Gold Seal Quality Care Program
Review Process and Procedures

Purpose

The Gold Seal Quality Care Program (Gold Seal) described in section 402.281, Florida Statutes, and Department rule recognizes child care facilities and family child care homes which comply with child care licensing requirements and which are accredited by an approved accrediting association with standards that reflect high-quality child care practices. The Department's Gold Seal accreditation standards are based on standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), and the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation Commission (NECPA). Organizations seeking approval to be Gold Seal accrediting associations must apply to the Department and satisfy criteria established in rule 65C-22.009 and 65C-20.014, Florida Administrative Code. This review process is the means through which the Department consults with the stakeholders identified in section 402.281, Florida Statutes, to evaluate applications to become an approved Gold Seal accrediting association.

The Review Team

The Department will utilize review teams to evaluate applications for approval as a Gold Seal accrediting association. Each review team will include no less than five reviewers from those entities and groups identified in section 402.281, Florida Statutes.

Reviewer Qualifications

Reviewers must be early childhood professionals who meet at least one of the following qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree in early childhood education, child development, or a related field.
- Minimum four years of experience in the early childhood field, and at least two years of the four must be experience in administration.
- Have experience with the accreditation process in at least one of the following ways:
    (a) Served as an administrator of an accredited program.

(b) Served as a validator for an accrediting organization.

(c) Served in an accrediting organization.

(d) Served as a consultant to programs seeking accreditation.

(e) Assisted with the development of accreditation guidelines.

Reviewer Agreements

Each team member must agree to review applications in accordance with the following conditions:

1. Review each Gold Seal application and any supporting documentation in their entirety;
2. Complete the Reviewer Attestation Statement
3. Complete evaluation instrument provided for each applicant within the timeline (minimum of 30 days);
4. Follow the evaluation instrument and process instructions;
5. Maintain confidentiality of the application materials and the review process;
6. Participate in a consensus meeting if ratings vary greatly between reviewers; and,
7. Disclose any conflict of interest with regard to an application provided for review.

Conflict of interest can occur if the reviewer, a member of the reviewer's immediate family, or a business partner has financial interests in any accrediting association; plans to obtain a financial interest in an accrediting association; has accepted gratuities, favors, or anything of monetary value from an accrediting association; has been employed by an accrediting association within the last 24 months; plans to seek or accept future employment with an accrediting association; or is predisposed to favor or disfavor a particular accrediting association for reasons other than the merits of the application.

The Review Process

The Department's contractor will perform an initial review of each application to ensure the application is complete and meets minimum requirements established in rule.

Completed applications must include the following supporting documents:

- Articles of Incorporation,
- Verification status of corporation (sunbiz.org print out),
- Standard Crosswalk Document,
- Self Study, Teacher Assessment,
- Administrative Assessment,
- Family Assessment,
- Validation Process, and
- Renewal Process.

Applications and supporting documents shall be submitted by the applicant to the Department's designated contractor.

Incomplete applications or applications not meeting minimum requirements established in rule, will be returned to the applicant with recommendations for revision.

Applications which are complete and which meet minimum requirements will be forwarded to review team members for evaluation. Once the individual reviews are completed, the rating sheets and supporting documentation will be returned to the Department's contractor to determine the overall assessment score. After calculating the overall assessment score, the Department's contractor will provide the Department a letter which relates the score, summarizes any issues pertinent to the approval criteria, and makes a recommendation concerning the application. The Department will make the final determination on all applications. The Department will advise applicants, in writing, whether the application has been approved or disapproved.

Rating Guidelines

The Gold Seal Reviewer Rating Scales for both Facility and Home Based programs have been designed to assess the degree to which the applicant's accreditation standards meet or exceed the Department's Gold Seal Accreditation Standards.

The evaluation instruments are based on a set of standards and indicators.

- ***Standards*** are the broad topic/subject areas for which the child care industry has established benchmarks for high-quality programs. *Health and Safety* is an example of a standard.

- ***Indicators*** are the specific, measurable and observable benchmarks which are used to measure performance under the standards. Each standard has a set of indicators which define the standard and set parameters for its evaluation. *Children are under adult supervision at all times* is an example of an indicator.

- Ratings should be assigned in the following manner:
    1. **Not Met (NM)** means:
        - There is no evidence of the relevant indicator documented in the application; or,
        - Evidence of the indicator is found but it does not meet the criteria to be scored as "Substantially Met/Exceed" the appropriate benchmark in the Department's Gold Seal accreditation standard.
    2. **Substantially Met or Exceed (SM/E)** means:
        - The application documentation does not fully and completely meet the relevant indicator, but so nearly meets the indicator that it would be unfair to score it as Not Met; or,
        - The application documentation exceeds the requirements of the relevant indicator.

3. **Not Applicable (NA)** should be selected when the indicator is not relevant to the application. For example, if the applicant does not accredit school-age programs, the indicator for school-age ***ratio***s would be scored NA. Any indicator rated as NA must include an explanation as to why the indicator is not relevant to the application. NA scores are not included in the scoring of each section.

The rating for each indicator also depends on whether the information in the application consists of a single statement or multiple statements.

- If the application addresses an indicator with a single statement, judge the statement on its own merit and choose whether it is Not Met, Substantially Met/Exceeded, or Not Applicable.

- If the application addresses an indicator with multiple statements which may meet some subparts of an indicator while not meeting others, the indicator may be rated Substantially Met/Exceeded, only if at least 85% of the subparts are rated Substantially Met/Exceeded.

After all indicators for a particular standard are rated, the Reviewer will tally the checkmarks in that section and record the total in the appropriate box.

Reviewers must:

- Review the entire evaluation instrument carefully before attempting to rate an application. All ratings should be based on the descriptions of the indicators as provided in the evaluation instrument after careful review of the applicant's materials.
- Ensure that a rating is not offered arbitrarily. Reviewers must note any indicators which are not clearly addressed in the application documentation.
- Place check marks in the appropriate column for each and every indicator on the evaluation instrument.
- For each indicator, identify the document and page number in the application where relevant material was found.

- Identify any indicator scored as Not Met (NM) for the reason that no relevant material could be found in the application.

Scoring and Determination of Approval

Each of the **14 broad standards for Facilities and 7 broad standards for Homes** will be scored separately. The standards are:

Facilities - Ratio and Group Size, Teacher and Staff Qualifications, Staff Training and Professional Development, Director Requirements, Curriculum Implementation, Learning Environment, Social Development, Literacy Support, Health and Safety, Teacher-Child Interactions, Program Operations, Family Interactions, Validation Process, Renewal Process

Homes – Provider Eligibility, Environment, Developmental Learning Activities, Health and Safety, Professional and Business Practices, Validation Process, Renewal Process

After completed evaluation instruments for an application are received from the participating reviewers, the Department's contractor will calculate the application's overall compliance percentage, first, by determining the compliance percentage for each broad standard as scored by each reviewer, then averaging all compliance percentages for that applicant for each reviewer and, finally, by averaging the average compliance percentages for that applicant among all reviewers. For example, if there were three broad standards and three reviewers:

Reviewer 1:

Compliance percentage for Standard 1:

$$\frac{\text{Indicators marked SM/E for Standard 1}}{\text{All Indicators for Standard 1}} = \%\text{ for Standard 1}$$

Compliance percentage for Standard 2:

$$\frac{\text{Indicators marked SM/E for Standard 2}}{} = \%\text{ for Standard 2}$$

All Indicators for Standard 2

Compliance percentage for Standard 3:

Indicators marked SM/E for Standard 3 = % for Standard 3

All Indicators for Standard 3

Overall Compliance % for Reviewer 1:

% for Standard 1 + % for Standard 2 + % for Standard 3 = Overall %

3

Reviewer 2:

Compliance percentage for Standard 1:

Indicators marked SM/E for Standard 1 = % for Standard 1

All Indicators for Standard 1

Compliance percentage for Standard 2:

Indicators marked SM/E for Standard 2 = % for Standard 2

All Indicators for Standard 2

Compliance percentage for Standard 3:

Indicators marked SM/E for Standard 3 = % for Standard 3

All Indicators for Standard 3

Overall Compliance % for Reviewer 2:

% for Standard 1 + % for Standard 2 + % for Standard 3 = Overall %

Reviewer 3:

Compliance percentage for Standard 1:

Indicators marked SM/E for Standard 1 = % for Standard 1

All Indicators for Standard 1

Compliance percentage for Standard 2:

$$\frac{\text{Indicators marked SM/E for Standard 2}}{\text{All Indicators for Standard 2}} = \%\text{ for Standard 2}$$

Compliance percentage for Standard 3:

$$\frac{\text{Indicators marked SM/E for Standard 3}}{\text{All Indicators for Standard 3}} = \%\text{ for Standard 3}$$

Overall Compliance % for Reviewer 3:

$$\frac{\%\text{ for Standard 1} + \%\text{ for Standard 2} + \%\text{ for Standard 3}}{3} = \text{Overall \%}$$

Overall Compliance % for Application:

$$\frac{\text{Overall \% Rev. 1} + \text{Overall \% Rev. 2} + \text{Overall \% Rev. 3}}{3} = \text{Overall Compliance \%}$$

If the initial analysis of scores reflects inconsistencies between reviewer scores for the same indicator(s), the contractor will notify the reviewers and schedule a group meeting to ensure variances are fully vetted. The group must work cooperatively in this process and come to a decision on indicators where some reviewers assigned scores of NM while others assigned scores of SM/E. The final decision must be one that can be supported by evidence provided with the application.

The Department's contractor will forward each evaluated application to the Department with a recommendation based on the overall compliance percentage. There are three possible recommendations: "Approved", "Resubmit with Revisions", or "Denied".

- Approved

  An application is **Approved** when it receives an overall compliance percentage of 85% or higher. .

- Resubmit with Revisions

  An applicant is invited to **Resubmit with Revisions** when the application receives an overall compliance percentage of 70% or higher but less than 85%. Under this

recommendation, the applicant may continue to work with the contractor toward a rating of 85% or higher for a period of six months. If the resubmitted documents do not reach an approval rating of 85% or higher, the applicant must wait until the next application acceptance period to restart the process by submitting a new application.

- Denied

An application is **Denied** when the applicant's overall compliance percentage is below 70%.

The Department will notify the applicant of the decision on the application.