



Quality for ME-Maine's Early Care and Education Rating System Tips for Parents

What is a quality rating system?

- ★ Quality for ME is voluntary system for licensed child care providers to have their quality assessed on a 4-step rating scale. They must meet the requirements at each step before moving to a higher level. Every step is an important quality measure based on the following criteria:
 - Licensing history
 - Learning environment (daily schedule, activities planned, etc.)
 - Program evaluation (looking at strengths and weaknesses)
 - Staff development (training for staff)
 - Administrative policies and procedures (holiday closings, illness etc)
 - Family involvement (welcoming parents in the program)
 - Community resources (where to find other services to help families)
 - Child Observations (watching for children's interests and skills)

Why does Maine have a child care quality rating system?

- ★ To give you a simple tool to help recognize and choose quality child care.
- ★ To give Maine child care programs help in improving their quality.
- ★ To help Maine measure how well supports to child care programs are working.
- ★ To join other states across the nation in measuring and supporting quality child care for families

What do the ratings mean?

- ★ Step 1- This program is in good standing with child care licensing and all staff members have enrolled in the Child Care Provider Registry.
- ★ Step 2- This program has some policies, procedures, and staff qualifications that are above and beyond those required by child care licensing.
- ★ Step 3- This program has several policies, procedures, and staff qualifications above and beyond those required by licensing. These include: parent conferences, staff evaluations, and written daily communications for infants and toddlers.
- ★ Step 4- This program has received Maine's highest quality rating. This program has been accredited by a national organization, has staff with a high level of experience and education in early childhood education, and actively utilizes Maine's Early Learning Guidelines and/or Infant Toddler guidelines.

What are the benefits of choosing a Quality for ME program?

- ★ If your child care provider has received a Step 4 rating, you may be eligible for a double tax credit for child care expenses on your Maine Income Tax return.
- ★ The Quality for ME system can help you decide what factors are most important to your family when choosing child care.
- ★ Many of the programs enrolled in Quality for ME are working hard to improve their quality and their rating—these improvements support your child's development!

How can I find a Quality for ME program?

- ★ Your local Resource Development Center can provide free child care referrals. Staff members who make these referrals can help you find a Quality for ME program. You can contact your Resource Development Center by calling: 1-888-917-1100.

Where can I use my subsidy voucher?

- ★ If your child care provider is licensed by the State of Maine, they are required to join Quality for ME by June 27, 2009. They must enroll in the system, but are not required to reach any specific Step rating.
- ★ If your provider is not licensed, you can continue to use them for child care. These providers are not expected to join Quality for ME at this time.

What if my provider is not enrolled?

- ★ Ask your child care provider about Quality for ME and share this information with them.
- ★ Your child care provider may be too new to enroll! New providers are not eligible to join Quality for ME for their first 12 months of operation, and can receive a waiver to receive vouchers during this time.

How can my provider enroll?

- Your child care provider needs to enroll him or herself and all staff in the Maine Roads to Quality Provider Registry. If they need more information about this, they should call Priscilla Armstrong at 207-780-5846 or Eric Norgarrd at 207-780-4367. They can also join online at: <https://mrtq.musk.usm.maine.edu>
- Once enrolled in the MRTQ Provider Registry, your child care provider can apply for Quality for ME at <http://www.qualityforme.org/qcare/login.aspx>. If your child care provider needs a paper application, he or she should call 624-7909.

Who is available to answer questions about Quality for ME?

- ★ Our Website! <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/ec/occhs/qualityforme.htm>
- ★ Our staff! Kristen Slefinger at the Early Childhood Division, 624-7917 or kristen.slefinger@maine.gov