



Moving to the National Quality Framework: more information on assessment and rating in NSW

From 1 January 2012, all services will be given a rating under the National Quality Framework of 'provisional – not yet assessed'. They will keep this rating until they are actually assessed and rated against the National Quality Standard. The first assessment and rating cycle will start in April 2012, with the first assessment visits anticipated to be in mid June 2012.

The assessment and rating process will continue to be evaluated with the benefit of information from actual assessments. Quality ratings will only be published by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority when the evaluation is complete and the government Ministers responsible for the National Quality Framework are satisfied that the assessment and rating process is valid and reliable.



Quality improvement plans

The National Quality Framework requires every service provider to develop a quality improvement plan for each approved service that the provider operates.

The provider of a service which was approved *before* 1 January 2012 has until 30 April 2012 to develop the plan for the service. (The plan will not have to be submitted at that stage – see the schedule below.) Providers of services which are approved *on or after* 1 January 2012 will have three months from the date of the service approval to develop a plan.*

A guide to help providers develop quality improvement plans is on the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority website at: <http://acecqa.gov.au/research-and-publications/>.

Steps in the assessment and rating process

The commencement of the assessment and rating process in April 2012 will give providers and service educators time to familiarise themselves with the process and the National Quality Standard.

The first services to be assessed and rated will mostly be those which would have been due for assessment by the National Childcare Accreditation Council in early 2012.

The following schedule outlines the assessment and rating process. It includes opportunities for providers and educators to discuss with the officer doing the assessment how the service is performing against the National Quality Standard.

The provider will have 14 days after receiving a notice of the service's rating to ask for a review of the rating by the

*Services which are approved on or after 1 January 2012 need to submit their quality improvement plan to the regulatory authority within three months of receiving service approval.

STEP 1 START*

The provider will receive advice that the service is scheduled for assessment and rating and will be given information about the process. The provider will be asked to submit the service's quality improvement plan to the regulatory authority. The provider will have six weeks to submit the plan.

The officer who is doing the assessment will start an analysis of available information about the service, including the service's compliance history and NCAC accreditation history, where relevant.

STEP 2 WEEK 6

The provider will be notified that the quality improvement plan has been received and the date of the assessment visit to the service and given information about what will happen during the visit.

STEP 3 WEEK 12

The assessment visit will be conducted. Some on-the-spot feedback may be given. The provider may also be given the opportunity to make minor adjustments.

STEP 4 WEEK 15

The provider will be sent the draft assessment report including the proposed rating.

The provider will have the opportunity to comment on and discuss the report and ask for clarification. (Providers will generally have 10 working days to provide comments.)

STEP 5 WEEK 18

Any comments by the provider on the report will be considered by the regulatory authority.

STEP 6 WEEK 20

The report will be finalised and the final rating determined. The report will be sent to the provider.

* These timeframes reflect the minimum period of time involved in each step.

regulatory authority (the NSW Department of Education and Communities).

While the assessment and rating process is being evaluated, providers will not have to display services' ratings, and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority will not publish the ratings.

Display and publication of ratings will only be required after Ministers are satisfied that the assessment and rating process is valid and reliable. Providers and services will be given ample notice of this. (In the meantime, it would be a good idea for providers not to display their services' ratings in case they need to be changed in light of the results of the evaluation of the process.)

Transitional arrangements for NSW services

School based services operating before 1 July 2008

For the purposes of its assessment and rating a school-based education and care service which was already operating before 1 July 2008 is treated by law to be at National Quality Standard in respect of requirements about:

- the amount of indoor and outdoor space a service must have
- the design of a service's premises facilitating supervision

until the service is no longer provided by a school, or is no longer provided on school premises.

Services with an approval subject to space requirements under Schedule 2 of the NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004

Some existing services were issued with an approval that was subject to

space requirements under clause (4)(1)(c) of schedule 2 to the NSW Children's Services Regulation 2004, For the purposes of assessment and rating, until their premises are renovated, these services are treated by law as being at National Quality Standard in respect of requirements about the indoor and outdoor space that a service must have.

Outside school hours care services

For the purposes of its assessment and rating an existing outside school hours care service is taken to be at National Quality Standard in respect of requirements about:

- fencing and security
- the amount of indoor space that a service must have
- shade in outdoor spaces
- the design of a service's premises facilitating supervision

until 31 December 2015, or until the service premises are renovated or the service approval is transferred, whichever happens earlier.

Where can I get more information?

More information is available at:

W: www.det.nsw.edu.au/what-we-offer/early-childhood-education-and-care

E: cslicensing@dhs.nsw.gov.au

P: 1800 619 113 or 02 9716 2100