

10A NCAC 09 .3205 CLASSROOM AND INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY PATHWAY FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS

(a) This Rule shall apply to child care centers that choose to earn two through five star rated license using the classroom and instructional quality licensure pathway.

(b) As used in this Rule, "educators" shall mean teachers, group leaders, and administrative staff, including directors, assistant directors, program coordinators, education coordinators, curriculum specialists, and other staff that have responsibility for planning, caregiving, mentoring or training on-site in a child care center. Educators shall meet the education standards of a position as set forth in Rules .3211, .3213, .3214, .3214, .3216 and .3218 of this Section and work full-time. If a program operates less than forty hours per week, full-time shall mean the hours the program is in operation.

(c) For a child care center to earn a two-star rated license, the following requirements shall be met:

- (1) The child care center shall meet either the enhanced ratio requirements set forth in Rule .3208 of this Section or the enhanced space requirements set forth in Rule .3210 of this Section.
- (2) A least fifty percent of lead teachers and at least fifty percent of educators shall meet the individual education standards at the two-star level as set forth in Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section or higher.
- (3) The child care center shall implement the family and community engagement foundational practices set forth in Rule .3219 of this Section.
- (4) The child care center shall implement the continuous quality improvement standards set forth in Rule .3221 of this Section.
- (5) The child care center shall implement a curriculum for all ages served that is:
 - (A) aligned with the North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development;
 - (B) child focused;
 - (C) developmentally appropriate; and
 - (D) culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- (6) In curriculum planning, the child care center shall ensure modifications and adaptations are made to involve all children with special health and developmental needs.

(d) For a child care center to earn a three-star rated license, the following requirements shall be met:

- (1) The child care center shall meet either the enhanced ratio requirements set forth in Rule .3208 of this Section or the enhanced space requirements set forth in Rule .3210 of this Section.
- (2) At least fifty percent of the lead teachers and fifty percent of the educators shall meet the individual education standards at the three-star level as set forth in Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section or higher.
- (3) The child care center shall implement the family and community engagement standards set forth in Rule .3219 of this Section for a three-star rated license.
- (4) The child care center shall implement continuous quality improvement standards set forth in Rule .3221 of this Section.
- (5) The child care center shall implement a curriculum for all ages served that is:
 - (A) aligned with the North Carolina Foundations for Early Learning and Development;
 - (B) child focused;
 - (C) developmentally appropriate; and
 - (D) culturally and linguistically appropriate.
- (6) In curriculum planning, the child care center shall ensure modifications and adaptations are made to involve all children with special health and developmental needs.
- (7) The child care center shall ensure child observations are conducted for each child enrolled in the facility. Child observations shall include evidence of the child's activities and may include the following:
 - (A) anecdotal notes;
 - (B) portfolio of child's work samples;
 - (C) developmental screenings
 - (D) formative assessment tools; or
 - (E) photographs, audio, or video recordings with permission from the child's family.
- (8) The administrator participates in one of the following activities regarding classroom and instructional quality practices:

- (A) annual completion of five hours of coaching or mentoring by another administrator of a licensed child care center with a star rating of three stars or higher, or a community resource partner;
 - (B) annual completion of five on-going training hours, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter and Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section; or
 - (C) annual completion of 0.5 continuing education unit, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter and Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section.
- (e) For a child care center to earn a four-star rated license, the following requirements shall be met:
- (1) The child care center shall meet the enhanced ratio requirements set forth in Rule .3208 of this Section. The child care center may choose to meet the enhanced space requirements set forth in Rule .3210 of this Section.
 - (2) At least fifty percent of lead teachers and at least fifty percent of educators shall meet the individual education standards at the four-star level as set forth in Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section or higher.
 - (3) The child care center shall implement the family and community engagement standards set forth in Rule .3219 of this Section for a four-star license.
 - (4) The child care center shall implement the continuous quality improvement standards set forth in Rule .3221 of this Section.
 - (5) The child care center shall implement a curriculum that has been approved by the Commission as defined in Rule .0102(11) of this Chapter for all ages served. A list of curricula that has been approved by the Commission is available at <http://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Services/Licensing/Star-Rated-License/Curriculum>.
 - (6) In curriculum planning, the child care center shall ensure modifications and adaptations are made to involve all children with special health and developmental needs.
 - (7) The child care center shall conduct on-going formative assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development based on individual development and learning needs and maintain evidence of each child's on-going assessment. The child care center shall use a formative assessment(s) that has been approved by the Commission, available at <https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Services/Licensing/Star-Rated-License/Curriculum>. Evidence of formative assessments shall include documentation required or contemplated by the approved formative assessment and may also include:
 - (A) anecdotal notes;
 - (B) portfolio of child's work samples;
 - (C) developmental screenings; or
 - (D) photographs, audio, or video recordings with permission from the child's family.
 - (8) The lead teacher shall share the results of the formative assessment with families at least once annually. The manner in which the results are shared shall be convenient for the family such as by telephone, email, virtually, or in-person.
 - (9) The administrator shall complete training related to the approved curriculum and formative assessment tool that is used by center staff with children, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter. Verification of this training shall be maintained in the administrator's personnel file.
 - (10) The administrator shall participate in one of the following activities regarding classroom and instructional quality practices:
 - (A) annual completion of five hours of coaching or mentoring by another administrator of a licensed child care facility with a star-rating of four or five stars or a community resource partner;
 - (B) annual completion of five on-going training hours, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter and Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section; or
 - (C) annual completion of 0.5 continuing education unit, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter and Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section.

- (11) All lead teachers shall participate in one of the following activities regarding classroom and instructional quality practices:
 - (A) annual completion of five hours of coaching or mentoring by the administrator, another lead teacher in the center, a lead teacher in another licensed child care center with a star-rating of four or five stars, an administrator of another licensed child care center with a star-rating of four or five stars, or a community resource partner;
 - (B) annual completion of five on-going training hours, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter and Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section; or
 - (C) annual completion of 0.5 continuing education unit, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter and Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section.
- (f) For a child care center to earn a five-star rated license, the following requirements shall be met:
 - (1) The child care center shall meet the reduced, enhanced ratio requirements set forth in Rule .3209 of this Section. The child care center may choose to meet the enhanced space requirements set forth in Rule .3210 of this Section.
 - (2) At least fifty percent of lead teachers and at least fifty percent of educators shall meet the individual education standards at the five-star level as set forth in Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section, or higher.
 - (3) The child care center shall implement the family and community engagement standards set forth in Rule .3219 of this Section for a five-star rated license.
 - (4) The child care center shall implement the continuous quality improvement standards set forth in Rule .3221 of this Section.
 - (5) The child care center shall implement a curriculum that has been approved by the Commission as defined in Rule .0102(11) of this Chapter for all ages served. A list of curricula that has been approved by the Commission is available at <https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Services/Licensing/Star-Rated-License/Curriculum>.
 - (6) In curriculum planning, the child care center shall ensure modifications and adaptations are made to involve all children with special health and developmental needs.
 - (7) The child care center shall conduct on-going formative assessments to gather information about each child's growth and skill development based on individual development and learning needs and maintain evidence of each child's on-going assessment. The child care center shall use a formative assessment(s) that has been approved by the Commission, available at <http://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Services/Licensing/Star-Rated-License/Curriculum>. Evidence of formative assessments shall include documentation required or contemplated by the approved formative assessment and may also include:
 - (A) anecdotal notes;
 - (B) portfolio of child's work samples;
 - (C) developmental screenings; or
 - (D) photographs, audio, or video recordings with permission from the child's family.
 - (8) The lead teacher shall share the results of the formative assessment with families at least twice annually. While sharing the results, the lead teacher shall provide an opportunity for families to contribute additional information to the formative assessment. The manner in which the results are shared shall be convenient for the family such as by telephone, email, virtually, or in-person.
 - (9) The administrator and all lead teachers shall complete training related to the curriculum and formative assessment tool that is used by the center with children, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter. Verification of this training shall be maintained in the individual's personnel file.
 - (10) The administrator participates in one of the following activities regarding classroom and instructional quality practices:
 - (A) annual completion of five hours of coaching or mentoring by an administrator of another licensed child care center with a star-rating of five stars, or a community resource partner;
 - (B) annual completion of five on-going training hours, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter and Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section; or

- (C) annual completion of 0.5 continuing education unit, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter and Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section.
- (11) All lead teachers participate in one of the following activities regarding classroom and instructional quality practices:
 - (A) annual completion of five hours of coaching or mentoring by the administrator, another lead teacher in the center, a lead teacher in another licensed child care center with a star-rating of five stars, an administrator of another licensed child care center with a star-rating of five stars, or a community resource partner;
 - (B) annual completion of five on-going training hours, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter and Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section; or
 - (C) annual completion of 0.5 continuing education unit, in addition to applicable requirements in Rule .1103 of this Chapter and Rules .3211, .3212, .3213, .3214, .3215, .3216 and .3218 of this Section.
- (g) For any child care center serving pre-school age children, the following shall also apply:
 - (1) Each child care center shall comply with the requirements set forth in Rule .0508 of this Chapter for written activity schedules and plans and Rule .0509 of this Chapter for general activity requirements;
 - (2) Each child care center shall comply with the requirements for activity areas for preschool-age children as set forth in Rule .0510 of this Chapter, except that all five of the activity areas listed in G.S. 110-91(12) shall be available each day and the activities listed in Rule .0510(c) of this Chapter shall be offered for each group of children at least once per week; and
 - (3) The requirements for activities for infants and toddlers set forth in Rule .0511 of this Chapter shall apply for children under three years of age.
- (h) For centers with a licensed capacity of two hundred or more, there shall be a second administrator on-site for a minimum of twenty hours per week who shall have the Level I North Carolina Early Childhood Administrator Credential or its approved equivalent.
- (i) For centers providing school-age care with two hundred or more school-aged children enrolled, there shall be two program coordinators on-site, one of whom shall not have concurrent group leader responsibilities. The additional program coordinator shall have completed all the applicable staff requirements in Rule .2510(b) of this Chapter.
- (j) The above requirements shall apply to centers located in a residence, as describes in Rule .0102 of this Chapter, except that the following shall apply when determining individual staff education standards:
 - (1) If the operator is the only lead teacher, the operator shall meet the individual education standards at the desired star level, as set forth in Rule .3212 of this Section, or higher.
 - (2) If additional lead teachers are employed by the operator, at least fifty percent of all lead teachers, including the operator, shall meet the individual education standard at the desired star level, as set forth in Rule .3212, or higher.

History Note: Authority G.S. 110-85(3); 110-88(7); 110-90(4); 143B-168.3, S.L. 2011-145, s.10.7(b) and (d); S.L. 2024-34; 42 USCS 9858e; 45 CFR 98.45; Eff. July 1, 2025.