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## Virginia's Quality Rating and Improvement System

A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a method to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings that families consider for their children. Virginia's Star Quality Initiative not only defines standards for early childhood education and creates a framework for accountability, but it also establishes a network of support and outreach for programs and practitioners. QRIS provides incentives linked to achieving and maintaining quality standards, and improves information available to parents. For more information on Virginia's QRIS please visit [www.smartbeginnings.org](http://www.smartbeginnings.org).

The Star Quality Initiative features four standard areas for programs, which will be rated on a five-star scale of increasing quality, like hotels or restaurants. The four standards in the Star Quality program are:

- Education, qualifications and training of staff
- Interactions between children and their teachers and peers using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
- Staff to child ratios and group size
- Program environment and instructional practices using the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-R).

These standards have been selected as a result of a thorough review of research and best practices in other states. A strong body of research suggests that early care and education programs that focus on improvements aligned with these four standards yield positive outcomes for children.

During the 2008-09 school year, divisions participating in Inclusive Placement Opportunities for Preschoolers (IPOP) initiative were asked to become part of a sub-pilot for Virginia's Star Quality Initiative, Quality Rating Improvement System. As you consider applying for assistance through the IPOP initiative, please consider the following.

IPOP teams will be asked to:

- Select a representative to become an IPOP QRIS rater. This person will be expected to attend a five-day training to become a reliable user of both the CLASS and ECERS-R, complete ratings visits at other IPOP sites as an objective observer, participate in inter-rater consistency checks to maintain reliability, and provide detailed feedback reports to programs and their assigned mentors.
- Select a representative to become an IPOP QRIS mentor to their program. Mentors are expected to attend a training course to become familiar with the QRIS process and the instruments utilized in the QRIS and to master consultative strategies to encourage quality improvement. Mentors are also expected to meet with Raters to discuss the outcome of their observations and regularly meet with directors and program staff to draft and implement a quality improvement plan (QIP). Mentors will complete regular contact reports related to the quality improvement plan.
- Have 1/3 of their inclusive classrooms observed by an IPOP QRIS rater. The rater cannot be an employee of your school division.