Searching for the Stars

Knowing the requirements child care centers and family child care homes must meet to obtain a star rated license in North Carolina can help you determine the best place to enroll your child.

In October 1999, North Carolina began to implement a new method of licensing child care programs using a system of one to five stars to indicate the program's level of quality attainment. During 2000, the state's A and AA licensed child care programs were transitioned to star rated licenses which provide a way for families to separate programs that operate at minimum licensing standards (one star) and from those that exceed licensing standards (two – five stars).

The new star rated licensing system is based on points a program can receive in three categories: Program Standards, Staff Education and Compliance History.

A program can earn more points and receive additional stars on its license by achieving the following:

1. Providing a higher quality environment/program for children, and
2. Employing staff with additional training, education and/or experience in early education, and
3. Maintaining a high rate of compliance with the State's regulations for child care programs.

Once its application is fully processed, the program may receive additional stars on its license if it meet the requirements for a higher rating.

When visiting a child care program, ask to see a copy of its star rated license (which should be posted within easy view). The program's star rating will be displayed as solid black stars out of a line of five outlined stars. For example, a three star rated license program will have a license displaying three black stars and two outlined stars. A program with a five star rated license will have five black stars.

If the program you visit has a low star rating, ask about plans to increase its star rating in the future. You can refer to the points the program received to find out exactly where the program needs to improve in order to receive a higher star rated license. The following pages outline the Star Rated License points system. Programs can re-apply for a new rating every six months.

In addition to the program's star rating, the license will display the following information about the program:

- Name and address of the program
- Program identification number
- Type of facility
- Person to whom license was issued
- Age range allowed
- Effective date of the license
- License capacity (# of children allowed)
- License restrictions, if any
- A breakdown of the points the program earned for each rating category

To access these Tip Sheets, please visit www.childcareresourcesinc.org or call Child Care Search at 704-348-2181 to speak with a Parent Counselor.
## Rated License for Child Care Centers

Star rated licenses are awarded on a point system. Points are awarded to a center according to its level of attainment in each of three components – Program Standards, Education Standards and Compliance History. A program can receive up to five points in each component. The program’s star rating will be based on the total points received across all three components.

(ex. ABC Child Care Center receives 2 points for Program, 3 points for Education and 3 points for Compliance: 2 points + 3 points + 3 points = 8 points; 8 points = 3 stars)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points Awarded</th>
<th>Program Requirement</th>
<th>Education Requirement</th>
<th>Compliance History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1              | • Meets minimum licensing requirements in NC General Statute 110 and 10 NCAC 3U | Staff must meet minimum licensing requirements contained in NC General Statute 110-91(8) and 10 NCAC 3U.0700 which includes:  
  • On site child care administrator must have a Level I NCECAC or equivalent  
  • Lead teachers must have NCECC or equivalent | Compliance history rating of 60% or higher with requirements in the areas of supervision, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, health, safety, sanitation/fire/building, transportation, program management. |
| 2              | • Meets minimum licensing requirements, AND  
  • Meets all enhanced program standards requirements, except may meet enhanced ratio or enhanced space requirement | • On site child care administrator must meet minimum requirements and have a Level I NCECAC or equivalent and 2 years of full-time verifiable early childhood experience  
  • Lead Teachers all must meet minimum requirements and have the NCECC or equivalent; 75% must have or be enrolled in 3 semester hours in ECE/CD or have 1 year of full-time verifiable early childhood experience  
  • Teachers counted in the ratios all must meet minimum requirements, 50% must have 2 semester hours in ECE/CD or 1 year of full-time verifiable early childhood experience | Compliance history rating of 65% or higher with requirements in the areas of supervision, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, health, safety, sanitation/fire/building, transportation, program management. |
| 3              | • Meets minimum licensing requirements, AND  
  • Meets all enhanced minimum standards requirements, AND  
  • Minimum score of 4.0 on Environment Rating Scales that are applicable in each classroom evaluated | • On site child care administrator must meet minimum requirements and have a Level I NCECAC or equivalent and 6 semester hours in ECE/CD and at least 2 years of full-time verifiable early childhood experience. Centers with a licensed capacity of 200 or more must have a second on-site child care administrator who meets minimum requirements and has a Level I NCECAC or equivalent  
  • Lead teachers all must meet minimum requirements and have the NCECC or equivalent; 75% must have 3 semester hours in ECE/CD or 2 years of full-time verifiable early childhood experience  
  • Teachers counted in the ratios all must meet minimum requirements, 50% must have or be enrolled in the NCECC or equivalent or 4 semester hours in ECE/CD or 3 years of full-time verifiable early childhood experience | Compliance history rating of 70% or higher with requirements in the areas of supervision, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, health, safety, sanitation/fire/building, transportation, program management. |
| 4              | • Meets minimum licensing requirements, AND  
  • Meets all enhanced programs standards requirements, AND  
  • Minimum score of 4.5 on Environment Rating Scales that are applicable in each classroom evaluated | • On site child care administrator must meet minimum requirements and have a Level II NCECAC or equivalent and at least 2 years of full-time verifiable early childhood experience. Centers with a licensed capacity of 200 or more must have a second on-site child care administrator who meets minimum requirements and has a Level II NCECAC or equivalent  
  • Lead teachers all must meet minimum requirements and have the NCECC or equivalent; 75% must have 9 semester hours in ECE/CD and 2 years of full-time verifiable early childhood experience  
  • Teachers counted in the ratios all must meet minimum requirements, 50% must have the NCECC or equivalent or 4 semester hours in ECE/CD, or 5 years full-time verifiable early childhood experience | Compliance history rating of 75% or higher with requirements in the areas of supervision, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, health, safety, sanitation/fire/building, transportation, program management. |
| 5              | • Meets minimum licensing requirements, AND  
  • Meets all enhanced programs standards requirements, AND  
  • Staff/child ratio reduced by one child per age group. AND  
  • Minimum score of 5.0 on Environment Rating Scales that are applicable in each classroom evaluated | • On site child care administrator must meet minimum requirements and have a Level III NCECAC or equivalent and at least 4 years of full-time verifiable work experience teaching in an early childhood center or administrative experience (or combination of both). Centers with a licensed capacity of 200 or more must have a second on-site child care administrator who meets minimum requirements and has a Level III NCECAC or equivalent  
  • Lead teachers all must meet minimum requirements and have the NCECC or equivalent; 75% must have an AAS degree in ECE/CD or an AA degree in any major with 12 semester hours in ECE/CD, and 2 years of full-time verifiable early childhood work experience  
  • Teachers counted in the ratios all must meet minimum requirements, 50% must have the NCECC or equivalent and 4 semester hours in ECE/CD, and 2 years full-time verifiable early childhood work experience | Compliance history rating of 80% or higher with requirements in the areas of supervision, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, health, safety, sanitation/fire/building, transportation, program management. |

1 ITERS = Infant/Toddlers Environment Ratings Scale  
2 ECERS = Early Childhood Environment Ratings  
3 NCEAC = North Carolina Early Childhood Administrator Credential  
4 NCECC = North Carolina Early Childhood Credential  
5 ECECD = Early Childhood Education/Child Development
## Rated License for Family Child Care Homes

Star rated licenses are awarded on a point system. Points are awarded to a center according to its level of attainment in each of three components -- Program Standards, Education Standards and Compliance History. A program can receive up to five points in each component. The program’s star rating will be based on the total points received across all three components. (ex. Jane Doe’s family child care home receives 2 points for Program, 3 points for Education and 3 points for Compliance: 2 points + 3 points + 3 points = 8 points; 8 points = 3 stars)

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| 1              | Meets minimum licensing requirements in NC General Statute 110 and 10 NCAC 3U | Operator meets minimum licensing requirements contained in NC General Statute 110-91(8) and 10 NCAC 3U.1700 which includes:  
Be at least 21 years old (exempt if operating prior to 1-1-98)  
Must have a high school diploma or equivalent (exempt if operating prior to 1-1-98)  
Must take 12 hours of annual in-service training (8 hours if 10 years of experience or more) | Compliance history rating of 60% or higher with requirements in the areas of supervision, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, health, safety, sanitation/fire/building, transportation, program management. |
| 2              | Meets minimum licensing requirements, AND Has written operational policies | Operator meets minimum licensing requirements, plus:  
Have completed the NC Family Child Care Credential or equivalent, OR  
Have completed at least 4 semester credit hours of ECE/CD2, OR  
Have at least 10 years of full-time verifiable early childhood work experience and completed 6 additional in-service hours annually (total of 14 clock hours annually) | Compliance history rating of 65% or higher with requirements in the areas of supervision, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, health, safety, sanitation/fire/building, transportation, program management. |
| 3              | Meets minimum licensing requirements, AND Has written operational policies, AND Minimum score of 4.0 on FDCRS\(^1\), OR is nationally accredited | Operator meets minimum licensing requirements, plus:  
Have completed the NC Family Child Care Credential or equivalent and have completed 3 additional semester credit hours in ECE/CD\(^2\) and have 1 year full-time verifiable early childhood work experience - OR - have completed the NC Family Child Care Credential or equivalent and 5 years full-time verifiable early childhood work experience, OR  
Have completed at least 6 semester credit hours of ECE/CD\(^2\) AND have 1 year full-time verifiable early childhood work experience, OR  
Have an A.A.S. or B.A. in any major with at least 6 semester credit hours in ECE/CD\(^2\) AND have 6 months of full-time verifiable early childhood work experience, OR  
Have an A.A.S. or B.A. in ECE/CD\(^2\) AND have 3 months of full-time verifiable early childhood work experience | Compliance history rating of 70% or higher with requirements in the areas of supervision, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, health, safety, sanitation/fire/building, transportation, program management. |
| 4              | Meets minimum licensing requirements, AND Has written operational policies, AND Is a member of professional organization, AND Minimum score of 4.5 on FDCRS\(^1\), OR is nationally accredited | Operator meets minimum licensing requirements, plus:  
Have completed the NC Family Child Care Credential or equivalent; AND have completed 6 additional semester credit hours in ECE/CD\(^2\) AND have 2 years full-time verifiable early childhood work experience, OR  
Have completed at least 9 semester credit hours of ECE/CD\(^2\) AND have 2 years full-time verifiable early childhood work experience, OR  
Have an A.A.S. or B.A. in any major with at least 9 semester credit hours in ECE/CD\(^2\) AND have 18 months of full-time verifiable early childhood work experience, OR  
Have an A.A.S. or B.A. in ECE/CD\(^2\) AND have 1 year of full-time verifiable early childhood work experience | Compliance history rating of 75% or higher with requirements in the areas of supervision, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, health, safety, sanitation/fire/building, transportation, program management. |
| 5              | Meets minimum licensing requirements, AND Has written operational policies, AND Member of professional organization, AND Maximum 3 children under age one enrolled | Operator meets minimum licensing requirements, plus:  
Have an A.A.S. or B.A. in any major with 12 semester credit hours of ECE/CD\(^2\) AND have 2 years full-time verifiable early childhood work experience, OR  
Have an A.A.S. or B.A. in ECE/CD\(^2\) AND have 18 months of full-time verifiable early childhood work experience | Compliance history rating of 80% or higher with requirements in the areas of supervision, staff/child ratios, staff qualifications, health, safety, sanitation/fire/building, transportation, program management. |

\(^1\)FDCRS = Family Day Care Rating Scale  \(^2\)Early Childhood Education/Child Development  \(^3\)No substantiations of abuse or neglect by either the Division of Child Development or the local department of social services