



Learn & Grow

Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System

(QRIS)

Policies and Procedures Manual

Last Revised May 3rd, 2017

Changes from original June 28th version highlighted in Yellow.

thread connecting
early care & education
to alaska

and

State of Alaska Child Care Program Office



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Section 1: Acknowledgements

Funding for Learn & Grow is provided by the State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services Child Care Program Office via a grant to Alaska's statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network, **thread**. Learn & Grow is located within and managed by **thread**.

The creation of this document involved staff members of **thread** and the Child Care Program Office, and with input from numerous other early care and learning professionals statewide and nationally.

Thank you to the individuals and organizations who have contributed time, dedication, and resources to the ongoing development, implementation and evaluation of Learn & Grow. Below are a list of organizations that have provided support in the planning and development of Learn & Grow.

Organizations within the state of Alaska:

- **thread**, Alaska's Child Care Resource & Referral Network
- State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services
 - Child Care Program Office
 - Office of Children's Services, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS)
 - Senior and Disabilities Services, Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program
- State of Alaska, Department of Education and Early Development
- Municipality of Anchorage, Child Care Licensing Program
- System for Early Education Development (SEED) Professional Development Committee
- University of Alaska System
- Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC)
- Alaska After School Network
- Best Beginnings
- Licensed Child Care Centers, Licensed Child Care Group Homes, and Licensed Child Care Homes Early Care and Learning Administrators
- Alaska Child Care and Development Fund Tribal Organizations
- Alaska Head Start Association

National Organizations:

- United States Administration for Children & Families, Office of Child Care
- BUILD Initiative <http://www.buildinitiative.org/>
- QRIS National Learning Network <http://qrisnetwork.org>
- ICF International <http://www.icfi.com/>

Section 2: Introduction

Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS) is named Learn & Grow. The goal of a Quality Recognition and Improvement System is to help early care and learning (ECL) programs stay actively engaged in continuous quality improvement. A QRIS can provide parity across ECL programs that might otherwise remain siloed in funding, and augment alignment in federal or state policies and quality standards. Comprehensive resources and supports are critical in helping ECL programs work toward and achieve these goals. As ECL programs advance in QRIS levels they are recognized for their achievements and are supported by fiscal resources, professional development, and technical assistance. Rather than have an emphasis on the rating component of a QRIS, Alaska has chosen to emphasize the strengths and efforts of ECL programs to improve quality and has changed the traditional "R for Rating" in QRIS to stand for Recognition.

Learn & Grow provides a quality framework for early care and learning programs. Learn & Grow also provides families, communities, and policy makers with an understanding of what quality ECL is and the impact it can have on children's development and readiness to learn and succeed in life. Learn & Grow utilizes a block system with five (5) levels of quality. The block system requires an ECL program to achieve all of the quality requirements of a given level before receiving the Level recognition. The five (5) levels of quality build on the foundation of health and safety standards that govern Licensed Child Care facilities in the State of Alaska.

There are five (5) levels of quality within Learn & Grow.

- Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality
- Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality
- Level 3: Committing to Higher Quality
- Level 4: Growing Into Higher Quality
- Level 5: Thriving In Higher Quality

Each of these levels has progressive quality standards in the areas of:

- Administration and Leadership
- Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
- Relationships and Learning Environment
- Family Engagement

Learn & Grow has two phases of implementation. Phase I of Learn & Grow is a voluntary statewide system available for State of Alaska and MOA Licensed Child Care Centers, Licensed Group Homes, and Licensed Child Care Homes starting in July 2016. It includes the first two of the five (5) levels of quality: Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality and Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality.

Phase II of Learn & Grow will include quality standards across all five (5) Levels and will include specific quality standards for: Head Start/Early Head Start, State Pre-Kindergarten or School District Pre-Kindergarten, Military Child Care, and Licensed School-Age programs. As Learn & Grow advances and as funding allows, Level's 3, 4 and 5 will become available for all ECL programs.

Section 3: Purpose of the Learn & Grow Policies and Procedures Manual

This manual provides the policies, procedures and technical details to support workers in administering Learn & Grow, and may be used for training and reference. The manual provides a comprehensive description of:

- History of QRIS;
- Purpose of Learn & Grow;
- Learn & Grow partners;
- How early care and learning programs will participate in Learn & Grow including procedures for enrollment, participation, verification, and renewal; and
- Supports and resources available to participating State of Alaska or MOA Licensed Centers, Licensed Group Homes, or Licensed Child Care Homes who enroll in Learn & Grow.

Section 4: Learn & Grow Policies and Procedures Manual Users

Several audiences may use this policies and procedures manual. Users of the manual include, but are not limited to:

- Alaska’s statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network, **thread** staff who:
 - Support ECL programs to stay actively engaged in continuous quality improvement activities and maintain or advance their Learn & Grow level of recognition; and
 - Assist ECL programs with assessment, verification, and renewal of recognition levels
- State of Alaska Child Care Program Office staff who:
 - Oversee the grant to **thread** and collaborate/coordinate with **thread** staff on an ongoing basis regarding the development and implementation of Learn & Grow and other professional development activities and early childhood services; and
 - License child care facilities statewide, with the exception of the MOA
- MOA, Child Care Licensing Program staff who license child care facilities within the MOA;
- Interested and/or participating early care and learning professionals;
- Interested families; and
- Other state or federal workers/contractors with a direct or indirect involvement and interest in Quality Recognition and Improvement Systems.

Section 5: QRIS History

National QRIS History

The first state sponsored and administered Quality Rating System was launched in Oklahoma in 1998. Initially designed as a consumer education tool and as a mechanism to build upon minimum health and safety standards, by 2005, ten (10) states had adopted a QRS including North Carolina, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, Colorado and the District of Columbia. During this period of rapid development and system implementation, some states added the 'I' to QRS, placing an intentional focus and emphasis on improvement, not just rating.

According to the QRIS Compendium, there are 40 operational QRIS in 38 states (Florida and California operate several county QRIS programs within their states).

States have implemented QRISs' in various phases, dependent on resources, partnership, and state policies, for example: All of the statewide QRISs' allow child care centers and Head Start/ Early Head Start programs to participate. Twenty-one of the statewide QRISs' allow school-age programs to participate and all but two allow family child care homes to participate in their QRISs'. Twenty of the statewide QRISs' allow state-funded prekindergarten programs to participate, as well.

In July 2016, Alaska will join over 40 states and territories with a QRIS.

Alaska's QRIS History

During the last 13 years, Alaska has worked to move a QRIS forward. This process of development has included two QRIS pilots: The Hearts for Kids and Quality Enrichment Demonstration Project.

Hearts for Kids

Alaska's first pilot Quality Rating System (QRS) initiative occurred April 2002- August 2003 in Fairbanks, Alaska. The initiative was called Hearts for Kids. Hearts for Kids was designed to raise the quality of child care in the Fairbanks North Star Borough. Thirteen State of Alaska Licensed Child Care Home programs and 24 State of Alaska Licensed Child Care Center or School-age programs participated. Hearts for Kids provided valuable information about the strengths, challenges, and needs of early care and learning programs. Some of the Hearts for Kids findings and recommendations included:

- An overall increase in the quality of classroom environments as measured by pre- post environmental rating scale scores;
- Language and Reasoning skills of adults showed the largest gain from pre-post environmental rating scores;
- The degree of quality increase was greater for unsubsidized programs narrowing the gap between the unsubsidized and subsidized programs;
- Alaska needs a reliable data collection and quality assurance system with a uniform set of standards for assessing the quality of early care and learning programs; and
- Early Care and Learning Program Administrators need resources and supports to help programs improve quality.

Quality Enrichment Demonstration Project (QEDP)

In 2008, the Quality Enrichment Demonstration Project (QEDP) was implemented by **thread** statewide with State of Alaska and MOA Licensed Child Care Centers, Licensed Group Homes and Licensed Child Care Homes. The primary purpose of the QEDP was to determine the effect of specific intervention strategies (i.e. assessment, technical assistance, and financial incentives) and characteristics of early care and learning teachers (i.e. education level, hourly wage, and experience) on improving the overall quality of early care and learning environments. Thirty-three programs and 117 classrooms, 33 ECL program directors, and approximately 323 early care and learning teachers participated. The QEDP drew several conclusions:

- The educational level and consistency of early care and learning teachers had a positive effect on the quality of early care and learning environments;
- Consultation supports and relationship based practices were key intervention strategies to improving the quality of early care and learning environments; and
- The Infant/ Toddler and Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales-revised (ITERS and ECERS-R) are reliable and valid tools to both assess and help identify activities for early care and learning providers to implement in order to enrich the quality of the classroom environments.

Alaska Quality Rating and Improvement System Reports

Alaska's QRIS Report 2008

In 2008, with funding from the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, the Alaska Humanities Forum in partnership with Best Beginnings, contracted with Anne Mitchell of Early Childhood Policy Research to assemble a team of national experts to work with the Alaska QRIS Advisory Committee. The national team was Anne Mitchell, Louise Stoney and Judy Collins. Based on research from other state QRIS, national trends and previous data from the Hearts for Kids and QEDP projects, recommendations and a draft of quality standards and implementation guidelines were developed.

The 2008 report includes specific recommendations on:

- Conducting a field test;
- How to assign a rating;
- Implementation strategies;
- Conducting environmental rating scale assessments;
- Recommendations on quality standard areas;
- Early care and learning program and provider supports;
- Administering quality recognition awards;
- Promoting consumer engagement strategies; and
- Policy development.

Alaska's QRIS Report 2011

In 2011, the Advisory Committee reviewed the 2008 report, Alaska's Quality Rating and Improvement System: Final Report with Recommendations for Implementation. This report articulated the goals for Alaska's QRIS which were affirmed in January 2011:

1. Be a sustainable system to recognize, reward, and improve the quality of early care and learning programs;
2. Provide reliable methods for parents and the public to evaluate early care and learning programs;
3. Ensure children have access to quality ECL programs that offer strong foundations for learning and life-long positive outcomes.

Next Steps in the development of a comprehensive quality early care and learning system for Alaska were identified and included:

- Adopt assessment criteria and tools;
- Adopt a rating system;
- Establish a governance structure;
- Update the 2008 plan, "Alaska's Quality Rating and Improvement System" and include an implementation timeline;
- Revise child care licensing regulations to phase in membership in Alaska's Early Childhood Professional Development Registry and to align professional development standards with Alaska's System for Early Education Development (SEED); and
- Collect cross-sector workforce data to identify and track trends.

Alaska QRIS 2013- Present

In 2013, the Department of Health and Social Services Child Care Program Office allocated funds to **thread**, Alaska's Child Care Resource and Referral Network, to manage the development and implementation of Alaska's QRIS. In December 2013, a QRIS Director was hired and re-assembled stakeholder groups and committees to work on revisions to the 2008 QRIS plan and help develop the current plan.

Phase I of Learn & Grow

In July 2016, Phase I of Learn & Grow was launched and made available for State of Alaska or MOA Licensed Child Care Centers, Licensed Group Homes, and Licensed Child Care Homes. Phase I includes Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality and Level 2: Moving into Higher Quality.

Phase II of Learn & Grow

The timeframe for Phase II of Learn & Grow, also voluntary for ECL programs to participate, will be determined based on available staff and financial resources. Phase II will include specific quality standards across all five (5) Levels and be available to these early care and learning program types including State of Alaska and MOA Licensed Child Care Centers, Licensed Group Homes and

Licensed Child Care Homes; Head Start/Early Head Start; State Pre-Kindergarten or School District Pre-Kindergarten; Military Child Care; and Licensed School-Age programs.

Section 6: QRIS Purpose

QRIS National Purpose

A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is a “method to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and learning settings” (Mitchell, 2005, p.4). A QRIS is a unique tool for early care and learning systems reform that has the potential to reach programs that serve a wide range of children and are financed by many public and private sources. “QRIS can exist on a spectrum in terms of their development and implementation and can operate statewide or in a local area. A fully functioning QRIS, however, includes the following components:

1. Quality standards for programs and early care and learning providers;
2. Supports and an infrastructure to meet such standards;
3. Monitoring and accountability systems to ensure compliance with quality standards;
4. Ongoing financial assistance that is linked to meeting quality standards; and
5. Engagement and outreach strategies (Child Trends, 2009).

A QRIS is used to evaluate and observe, recognize and reward, and support and communicate the level of quality in early childhood programs. As defined by the QRIS National Learning Network, a well-developed QRIS includes the following:

- Early care and learning (ECL) program standards, although standards will vary among states;
- A common framework to link and align standards across the whole ECL system, including child care regulatory requirements, early learning guidelines, Head Start/Early Head Start Performance Standards, pre-kindergarten program standards, early intervention program standards, accreditation standards, and so forth;
- The alignment of policies and procedures across the whole ECL system;
- A method of educating and communicating consumers about quality ECL programs;
- A method of improving quality ECL programs;
- A culture of continuous quality improvement;
- A framework for investment in accountability;
- A tool used to align all current resources as well as additional investments toward system goals;
- A tool for benchmarking the progress a state has made toward increasing the availability of high-quality programs; and
- A tool for ECL system reform.

As states review their QRIS benchmarks are used to gauge a state’s progress. Benchmarks may include the following:

- Increasing program participation rates including increasing participation rates across program types;

- Increasing quality of ECL programs overtime including increasing quality in programs that serve children of all: income levels, ethnicities, languages, abilities, age-groups and across different geographic regions of a state;
- Alignment of public and private funding to quality rating levels; and
- Increased investments in ECL programs statewide.

A QRIS takes a systems approach and uniformly addresses multiple aspects of early care and learning. A QRIS can include funding streams and a broad range of early care and education program types include: (center-based child care, family child care, Head Start/Early Head Start, State Pre-Kindergarten or School District Pre-Kindergarten, Military Child Care, and Licensed School-Age). A QRIS is part of the quality improvement spectrum, and shares five (5) common elements:

1. Quality Standards
 - a. Staff qualifications
 - b. Environments
 - c. Curriculum/ learning
 - d. Leadership/ management
 - e. Family engagement
2. Accountability Measures
 - a. Teacher/ child interactions
 - b. Environment
 - c. On-Site visits
 - d. Self-assessment
 - e. Professional development
3. ECL program and teacher outreach and support
 - a. Training
 - b. Mentoring/ coaching
 - c. Technical assistance
4. Financial incentives linked to compliance with standards
 - a. Increased provider reimbursement rates
 - b. Quality grants
 - c. Merit awards
 - d. Wage incentives
 - e. Scholarships
5. Parent Support and Consumer education
 - a. Star rating system
 - b. Website posting
 - c. Media
 - d. Certificates

A QRIS:

- Empowers families to become savvy consumers who choose high quality care for their children;
- Gives policymakers effective tools and monitoring information to improve early care and learning quality;
- Promotes accountability so that donors, legislators and taxpayers feel confident investing in quality;
- Gives early care and learning teachers and programs a roadmap to quality improvement; and
- Promotes the health and development of children in early care and learning.

Currently there are three rating structure approaches for determining rating steps.

1. Building Block Approach – requires the program to meet the level of rating in all categories of standards before receiving that rating.
2. Point Approach – allows the program to earn points in each category of standards, with the total of points determining the rating level of the program.
3. Hybrid Approach – includes building blocks (for some levels and/or some criteria) and points.

Additionally states vary in the amount of rating levels. A rating level refers to the number of levels included in the QRIS structure, such as 2 levels, 3 levels, 4 levels, etc. These levels are often designed with an easily understood symbol indicating ascending quality such as: stars; steps; levels; and bronze, silver, gold. The beginning level is usually defined by “being in good standing” with the licensing requirements or meeting licensing with some additional criteria.

Child Care and Development Block Grant Reauthorization

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) goals include:

1. Allow each state maximum flexibility in developing child care programs and policies that best suit the needs of children and parents within that state;
2. Promote parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions regarding the child care services that best suit their family’s needs;
3. Encourage states to provide consumer education information to help parents make informed choices about child care services and to promote involvement by parents and family members in the development of their children in child care settings;
4. Assist states in delivering high-quality, coordinated early childhood care and education services to maximize parents’ options and support parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance;

5. Assist states in improving the overall quality of child care services and programs by implementing the health, safety, licensing, training, and oversight standards established in CCDBG and in state law (including state regulations);
6. Improve child care and development of participating children; and
7. Increase the number and percentage of low-income children in high-quality child care setting.

With guidance and fiscal support from the CCDBG along with research and grassroots efforts of many state, local governments, and Early Childhood Advisory Councils, there is a strong support for the development of and expansion of QRIS to increase access to high quality early care and learning programs for all children.

Alaska's Early Care and Learning System

As part of the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007, states were required to establish State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care, which have also come to be known as Early Childhood Advisory Councils. Alaska's early childhood advisory council is known as the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC). Alaska's Early Care and Learning System receive guidance from the AECCC. The AECCC promotes positive development, improved health and mental health outcomes and school readiness for Alaska's children prenatal through age eight by creating a culturally responsive, comprehensive and accessible service delivery system that links service providers, empowers families, and engages communities. Under the Memorandum of Agreement signed by the Council members, the AECCC facilitates an integration and alignment of services, planning efforts, resources, policy development, and funding as well as strengthens connections between health, education and family support systems and public and private partners.

The AECCC is supported by the Governor's office under the direction and leadership of:

- Commissioner, Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS), and
- Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Learning (DEED)

Membership of the AECCC includes:

- Alaska Superintendents Association
- Association of Alaska School Boards
- Alaska Infant Learning Program Association
- Alaska Head Start Association
- Alaska Child Care Resources and Referral Network
- Alaska Native Health
- Mental Health Providers
- Public/ Private Partnership Organization
- Parent Representative (two positions)
- Business Community (submitted by State Chamber of Commerce)
- Faith Based Community
- Representative from the Governor's Office

- Commissioner, Department of Health & Social Services
- Commissioner, Department of Education and Early Learning
- Commissioner, Department of Labor
- Commissioner, Department of Public Safety
- Director, Division of Teaching and Learning Support
- Early Learning Administrator
- State Part C/ Early Intervention Program Manager
- Child Care Program Manager, Division of Public Assistance
- Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Manager
- Early Periodic Screening Development Test (EPSDT) Coordinator, Health Care Services
- University of Alaska Systems (appointed by President)

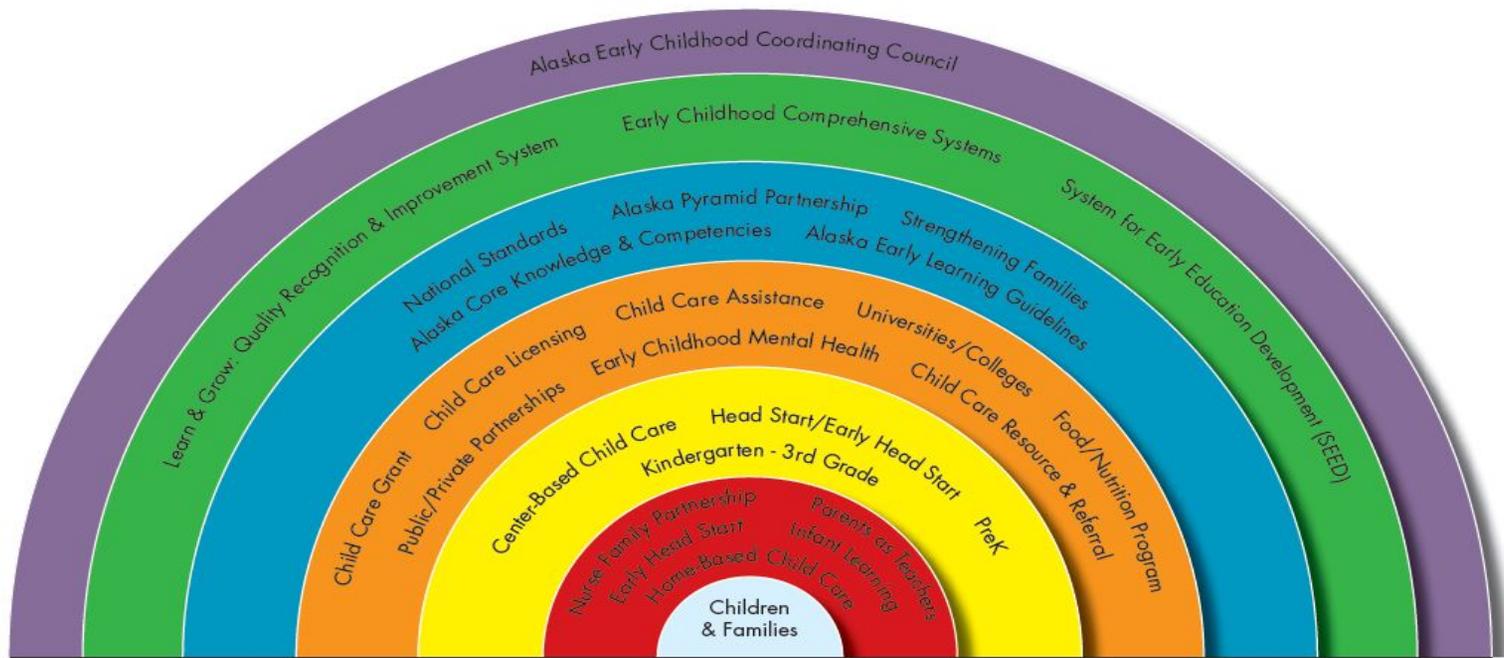
Within the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007, the AECCC Advisory Council is tasked with: conducting periodic needs assessment, identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination of early care and learning programs and services; developing recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in ECL programs; developing recommendations for a unified, statewide early childhood data collection and professional development systems; assess the capacity and effectiveness of two and four year public and private institutions of higher education and make recommendations for improvements to ECL standards; and developing high quality comprehensive early learning standards.

The AECCC sets priority areas of focus for Early Childhood policy and planning. One of the AECCC priority areas is to support the implementation of a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System.

Table 1.1 Visual Depiction of Alaska's Early Care and Learning System

- Purple: AECCC assisting and advising;
- Green: How Learn & Grow, the Early Childhood Comprehensive System (ECCS), and System for Education Early Development (SEED) help set the standards for ECL programs, partnering organizations and state departments, and quality standards for individual ECL professionals;
- Blue: National and local best practices;
- Orange: Describes who is providing the services for children and families in Alaska;
- Yellow: Out of home center based ECL programs;
- Red: In home ECL programs and services; and
- Light Blue: Who this system is supporting.

Alaska's Early Care and Learning System Birth Through Age 8



Updated 1/5/2015

Section 7: Learn & Grow Purpose

Learn & Grow is Alaska's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS). In no particular order, the mission (purpose), values, beliefs, guiding principles, and outcomes of Learn & Grow are as follows:

Learn & Grow Mission

To advance the quality of early care and learning to foster the success of young children.

Learn & Grow Values

- Quality
- Relationships
- Respect
- Community partnerships
- Commitment to continuous quality improvement in early care and learning

Learn & Grow Beliefs

- Healthy communities equals healthy families
- Alaska needs more quality early care and learning programs
- Early care and learning is a critical window of opportunity
- Alaska needs a strong workforce (now and in the future)
- Early care and learning professionals are a catalyst for change
- Relationships matter
- Quality early care and learning is diverse
- Children are precious
- Families are irreplaceable

Learn & Grow Guiding Principles

- Quality early care and learning is rooted in respect for diversity;
- Use of best practices ensures strength-based approaches to create nurturing quality environments;
- Creating a quality early care and learning system requires work in partnership with multiple stakeholders;
- Families need information when considering early care and learning programs for their child;
- Continuous quality improvement needs to be feasible and achievable for programs;
- Quality early care and learning is an investment now and in the future. It is economically imperative; and
- Retention of a highly qualified early care and learning workforce is imperative to building and maintaining quality.

Learn & Grow Outcomes

- Families have access to affordable high quality care;
- Families can identify quality standards in early care and learning environments;
- Families are actively participating in their child's early care and learning program and have access to community supports and resources;
- Children are safe and healthy;
- Communities have a healthy and sustainable workforce;
- Early care and learning professionals earn a living wage and have access to the education to increase their knowledge and advance their profession;
- Early care and learning administrators have resources to support continuous quality improvement activities for their ECL programs and teachers; and
- Children have access to high quality early care and learning environments that foster social, emotional and developmental skills to prepare them for kindergarten and success in life.

Section 8: Organization and Management of Learn & Grow

Learn & Grow is located within and managed by **thread. thread**, in partnership with the State of Alaska Child Care Program Office currently provides funding for the development and implementation of Learn & Grow for all State of Alaska and MOA Licensed Child Care Centers, Licensed Group Homes, and Licensed Child Care Homes.

Learn & Grow is a comprehensive quality improvement system for all early care and learning programs. Representatives from several organizations and agencies (System Partners) are participating in the development and implementation of Learn & Grow.

System Partners

- **thread**, Alaska’s Child Care Resource & Referral Network
- State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services
 - Child Care Program Office
 - Office of Children’s Services, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS)
 - Senior and Disabilities Services, Early Intervention/Infant Learning Program
- State of Alaska, Department of Education and Early Development (DEED)
- Municipality of Anchorage, Child Care Licensing Program
- System for Early Education Development (SEED) Professional Development Committee
- University of Alaska System
- Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC)
- Alaska After School Network
- Best Beginnings
- Alaska Child Care and Development Fund Tribal Organizations
- Administration for Children & Families, Office of Child Care, Region X
- Region X and XI Technical Assistance
- Alaska Head Start Association
- Alaska Association for the Education of Young Children, and affiliates
- Alaska Family Child Care Association
- Licensed child care providers

Learn & Grow has one Statewide Stakeholder Group and nine subcommittees. System Partners participate in one or more Learn & Grow subcommittees. Subcommittees include:

1. Executive/Governance
2. Licensed Center and Group Home Standards
3. Licensed Home Standards
4. Licensed School-age Standards
5. Fast Track (standards for Head Start, Early Head Start, Pre-Kindergarten and Accredited ECL programs)
6. Early Childhood Administrator Credential

7. Coaching and Technical Assistance
8. Fund Development, and
9. Marketing and Communications

Subcommittee Roles & Responsibilities

Statewide Stakeholder Group

The Statewide Stakeholder Group is responsible for reviewing quarterly updates, providing input, and assisting with Learn & Grow work plan activities and strategic planning. Where applicable, some stakeholder group members may also work in positions that allow them to help with policy and funding decisions for Learn & Grow.

Executive/ Governance Subcommittee

The Executive/Governance Subcommittee is responsible for the overall management of Learn & Grow work plan actions including funding, policy development and recommendations, policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities, data collection, implementation and evaluation activities.

Standards Subcommittees

There are four standards subcommittees (Licensed Center and Group Home; Licensed Home; Licensed School-age; and Fast Track). These subcommittees identify standards applicable to their specific age groups served and program types. The Learn & Grow Director brings forth recommendations from the subcommittees to the Executive/Governance Subcommittee.

Early Childhood Administrator Credential Subcommittee

The Early Childhood Administrator Credential Subcommittee develops and refines the content and methods for completion of the Early Childhood Administrator Credential 1 and 2. The Learn & Grow Director brings forth recommendations from this subcommittee to the Executive/Governance Subcommittee.

Coaching & Technical Assistance Subcommittee

The goal of this subcommittee is to develop a coaching and technical assistance approval system for Alaska. Coaching is an evidence-based practice shown to support ECL programs quality improvement. This group is tasked with developing core knowledge and competencies of a coach and potential levels of an approval system. The Learn & Grow Director brings forth recommendations from this subcommittee to the Executive/ Governance Subcommittee.

Fund Development Subcommittee

The Fund Development Subcommittee is tasked with collecting research on sustainable funding methods, developing the budget and analyzing current funding sources and allocations for Learn & Grow, while keeping in mind the goal of the Learn & Grow and SEED fund development plan is to increase and diversify funding to support Learn & Grow and SEED activities. The Learn & Grow Director brings forth recommendations from this subcommittee to the Executive/Governance Subcommittee.

Marketing and Communications Subcommittee

Members of this subcommittee develop key talking points, all web-based communication, and develop and refine a marketing and communication plan for Learn & Grow. The Learn and Grow Director brings forth recommendations from the subcommittee to the Executive/Governance Subcommittee.

Section 9: Learn & Grow Program Tools and Resources

A variety of tools and resources are available to support Learn & Grow services. These tools include: Child Care Aware of America National Data System (NDS); State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, CCPO Integrated Child Care Information System (ICCIS); Interpreter Services; SEED Registry; SEED Training and Trainer Approval System; SEED Career Ladder; and **thread** and Learn & Grow websites.

Child Care Aware of America National Data System (NDS)

NDS is **thread's** data system that holds early care and learning program information, consultation and program service documentation. **thread** staff are the primary user of NDS.

Department of Health and Social Services, Child Care Program Office Integrated Child Care Information System (ICCIS)

ICCIS is the database system used to track early care and learning programs history and compliance with child care licensing regulations, ECL program demographics, and the voluntary child care programs they are participating in (i.e. Alaska IN!, Child Care Assistance Program, Child Care Grant).

Interpreter Services

If an individual is not able to or is limited in speaking, reading, or writing English, or the individual requests interpreter services, translation services are available to assist in the provision of services.

System for Early Education Development (SEED)

SEED is Alaska's statewide early childhood professional development system located within and managed by **thread**. SEED is overseen by the SEED Professional Development Committee (PDC). The SEED PDC includes a cross-sector of early childhood stakeholders, who provide leadership and stewardship for SEED. Several components of early care and learning professional development are managed by SEED. These include the SEED Career Ladder, SEED Registry, Alaska Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies, Professional Development Reimbursements, and the SEED Trainer and Training Approval System.

SEED Career Ladder

The SEED Career Ladder is Alaska's professional development pathway articulating advancement in the early care and learning profession. It is an integrated common system for all early care and learning professionals that recognizes credit-based education and community based training. The SEED Career Ladder can be accessed by going to <http://www.seedalaska.org> under the SEED Registry tab.

SEED Registry

The SEED Registry is a member-based database supporting Alaska's early childhood professionals. The SEED Registry tracks the workforce's ongoing education and training through the SEED database to:

- Document and quantify educational growth and accomplishments;
- Provide information to employers and parents about the early childhood professional credentials of staff working in all early care and learning settings;
- Provide critical information to legislators and policy makers about the early childhood professionals working in the early care and learning field;
- Drive quality and accountability for early care and learning professionals and programs; and
- Bring increased recognition, professionalism and compensation to the early care and learning field.

The registry awards a certificate to SEED Registry members verifying placement on the SEED Career Ladder.

Alaska's Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies

Alaska's Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies (CKC) provide information about what early childhood professionals who work with young children need to know, understand, and demonstrate to best facilitate children's learning and development. It is also a resource document for early childhood professionals who work in administrative, policy, higher education, and teaching roles. CKCs create a foundation for the SEED Professional Development system by providing a road map for curriculum development, organizing and approving training and trainers, informing academic coursework, and providing a basis for the levels on the SEED Career Ladder. The CKCs can be accessed at <http://www.aseedalaska.org>.

SEED Training and Trainer Approval System

- A Training and Trainer Approval System provides a process for quality assurance for both individuals who provide training in Alaska and the training they deliver;
- There is an application process for both trainers and training; and
- The Training and Trainer Approval System is voluntary.

The Training and Trainer Approval System consists of two components: Training Approval and Trainer Approval.

- **Training Approval** ensures training content reflects current research, best practice and aligns with the SEED Registry, CKC and the Alaska Early Learning Guidelines. Information about the Early Learning Guidelines can be accessed at <https://education.alaska.gov/publications/earlylearningguidelines.pdf>. Training is delivered in a way that reflects how adults learn. Trainers can submit their training

curricula for approval for their training to be SEED-approved. Training also needs to be SEED-approved to qualify for professional development funding through **thread** (Professional Development Reimbursement-PDR, Travel Reimbursement-TR & Pathways to Professionalism- P2P, etc.).

- **Trainer Approval** process promotes consistent standards for trainers. Trainers have the opportunity to document their experience and formal education. Trainers will be assigned a Trainer Certification based on their education, training and experience: this can help guide early childhood professionals in choosing training opportunities. This includes a “Specialty” Trainer category for trainers outside the early childhood field whose expertise benefit ECL programs (example: CPA/tax workshop for Family Child Care or health professional providing health & safety training). The Trainer Approval system will be phased in to allow trainers time to meet the requirements. There will be a renewal process. Trainers can be approved at new levels if they have met the requirements for that new level.

thread Website

The **thread** website can be accessed at <http://www.threadalaska.org>. The **thread** website has information for families, communities, early educators and training. The **thread** website has links for families to find child care, community resources, employment opportunities, statewide training and professional development, early care and learning advocacy opportunities and information on how to identify quality practices in early care and learning.

Learn & Grow Website

The Learn & Grow website can be accessed at <http://www.aklearnandgrow.org>. The Learn & Grow website contains information for ECL programs and teachers, families, partnering agencies, and Learn & Grow reports, data and other quality resources. Specific information on what is Learn & Grow, why Learn & Grow, Levels of Quality, and Phase I activities can be accessed on the Learn & Grow website.

Section 10: Rights Under the Learn & Grow Program

Confidentiality and Data Privacy

Confidentiality is maintained by Learn & Grow and SEED staff for the benefit of all participants. All Learn & Grow and SEED staff will be required to sign **thread's** confidentiality statement upon employment. The only data retained by Learn & Grow and **thread**, not of a confidential nature, is that provided by child care providers and programs that use the referral process and the names of **thread's** members and contributors. Access to data is limited to **thread** staff and volunteers and controlled by **thread's** Chief Executive Officer.

Reference to any client information is strictly prohibited, except necessary communication of such information among staff and volunteers in the performance of their jobs. The only exceptions to the forgoing are:

- To qualified personnel for the purpose of conducting scientific research;
- Management audits, financial audits, or program evaluation, but such personnel may not identify, directly or indirectly, any individual client in any report, audit or evaluation or otherwise disclose client identities in any manner;
- If authorized by an appropriate court order issued by a judge or magistrate of the State of Alaska;
- To comply with state or municipal child abuse reporting requirements;
- To confirm that a practitioner is in the SEED Registry or not and if they are active or inactive; and
- To comply with a request from the State of Alaska CCPO or MOA Child Care Licensing Program.

The decision to release information which falls into one of the exceptions to the strict nondisclosure of confidential information may only be made by **thread's** Chief Executive Officer. Any request for disclosure of information which may fall within one of the exceptions must be brought to the immediate attention of **thread's** Chief Executive Officer.

Clients may authorize disclosure of confidential information. The consent to disclose confidential information must be in writing and contain the name of the employee or volunteer authorized to make such disclosure, the name or title of the person or organization to whom the disclosure may be made, the name of the client, purpose or need for the disclosure, the extent or nature of the information to be disclosed, a statement that the consent is subject to revocation at any time, the specified date, event and condition upon which it will expire without express revocation, the date on which the consent is signed, and the signature of the client.

Whenever information from Learn & Grow's confidential data is requested by any person or organization, the request for information must be in writing.

Sensitive Identifiers

Only the last five (5) digits of Social Security Numbers are stored in the system. Paper applications received containing complete Social Security Numbers shall have the first four numbers redacted from the document prior to storage in paper or digital files.

The SEED Registry will generate a unique username for each provider and instructor in the system that is proprietary to this system.

Confirmation of Identity

Learn & Grow and SEED Registry staff will confirm an ECL provider's identity over the phone by asking the caller to provide their date of birth plus the last five (5) digits of their Social Security Number before releasing any information to the caller.

Learn & Grow records may be requested by the ECL program, individual provider, State of Alaska CCPO or MOA Child Care Licensing program. ECL programs or individual providers must complete a documents release form prior to the release of this information.

Database information or paper files may not be removed from the premises aside from disaster recovery backup processes or requested for grant monitoring purposes.

All files with personal and program information will be stored in locked file cabinets. The office site will be locked and secured during non-business hours.

Staff will use a cross-cut shredding machine to shred reports and inactive provider files. Shredded material will be picked up by a recycling service.

Basic information on Licensed Child Care in the State of Alaska is available to the public at <https://dpasysops.dhss.alaska.gov/FindProviderVS8/zSearch.aspx>. Learn & Grow and the SEED registry will provide the business name, owner name and address of any or all child care facilities when requested by any member of the public. This information is a public record and must be provided when requested.

Other information such as training records and demographic information (such as program name, administrator, number of classrooms, names of individual professionals, etc.) is confidential and will be shared only in aggregate form or in a manner which prevents individuals from being personally identified. For example, Learn & Grow and SEED may create reports for legislators and policy makers about the number of child care professionals in our state or a general profile of training among all child care providers in Alaska.

Security of Electronic Files, Data Backup and Storage Policy

thread data system (NDS) provides hosting and storage services for Learn & Grow and the SEED Registry. NDS has established policies and procedures for the physical, router, and server configuration security to ensure:

- Access to server is logged or protected;
- Security patches are installed on the server;
- All servers are physically located in an access-controlled environment;
- All security-related Logs are kept according to NDS policy;
- Daily, weekly, and monthly tape Backups are retained;
- Corrective measures are prescribed as needed for security-related events such as viruses and evidence of unauthorized access; and
- Audits are performed on a regular basis by NDS

Data Backup, Storage Policy

NDS provides services for the retrieval and restoration of information in the event of a natural disaster, equipment failure, intentional destruction of data, and/or accidental loss of files. Servers to be backed up include the file server, the mail server, and the web server. Data backup includes user data stored on the hard drive, system state data, and the registry. The retention period for the weekly backup is one month; monthly backup is six months, and seven years for archiving.

Data Transfer Policies and Procedures

Data may be shared and transferred as determined appropriate by the State of Alaska CCPO or their designees and Learn & Grow and/or SEED.

Personally identifying information such as social security numbers is not stored in the system. Learn & Grow and SEED staff will use a secure platform, which ensures the privacy of email attachments, and/or send sensitive information via fax.

Civil Rights (Age, race, color, sex, disability, religious creed, national origin or political belief)

Staff administering any aspect of Learn & Grow or SEED will not discriminate against any applicant or participant, including, but not limited to, the: application submission or withdrawal; approval of providers; issuance of program supports; request to discontinue technical assistance; choice of participating child care provider; request for an appeal or the conduct of any other program service, for reasons of age, race, color, sex, disability, religious creed, national origin or political belief.

A complaint is any clear expression by the complainant or person acting for him/her, to the effect that he or she believes himself or herself to be the object of discrimination based on age, race, color, sex, disability, religious creed, national origin, or political belief.

Appeals Process

If an applicant receives their Learn & Grow Recognition Certificate and believes their ECL program was placed at an inaccurate level, they may request an appeal. An ECL program taking part in the appeal process will have their Learn & Grow Recognition Certificate placed on hold until appeal decision is made.

An ECL program may pursue a Learn & Grow recognition level appeal for the following reasons:

- ECL program suspects errors in calculation of Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) scores; and/or
- ECL program claims they have met the quality standard area associated with the level being appealed.

The Learn & Grow appeals process does not address the following scenarios but could be addressed through a grievance procedure.

- To provide new evidence or documentation;
- ECL program has concerns about on-site environmental assessment visits such as inappropriate or unprofessional behavior by on-site assessors or perceived conflict of interest between environmental assessor or Professional Development Specialist (PDS) and ECL program through **thread**;
- Additional information gathered by ECL program after on-site evaluation visits;
- Self-Assessment scores were higher than official assessment scores;
- ERS scores from past assessments were higher than Learn & Grow evaluation scores;
- Date/time of on-site visits if visits occurred during timeframe provided by facility on their Request for ERS Environmental Assessment including: ECL program hours/days of operation; three week environmental assessment window requested by ECL program;
- Visits are rescheduled only in the case of facility emergency/natural disaster;
- Selection of classrooms for observations;
- Variability of time spent in classrooms;
- Typical staff not present during visit;
- Classroom or home child care had new children, sick children, or an otherwise “non-typical” day, including disruptions to regular schedule;
- Information was not ready for review by environmental assessor at time of assessment visits;
- Concerns about staff education verification must be appealed using existing SEED processes.

Appeal submission process

The Learn & Grow Appeal form and supporting documentation must be received by Learn & Grow no later than 5:00 pm Alaska Standard Time (AKST) of the 30th calendar day that notification of recognition has been sent. Learn & Grow assumes no responsibilities for the delays caused by any mail delivery service. Materials received after 5:00pm AKST on the 30th calendar day will not be considered.

An ECL program must submit the Learn & Grow appeals form to the Learn & Grow Director, 3350 Commercial Dr. Suite 203, Anchorage, AK 99501 or email to info@aklearnandgrow.org explaining the reason for the appeal. Documentation related to Learn & Grow quality standards associated with the Level being appealed should be included. A copy of the letter along with all appeal documents will be placed in the ECL program’s file.

Process for reviewing an appeal

The Learn & Grow Director will review the applicant's file, and if needed, the applicant will be notified if further documentation, such as transcripts, licensing information, ERS scores, etc. is needed in order to review and assign an accurate level. The Learn & Grow Director will convene the Appeal Committee that may consist of representatives from the State of Alaska CCPO and/or MOA Child Care Licensing Program other than the assigned ECL program's Child Care Licensing Specialist; Learn & Grow Director; SEED Director; ECL program administrator (center or home); and the **thread** PDS supervisor to review the applicant's file. Written notification of decision will be sent to the ECL program within twenty (20) business days of receiving the appeal.

Appeal Granted

If the appeal is granted, all Learn & Grow verification documentation (ERS report, **thread** data system (NDS) or SEED Registry, and ECL program's electronic file stored on **thread** servers, along with a new Learn & Grow Level Recognition Certificate) will be updated within five (5) business days of the appeal being granted. The appeal applicants will be notified by letter of their current standing within the Learn & Grow Levels of quality framework.

Denial of appeal

If the appeal is denied, the ECL program will be notified in writing of the Learn & Grow Appeal Committee's decision including information about why the appeal was denied. If the ECL program disagrees with the decision it is eligible to submit for re-verification no sooner than 90 calendar days from the denial date. ECL programs must submit a new Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) describing plans for how it will meet the specific quality standards associated with the level for which they are seeking re-verification. A **thread** PDS may be available to assist the program with the QIP revisions. If an ECL program does not receive the Level recognition for a second time, it must wait one full year from the issue date of the last Learn & Grow Level received to re-apply.

Grievance Process

ECL programs and/or staff who think they have been treated unfairly, too harshly or inappropriately may pursue a grievance through the Learn & Grow formal grievance procedure, as follows:

Step 1 (Verbal Discussion)

- The action or interpretation believed to be unfair or improper should be discussed with the ECL program administrator and the Learn & Grow Director and/or **thread's** Chief Executive Officer orally within five (5) working days after the grievance arises.
- The discussion should include the specific facts which lead the ECL program to believe that the action or interpretation was unfair or improper and the resolution that the ECL program seeks. The Learn & Grow Director will document the issue raised by the ECL program and the resolution decided upon by the Learn & Grow Director, **thread's** Chief Executive Officer and the ECL program administrator. A memorandum of agreement will be signed by the ECL program administrator, Learn & Grow Director, and **thread's** Chief Executive Officer.

Step 2 (Written Notification)

- If the grievance is not resolved, the ECL program administrator must present the grievance, in writing to the Learn & Grow Director within five (5) business days following the last verbal discussion regarding the grievance discussed in Step 1.
- The grievance must include a concise statement of the facts upon which the grievance is based and the resolution that the ECL program seeks.
- The Learn & Grow Director will provide a copy of the written grievance to **thread's** Chief Executive Officer. The Chief Executive Officer will meet with the parties regarding the grievance within five (5) business days of receiving the written grievance from the Learn & Grow Director to discuss the complaint and take any further action necessary to investigate and review the grievance. **thread's** Chief Executive Officer will issue a written decision within thirty (30) calendar days from the date **thread's** Chief Executive Officer received the written grievance. A copy of the written decision will be placed in the ECL program's electronic file located at **thread** and hard copy mailed to the ECL program.

Section 11: Responsibilities Under the Learn & Grow Program

The following organizations and groups of individuals have unique roles and responsibilities to help support the successful implementation of Learn & Grow. The current organizations and groups include: **thread** which manages Learn & Grow and SEED; State of Alaska CCPO; MOA Child Care Licensing Program; Early Care and Learning Programs and parents.

thread Child Care Resource & Referral Network

thread, Alaska's statewide Child Care Resource and Referral (CC&R) Network is comprised of three regional offices that provide services to programs and families throughout the state of Alaska. Offices are located in Anchorage, Juneau and Fairbanks and provide services to children, families, and early care and learning programs. The South Central **thread** office is located in Anchorage; the South East **thread** office is located in Juneau at the SE-AEYC office; the Northern **thread** office is located in Fairbanks at Thrive Alaska. The three regional **thread** offices receive oversight from the State of Alaska, Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Assistance (DPA), CCPO. The CCPO receives oversight and management from the federal Office of Child Care who administers the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) and is located within the Administration for Children and Families.

thread's responsibilities include the management and oversight of:

- SEED and Learn & Grow;
- Providing training and technical assistance to ECL programs enrolled in Learn & Grow;
- Maintaining staff capacity for interrater reliable services for the ERS, environmental assessment tools;
- Tracking and distributing financial supports to ECL programs and early educators including: professional development reimbursement, travel reimbursement, and Learn & Grow Quality Recognition Awards; and
- Data system for early care and learning programs and educator data and documentation.

thread Professional Development Staff

thread will employ qualified Professional Development staff to provide the supports and services for ECL programs and educators participating in Learn & Grow. Staff will receive ongoing training and build capacity to deliver training, technical assistance, assessment for participating ECL programs and educators.

SEED and Learn & Grow

Two systems under the management of **thread**, work together to carry out Alaska's quality early care and learning initiatives: System for Early Education Development (SEED) and Learn & Grow. SEED supports individual early childhood professionals, while Learn & Grow supports early care and learning programs.

System for Early Education Development (SEED)

SEED is responsible for managing activities related to the Staff Qualifications and Professional Development Quality Standards of Learn & Grow. Specific SEED responsibilities include:

- Maintaining new and renewed early childhood professionals in the SEED Registry
- Ensuring SEED Career Ladder, SEED Training and Trainer Approval System, and Alaska's Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies align with Learn & Grow Quality Standards.
- Issuing the Early Childhood Administrator Credential 1 and 2 certificate in connection with the SEED Training and Trainer Approval and **thread** database training tracker systems

Learn & Grow

Learn & Grow works to support ECL program quality, aligning resources, funding, data systems and professional development to provide a comprehensive and unified quality improvement system. Learn & Grow leverages staff and resources from **thread** and SEED. In addition to SEED managing all of the components related to the Staff Qualifications and Professional Development Quality Standards, SEED and Learn & Grow share responsibility for verifying the quality recognition levels of enrolled ECL programs.

A Learn & Grow verifier is responsible to issue Level Recognition Certificate(s) by cross-referencing all program documentation from the SEED Registry, **thread** NDS database and ICCIS systems including:

- SEED registration and levels of all program staff;
- Completion of administrator credential;
- ECL program licensing status and type;
- Lead teacher training requirements;
- Environmental Rating Score (ERS); and
- Issuing Level Recognition Certificate(s).

A Learn & Grow Assessment Coordinator is responsible for:

- Assuring assessors maintain inter-rater reliability on all three tools: Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS), Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-3 (ECERS-3), and Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCERS);
- Training on ERS assessment and report writing; and
- Scheduling of all official Learn & Grow ERS assessments statewide.

State of Alaska Child Care Program Office (CCPO)

The State of Alaska CCPO office receives funding from the federal Office of Child Care to administrator the activities specified in the Child Care and Development Block Grant, (CCDBG). The State of Alaska Child Care Program Office provides oversight and monitoring of the Child Care Resource and Referral grant to support SEED and Learn & Grow services. The CCPO also manages

the Child Care Licensing and Child Care Assistance Programs for all licensed and approved child care programs throughout the state. The State CCPO office sub grants to the MOA Child Care Licensing Program to provide licensing functions of child care programs within the MOA.

Child Care Licensing Staff

Child care licensing staff will notify Learn & Grow/ **thread** of changes in licensing status of ECL programs on a monthly basis, or as soon as possible in the event of an enforcement action involving suspension or closure of a child care program.

Municipality of Anchorage Child Care Licensing Program

The MOA Child Care Licensing Program is responsible for licensing and monitoring of Anchorage Municipality Child Care Programs. The child care programs within the MOA must meet or exceed state licensing regulations.

MOA CCL Program staff will notify Learn& Grow/**thread** of changes in licensing status of programs on a monthly basis, or as soon as possible in the event of an enforcement action involving suspension or closure of a child care program.

Early Care and Learning Programs

Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Homes, and Homes participating in Learn & Grow are responsible for maintaining their child care license in good standing and notifying Learn & Grow staff of any changes regarding their license. These early care and learning programs must work cooperatively with Learn & Grow and **thread** to support their continuous improvement goals.

Families

Family's responsibilities include selecting an eligible child care program, with assistance from the Alaska statewide Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network, if needed, and working in partnership with their early care and learning program and educators to support the needs of their child/ children.

Section 12: Learn & Grow Quality Standard Areas

The quality of an ECL program is rooted in the health and safety of the environments, practices, and interactions a program provides for families and the children in their care. Learn & Grow Quality Standard Areas and their associated requirements build on the foundation of health and safety Standards that govern Licensed Child Care facilities in the State of Alaska. Learn & Grow Quality standard areas include: Administration and Leadership; Staff Qualifications and Professional Development; Relationships and Learning Environment; and Family Engagement. There are specific requirements related to quality in each standard area. As an ECL program moves through the five (5) levels of Learn & Grow, the ECL program will work toward and achieve progressive quality requirements in these four Quality Standard Areas.

The following descriptions outline each Learn & Grow Quality Standard Areas and describe their key roles in advancing the quality of early care and learning and fostering the success of young children.

Administration and Leadership

Active engagement in continuous quality improvement takes specific dedication, leadership, support, and knowledge of ECL program administrators. Some of the ways ECL program administrators demonstrate their commitment to quality are: providing resources for staff to complete a related professional development certification or degree, supporting onsite mentoring, and implementing employee/staff retention practices such as paying staff a higher wage compensatory to professional development and educational attainment and providing comprehensive employee benefits.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

Early care and learning is a profession. While experience is valuable to any profession, formalized education and training plays a key role. The early care and learning sector works to shape the minds of children for Alaska's future. ECL educator training, professional development, and related supports are pivotal to improving ECL program quality.

Relationships and Learning Environment

Young children learn in the context of relationships. Adult and child relationships are critical to a child's readiness for school and success in life. Highly qualified teachers nurture healthy relationships and create learning opportunities through the use of play. Key components of a quality early care and learning environment include:

- Adults asking open-ended questions of children to expand their language;
- Adults fostering social interactions and assuring problem solving skills are being used;
- Adults encouraging children to express their feelings; and
- Adults encouraging children to use self-help and decision making skills to increase independence and confidence.

There are several activities and measures under the Quality Standard of Relationships and Learning Environment. Phase I of Learn & Grow begins to help ECL programs with their learning environments. The quality of the learning environment is rooted in the skills and knowledge of the ECL professionals in the program. Specific professional development requirements include training for ECL program administrators and program staff in the area of:

- Social Emotional Foundations: Pyramid Foundations Training is designed to help ECL professionals understand the social emotional development of young children and how to create a learning environment that fosters these relationships and skills.
- Environmental Rating Scales (ERS): ECL professionals use the ERS tool to learn how to design an environment that enhances children’s interactions with one another, with activities and developing independence.
- Introduction to Alaska’s Early Childhood Core Knowledge and Competencies

Family Engagement

Positive and nurturing relationships are critical between children and caregivers. Early care and learning programs provide a place for families to connect with other families and to a network of supports, and for children to make friends.

Learn & Grow has chosen to utilize Strengthening Families, a nationally recognized framework for increasing quality family engagement practices. Strengthening Families was originally funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation and is now supported through the Center for Study of Social Policy. <http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies> Strengthening Families is not a curriculum. It is a framework for early care and learning programs and communities to guide the individualized strategies and practices to increase “Protective Factors.” Protective factors refer to traits of an individual that serve as strengths or assets that can reduce vulnerability to risk. The five (5) protective factors of Strengthening Families that have been shown to make positive outcomes more likely for young children and their families, and to reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect include:

- Parental Resilience
- Social Connections
- Concrete Supports
- Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
- Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Section 13: Learn & Grow Levels of Quality



Learn & Grow is a block system composed of five (5) levels of quality. In order to receive recognition of a level, an ECL program must achieve all required quality standards of that level. To advance to the next level, an ECL program must also complete all the requirements of any preceding level. Beginning July 2016, Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Homes, and Homes throughout the state are eligible to participate in Learn & Grow.

As Alaska works to diversify its ECL funding, resources and policies, Phase II will include specific quality standards across all five (5) Levels applicable to each of these early care and learning program types including: Head Start/Early Head Start, State Pre-Kindergarten or School District Pre-Kindergarten, Military Child Care, and Licensed School-Age.

Phase 1: Levels 1 and 2 Overview

Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Homes, and Homes

Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality

Phase I of Learn & Grow includes Licensed Child Care Centers, Groups Homes, or Homes working to achieve Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality will have specific requirements to complete in two of the four quality standard areas. The standard areas of focus for Level 1 are Administration and Leadership and Staff Qualifications and Professional Development.

Administration and Leadership

License Type

- An ECL program must have a current biennial license issued by the SOA Child Care Licensing or MOA Child Care Licensing.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

Level 1 Training

- The ECL program administrator must complete the Level 1 Training. Other administrative staff are encouraged to attend, but not required. The Level 1 Training is required for Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Homes, and Home programs.
- The Level 1 Training is FREE.
- The Level 1 Training is available via webinar statewide. To find the next available training and times go to <http://www.threadalaska.org> and click on the training tab and register.

SEED Registry

- All ECL program staff must be registered in the SEED Registry.
- Go to <http://www.seedalaska.org> and have your employees complete the SEED Registry application, or contact SEED for assistance.

Licensed Child Care Centers and Group Homes

Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality

Level 2 requirements are slightly different for Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Homes, and Homes. An ECL program working to achieve Level 2 must continue to meet all of Level 1 requirements.

A Licensed Child Care Center or Licensed Group Home working on Level 2: Moving into Higher Quality has specific requirements to complete in four quality standards. The four Level 2 quality standards areas are: Administration and Leadership, Staff Qualifications and Professional Development, and Relationships and Learning Environment, and Family Engagement.

Quality Standard Area: Administration and Leadership

- The ECL program administrator (person indicated on license) is recognized at a SEED level 7.
- The ECL program administrator has completed the Early Childhood Administrator Credential I (ECAC1).

- The goal of the Early Childhood Administrator Credential is to provide administrators with the skills and knowledge to support the ECL program in staying actively engaged in continuous quality improvement.
- There are multiple pathways for an ECL program administrator to complete the ECACI. The purpose of multiple pathways is to acknowledge the previous course work, training, experience, or education that would satisfy one or all of the content areas.
- ECACI Content areas include:
 - Pyramid Foundations training
 - Family Engagement (minimum of Strengthening Families training)
 - ERS overview and self-assessment training
 - Business and Fiscal Management
 - Human Resources
 - Introduction to Alaska Early Childhood Core Knowledge and Competencies
- See Appendix for additional information on the Early Childhood Administrator Credential I (Center and Group Home Administrators) requirements and pathways to completion.
- All trainings must be approved by the SEED Training Approval System.
 - See the list of SEED approved training and trainer courses.
 - The current approved list is not an exhaustive list. If the program administrator has completed a training or course not on the approved list, the program will consult with SEED to learn about eligibility for the approval process.

Quality Standard Area: Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

- All lead teachers of a program will be required to complete the Level 2: Moving into Higher Quality Training. There are three content areas:
 - Pyramid Foundations training
 - Strengthening Families training
 - ERS overview and self-assessment training
- If lead teachers have already completed one or all of the content areas in the Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality training, some or all of the training requirements may already be met.
- ECL programs are encouraged to consult with their assigned **thread** professional development specialist regarding access to trainings and to identify trainings that may have already been completed.
- This is not an exhaustive list of approved training. As more trainers and trainings (both local and national) gain approval through the Alaska SEED Training Approval System the approved training list will grow.

Quality Standard Area: Relationships and Learning Environment

- ECL classrooms are required to receive a minimum score of 2.5 on the ECERS-3 and/or ITERS (Which ever individual or combination of tools is applicable to their program type and age groups served).

- Center Child Care: A minimum of one classroom in each age group served by the program will be used to assess the environments of the center. For example: A center program that has six classrooms (two infants, two toddler and two preschools) will have three ERS assessments, one in each aged classroom. Programs will be selected randomly on the day of the assessment.
 - An ECL program must achieve a minimum overall score of 2.5 in each of the assessed classrooms.

Quality Standard Area: Family Engagement

ECL programs meet the Level 2 requirement for Family Engagement by completing the Strengthening Families training that is both part of the ECAC I credential and Moving Into Higher Quality lead teacher training.

Level 2 Training Survey

Each year an ECL program participates in Learn & Grow with a Level 2 Recognition Level all lead teachers and program administrator will need to complete the Level 2 Training Survey. This survey is determine if there is any change in practice, skills, and knowledge as a result of the specific Level 2 Training and technical assistance provided. The survey will be provided by the ECL programs PDS and to be turned in with the Level 2 verification documentation.

Licensed Child Care Homes

Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality

There are three Quality Standard Areas for a licensed home starting at Level 2. Licensed Home programs do not typically have staff, therefore the Administration and Leadership and Staff Qualifications and Professional Development standards have been combined. The three quality standard areas are: Administration, Leadership and Staff Qualifications; Relationships and Learning Environments; and Family Engagement.

Quality Standard Area: Administration, Leadership and Staff Qualifications

- The ECL program administrator (person indicated on license) is recognized at a SEED level 6.
- The ECL program administrator has completed the Early Childhood Administrator Credential I (ECAC I).
 - The goal of the early childhood administrator credential is to provide administrators with the skills and knowledge to support the program in staying actively engaged in continuous quality improvement.

- There are multiple pathways for an ECL program administrator to complete the ECAC I. The purpose of multiple pathways is to acknowledge the previous course work, training, experience, or education that would satisfy one or all of the content areas.
- ECAC I Content areas include:
 - Pyramid Foundations training
 - Family Engagement (minimum of Strengthening Families training)
 - ERS Overview and Self-Assessment training
 - Business and Fiscal Management
 - Introduction to Alaska’s Early Childhood Core Knowledge and Competencies
 - All trainings must be approved by the SEED Training Approval System.
 - See the list of SEED approved training and trainer courses.
 - The current approved list is not an exhaustive list. If the program administrator has completed a training or course not on the approved list, the program will consult with SEED to learn how it may become approved.

Quality Standard Area: Relationships and Learning Environment

- An ECL program will need to complete an Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) as a quality requirement of Level 2. A program must achieve a minimum overall score of 2.5.

Quality Standard Area: Family Engagement

- ECL program administrators completing the Strengthening Families training as part of the ECAC I meet the Family Engagement requirement of Level 2.

Level 2 Training Survey

Each year an ECL program participates in Learn & Grow with a Level 2 Recognition Level they will need to complete the Level 2 Training Survey. This survey is determine if there is any change in practice, skills, and knowledge as a result of the specific Level 2 Training and technical assistance provided. The survey will be provided by the ECL programs PDS and to be turned in with the Level 2 verification documentation.

Section 14: Learn & Grow Step By Step Guide

This section provides details regarding the specific activities associated with each of the Learn & Grow user groups during Phase I (Level 1 and Level 2). Learn & Grow user groups include:

1. Early care and learning programs
2. **thread** professional development specialist
3. Child care licensing staff
4. Learn & Grow staff
5. Learn & Grow Assessor

Within each user group each process phase of Learn & Grow is described. The phases include:

- Eligibility
- Enrollment
- Working on quality standard requirements
- Assessment
- Verification
- Renewal

Early Care and Learning Programs

Licensed Child Care Centers, Licensed Group Homes, and Licensed Child Care Homes

Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality

Level 1: Eligibility

The program must be a Licensed Child Care Center, Group Home, or Home with a biennial license from the SOA Child Care Licensing or MOA Child Care Licensing Program to be eligible for Learn & Grow.

A Licensed Center, Group Home, or Home with an initial Provisional License may complete the Learn & Grow Level 1 Training in anticipation of obtaining a biennial license.

Level 1: Enrollment

Learn & Grow Level 1 Training

An ECL program enrolls in Learn & Grow following attendance of the Learn & Grow Level 1 Training. A program can invite other staff to participate in the Learn & Grow Level 1 Training.

Learn & Grow Level 1 Training is one of the Level 1 Quality Standard requirements.

The ECL program administrator has six months from the time they complete the Learn & Grow Level 1 Training to enroll in Level 1. If an ECL program completed the Learn & Grow Level 1 Training longer than six months prior to the month they enrolled in Level 1, an ECL program must re-take the Learn & Grow Level 1 Training.

The Learn & Grow Level 1 Training will be offered via webinar statewide. See **thread's** statewide training calendar for the next available Learn & Grow Level 1 Training. In-person Learn & Grow Level 1 Training will also be offered regionally. Check your local **thread** training calendar for the next available training.

The Learn & Grow Level 1 Training is approximately two hours and at no cost for an ECL program administrator or staff who attend.

The Learn & Grow Level 1 Training is aligned with Alaska's Early Childhood Core Knowledge and Competencies and will count for CDA credit in the area of Program Management. The Learn & Grow Level 1 Training will also count towards licensing hours.

Letter of Interest Form

At the end of the Learn & Grow Level 1 Training, ECL program administrators will be asked to complete the Learn & Grow Interest Form. ECL programs will indicate what their next step is:

- Yes, I'm interested in enrolling in Learn & Grow. By checking yes you are choosing to enroll your program in Learn & Grow and someone from Learn & Grow will be contacting you within five (5) business days.
- I would like additional information
- No, I'm not interested in enrolling in Learn & Grow at this time

Completed *Letter of Interest Forms* can be:

- Emailed directly to info@aklearnandgrow.org
- Mailed to 3350 Commercial Drive Suite 203 Anchorage, Alaska 99501 Attn: Learn & Grow
- Faxed: 1 (907) 265-3191 or (877) 563-1959
- Delivered in person to a local **thread** office

Level 1: Working on Quality Standards

Level 1 Quality Standards

Administration and Leadership

- Biennial License

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

- Learn & Grow Level 1 Training
- SEED Registry: Leadership and all teaching staff who provide direct care and supervision of children

- Go to <http://www.seedalaska.org> to access the online SEED Registry portal. All required documentation can be scanned and uploaded to the SEED Registry.
- Paper applications are also available to download from the website. Contact SEED Registry at info@seedalaska.org for additional assistance.
- SEED Registry has thirty (30) days from time of receiving a completed application to process an individual's information and assign them a SEED level.
 - Individuals will receive a SEED certificate indicating their level. This certificate is also stored on the online portal.
 - To maintain an active enrollment in the SEED Registry an individual is required to update their SEED Registry on an annual basis. SEED will send an email reminder of when the individuals renew date is approaching.
 - Pending status is not considered active enrollment.
 - Pending could mean that all the necessary documentation for SEED to assign an individual a level on the SEED Career Ladder has not been submitted.

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

The ECL program with support from **thread** PDS if needed, will develop a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to identify how their ECL program will meet Level 1 Quality Standard Requirements.

Technical Assistance

ECL programs may receive technical assistance from a **thread** PDS to help achieve Level 1 Quality Standard Requirements.

The technical assistance can be conducted on the phone or in the **thread** regional office.

Level 1: Verification

The ECL program determines when they are ready to be verified at Level 1.

The ECL program will complete the *Level 1 Verification Checklist* and submit it via one of the following methods for the Level 1 Verification process.

- Email directly to info@aklearnandgrow.org
- Mailed to 3350 Commercial Drive Suite 203 Anchorage, Alaska 99501 Attn: Learn & Grow
- Faxed: 1 (907) 265-3191 or (877) 563-1959
- Delivered in person to a local **thread** office

The Level 1 Verification Checklist can be obtained from an ECL programs assigned **thread** PDS.

A paper copy of the *Level 1 Verification Checklist* can also be submitted in person or mail to the local **thread** office who will take measures to assure it is sent to the Learn & Grow Systems Development Coordinator or an ECL program can mail directly to 3350 Commercial Drive Suite 203 Anchorage, Alaska 99501 Attn: Systems Development Coordinator.

The Level 1 Checklist includes:

- First and last names of all employees
- Last 5 digits of Social Security Number
- Employee start date
- Position/ title of each employee
- Current biennial State or MOA child care license
- Completion of Learn & Grow Level 1 Training (An ECL program does not need to submit a copy, but rather the verifier will confirm completion of Learn & Grow Level 1 Training in the **thread** data system (NDS)).

By submitting the *Level 1 Verification Checklist*, ECL programs are assuring the most accurate record of current employees and their individual information.

Within ten (10) business days of receipt of a Level 1 Verification Checklist, the ECL program will receive notification of Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality Recognition level or notification of missing information that may be preventing the program from receiving Level 1 Recognition.

A Learn & Grow Marketing Tool Kit will be provided to the ECL program with their Level 1 Recognition certificate. The Learn & Grow Marketing Tool Kit may include:

- Family Letter Template (describing Learn & Grow and an ECL programs participation in the system)
- Learn & Grow window decal signifying the Learn & Grow recognition level the program has received
- Learn & Grow stickers
- Learn & Grow talking points that an ECL program could include in a newsletter, press release or other marketing materials the program may be utilizing.

There are no fiscal incentives available at Level 1.

ECL program administrator is responsible for assuring that all staff are in the SEED registry. Individual ECL providers please go to <http://www.akseed.org> or <http://www.threadalaska.org> to access professional development funding opportunities.

Professional development funding opportunities are not dependent on an ECL provider being enrolled in Learn & Grow.

Level 1: Renewal

An ECL program's Learn & Grow renewal occurs one year from the month of the last recognition level received. ECL programs will receive notification of their Level renewal 90 business days prior to the month of their renewal.

ECL programs submit a *Level 1 Renewal Checklist* to initiate renewal of their program's Learn & Grow Recognition Level.

Renewal activities provided by the **thread** PDS are not part of the Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality technical assistance.

Licensed Centers and Licensed Group Homes

Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality

The following steps describe the Level 2 activities for an ECL program for: enrollment; working on quality standards; environmental assessment; verification; and renewal process.

Level 2: Enrollment

If an ECL program chooses to enroll in Level 2 a **thread** professional development specialist assigned to the program at Level 1 will set up a time to meet with the ECL program and review Level 2 requirements and supports.

1. Administrator Credential content
 2. Pathways to complete credential
 3. Level 2 Lead Teacher training requirements
 4. Fiscal supports
 5. Technical assistance
- Each ECL program may receive technical assistance from a **thread** PDS which may include an onsite visit.
 - Technical assistance is customized to each ECL program to meet the individual needs of the ECL program to achieve Level 2 Learn & Grow Quality Standard Requirements.
 - Programs can decide on how they would like to spend their technical assistance. Minimum requirement is that consultation should be focused on meeting Level 2 requirements.

If an ECL program chooses to continue after reviewing Level 2, the ECL program administrator will sign a *Letter of Commitment*. The signed *Letter of Commitment* is the official enrollment date of an ECL program working on Level 2.

The *Letter of Commitment* outlines the ECL programs responsibilities, potential time an ECL program may need; **thread's** time commitment, and resources and supports that will be made available to the ECL program to assist in meeting the Learn & Grow Level 2 Quality Standard Requirements. The ECL program will also be asked to put a projected completion date of Level 2 activities. An ECL program is not bound by this date, but rather to serve as a goal to achieve. This date also help Learn & Grow assess and monitor its availability of support resources and ability to serve more ECL programs that choose to enroll in Learn & Grow.

If an ECL program does not choose to work on Level 2 following the Level 2 introductory conversation, the program will remain on the Learn & Grow list of participating programs and will be placed on a monitoring status.

Technical Assistance

- Each ECL program may receive technical assistance from a **thread** PDS which may include an onsite visit.
- Technical assistance is customized to each ECL program to meet the individual needs of the ECL program to achieve Level 2 Learn & Grow Quality Standard Requirements.
- Programs can decide on how they would like to spend their technical assistance.
- Minimum requirement is that consultation should be focused on meeting Level 2 requirements.

Monitoring status means the ECL program will receive a phone call from Learn & Grow once or twice a year to check in on how things are progressing and offer any support or resources that may be helpful for the program to stay actively engaged in continuous quality improvement activities.

Level 2: Working on Quality Standards

Quality Standard Area: Administration and Leadership

Early Childhood Administrator Credential I (ECAC I)

The Early Childhood Administrator Credential (ECAC I) is intended to provide ECL program administrators with the resources and supports needed to help their programs stay actively engaged in continuous quality improvement activities that progress them through the Learn & Grow Levels of quality.

Administrator Credential Topics include:

- Business and Fiscal Management
- Family Engagement (Minimum Strengthening Families)
- Pyramid Foundations Training
- Environment Rating Scale Overview and Self-Assessment
- Human Resources (Center and Group home administrators only)
- Introduction to Alaska's Early Childhood Core Knowledge and Competencies

There are multiple pathways for someone to complete the credential. Many ECL program administrators may have already completed training or course work as part of previous university, **thread** or other online training.

Consult with a **thread** professional development specialist for a list of approved courses and locations of trainings.

All trainings must be SEED approved. The current approved list is not exhaustive and will continue to grow as courses are approved by the SEED Trainer Approval system.

Quality Standard Area: Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

Within the Level 2 Staff Qualifications and Professional Development Standard Quality area there are three training topic requirements for lead teachers of an ECL program.

Strengthening Families

There are three ways for an ECL program to complete a Learn & Grow approved Strengthening Families training.

- University of Alaska Fairbanks Family Course
- **thread** Strengthening Families training
- The Center for Study of Social Policy
<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/about/overview-of-the-strengthening-families-website>Center for social policy
- This training is free, self – paced, and available online training. It is approximately 14 hours long.
- To be considered an eligible training for Learn & Grow the participant must complete the entire course and receive a training completion certificate from the Center for Study of Social Policy.
- If a lead teacher or administrator has already completed Strengthening Families training from **thread** or online from the Center for Study of Social Policy, there is no expiration on the training.
- An ECL program must have documentation of completed courses in the SEED registry.

Pyramid Foundations Training

There are a few ways an ECL program can meet the Pyramid Foundations Training requirement.

- **thread** training
- Other ECL program who offered an approved Pyramid/ CSEFEL training
- The following training titles may also meet the Pyramid Training requirement for Learn & Grow.
 - Planting the Seeds of Success: Supporting Social Emotional Development
 - Alaska Pyramid Partnership Training

Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) Overview & Self-Assessment Training

Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) is a new course and currently in development. Please check the **thread** website and training calendar for available training.

Introduction to Alaska’s Early Childhood Core Knowledge and Competencies

Alaska's Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies can assist ECL educators in understanding the many skills needed to provide quality programs for children. This session will describe the Core Knowledge and Competencies, how they are organized, and how they connect to advancing the professional development of ECL educators.

Quality Standard Area: Relationships and Learning Environment

Level 2 requires that each program receive a minimum of 2.5 on the applicable ERS tool for at least one classroom in each age group that a program offers. For example:

- If an ECL program has two infant classrooms, two toddler classrooms and two preschool classrooms the Learn & Grow requirement is that one classroom from each of the three age groups will be assessed.
- Assessment of the classrooms will be randomly selected on the day of the assessment.
 - See the assessment section for specific requirements.

Quality Standard Area: Family Engagement

Strengthening families training meets the requirements for this Quality Standard Requirement.

This training is documented in thread data system (NDS).

Quality Standards Training Survey

Additionally, each ECL program must complete a Level 2 Quality Standards Training Survey. This is to be completed with ALL lead teachers and program administrator at enrollment of Level 2 and no less than 3 months from the ECL programs Level 2 Verification submission.

This survey is designed to determine if there is any change in practice, skills, and knowledge as a result of the specific Level 2 Training and technical assistance provided. The pre and post survey will be provided by the ECL programs PDS and to be turned in with the Level 2 Verification documentation.

Level 2: Environmental Assessment

When an ECL program is ready for an official ERS assessment to be conducted, the ECL program will submit the *Level 2 Request for ERS Assessment Form* to their **thread** PDS.

The *Level 2 Request for ERS Assessment Form* must be submitted at minimum of thirty (30) business days prior to the available assessment times provided.

The *Level 2 Request for ERS Assessment Form* will contain information about the following:

- An ECL program may have outings, scheduled closures or other activities they have pre-planned. To accommodate these scheduled, the ECL program will provide Learn & Grow with a two week period of time in which their ECL program would be available for an ERS assessment.

- The ERS assessment(s) are un-announced and classrooms will be randomly chosen on the day of the assessments within the two-week period of time provided by the ECL program.
- If an ECL program does not achieve the minimum Level 2 Quality Standard Requirement of an ERS score of 2.5 in all the assessed classrooms, the ECL program can request a re-assessment (free of charge). An ECL program can receive a re-assessment no sooner than 30 days from last assessment and no later than 90 days.
- If an ECL program has used all of the Level 2 technical assistance hours they can submit a special request for additional technical assistance hours.

Level 2: Verification

The ECL program determines when they are ready to be verified at Level 2.

The ECL program will complete the Level 2 checklist and submit to the Statewide Systems Coordinator at **thread** who will facilitate the Level 2 verification process.

info@aklearnandgrow.org

This email *Level 2 Verification Checklist* includes:

- First and last names of each employees
- Date of Birth for each employee
- State date for each employees
- Position/ title of each employee
- Early Childhood Administrator Credential I
- Moving into Higher Quality Training for each lead teacher
- ERS Scores for at least one of each age classroom of 2.5
- Completed Level 2 Quality Standards Survey from each lead teachers and administrator
- Completed Level 2 Benchmarks of Quality per ECL program

Within ten (10) business days of receipt of a *Level 2 Verification Checklist*, the ECL program will receive Validation of Level 2 Recognition Level or notification of missing information that may be preventing the program from receiving Level 2 Recognition.

Level 2: Renewal

An ECL program's Learn & Grow renewal occurs annually from the date of the latest recognition level received. Early Care and Learning programs will receive notification of their Level renewal one month prior to the date of their renewal.

ECL programs will submit a renewal checklist applicable to the level they would like to renew or perhaps be reassessed at to determine if they have met the requirements of a new Learn & Grow level of quality.

Licensed Child Care Home

Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality

The following steps describe the Level 2 activities for an ECL program from enrollment, working on quality standards, environmental assessment, verification, renewal process.

Level 2: Enrollment

If a program chooses to enroll in Level 2 a **thread** professional development specialist assigned to the program at Level 1 will set up a time to meet with the program and review Level 2 requirements and supports.

- Administrator Credential content
- Pathways to complete credential
- Fiscal supports
- Technical assistance
 - Each ECL program may receive technical assistance from a **thread** PDS which may include an onsite visit;
 - Technical assistance is customized to each ECL program to meet the individual needs of the ECL program to achieve Level 2 Learn & Grow Quality Standard Requirements; and/or
 - Programs can decide on how they would like to spend their technical assistance. Minimum requirement is that consultation should be focused on meeting Level 2 requirements.

If an ECL program chooses to continue after reviewing Level 2, the ECL program administrator will sign a *Letter of Commitment*. The signed *Letter of Commitment* is the official enrollment date of an ECL program working on Level 2.

The *Letter of Commitment* outlines the ECL programs responsibilities, potential time and ECL program may need; **thread's** time commitment, resources and supports that will be made available to the ECL program to assist in meeting the Learn & Grow Level 2 Quality Standard Requirements. The ECL program will also be asked to put a projected completion date of Level 2 activities. An ECL program is not bound by this date, but rather to serve as a goal to achieve. This date also help Learn & Grow assess and monitor its availability of support resources and ability to serve more ECL programs that choose to enroll in Learn & Grow.

If an ECL program does not choose to work on Level 2 following the Level 2 introductory conversation, the program will remain on the Learn & Grow list of participating programs and will be placed on a monitoring status.

Monitoring status means the ECL program will receive a phone call from Learn & Grow once or twice a year to check in on how things are progressing and offer any support or resources that may be helpful for the program to stay actively engaged in continuous quality improvement activities.

Level 2: Working on Quality Standards

Quality Standard Area: Administration, Leadership and Staff Qualifications

Early Childhood Administrator Credential I (ECAC I)

The credential is intended to provide ECL program administrators with the resources and supports needed to help their programs stay actively engaged in continuous quality improvement activities that progress them through the Learn & Grow Levels of quality.

Administrator Credential Topics include:

- Business and Fiscal Management
- Family Engagement (Minimum Strengthening Families)
- Pyramid Partnership Training
- Environment Rating Scale Overview and Self-Assessment (FCCERS)
- Strengthening Families Training
- Introduction to Alaska's Early Childhood Core Knowledge and Competencies

There are multiple pathways for someone to complete the ECAC I and the various trainings associated with the credential. Many ECL program administrators may have already completed training or course work as part of previous university, **thread** or other online training.

Consult with a **thread** professional development specialist for a list of approved courses and locations of trainings.

All trainings must be SEED approved. The current approved list is not exhaustive and will continue to grow as courses are approved by the SEED Trainer Approval system.

If an ECL program administrator has a course they feel meets one of the requirements for the administrator credential contact the SEED Trainer Approval system to see how a course and/or trainer may be approved.

SEED Career Ladder

The ECL administrator of the Licensed Home must be a SEED Level 6 or above on the SEED Career ladder.

Training

Strengthening Families

There are three ways for an ECL program to complete a Learn & Grow approved Strengthening Families training.

- University of Alaska Fairbanks Family Course
- **thread** Strengthening Families training

- The Center for Study of Social Policy
<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/about/overview-of-the-strengthening-families-website>Center for social policy
 - This training is free, self – paced, and available online training. It is approximately 14 hours long.
 - To be considered an eligible training for Learn & Grow the participant must complete the entire course and receive a training completion certificate from the Center for Study of Social Policy.

If a lead teacher or administrator has already completed Strengthening Families training from **thread** or online from the Center for Study of Social Policy, there is no expiration on the training.

ECL programs must have documentation of completed courses in the SEED Registry.

Pyramid Foundations Training

There are a few ways an ECL program can meet the Pyramid Foundations Training requirement.

- **thread** training
- Other ECL program who offered an approved Pyramid/ CSEFEL training
- The following training titles may also meet the Pyramid Training requirement for Learn & Grow.
- Planting the Seeds of Success: Supporting Social Emotional Development
- Alaska Pyramid Partnership Training

Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) Overview & Self-Assessment Training

This is a new course and currently in development. Please check the **thread** website and training calendar for available training.

Introduction to Alaska’s Early Childhood Core Knowledge and Competencies

Alaska’s Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies can assist ECL educators in understanding the many skills needed to provide quality programs for children. This session will describe the Core Knowledge and Competencies, how they are organized, and how they connect to advancing the professional development of ECL educators.

Quality Standard Area: Relationships and Learning Environment

Level 2 requires that each program receive a minimum of 2.5 in the Environmental Rating Scale tool: Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCERS).

- Assessment of the ECL program will be randomly selected during one of the two weeks provided by the ECL program on the Level 2 Request for ERS Assessment Form.

Quality Standard Area: Family Engagement

Strengthening families training meets the requirements for this quality standard requirement.

This training is documented in **thread** data system (NDS).

Level 2 Training Survey

Each ECL program must complete a Level 2 Training Survey. The Level 2 Training Survey is designed to determine if there is any change in practice, skills, and knowledge as a result of the specific Level 2 Training and technical assistance provided. The survey will be provided by the ECL programs PDS and to be turned in with the Level 2 Verification documentation.

Level 2: Environmental Assessment

When an ECL program is ready for an official ERS assessment to be conducted, the ECL program will submit the *Level 2 Request for ERS Assessment Form* to their assigned **thread** PDS.

The *Level 2 Request for ERS Assessment Form* must be submitted at minimum of thirty (30) business days prior to the available assessment times provided.

The *Level 2 Request for ERS Assessment Form* will contain information about the following:

- An ECL program may have outings, scheduled closures or other activities they have pre-planned. To accommodate these scheduled, the ECL program will provide Learn & Grow with a two-week period of time in which their ECL program would be available for an ERS assessment. The ERS assessment is un-announced within the two-week period of time provided by the ECL program.
- If an ECL program does not achieve the minimum Level 2 Quality Standard Requirement of an ERS score of 2.5, the ECL program can request a re-assessment (free of charge). An ECL program must submit a formal request for re-assessment within 10 business days after receiving the first ERS report.
- If an ECL program has used all of the Level 2 technical assistance hours they can submit a special request for additional technical assistance hours.

Level 2: Verification

The ECL program determines when they are ready to be verified at Level 2.

The ECL program will complete the *Level 2 Verification Checklist* and submit to the Statewide Systems Coordinator at **thread** who will facilitate the Level 2 verification process.

info@aklearnandgrow.org

This email Level 2 Verification checklist includes:

- First and last names for each employee
- Date of Birth for each employee
- Employee start date for each employee
- Position/ title for each employee
- Early Childhood Administrator Credential I

- ERS Scores for at least one of each age classroom OR a 1/3 of total classrooms of 2.5
- Completed Level 2 Benchmarks of Quality per ECL program
- Level 2 Training Survey

Within ten (10) business days of receipt of a *Level 2 Verification Checklist*, the ECL program will receive Validation of Level 2 Recognition Level or notification of missing information that may be preventing the program from receiving Level 2 Recognition.

Level 2: Renewal

An ECL program's Learn & Grow renewal occurs annually from the date of the latest recognition level received. Early Care and Learning programs will receive notification of their Level renewal one month prior to the date of their renewal.

ECL programs will submit a renewal checklist applicable to the level they would like to renew or perhaps be reassessed at to determine if they have met the requirements of a new Learn & Grow level of quality.

thread Professional Development Specialist

Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality

The following steps provide guidance for **thread** Professional Development Specialist (PDS) who will provide most of the on-site and telephonic technical assistance to ECL programs enrolled in Level 1 and/or Level 2 of Learn & Grow. These steps provide guidance for a PDS beginning at Level 1 eligibility, enrollment, working on quality standards, verification, renewal; Level 2 enrollment, working on quality standards, environmental assessment, verification, and renewal process.

Level 1: Eligibility

Recruitment

thread PDS are encouraged to promote the benefits to an ECL program enrolling in Learn & Grow in their every-day interactions with ECL programs and ECL providers. See specific talking points for how to help support and encourage ECL programs to enroll. There is no recruitment documentation required by the PDS.

Level 1: Enrollment

Messaging to ECL programs

If an ECL program calls inquiring about Learn & Grow, refer the program to <http://www.aklearnandgrow.org> and review the Learn & Grow content (If they haven't already done so).

There are two documents to refer SOA or MOA Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Homes, and Home programs to on the <http://www.aklearnandgrow.org> website.

- Licensed Child Care Center and Group Home quality standards document
- Licensed Home quality standards document

PDS Level 1 Enrollment Documentation

The **thread** PDS supervisor will assign a **thread** PDS the ECL program within five (5) business days of receiving notice from PDS supervisor and not to exceed ten (10) business days from the time the Letter of Interest Form was received.

The **thread** PDS supervisor will document the **thread** PDS assigned to the ECL program in **thread's** data system (NDS).

Once a PDS has been assigned the PDS will use the following procedures to record their activity with the Learn & Grow enrolled ECL program.

The PDS supervisor will also document the PDS assignment in the shared Learn & Grow Google docs.

Level 1: Working on Quality Standards

Technical assistance (TA)

ECL programs can receive technical assistance either by phone or in the **thread** office.

A PDS may conduct some or all of the technical assistance if they are already out on site at the ECL program for another reason.

- Work on building a relationship with the program
- Review Level 1 checklist. If the program has not completed specific activities these can be put on the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) as an action item for the program to complete. For example: Assisting with a program getting all staff in the SEED Registry. If the program does not have all staff in the SEED Registry it is the program's responsibility to assure all staff are in the SEED Registry.
- The PDS can receive a print out from SEED for the ECL program.
- The PDS is not responsible for helping an ECL program enroll their staff in the SEED Registry.
- Complete Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) with program
 - Discuss how the Learn & Grow QIP addresses the two quality standard areas of Learn & Grow Level 1.
 - Administration and Leadership
 - Biennial License
 - Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
 - Learn & Grow Level 1 Training
 - SEED Registry: Leadership and all teaching staff who provide direct care and supervision of children
- Encourage a due date for when the SEED Registry requirement will be completed.
- Include a date and time for when you will follow up with the ECL program and check back about being ready for Level 1 verification.

Technical Assistance Documentation

Level 1: Technical Assistance includes (working and talking directly with an ECL program, helping to complete a QIP, email correspondence regarding support to achieve Level 1: Quality Standard Requirements) is documented in **thread** data system (NDS).

Level 1: Planning activities (NOT part of Level 1 Technical Assistance time) will be documented in **thread's** data system (NDS) in the typical way PDS have recorded their time with an ECL program regarding: travel time, report write up, preparation, and follow up).

Level 1: Verification

The ECL program will receive Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality Recognition Certificate and Learn & Grow Level 1 Marketing Tool Kit. Marketing Tool Kit could include:

- Parent Template letter (describing Learn & Grow and an ECL programs participation in the system)

- Learn & Grow window decal signifying the Learn & Grow recognition level the program has received
- Learn & Grow stickers
- Learn & Grow talking points that an ECL program could include in a newsletter, press release or other marketing materials the program may be utilizing.
- Signed letter from state official recognizing Level of Quality achievements
- Encouragement to continue enrollment in Learn & Grow with instruction on how to enroll in Level 2

PDS Level 1 Recognition Documentation

The assigned PDS will document delivery of Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality Marketing Kit or notification of missing information and process for re-verification in **thread's** data system (NDS).

Level 1: Renewal

As part of the relationship building process with an ECL program, a **thread** PDS should continually be encouraging “active engagement in continuous quality improvement activities by the ECL program.”

Keep in mind where an ECL program is at in their readiness, availability and what is feasible and achievable for the ECL program.

PDS will provide the necessary TA assistance as requested by the ECL program to continue to meet Level 1 requirements at their renewal.

There is no specific TA time allocated to an ECL program for renewal. Assistance with renewal is not part of the ECL programs Level 1 TA.

Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality

Level 2: Enrollment

During the Level 2 Readiness conversation with an ECL program the PDS will provide information on the following topics:

- Administrator Credential content
- Pathways to complete credential
- Review of previous course work and/or trainings that may have already been completed
- Fiscal supports available for an administrator to complete credential such as Professional Development Reimbursement (PDR) and /or Travel Reimbursement (TR).

The PDS will provide the ECL program administrator with the Letter of Commitment. The Letter of Commitment outlines **thread's** responsibilities and support services and asks the program to commit to pursuing Level 2 recognition level within a specified period of time (each program will specify their time frame).

If an ECL program does not want to work on Level 2 requirements at this time the assigned PDS specialist will keep on “case load” and check in with program via phone on a regular basis to offer supports and resources. Priority of PDS time should be given to ECL program’s actively pursuing Level 2 requirements.

PDS Level 2: Enrollment Documentation

The assigned **thread** PDS will document the Level 2 Enrollment conversation in **thread’s** data system (NDS).

Level 2: Working on Quality Standards

Technical Assistance

Once the *Letter of Commitment* is signed by the ECL program, the PDS will work with the program administrator to complete the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). The QIP should include activities related to helping the program achieve Level 2 Learn & Grow requirements.

Each program has access to technical assistance hours to support the individual needs of each ECL program to achieve Level 2 Quality Standard Requirements.

Some programs QIP may have minimal activities, while others may have more. The QIP will address Administration & Leadership; Staff Qualifications and Professional Development; Relationships & Learning Environment; and Family Engagement. See the QIP for guidance on how to complete.

The PDS will work with the program to identify how they would like to spend their Level 2 technical assistance hours. This will vary for each program, with exception of the development of the QIP.

- Once the QIP is completed, a copy should be uploaded the ECL program file under the Learn & Grow folder on the **thread** main server.
- PDS should record their technical assistance in NDS.
- Technical Assistance content may include guidance and assistance on how an administrator and/or lead teachers can meet the Level 2 training and credential requirements.

Quality Standard Area: Administration and Leadership

Early Childhood Administrator Credential (ECAC I)

Review of training to determine the best pathway for an ECL program administrator to complete the ECAC I requirements.

There are multiple pathways for someone to complete the ECAC I. Many program administrators may have already completed some of the course work as part of previous university or **thread** training they completed.

The ECAC I is intended to provide administrators with the resources and supports needed to help their ECL program stay actively engaged in continuous quality improvement activities that progress them through the Learn & Grow Levels of quality.

There are two ECACI guidance documents: 1) ECACI Center and Group Home; 2) ECACI Home. These documents provide guidance on what courses have been approved through the SEED Training Approval system and will count for the ECACI requirements. If an ECL program administrator feels they may have completed a course or training that should be considered for eligibility please provide them with the SEED Training Approval Policies and Procedures and assist them with submitting their training for approval.

Quality Standard Area: Staff Qualifications and Professional Development
Level 2: Moving into Higher Quality Training

There are four training requirements associated with Level 2 Moving Into Higher Quality for all lead teachers of an ECL program.

Strengthening Families

There are three ways for a program to complete a Learn & Grow approved Strengthening Families training.

- University of Alaska Fairbanks Family Course
- **thread** Strengthening Families training
- The Center for Study of Social Policy
<http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies/about/overview-of-the-strengthening-families-website>Center for social policy
 - This training is free and self – paced, online training. It is approximately 14 hours long.
 - To be eligible to count for Learn & Grow training the participant must complete the entire course and receive a training completion certificate from the Center for Study of Social Policy.

If a lead teacher or administrator has already completed Strengthening Families training from **thread** in the past, there is no expiration on the training and their successful completion of the training will be eligible for the Learn & Grow Level 2 training requirement. Documentation of their training completion should be in the **thread** data system (NDS).

Pyramid Partnership Training

There are a few ways an ECL program can meet the Pyramid Foundations Training requirement.

- **thread** training
- Other ECL program who offered an approved Pyramid/ CSEFEL training
- The following training titles are also eligible to count as a valid Pyramid Training requirement for Learn & Grow.
 - Planting the Seeds of Success: Supporting Social Emotional Development
 - Alaska Pyramid Partnership Training

Environmental Rating Scale (ERS) Overview & Self-Assessment

This is a new course and currently in development. Please check the **thread** website and training calendar for available training.

Introduction to Alaska's Early Childhood Core Knowledge and Competencies

Alaska's Early Care and Learning Core Knowledge and Competencies can assist ECL educators in understanding the many skills needed to provide quality programs for children. This session will describe the Core Knowledge and Competencies, how they are organized, and how they connect to advancing the professional development of ECL educators.

Quality Standard Area: Relationships and Learning Environment

Some ECL programs may choose to spend their much of their technical assistance on more classroom based supports on how to help individual classrooms to meet the 2.5 minimum overall ERS requirement in each classroom.

PDS Level 2: Working on Quality Standards Documentation

The assigned **thread** PDS will document all of the Level 2 Working on Quality Standards TA (phone and on-site) in **thread's** data system (NDS).

Quality Standard Area: Family Engagement

ECL programs must submit a copy of the completed Strengthening Families Self-Assessment. This should be conducted as part of the Strengthening Families training.

However, there are many ECL programs that may have completed the training in the past. ECL programs must have a current completed Strengthening Families self-assessment (within 9 months of submitting Level 2 verification documentation).

PDS are responsible for helping ECL programs assure they have the self-assessment completed with their Level 2 Verification documentation. See Level 2 Checklist

Level 2 Training Survey

Additionally, PDS are to help assure ECL programs also turn in a Level 2 Training Survey. This is to be completed with ALL lead teachers and program administrator at enrollment of Level 2 and no less than 3 months from the ECL programs Level 2 Verification submission. The surveys should be submitted with the Level 2 Verification documentation. See Level 2 Checklist

This survey is designed to determine if there is any change in practice, skills, and knowledge as a result of the specific Level 2 Training and technical assistance provided. The survey will be provided by the ECL programs PDS and to be turned in with the Level 2 verification documentation.

Any work to help support the ECL program with completion of these documents is to be recorded as part of Level 2 technical assistance.

Level 2: Environmental Assessment

The PDS is responsible for sharing the final ERS report with the ECL program. Sharing of the ERS assessment report does not count toward an ECL programs Level 2 technical assistance.

Scheduling of ERS Assessment: If the first request for ERS assessment times cannot be accommodated by the ECL program, the PDS should assist the ECL program to identify a three week window in which the assessment could be conducted.

PDS Level ERS Assessment Documentation: The assigned **thread** PDS will document sharing of the ERS report and assisting the ECL program with identifying an assessment three week time frame in the **thread** data system (NDS).

Level 2: Verification

The assigned PDS will provide the ECL program with Level 2: Learning About Higher Quality Recognition Certificate and Learn & Grow Level 2 Marketing Tool Kit. Marketing Tool Kit could include:

- Parent Template letter (describing Learn & Grow and an ECL programs participation in the system)
- Learn & Grow window decal signifying the Learn & Grow recognition level the program has received
- Learn & Grow stickers
- Learn & Grow talking points that an ECL program could include in a newsletter, press release or other marketing materials the program may be utilizing.

If an ECL program is ready to continue working on quality standards beyond Level 2 please consult the Learn & Grow Director for the most recent information regarding Phase II Quality Standard requirements.

PDS Level 2 Recognition Documentation

The assigned PDS will document delivery of Level 2: Learning About Higher Quality Marketing Kit or notification of missing information and process for re-verification in **thread's** data system (NDS).

Level 2: Renewal

As part of the relationship building process with and ECL program, a **thread** PDS should continually be encouraging “active engagement in continuous quality improvement activities by the ECL program.”

PDS will provide the necessary technical assistance as requested by the ECL program to maintain their Level 2 requirements at their renewal.

There is no specific technical assistance time allocated to an ECL program for renewal. Assistance with renewal is not part of the ECL programs Level 2 technical assistance.

Child Care Licensing Staff

Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality

Child care licensing staff will notify Learn & Grow of any changes in the licensing status of an ECL program.

Learn & Grow Staff

Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality

The following steps describe the procedures for the Learn & Grow Director and Systems Development Coordinator to follow during Level 1 eligibility, enrollment, verification, renewal; Level 2 enrollment, verification, and renewal processes.

Level 1: Eligibility

Level 1 Eligibility Documentation

The Learn & Grow Director will document receipt of *Letter of Interest Form* in two locations: 1) Learn & Grow Google docs and 2) **thread** data system (NDS) using the documentation procedures located in the Learn & Grow data management guide.

The Learn & Grow Director will create a folder on the server for each ECL program enrolled in Learn & Grow.

The Learn & Grow Director will make a follow up call to program after receiving the completed *Letter of Interest Form*.

The Learn & Grow Director will send a template welcome letter via email to the ECL program informing them of the next steps in the Learn & Grow enrollment and participation process. The template welcome letter will include the following content:

- Welcome and thank you for enrolling notice from Learn & Grow
- Time frame and what to expect next: Within five (5) business days of receiving this letter a **thread** PDS will be in contact with you to answer any additional questions you have and begin working on achieving Learn & Grow Level 1 Quality Standards.

Letter of Interest Forms will be kept for six months. After six months if an ECL program has not enrolled or has not expressed interest in doing so the *Letter of Interest Form* will be deleted from the shared excel document.

Level 1: Enrollment

Within five (5) business days of receiving the completed *Learn & Grow Interest Form*, the Learn & Grow Director will:

- Send a welcome letter via email to the ECL program informing them of the next steps in the Learn & Grow enrollment and participation process.
- The welcome letter will include the following content:
 - Welcome and thank you for enrolling notice from Learn & Grow
 - Time frame and what to expect next: Within five (5) business days of receiving this letter a **thread** PDS will be in contact with you to answer any additional questions you have and begin working on achieving Learn & Grow Level 1 quality standards.

Level 1: Verification

Within ten (10) business days of receiving the *Level 1 Verification Checklist* from an ECL program, the Systems Development Specialist will send one of the following responses:

- Notification to the assigned PDS that the ECL program has successfully met the Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality recognition level.
- Notification to the assigned PDS that the ECL program has not met the Level 1: Learning About Higher Quality recognition level with explanation of why the program did not meet the Level 1 recognition level and instructions for how to submit for Level 1 re-verification.
- The Systems Development Specialist time does not go towards the ECL programs Level 1 TA.

Level 1 Verification Documentation

The Systems Development Specialist is responsible for Learn & Grow verification activities and will document Level 1: Verification in **thread's** data system (NDS).

Level 1: Renewal

Learn & Grow Director will send email notification to the program and the assigned PDS 90 business days prior to the renewal. This will include Level 1 Checklist Renewal and instructions for renewal.

The Systems Development Coordinator will review the documentation associated with the Level of recognition the program is requested be verified (Level 1 or 2).

If the program continues to meet all the requirements of that current recognition level or a new level, the Learn & Grow Systems Development Coordinator will issue a new Learn & Grow recognition level certificate with a new expiration date.

Level 2 Renewal Documentation

Learn & Grow Director will document date of 90 day renewal notification in **thread's** data system (NDS). The Systems Development Coordinator will record date the renewal was sent in **thread's** data system (NDS).

Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality

Level 2: Verification

The Systems Development Coordinator will document Level 2 Verification in **thread** data system (NDS) and send an email to the assigned PDS using the Level 2 Recognition template letter.

If an ECL program did not meet the Level 2 requirements a written explanation describing what information may have been missing will be sent within ten (10) business days Level 2 Verification request. The Systems Development Coordinator will use the Level 2 Verification (Denial) template.

Level 2 Verification Documentation

The Learn & Grow verifier will document the Level 2 Verification activities in **thread's** data system (NDS).

Level 2: Renewal

The Learn & Grow Systems Development Coordinator will review the documentation associated with the Level of recognition the program is requested be verified (Level 1 or 2).

If the program continues to meet all the requirements of the current recognition level or a new level, the Learn & Grow Systems Development Coordinator will issue a new Learn & Grow recognition level certificate with a new expiration date.

Learn & Grow Level 2 Renewal Documentation

The Learn & Grow Verifier will document the Level 2 Renewal activities in **thread's** data system (NDS).

Learn & Grow Assessor

Level 2: Moving Into Higher Quality

There are no responsibilities of an Assessor in Level 1. The section below describes the procedures of a Learn & Grow Assessor beginning at Level 2.

thread maintains a cadre of inter-rater reliable assessors on the following tools:

- Infant Toddler Environmental Rating Scale (ITERS)
- Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale- 3 (ECERS-3)
- Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale (FCCERS)

The ERS assessor cannot be the same as the PDS who is providing technical assistance to the ECL program.

The ECL program's **thread** PDS will send the *Level 2 Request for ERS Assessment Form* to the **thread** statewide ERS Assessment Coordinator.

The ERS Assessment Coordinator is responsible for:

- assuring inter-rater reliability is maintained on all three of the tools of anyone conducting official assessments for Learn & Grow verification
- training on ERS assessment and report writing
- scheduling of all the official Learn & Grow ERS assessments throughout the state.
 - If the dates the ECL program proposed cannot be accommodated by the ERS Assessor, the ERS Assessor contacts the assigned PDS and asks the programs to identify additional weeks that would work for an ERS assessment.

The ERS Assessor will review the *Level 2 Request for ERS Assessment Form* times and dates and plan for conducting the appropriate amount of assessments with the assigned ECL program.

The ERS assessor will give the ERS Assessment Coordinator all final ERS reports for approval within ten (10) business days of conducting **each classroom** assessment.

The ERS Assessment Coordinator will provide feedback and return to ERS assessor with five (5) business days of receiving the final report from the ERS assessor.

The ECL program will receive their program's ERS assessment reports for all assessed classrooms no more than 20 business days from the last day of the final assessment conducted.

Once the final ERS assessment report is approved, the ERS assessor will send a copy of the report to the assigned **thread** PDS.

Assessor Level 2: Environmental Assessment Documentation

ERS assessor will document ERS results and full report in the main **thread** server under the ECL program file.

Additionally the assessor will document conducting of the Level 2 Environmental Assessment in **thread's** data system (NDS). The ERS Assessor will also document any logistic (travel, phone scheduling and writing of the report) in **thread's** data system (NDS).

Phase II: Levels 3, 4, and 5

The timeframe for Phase II of Learn & Grow, also voluntary for ECL programs to enroll, will be determined based on available staff and financial resources. Phase II will include specific quality standards across all five (5) Levels and will be available to all early care and learning program types including; SOA and MOA Licensed Child Care Centers, Group Homes, and Homes; Head Start/Early Head Start; State Pre-Kindergarten or School District Pre-Kindergarten; Military Child Care; and Licensed School-Age programs.

