

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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\$3 Million in Incentives to Expand Access to Quality Child Care

COLUMBUS, OHIO – The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) is offering \$3 million in incentives to help current publicly funded child care providers become rated or improve their rating in Step Up To Quality, Ohio’s quality rating system for child care providers.

Unrated programs that submit a Step Up To Quality registration between Jan. 1 and Feb. 29 – as well as one- and two-star programs that submit a registration during this time and improve their ratings to achieve three, four, or five stars – will be eligible for the one-time incentive payment upon approval of the rating. Qualifying child care centers will earn \$4,000, and family child care providers will earn \$2,000.

“All Ohio children, regardless of their income, deserve the best possible start in life,” said ODJFS Director Kimberly Hall. “Step Up To Quality ratings let parents know that these programs are staffed by qualified educators, use a curriculum to promote learning and development, and go above and beyond to help prepare children for kindergarten.”

By July 1, 2020, all Ohio licensed child care programs that receive state funding must participate in Step Up To Quality. As of January, 86% of programs offering publicly funded child care services were quality rated.

ODJFS has implemented multiple initiatives to help providers become rated, including the following:

- Reducing licensing application fees.
- Dedicating ODJFS staff to meet with and guide providers through the process.
- Offering free curricula and assessments.
- Paying wage and retention bonuses for child care staff members.
- Hosting workshops where providers can ask questions and receive guidance.
- Creating a mentorship program where rated providers help guide programs that are not yet rated.

All Ohio families can search for child care providers by county, city, ZIP code, program type, and Step Up To Quality rating at [ChildCareSearch.Ohio.gov](https://www.ohio.gov/childcaresearch).

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The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services manages vital programs that strengthen Ohio families. These include job training and employment services, unemployment insurance, cash and food assistance, child care, child and adult protective services, adoption, and child support services.

