Steps To Excellence Program

Promoting Quality Child Care

Family Child Care Home Application

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

CALIFORNIA

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Steps To Excellence Program

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Policy Roundtable for Child Care
Fiscal Year 2012 - 2013

The Policy Roundtable for Child Care developed the Steps To Excellence Program. The Roundtable is comprised of members appointed by the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors. The group's mission is to build and strengthen the early care and education system by providing recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on policy, systems, and infrastructure improvement.

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Sharoni Little, Ph.D. *Second Supervisorial District*	**Ruth Yoon** *First Supervisorial District*

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Welcome to the Steps To Excellence Program!

The County of Los Angeles Policy Roundtable (Roundtable) for Child Care applauds your commitment to providing high quality child development services and welcomes you to the Steps to Excellence Program (STEP).

STEP is a child care quality rating and support system that is designed to help parents make informed child care choices. It helps child care programs by:

- Identifying quality standards that have been shown by research or best practice to positively impact child outcomes;
- Distinguishing child care programs that are providing high quality services; and
- Coordinating support and technical assistance to help programs make incremental and substantial improvements to the quality of care provided.

The quality of care children receive during their early years has lifelong implications for their cognitive and social development. High quality child care services contribute to positive child outcomes, while mediocre or poor quality services do not. Licensed child care centers and family child care homes care for an estimated 246,000 children on a daily basis in Los Angeles County. This represents an incredible opportunity to support families and the healthy development of their children.

However, California Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) regulations, which are applied universally to licensed child care, focus specifically and are limited to health and safety standards. While health and safety standards are important, they are not the exclusive benchmark of high quality care. By contrast, accreditation standards, as implemented by the NAEYC and the NAFCC, in these accreditation programs is voluntary and fewer than seven percent of centers and two percent of family child care homes in Los Angeles County are currently accredited.

How Will STEP Assess the Quality of Your Child Care Program?

STEP uses quality standards that research and best practice have shown to impact child outcomes. The STEP rating system also defines incremental improvements that bridge the gap between basic compliance with CCLD regulations to the significantly more comprehensive standards associated with accreditation. STEP's goal is to engage child care programs across the spectrum, offering support and recognition for efforts that result in program quality improvements.

STEP will assess the following six components of your child care program:

1) Regulatory Compliance
2) Teacher-Child Relationships
3) Learning Environment
4) Early Identification and Inclusion of Children with Special Needs
5) Staff Qualifications and Working Conditions
6) Family and Community Connections

With the exception of Regulatory Compliance, each component includes five quality levels:

STEP Rating	Quality Level
STEP 1	**Basic**
STEP 2	**Intermediate**
STEP 3	**Good**
STEP 4	**Advanced**
STEP 5	**Excellent**

The first STEP quality level (STEP 1) is largely aligned with CCLD licensing regulations and represents a beginning level of quality. STEP quality standards at STEP 3 are largely aligned with Title 5 standards for

child care programs funded by the California Department of Education/Child Development Division. STEP quality standards at STEP 5 are largely aligned with NAEYC accreditation standards. And lastly, STEP levels three, four and five are all aligned with the Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) standards for the Learning Environment and Staff Qualifications components.

To view a detailed list of STEP standards and quality rating elements, we strongly recommend that you review the **STEP Scoring Matrix for Family Child Care Homes**. The matrix is included in your application packet and is also available online at www.childcare.lacounty.gov.

An Overview of the STEP Participation Process

Are you ready to get started? Here is a description of the steps you must take in order to fully participate in STEP:

1). Read this STEP application packet entirely. It is important for you to take time to carefully review the STEP quality assessment process, supports and resources available prior to enrolling in STEP.

2). Review the STEP Scoring Matrix. Please review the matrix that is included in your application packet. The matrix lists the STEP quality criteria that will be used to assess and rate your child care program.

3). Complete and submit a STEP Application Form. Once you have decided to enroll your child care program in STEP, complete the STEP application included in pages 15-18 of this document and mail or fax it to our office. Or, you may download and submit an electronic version of this STEP application by visiting www.childcare.lacounty.gov.

4). Attend a STEP Orientation Session. After your child care program passes STEP's licensing verification review, you will be invited to a STEP orientation meeting. During this meeting, we will help you complete a self-assessment that identifies the strengths and needs of your child care program. You will also receive a STEP Grant Application, a resource guide with helpful information, and tips on how to make the most of your STEP experience!

5). Participate in a STEP Preliminary Site Visit. Next, a highly trained and reliable Quality Reviewer from the UCLA Center for Improving Child Care Quality (CICCQ) will visit your family child care home to assess the quality of your teacher-child relationships and learning environment. You will receive your results in about 6 to 8 weeks via email or mail. You can then use this information to make quality improvements.

6). Connect with a Quality Improvement Coach. STEP will send your contact information to a coach from a nearby Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R) Agency. This individual will help you create a quality improvement plan and support your participation in STEP.

7). Apply for a STEP Quality Improvement Grant. Next, you may apply for a STEP quality improvement grant. Use your grant to make improvements based on your preliminary site visit results and the quality improvement plan you developed with your coach. (Refer to page 8 for more details about the STEP grant process.)

8). Attend STEP Quality Improvement Trainings. STEP will invite you to participate in a series of professional development trainings. During these meetings, you will meet and network with other family child care providers who, like you, are interested in making their business shine! (Refer to page 11 for more information about STEP trainings.)

9). Participate in a STEP Quality Review Site Visit. Once you have used your STEP quality improvement grant, received support from your coach and attended STEP trainings, you are now ready for your official STEP quality review! A Quality Reviewer from the UCLA CICCQ will visit your family child care home again, but this time will assess all six components of your child care program (listed on page 6). Site visits are scheduled in advance and conducted during normal business hours. (Refer to page 9 for more information about STEP quality reviews.)

10). Obtain your STEP Rating. You will receive a STEP Quality Rating Results Report via email (or by mail if you do not have email) within 6 to 8 weeks. It will contain your family child care business' STEP rating and additional quality improvement tips. We will also provide a copy of this report to your coach. Your report will include a cover letter with instructions about how to appeal your rating if you feel an error has been made. You will also receive a rating certificate that you can post for parents to see. Also, your quality rating will be made public and posted in STEP's Child Care Quality Rating Guide. Please visit our website (www.childcare.lacounty.gov) to see a copy of this rating guide.

11). Welcome to the STEP Provider Network! Now that you have your STEP quality rating, we welcome you to join our STEP Provider Network. Your participation in this network will allow you to access STEP marketing materials to promote your rating. You will also be able to access ongoing coaching, STEP-sponsored training opportunities and additional fiscal incentives when available. You may renew your family child care business' STEP quality rating every two years.

STEP Eligibility Requirements for Family Child Care Homes

To enroll in STEP, your child care program must meet the following eligibility requirements:

1). Have been licensed for at least one-year;

2). Care for children ages 0-5; and

3). Be located in one of the following STEP communities:

- Altadena
- Arleta
- Boyle Heights
- Florence/Firestone
- Granada Hills
- Inglewood
- Lancaster
- Long Beach
- Mission Hills
- Pacoima
- Palmdale
- Pasadena
- Pomona
- San Fernando
- San Pedro
- Santa Monica
- Torrance
- Watts/Willowbrook
- Wilmington

Private for-profit, non-profit, publicly subsidized programs, faith-based, school districts and any other licensed child care programs are all eligible to participate in STEP!

If your program is eligible, please complete pages 13-16 of this application packet and mail or fax to:

Los Angeles County Office of Child Care
Attention: STEP FCC Application Unit
222 South Hill Street, 5th Floor
Los Angeles, California 90012
Fax: (213) 217-5106

Make sure to include a copy of your current child care license along with your application. You may also choose to complete and submit an electronic STEP application, available online at www.childcare.lacounty.gov.

(If your program is currently not eligible, feel free to contact the Office of Child Care at (213) 974-4103 and request to be placed on the STEP waiting list.)

Upon receiving your application, STEP staff will first verify that your child care program has maintained a licensing history compliant with the regulations of the **California Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD)**. We will send your child care license number to CCLD and will ask them to report whether in the past three years your program has:

- Held a probationary license;
- Been required to participate in a compliance plan; or
- Been issued civil penalties.

If your family child care business has encountered any of these licensing issues, it is not eligible to participate in STEP. Instead, we will place your program on a waiting list until it has established a three-year track record clear of any of these regulatory issues.

If your family child care business does pass this regulatory compliance review, it will be automatically enrolled in STEP. Our office will send you a congratulatory letter to notify you of your enrollment and invite you to attend a STEP Orientation.

Obtaining a STEP Quality Improvement Grant

Once your program has enrolled in STEP, our office will invite you to attend a STEP Orientation. During this orientation, you will both complete a self-assessment and receive a STEP grant application form with corresponding instructions on how to complete it. This is your opportunity to request a one-time grant to support quality improvements.

STEP Quality Improvement Grants are currently limited to **$5,000** per family child care program enrolled in STEP. They are optional, meaning your program is not required to apply for a grant. The STEP program reserves the right to offer a lesser grant amount based on available resources. Please call (213) 974-4103 and ask to speak with a STEP staff member to confirm the most current STEP grant award that is being offered.

Grant funds may only be used to purchase items or services relevant to the six quality components rated by STEP (refer to page 8). Your funds must also support improvements that were identified during your STEP self-assessment process.

After submitting a grant application, you will need to provide proof of liability insurance and workers compensation (if applicable) for your family child care business in order to receive these funds. Once you have received and used your grant check, you must submit copies of all receipts to verify monies were spent appropriately and as indicated in your STEP grant application.

If you have additional questions about STEP Quality Improvement Grants, please feel free to contact the Office of Child Care at (213) 974-4103 and ask to speak with a STEP staff member.

STEP Quality Improvement Trainings and Resources

The Office of Child Care offers a variety of quality improvement trainings and resources to help child care programs meet STEP's quality standards.

A **STEP Resource Guide** is distributed to every STEP child care program upon enrollment. The guide contains useful information to help programs improve their quality and prepare for their STEP quality review site visit. It is also posted on the Office of Child Care website at www.childcare.lacounty.gov.

We also implement **STEP Up Your Quality!**, a professional development training curriculum especially designed to support family child care providers that are participating in STEP. You will be able to access this curriculum by participating in STEP-sponsored group training sessions. You will also receive one-on-one support by working with a quality improvement coach from your local R&R agency. Both group trainings and coaching services are available in English and Spanish to address the linguistic needs and diverse backgrounds of our STEP participants.

Once you have successfully enrolled in STEP, you will be assigned to a cohort of providers. Cohorts are typically created based on the geographical proximity of STEP participants. So, you will have an opportunity to meet other providers that live near you, build leadership skills, and encourage each other to achieve higher levels of professional growth.

The following topics are the core of STEP's professional development training curriculum:

Building Positive Relationships with Children: Focuses on the importance of adults' active and responsive interactions with young children and relevant best practices. Participants will learn strategies that increase their overall quality of adult-child relationships.

Developmental Screening Tools: Introduces providers to high quality developmental screening tools and how to use them to: 1) Assess whether children are developing and learning as expected; 2) Spot children at risk of learning disabilities and needing additional support to develop, learn, and prevent future learning difficulties; 3) Help determine interventions and curriculum modifications for targeted children to fully participate in classroom activities and routines; and 4) Identify children needing referrals to their local Regional Center and/or school district for formal assessments of learning disabilities or other special needs.

Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale-Revised Version (FCCERS- R): Provides an overview of the scale used by the STEP Quality Reviewer to evaluate your family child care business' learning environment. The FCCERS-R focuses on seven subscales: 1) Space and Furnishings; 2) Personal Care Routines; 3) Listening and Talking; 4) Activities; 5) Interaction; 6) Program Structure; and 7) Parents and Provider.

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs: Provides an overview of teaching strategies used to help child care providers make practical accommodations and modifications to the curriculum and environment to effectively include children with special needs.

STEP Portfolio Preparation Workshops: Offers hands-on assistance to help STEP participants complete required STEP Portfolio documentation and prepare for their site visit.

If you have questions about the support you will receive through STEP, or for more information about STEP's professional development trainings, please contact Doris Monterroso, STEP Training Coordinator, via email at dmonterroso@ceo.lacounty.gov or by telephone at (213) 974-4103.

STEP Quality Review Site Visits

Your child care program will be contacted by a coordinator to schedule a STEP Quality Review Site Visit approximately 8 to 10 months after enrolling in STEP. All site visits are scheduled in advance and will be conducted during normal business hours by a trained Quality Reviewer.

STEP site visits are typically a day-long event and consist of two main activities: an observation and a review of documentation from your STEP Portfolio. During the observation portion, the Quality Reviewer will observe and record your staff-to-child ratios and group size. The Quality Reviewer will use the Adult Involvement Scale (AIS) and Family Child Care Environmental Rating Scale-Revised Version (FCCERS-R) to objectively assess the quality of your teacher-child relationships and your learning environment, respectively. You can obtain more information about the AIS and FCCERS-R by attending relevant STEP Quality Improvement Trainings and/or reviewing the STEP Resource Guide available online at www.childcare.lacounty.gov.

The Quality Reviewer will also review your child care program's STEP Portfolio, which is a collection of documents and evidence that corroborates to what extent your child care program meets the quality criteria listed in the STEP Scoring Matrix. You will receive a STEP Portfolio binder and materials when you attend a STEP Portfolio Preparation Workshop.

STEP Quality Ratings

Once a STEP Quality Reviewer has visited your child care program, you will receive your STEP quality rating via email (or mail if you do not have an email address). A customized **STEP Quality Rating and Improvement Report** will be sent to you within 6 to 8 weeks of your site visit. This report will contain your STEP rating for each of the six quality components evaluated by STEP, and an overall STEP rating for your child care program.

Because STEP was designed to offer parents clear, concise information about child care quality, your STEP quality rating will be posted in the Office of Child Care's STEP Child Care Quality Rating Guide, which is posted on its website at www.childcare.lacounty.gov and made available to the public. STEP will also provide you with promotional materials to help you use your STEP rating as a marketing tool that distinguishes your program from non-rated child care programs.

Contact Information

If you have additional questions about STEP, please contact the Office of Child Care at (213) 974-4103 and ask to speak with a STEP staff member. The following is a listing of STEP staff, by name:

Mariela Balam
STEP Outreach Coordinator
mbalam@ceo.lacounty.gov
(213) 974-4519

Helen E. Chavez
STEP Program Manager
hchavez@ceo.lacounty.gov
(213) 893-0505

Doris Monterroso
STEP Training Coordinator
dmonterroso@ceo.lacounty.gov
(213) 974-9526

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STEP Family Child Care Application

For Office Use Only
Confirmation: ☐Call ☐Email
Application Date Received: _____
Application: ☐Complete ☐Incomplete
CCLD Office: ☐NW ☐E ☐Passed ☐Failed
Date Sent: _____ Received: _____
☐ Program referred to Orientation

1. Family Child Care Facility Name: _____
(As shown on child care license)

2. Address: _____ _____ _____
(Number and Street) *(City)* *(Zip Code)*

3. Child Care License Number: _____

4. License Effective Date: ____/____/____ **5. License Capacity:** _____children
MM DD YY

6. Does your child care business operate under a different name? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Doing Business As (DBA): _____

7. What days and hours is your family child care business open? *Check all that apply:*

☐ Monday ____a.m. to ____p.m.
☐ Tuesday ____a.m. to ____p.m.
☐ Wednesday ____a.m. to ____p.m.
☐ Thursday ____a.m. to ____p.m.
☐ Friday ____a.m. to ____p.m.
☐ Saturday ____a.m. to ____p.m.
☐ Sunday ____a.m. to ____p.m.

8A. In the past, has your family child care business served children that are:

☐ In foster care ☐ Receiving welfare/TANF ☐ Low-income ☐ Dual Language Learners ☐ Special Needs

8B. Is your family child care business currently serving children that are:

☐ In foster care ☐ Receiving welfare/TANF ☐ Low-income ☐ Dual Language Learners ☐ Special Needs

8C. How many children by the specific age groups do you serve:
0 yrs – less than 3 yrs_____ 3 yrs – 5 yrs_____ 6 yrs and up_____

9. Does your family child care business have a website address? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Website address: _____

10. Licensed Child Care Provider: _____ _____
(First Name) *(Last Name)*

Title: _____

Ethnicity: ☐ Alaska Native/American Indian ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Multiracial
☐ Asian ☐ Pacific Islander ☐ Other
☐ Black/African American ☐ White/Caucasian ☐ Unknown

Taxpayer Identification Number (*provide only one*):

☐ Social Security Number: _____ - _____ - _____

-OR-

☐ Employer Identification Number: _____ - _____

Email: _____

Phone: (_____) _____-_____ Alternate Phone: (_____) _____-_____

11. Alternate Contact Person: _____ _____
(First Name) *(Last Name)*

Title: _____

Email: _____

Phone: (_____) _____-_____ Alternate Phone: (_____) _____-_____

12. Does your family child care business employ others? ☐ No ☐ Yes

12a. If Yes: List employee names, titles and identify their ethnicity:

Name #1:_____

Title: _____

Is this person a family member? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Ethnicity: ☐ Alaska Native/American Indian ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Multiracial
☐ Asian ☐ Pacific Islander ☐ Other
☐ Black/African American ☐ White/Caucasian ☐ Unknown

Name #2: _____

Title: _____

Is this person a family member? ☐ No ☐ Yes

Ethnicity: ☐ Alaska Native/American Indian ☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Multiracial
☐ Asian ☐ Pacific Islander ☐ Other
☐ Black/African American ☐ White/Caucasian ☐ Unknown

13. What are your family child care business' funding sources? *Check all that apply:*

☐ Family Child Care Home Education Network

Network Coordinator: _____ _____
(First Name) *(Last Name)*

Coordinator's Phone Number: (_____) _____-_____

☐ Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP)*
Note: Child care providers funded by LAUP are not eligible to participate in STEP.

☐ Alternative Payment (AP) Program or CalWORKs**
****Note: Check this box if, for example, you receive payment from your local R&R agency.***

☐ Parent fees

☐ Other: _____

14. Is your family child care business accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

15. Which languages are spoken on a daily basis as part of your child care program?
Check all that apply:

☐ Armenian ☐ Japanese ☐ Russian
☐ Chinese ☐ Khmer (Cambodian) ☐ Spanish
☐ English ☐ Korean ☐ Vietnamese
☐ Other language: _____

16. Child Care Licensing Analyst: _____ _____
(First Name) *(Last Name)*

Analyst's Phone Number: (_____) _____-_____

17. **Attach a copy of your current child care license (issued by the Community Care Licensing Division).** You must be licensed for at least one year in order to join STEP.

☐ Yes, I have attached a copy of my current child care license to this application.

18. **Do you have liability insurance* for your child care business?** ☐ No ☐ Yes

**Note: If you marked "No", your program will need to purchase liability insurance soon in order to accept a STEP grant. More information about this requirement will be provided during your STEP orientation meeting.*

19. **Do you have workers compensation insurance** for your child care business?**

☐ No ☐ Yes

***Note: If you marked "No", your program will need to purchase workers compensation insurance soon (if you employ non-family members) in order to accept a STEP grant. More information about this requirement will be provided during your STEP orientation meeting.*

20. **Are you participating in the AB 212 Program (also known as the Investing in Early Educators Stipend Program)?** ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure

21. **Are you participating in the LAUP ASPIRE Program?** ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure

****

Consent to Participate

By completing and submitting this application form, I am stating my intent to fully participate in STEP. I have read this application packet in its entirety, understand and agree to comply with STEP's participation requirements as stated therein.

Print Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Signature: _____

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Please submit your STEP application via mail or fax to:

Los Angeles County Office of Child Care
c/o STEP FCC Application Unit
222 South Hill Street, 5th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Telephone: (213) 974-4103
Fax: (213) 217-5106
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