2020 Needs Assessment
**About this Needs Assessment**

In June 2017, the Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC) in Canton, Ohio became the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency for Service Delivery Area 4 (SDA 4), the six-county region shown on the map.

Needs assessments are conducted annually to ensure the ECRC is assessing and meeting needs throughout the region. We collect data from key stakeholder groups, including parents and caregivers, child care providers, and agency representatives.

The areas of focus for this needs assessment were based on the three objectives of the project:

1. **Increase awareness of early childhood options for providers, families, and community stakeholders;**

2. **Increase quality of services provided by programs by providing professional development and technical assistance; and**

3. **Provide information to communities on the importance of quality and the impacts of early childhood education.**

The needs assessment includes both qualitative and quantitative data measures, and it follows the framework provided by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS).

Also included in this report is information gathered in the field and gained during discussions with providers about their needs.

SDA 4 includes Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, & Trumbull counties.
Outreach

The Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC) in Canton, Ohio (Stark County) serves as the lead agency, coordinating all SDA 4 services from three strategically located regional offices: the administrative office in Canton serves the entire SDA, and houses those who directly serve Stark and Portage counties; the Austintown office serves Mahoning and Trumbull counties; and the Akron office serves Medina and Summit counties. The Akron office is inside Child Guidance and Family Solutions, a respected behavioral health organization. This arrangement offers opportunities for collaboration as well as early childhood mental health services alignment.

Serving a large region with a wide variety of needs poses many challenges. Our regional approach ensures that every two counties in SDA 4 have a readily accessible local office to engage the community (including county agencies, providers, legislators, schools, and faith-based entities).

Each office houses a Regional Coordinator, who provides outreach and referral services to families, oversees programs and services for families and providers, and coordinates and delivers training and technical assistance in the region. Each regional office houses at least two Early Childhood Specialists and works closely with contracted trainers. The Regional Coordinators conduct outreach throughout their counties, and they coordinate and provide professional development and technical assistance to providers.

Our Regional Coordinators are making themselves visible and present throughout the cities, counties, communities, and agencies they serve, and they’re developing local relationships in order to understand local needs, available services, challenges, and opportunities. Staff members strive to understand local dynamics and demographics at play and build local relationships that foster effective collaboration and service delivery.

Each regional office offers Child Development Associate classes and our SUTQ Success curriculum (which includes both SUTQ 101 sessions), in addition to the training and technical assistance needed to support child care programs as they earn and increase star ratings.

Since SDA 4 is vast in size, population, and number/types of child care programs, the ECRC plans training calendars regionally, spreading training locations throughout the SDA to ensure convenience and access. Pre-pandemic training locations have included libraries, child care facilities, churches, and community centers. Planning, preparation, and coordination of training are conducted in regional offices to ensure local needs are considered, to reduce travel expense, and to ensure easy access to resources and materials. Each office continually gathers information on what programs and services are working effectively and where deepening or extending services might be beneficial. Information gathered through the needs assessment process is articulated into a strategic plan that serves as the roadmap for delivery of services across the SDA. Since the pandemic began, we have made all training available online.

1. **How do you make your presence known in the community and how are you accessible?**

   The Early Childhood Resource Center (ECRC) in Canton, Ohio (Stark County) serves as the lead agency, coordinating all services across SDA 4 from the three regional offices: the main office serves the entire SDA and houses staff members who serve Stark and Portage counties; the Austintown office serves Trumbull and Mahoning counties; and the Akron office serves Summit and Medina counties.

   The ECRC uses a unique hub approach to ensure all areas of the SDA are being served well. While the Stark office oversees all programs and services for SDA 4, having regional offices allows for greater collaboration and deeper community relationships, closer oversight of services, better and more efficient coordination, easier access and more input around local needs, reduced travel expenses, and more seamless delivery. All calls are fielded in the
central office and deployed to the respective departments. Technical assistance staff members are available Monday-Friday to assist child care providers and families.

Serving a large SDA with vast needs poses many challenges when services are not spread out and made available close to the communities that need them. In essence, our regional approach ensures that every two counties in SDA 4 has a readily accessible local office hub office to bring together the early childhood community. To engage the early childhood community (county agencies, providers, legislators, schools, the faith-based community, etc.), our Regional Coordinators make themselves visible and present within the cities, counties, communities, and agencies served, and develop local relationships in order to understand local needs, available services, challenges, and opportunities. Staff have a clear understanding of the local dynamics and demographics at play and work diligently to build local relationships that foster effective collaboration and service delivery.

Each hub houses a Regional Coordinator, oversees programs and services for families and providers, and coordinates and delivers training and technical assistance in the region. Each regional office has 3-5 FTE Early Childhood Specialists, as well as contracted trainers. The Regional Coordinators conduct outreach throughout their counties, and coordinate and provide professional development and technical assistance to families and providers. Child care referrals for families are centralized to our main office.

Each regional office offers Child Development Associate courses at least twice annually, as well as the SUTQ Success Curriculum, which includes the training and technical assistance needed to support child care programs as they earn, maintain, or increase star ratings.

In addition, since SDA 4 is vast in size, population, and number/types of child care programs, the ECRC utilizes training locations spread throughout the SDA. Locations include libraries, child care facilities, churches, community centers, etc. Planning, preparation, and coordination of training takes place in regional offices to ensure identified local needs are considered, to reduce travel expense, and to ensure easy access to resources and materials. The Regional Coordinator in each office gathers information on what programs and services exist and are working effectively, and where deepening or extending services might be beneficial. Information gathered through the needs assessment process is articulated into a strategic plan that serves as the road map for delivery of services across the SDA. Since the pandemic began, training has been made available online, to ensure accessibility.

The ECRC uses a wide variety of communication strategies to make its presence known in the community. Email marketing campaigns and social media are our main ways of informing families and providers about programs and services. In addition, we deliver brochures on our referral services and programs to local agencies and businesses frequented by families.

2. How do you assess the needs of families needing child care?

Three trained staff members serve as Referral Specialists in our central office. Specialists meet with families or discuss their needs over the phone, based on what is convenient for and preferred by the family. The Referral Specialist conducts a needs assessment to complete an intake form, and then links the family to a child care program, appropriate agency, or special service to best meet the identified needs. Staff members make referrals and follow up with the family by phone or email a survey to see how things are going and assist further as needed. Outreach services target locations and agencies where we may find families with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, those experiencing homelessness, and other families with barriers to access, to assess child care needs and provide information, resources, and services. An initial needs assessment of families in the region, along with ongoing formal and informal needs assessments, will be used to plan additional ways of meeting the needs of families seeking care. In July, the Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association, along with all the Resource and Referral agencies in Ohio, will be launching a new application for child care referrals, called WorkLife Solutions. This user-friendly solution allows families to explore their child care options online.
During the pandemic, it became critical that the ECRC meticulously update data on child care openings, so we could refer families to Pandemic Child Care programs. With the reopening of child care in June, we are in regular contact with child care programs to ensure we remain updated about available slots. Our new WorkLife Solutions database has a portal that allows each provider to update their program profile and add enrollment information in a timely manner. This will ensure our referral staff can efficiently update the database and provide real-time referral information.

3. Do you link families with additional resources to assist the family to move toward self-sufficiency?

In close consultation with the family, the Referral Specialist develops a plan to support each family’s goals and needs. Specialists have available a wide range of brochures, along with information on numerous community services, support groups, and resources for families who have children with special needs or health conditions, those who are experiencing homelessness, or those who are facing a wide range of other challenges. For example, we have identified more than 45 organizations that offer housing assistance. We work with these organizations—and many other community organizations—to ensure outreach is provided to children and families. Our staff members make referrals, follow up, and provide information on community resources as needed to ensure a positive outcome of the service plan. At a minimum, families are provided with ODJFS’s Resource Guide (JFS form 01224) to link them to services that may be available. In addition, information on choosing high-quality child care is provided, along with a description of policies to prevent suspension, expulsion, and denial of services due to behavior in child care (45 C.F.R.) will be provided, so families understand their child’s rights and the processes child care programs must undertake before suspension, expulsion, or denial.

In addition, the ECRC seeks additional funding to provide parenting education, resources, and advocacy. Grant funding allows us to provide court system assistance to help families navigate the family court systems in Stark and Summit counties.

We help families get answers on divorce, child and spousal support, custody and visitation, contempt of court, restraining orders, move-away issues, and attorney concerns. We also help non-custodial parents understand their responsibilities and rights so they can make smart choices, both for themselves and their children. Referrals to job and resource assistance also help remove barriers to spending time with their children.

Parent education is a key component of our services. We offer many Parent Cafés throughout our region. These parent-run meetings help parents connect, share, and learn from one another in a casual, open environment. Parent Cafés help parents find supports and develop coping strategies that allow them to parent effectively, even under stress. The mutual support cultivated during Parent Cafés helps parents strengthen their parenting skills, learn how to respond to crisis situations, and become effective, supportive, and resilient. For fathers, we provide the 24/7 Dad class, which is taught by dads, for dads of infants and children 12 and younger. This class helps dads understand and fulfill the critical role they play in their children’s lives.

And the On My Shoulders class helps dads step into their most important life role as they develop strong relationships with their children and co-parents.
We also train and coach child care center directors and staff on the Strengthening Families model. According to the model’s developer, the Center for the Study of Social Policy, “Strengthening Families is a research-informed approach to increase family strengths, enhance child development, and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect. It is based on engaging families, programs, and communities in building five key Protective Factors: Parental resilience, Social connections, Knowledge of parenting and child development, Concrete support in times of need, and Social and emotional competence of children.”

4. How do you assist the family in making them aware of the options available for child care in their community?

When speaking with families seeking care, staff members use a parent intake form to ensure consistency of services and thorough investigation of family needs. During the intake process, information is provided on the types of care available, extra service options (such as before- and after-school care, languages spoken at the program, environmental specifications such as pets in a FCC setting, special needs supports, options for extended care hours, subsidized care choices and assessment, and meal provisions), and SUTQ star rating information. Families are given brochures and information on relevant community resources along with any child care referrals. At a minimum, the information provided includes ODJFS’s Resource Guide and information on choosing high-quality child care. Additional information is provided based on identified needs and interests. For example, a family might receive information on choosing the best setting to meet their child’s temperament or information on nutrition, depending on concerns expressed during the referral call. Links to helpful online resources are also provided as applicable.

Our brochure for families is also distributed widely at organizations where families access goods, services, and resources throughout our region. The brochure provides information on SUTQ, our referral services, and what to look for when choosing a child care program.

Social media is another tool we use to make families aware of care options, especially with regard to understanding Step Up to Quality and indicators of quality. With 13,194 likes and robust engagement, our page is able to widely disseminate valuable information to families.

5. Do community members, parents, and the providers in your area understand the requirements to participate in SUTQ and the benefits the children will see as a result?

As more programs are becoming rated, prominently displayed banners and signs are getting more attention. When parents call in for referrals, they often indicate that they’ve seen the banners or signs, but they aren’t always sure what they mean. We make sure to share information on Step Up to Quality requirements with families as they are seeking care, so that they can make informed choices.

The ECRC’s leadership team represents the agency on a variety of committees and stakeholder groups throughout the region. During meetings, we speak with community members about SUTQ and our progress toward increasing quality in the each county. It seems many agencies in the early childhood world are quite familiar with SUTQ.

The ECRC’s community partners often reach out to request data. Two examples include an employment partner that requested child care referral information for vendors that are helping clients become employed. We gave them...
information on our referral services. Another partner requested and received information on pandemic-related changes affecting child care.

As for providers, the pending deadline of becoming rated by June 30 forced many providers to decide whether to continue providing publicly funded care, which would require that they therefore become rated. Over the course of FY20, providers were saturated with a variety of communications to ensure they understood the deadlines, benefits, steps and requirements to participate. Between ODJFS licensing staff and resource and referral staff making calls, dropping by, sending emails, and direct mail pieces, it would be impossible to be unaware of SUTQ.

6. How do you plan to outreach to the licensed providers in your network to move them into and maintain Step Up To Quality ratings?

We will continue using a variety of outreach techniques to engage child care programs and support them as they navigate ways to provide high-quality care under new or existing COVID-19 health and safety rules and SUTQ rating requirements.

Personal Calls and Technical Assistance: Each Early Childhood Specialist is assigned a caseload that includes both rated and non-rated programs. The Specialists are expected to call and support each assigned program on an ongoing basis to assess program needs and offer updates on available services and resources. This coordinated outreach ensures regular contact with all child care programs in the region. Support may be provided on site at child care programs (if programs allow outside visitors) or through Zoom chats, one-on-one ECRC office meetings, or in other locations supporting social distancing during the pandemic. Specialists inform their assigned programs about available services, programming, and information, discuss each program’s current and desired rating status, and gather data about individual program needs and barriers to improvement.

Each regional ECRC office has specific goals for engaging new programs in our Step Up to Quality curriculum, including enrolling them in SUTQ 101 sessions and offering technical assistance to maintain or increase star ratings. Staff members review caseloads with their supervisors weekly, and goals are reviewed monthly, to plan individual program engagement strategies, so that all programs have access to services. To support programs while exercising social distancing, SUTQ curriculum sessions will be offered in Zoom sessions and in small-group meetings in a safe, socially distanced environment.

Specialists also contact individuals who are in the beginning stages of starting a child care business to offer professional development, technical assistance, and information on the benefits of being star rated, as well as to engage new program owners in SUTQ 101 sessions.

Marketing and Social Media: Survey respondents continue to indicate that email is their preferred way of receiving information on our services. Therefore, child care programs receive regular emails about our services, including information on the Child Development Associate classes offered by each regional office and the SUTQ Success curriculum (which includes SUTQ 101 sessions for non-rated programs). In addition, we use social media to share a wide range of information for both providers and families, including updates on SUTQ and information on the benefits of high-quality care. Due to the increased networking and communication needs of programs during the pandemic, the ECRC has established new Facebook pages offering providers daily updates and opportunities to network and ask questions. Any licensing questions are referred to an ODJFS licensing specialist or to the OFJDS website.

Conferences, Community Events, Fairs, and Networking Opportunities: To ensure we are reaching providers and potential providers, we maintain a consistent presence throughout the region at fairs, provider events, conferences, and provider networking meetings. During the pandemic, we have transitioned to an online presence at meetings or events.
Non-Rated Program Recruitment Strategies for the revised 2020 Deadline: This year, the ECRC launched a marketing campaign that recognized that not every format of SUTQ support fits all programs. Staff used a variety of strategies that allowed programs to choose their path. Marketing materials outlined in detail the many paths to a one-star rating, including (but not limited to):

- Intensive on-site technical assistance
- Condensed SUTQ 101 cohort sessions (3-4 weeks)
- SUTQ Express days (one- to two-day rating events)
- SUTQ do-it-yourself (utilizing 4C’s online tool) and access to how-to videos
- Peer-to-peer mentoring support

As programs work to earn their initial rating under COVID-19 health and safety mandates and best practices, we plan to use a variety of outreach techniques to engage them. Multiple technical assistance formats will be offered, including on-site visits, Zoom meetings, and meetings at alternative sites offering space for social distancing.

7. How do you plan to outreach star-rated providers in your network to help them improve their star rating to a 3-5?

The ECRC will continue using a variety of ways to reach out to star-rated programs, including:

- Sending regular emails to keep providers informed about available programs and services,
- Making targeted outreach calls and technical assistance visits (on site or online via Zoom) to discuss the benefits of being highly rated and devise strategies for increasing ratings,
- Using social media to advertise the benefits of providing high-quality care and create a sense of urgency in getting highly rated, and
- Using direct mail to reach unresponsive providers.

Strategies for engaging rated programs will include:

- Addressing controllable barriers, such as staff education and qualifications, by providing scholarships and online options for CDA classes;
- Offering on-site or online (Zoom) technical assistance and classroom-based coaching for programs, based on individual action plans to gear up to apply for 3-5 stars;
- Offering online or small-group, in-person curriculum and assessment training, along with annual Ohio Approved training, to meet biannual professional development requirements; and
- Using annual provider survey responses about which SUTQ supports and communication methods are working best to enhance planning for individual and group messaging and services.

The ECRC’s signature program, the Step Up to Quality Success curriculum, has been highly effective at getting programs rated and helping them increase their stars. Recent provider survey responses support the value and continued use of this approach and development of similarly structured supports, with online options to support COVID-19 health and safety guidelines. With nearly 50% of Centers and Type A home providers in our region highly rated, we are on target to reach the 2025 goal.
1. **How many providers are in your service area?**

As of June 17, 2020, there were 1,056 programs in SDA 4. These include child care centers, family child care homes, Ohio Department of Education (ODE) licensed programs, day camps and in-home aides. Of the 1,056, 4 are in-home aides, 23 are registered day camps, 534 are Job and Family Services licensed centers, 204 are ODE Centers, and 291 are Type A/B.

Across the region, there are approximately 7,568 total child care providers offering all types of care, including 7,127 working in center-based care (ODE, JFS, and day camps) and 441 working in Type A/B programs or as in-home aides.

2. **How many of those providers are employed at a program that has earned a Step Up To Quality rating?**

We are unsure exactly how many providers are working at rated programs. However, since 91% of our programs in SDA 4 are rated, we can estimate that approximately 6,887 (91%) of the above providers are working at a rated program.

3. **What professional development classes have the providers in your area taken in the past two years?**

Every year, the ECRC offers Child Development Associate classes to hundreds of providers in our region. We offer several options, including fast-track day classes that allow providers to complete the coursework in 5-6 months, and extended courses that last 8-9 months. The ECRC also offers training throughout SDA 4 on a variety of topics, including:

- Ohio Department of Education Early Learning and Development Standards
- Culture, race, equity, and implicit bias
- Ages and stages
- Attachment, attunement, and social play
- Curriculum and assessment
- Positive guidance techniques
- Trauma and resiliency
- Social studies, drama, math, literacy, gross motor, science
- Operating a child care business
- Supporting children experiencing homelessness
- Effective communication
- Problem solving and conflict resolution
- COVID-19 precautions and procedures
- Working with mixed-age groups
- Supporting children with special needs
- Creativity and imagination
- Nature and the outdoors
- Infant and toddler best practices
- Developmentally appropriate practices
- School-age-specific topics
- Family engagement
- Brain development
- Social emotional development
- Importance of play
- Managing stress & mindfulness
- School readiness
- Routines, transitions, and schedules
- High-quality practices
- Lesson planning

4. **How many professionals have taken your classes in the last year?**

From July 1, 2019 through June 17, 2020, 19,564 professionals took ECRC classes. This includes all participants who have completed classes in the SDA.

5. **What are their professional development needs in the upcoming two years to meet the requirements of the SUTQ professional development certificate?**

Providers attending training classes were surveyed, so we could learn which training topics were of most interest. There were 10,594 responses. Survey responses (summarized in the table), along with needs assessments conducted through field work, will be used to determine professional development offerings over the next two years.

We also anticipate the need for additional health and safety training, as well as business support training, to meet demands being placed on providers due to the pandemic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training categories participants were most interested in</th>
<th>Percentage Expressing Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creative Arts: Music, Art, and Drama</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Emotional Development</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Environments</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Needs Topics</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Community Engagement</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language/Communication</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Trends in Early Childhood</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety, Health, and Nutrition</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Care Administration</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories of Child Development</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical and Intellectual Development</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum, Assessment and Standards</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professionalism</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are their professional development training needs since COVID-19? Providers were surveyed about their pandemic-related concerns and training needs. There were 165 responses. Providers were also encouraged to share their needs and concerns about reopening during community conversation groups with ECRC specialists.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training Need Identified</th>
<th>Training Made Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free professional development classes</td>
<td>All free online PD training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety after COVID-19</td>
<td>Two free online COVID-19 trainings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting for programs</td>
<td>Free online fiscal management training and coaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning and sanitizing</td>
<td>Free cleaning and sanitizing training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for re-opening</td>
<td>Free reopening training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. What do the providers not already at a rated program need to focus on to meet Step Up To Quality requirements?

As we provide technical assistance and coaching, providers indicate a need for training on requirements and steps, assistance in walking them through the process, and help with navigating the OCLQS. Many also need help with developing systems to maintain licensing requirements, leadership development assistance, and peer support. Staff often need to dispel myths about SUTQ and explain the benefits for them, for families, and for children.

7. Which classes do you plan to provide to ensure all providers can meet the SUTQ requirements?

The ECRC will offer a variety of Ohio Approved classes, based on the information in this needs assessment, along with information gathered during outreach calls and from training attendees. There is significant interest in the following topics:

- COVID-19 training
- Fiscal management
- Child Development Associate classes
- Classroom management
- Curriculum and assessment
- ELDS and ASQ
- Aligning lesson plans with ELDS and curriculum and assessment tools
- Supporting children who have experienced trauma
- Supporting children with special needs
- Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- Administrator training
- Program Assessment: BAS, PAS, Environmental Rating Scales
- Classroom environments
- Creative arts
- Working with families
- Language and communication
- Developing systems to reduce likelihood of serious and moderate risks
- Emergency preparedness
- Supporting families experiencing homelessness

2020 ODJFS Needs Assessment
Early Childhood Resource Center
8. How will you advertise classes available online?
Training is advertised in the Ohio Professional Registry and the class schedule is posted on our website. Social media and email marketing campaigns are also used to promote upcoming training opportunities. In addition, Training Specialists and Early Childhood Specialists continue providing technical assistance to help programs find training that meets their needs. Upcoming training sessions are also promoted during current training sessions and by staff working in the field to help providers meet their professional development goals.

9. How will your agency utilize resources to implement ELA within your region?
As the need arises, we will ensure staff is trained and ample offerings are available, so programs that need ELA can access it. We have identified training locations across the region, allowing for a diverse range of places where training can be offered to meet the need. Since ELA is not required at this time for child care programs, the only offerings available are provided by the State Support Teams.

Health & Safety Training

1. How many providers are in your service area?
Approximately 13 providers offer a variety of health and safety training classes in our SDA. They’re listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Training Provided</th>
<th>Mahoning</th>
<th>Medina</th>
<th>Portage</th>
<th>Summit</th>
<th>Stark</th>
<th>Trumbull</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPR First Aid Training of Ohio</td>
<td>CPR/First Aid</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YMCA of Youngstown</td>
<td>CPR, First Aid</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Training Consultants</td>
<td>CPR, Child Abuse, Communicable Disease, Health and Safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Choice CPR</td>
<td>CPR, First Aid, Health &amp; Safety, Child Abuse Recognition &amp; Prevention, Communicable Disease</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Med-Cert Training Center</td>
<td>Communicable Disease, Child Abuse &amp; Neglect, CPR, First Aid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boardman Fire Dept.</td>
<td>CPR, First Aid</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medina County Health Dept.</td>
<td>CPR, First Aid, Communicable Disease</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Red Cross</td>
<td>First Aid, CPR</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Child Care Training Solutions</td>
<td>CPR, First Aid, communicable disease, child abuse and neglect</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Compressions</td>
<td>First Aid, CPR</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSB for Child</td>
<td>Child Abuse and Neglect</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
<td>Varies each year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polaris Career Center</td>
<td>CPR, Communicable Disease, First Aid, Child Abuse and Neglect</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. How will you ensure there is adequate health and safety training offered in your area?

We have identified agencies throughout the region that provide the required health and safety training. Each quarter, we assess demand for and supply of health and safety training in each county by contacting local providers and reviewing course offerings. Where a need exists, we will schedule or partner with a local provider to ensure courses are delivered. We also partner with local agencies to provide training on a variety of health and safety topics that support caregiver preparation for emergencies, prevent injury or death, and keep children safe. Topics will be based on identified needs, but could include safe sleep (health departments); environmental hazards (EPA, health departments, and fire departments); emergency drills (lockdown, fire, tornado); prevention of injury (including administration of medication and health and safety checks); caring for children with special needs/health conditions; and developing policies and procedures that prevent suspension, expulsion, and denial of services due to behavior in child care (45 C.F.R).

This past year, two staff members were trained to deliver training on child abuse and neglect prevention and identification. This will allow us to offer such training going forward.

3. How will you make your providers aware of trainings?

Because survey responses clearly indicate that a majority of providers prefer email contact, email has become our primary way of reaching providers about training. Each quarter, we create a training calendar listing all training scheduled for the upcoming quarter. The calendar is promoted via email and posted on our website. Training is also advertised on the Ohio Professional Registry, and social media is used to promote upcoming classes. Training Specialists and Early Childhood Specialists will continue providing technical assistance to help programs find training that meets their needs. Upcoming training sessions are promoted during current training sessions and by staff working in the field to help providers meet their professional development goals.

Technical Assistance

1. What are the primary issues the providers in your area are having with earning or maintaining a Step Up To Quality rating?

Programs in the region have identified a wide range of barriers to earning or maintaining ratings. Some of these barriers include:

- Finding, retaining, training, and paying high-quality staff to meet SUTQ Standards;
- Meeting deadlines due to missed communication from the OQLQS system;
- Finding the time and financial resources to send staff to training;
- Completing SUTQ forms and using computer technology to complete applications/reports;
- Adjusting and maintaining business practices to sustain star ratings;
- Maintaining staff morale amid increasing job expectations;
- Avoiding licensing non-compliances through staff education and oversight; and
- Obtaining curriculum and assessment materials and training staff to use them.

2. How will you provide targeted technical assistance to providers?

Each regional ECRC office has 3-5 Early Childhood Specialists who have specific early childhood expertise. They provide targeted technical assistance to programs serving a wide range of ages, from birth to school age. Every effort will be made to provide training across age ranges, so that staff can be early childhood generalists and work...
with programs in a variety of ways. Technical assistance will be given to programs that are not yet working toward a star rating, including helping them find training, answering age-specific questions, and making referrals for services (Early Childhood Mental Health, Health Department, etc.), and to individuals seeking to open a child care program.

Early Childhood Specialists will focus specifically on age-related questions related to Infants and Toddlers. Regional Coordinators and Early Childhood Specialists will work with programs’ SUTQ-related quality improvement goals centering on administrative and leadership practices, family and community partnerships, learning and development, ratio/group size and licensing adherence, and staff qualifications and professional development needs.

Administrators wishing to earn or increase a star rating will work with Regional Coordinators/Early Childhood Specialists, who will act as coaches to help them develop goals and strategies to increase program quality by focusing on the standards needed to achieve their desired star rating. One of the most often cited obstacles to increasing star ratings is the ability to meet the staff education requirements in the Program Standards. Programs need support in developing administrative leadership that can provide the infrastructure required to move toward higher quality. Program directors often cannot see the path and are overwhelmed by day-to-day challenges. Coaches can provide the necessary outsider perspective to help administrators strategize and devise a systematic approach to moving toward higher quality. In addition, coaches can answer age-related questions and concerns and direct staff in finding resources and implementing best practices.

Recruited programs will be assigned to SUTQ Forums based on location, star rating, and type (Center or Family Child Care). Programs will meet both individually with their coach and as a cohort each month. Coaches will provide consultation to their programs and work with the program administrator to review SUTQ guidance documents and examine program readiness for the star rating being pursued. The coach will work alongside the program administrator to create a quality improvement plan that includes goals, a timeline, and a to-do list that outline specific steps and strategies for reaching goals. The coach will provide in-depth coaching, targeted services, and interventions in adherence with the domains of the Program Standards.

Early Childhood Specialists are qualified to provide individualized assistance with classroom assessment, selecting/implementing curriculum, creating staff professional development plans, navigating SUTQ processes, addressing barriers, and family and community engagement partnerships, all related to the quality improvement plan. Early Childhood Specialists will track and document provider activities and progress notes and enter them into the online technical module of the Ohio Professional Registry. The Data Manager, along with the Regional Coordinators and SUTQ Coordinator, will monitor data and compile information for the Grant Manager.

SUTQ Forums will meet each quarter for workshops/presentations designed to strengthen administrative leadership skills and provide instruction on what administrators need in order to advance in the SUTQ rating system. Cohort meetings will be coordinated and facilitated by the Early Childhood Specialists and will serve as a way to check in, clarify policies and procedures, and track programs’ progress. The Specialists and guest speakers will present relevant information on common issues that members of the cohort are experiencing. We also see this as an opportunity to work with representatives from ODJFS and child care licensing/SUTQ to clarify steps and processes and keep them informed on progress. Speakers will include representatives from highly rated programs. The Early Childhood Specialists will keep a pulse on how programs are progressing along the TQRIS and determine whether additional services are needed. Information obtained from cohort discussions will inform future professional development and assistance.

Once the program has received its quality achievement award, the Early Childhood Specialist will recognize their achievement amongst their peers and discuss next steps. Discussions will include ways to create mechanisms, policies, and procedures that ensure the program maintains their star rating while simultaneously working on continuous quality improvement.
3. **Will you offer technical assistance on early childhood issues identified within the service delivery area?**

The ECRC offers technical assistance based on issues identified within the region, and keeps ODJFS informed about barriers, inconsistencies, and issues that emerge during the process.

Providers tell us that guidance on forms and documents is the most helpful kind of technical assistance, followed by administrator supports around leadership and organization, curriculum and assessment support, and technology support. Other technical assistance requests include:

- Strategies and systems to implement high-quality practices
- Classroom observation to support teacher improvement
- Peer-to-peer opportunities to gain new ideas and solve problems
- Training on staff meetings and motivational sessions focusing on how to get rated
- On-site visits to show administrators how to navigate the OCLQS, and instruct them on standards and best practices

In addition, many providers in our region are ineligible to participate in SUTQ due to serious or moderate risk points. This is an area of ongoing focus. We help programs implement systems to prevent and lessen the likelihood of these issues.

4. **How will you provide technical assistance to providers to achieve a higher star rating (3-5)?**

Programs spend a great deal of time readying their programs to apply or increase their star rating. The ECRC wants to make sure programs recognize that earning a star is only the beginning.

When a program loses a star, it is often because they don’t have the administrative leadership, oversight, or systems in place to effectively monitor staff, licensing requirements, and SUTQ standards. Infrastructure must be in place from the top down and bottom up to ensure a program retains its rating. There’s no sense in investing state resources to help a program become rated if the program doesn’t have the leadership needed to understand and maintain basic licensure requirements. That is why the ECRC’s quarterly Success Forums will provide a forum for group technical assistance and peer support. This ensures programs have training and support on understanding licensing rules, SUTQ rules and standards, and ramifications for serious risk non-compliance. We will continue partnering with licensing/SUTQ representatives to ensure programs understand licensing rules. Early Childhood Specialists will make themselves available to centers wishing to bring them in for staff meetings to present strategies for maintaining stars.

In addition, coaches will work with programs individually to develop systems to ensure quality standards are maintained. Instruments such as the Program Administration Scale (PAS) provide valid, reliable, and widely accepted measures of leadership and management practices of early childhood programs. ECRC coaches will conduct a PAS assessment on each participating program. The PAS measures quality on a seven-point scale for 25 items clustered into 10 subscales: Human Resources Development, Personnel Cost and Allocation, Center Operations, Child Assessment, Fiscal Management, Program Planning and Evaluation, Family Partnerships, Marketing and Public Relations, Technology, and Staff Qualifications. For FCC, the Business Administration Scale (BAS) is used in place of PAS. The ECRC will work with program administrators to identify risks and potential licensing violations and to develop infrastructure at the center/home using the PAS/BAS assessment as springboard for program improvement and quality maintenance. Monthly cohort meetings will serve as a forum to discuss administrative topics and work together to brainstorm strategies to ensure programs continue to maintain and move toward higher quality practices. Meetings will focus on topics such as creating a business model, developing marketing strategies, staff
recruitment and retention, compensation and benefit packages, continuous quality improvement, and pulling it all together. The cohort model also promotes peer support and helps the Early Childhood Specialists address barriers, recognize achievements, answer questions, and devise progress strategies.

5. What types of technical assistance are you providing to help providers become rated or maintain a star rating?

Our technical approach prioritizes providers with a set date for registering and providers that have not responded to our outreach or recruitment efforts.

While these two groups are the priority, we will continue reaching out to uninterested providers and set timelines for ineligible providers to participate in one of our paths to getting rated.

In FY20 and 21, we will continue to promote the advantages of star rating to those not interested in becoming rated and carry out our Many Paths to a One-Star campaign.

The ECRC’s technical assistance includes the following components:

- Contacting unrated providers and offering services that will prepare them for the rating process,
- Setting a schedule and specific work plan for each unrated provider,
- Giving unrated providers intensive technical assistance on SUTQ program standards,
- Assisting providers in obtaining necessary forms and documents to be submitted,
- Assisting and advising providers on registration and verification processes,
- Assisting unrated providers in the submission of SUTQ required documents, and
- Assisting existing providers in renewing their rating.