	Department of Public Instruction
ECEC	Early Childhood Education Council
ECERS-3™	Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Third Edition®
EHS	Early Head Start
ERS®	Environment Rating Scales®
FCCERS-3™	Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale, Third Edition®
HS	Head Start
ITERS-3™	Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Third Edition®
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTSS	Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
NAC	National Accreditation Commission for Early Care & Education Programs
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NAFCC	National Association of Family Child Care
PM	Pyramid Model
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
QRIS	Quality Rating and Improvement System
QSI	Quality Standards Inventory
RAP	Reflective Action Plan
TA	Technical Assistance
TPITOS	The Pyramid Infant Toddler Observation Scale
TPOT	The Pyramid Observation Tool