



Program Participation and Technical Assistance Protocol Center-Based, Licensed Child Care Programs (excluding Head Start)

Protocol Information

Purpose:	The purpose of this protocol is to provide a timeline for Grow NJ Kids (GNJK) participating programs working towards their first rating and to clearly define the responsibilities of the program, the QIS and the TAS. Grow NJ Kids has a multi-layered technical assistance approach to efficiently support progressive movement through the framework of Grow NJ Kids (GNJK). The protocol outlines clear parameters regarding program responsibilities, QIS and TAS responsibilities, the amount of time a Grow NJ Kids program will/can receive technical assistance and support prior to the program’s first rating.
Protocol Timeframe:	18 Months – Participating programs are expected to file for their first rating within 18 months of enrollment in Grow NJ Kids.
NJCCIS:	Programs must keep their NJCCIS provider accounts up-to-date. All staff must register and have an individual account in NJCCIS. Center Administrator/Director must associate their staff to their program. Please visit www.njccis.com for additional information and refer to the Help Desk for information on associating staff to your program.
Blended Programs	A “blended” program is defined as a center that has classrooms supported by more than one funding source (private pay, and/or district-contracted, and/or Head Start). Center-Based programs that receive funding from multiple sources will follow this Center-Based GNJK Protocol and will initially receive support from a QIS at their local county CCR&R (Child Care Resource and Referral agency) prior to being assigned a TA Specialist. Center-Based programs that have contracted with a local school-district to fund 100% of their classrooms will follow the “School-District Contracted and Public Preschool Program Protocol” and will receive their TAS assignment upon completion of the GNJK Orientation. *Please note that Grow NJ Kids QISs and TASs will not provide coaching or conduct formal observations (ECERS/ITERS) in district-contracted or Head Start Classrooms.
Rating Guidelines	Grow NJ Kids provides an individual rating for each program address/license. Programs with multiple facilities/locations must complete a unique Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for each school and each school must apply for rating individually for each location. All classrooms within the school serving children birth through preschool, will be included in the overall rating. District classrooms located in Center-Based facilities will be included under the contracted center’s rating. Note about curriculum training: Grow NJ Kids requires that all training be facilitated by the developer of the curricula or by an individual who has a current certification by the curriculum developer as an approved trainer. Turn-key training or training provided by an individual that is not certified by the curriculum developer will not count towards the GNJK curriculum training requirement. Curriculum training on Creative Curriculum and High-Scope are offered regularly, at no cost, through NJCCIS. Tools of the Mind training is offered annually via NJCCIS at no cost, on a limited-basis, for most GNJK programs.
Rated Programs	Once rated, GNJK programs will continue to receive support from their TA Specialist during their 3-year continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts. Please refer to the “CQI Protocol for Center-Based, Head Start and DOE Programs” for additional information related to post-rating guidance and supports.
Disengagement	Programs that do not adhere to this protocol or the GNJK participation agreement may be disengaged. Disengagement will result in the forfeiture of a current star rating (if rated) and any benefits or incentives related to Grow NJ Kids, including technical assistance. Programs that disengage may re-enroll after 90 days.
Definitions:	Program/Provider refers to participating GNJK center, site(s), provider or school. These terms are interchangeable. QIS: Quality Improvement Specialist - is responsible for recruitment, support, and consultation to Center-Based during phase 1 of this protocol. TAS: Technical Assistance Specialist - is responsible for providing support and consultation to Center-Based during phase 2 of this protocol. CCR&R: Child Care Resource and Referral Agency TAC: Technical Assistance Center

Program Participation and Technical Assistance Protocol Phase 1: Working with your Quality Improvement Specialist

Step 1: Getting Started

Timeframe:	Months 1-3
Activity:	Acceptance Notification, GNJK Orientation, QIS Assignment and NJCCIS
Protocol:	<p>Program Responsibility</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Enroll in Grow NJ Kids (GNJK) through New Jersey’s Child Care Information System (www.NJCCIS.com). 2. Program is notified of acceptance via welcome email through NJCCIS, then the Director/Administrators must register and complete GNJK Orientation within the first 30 days. Programs that fail to complete the Grow NJ Kids Orientation within 90 days will be disengaged. 3. Upon completion of Orientation, your Quality Improvement Specialist (QIS) will be assigned to your program and will work with your program to schedule an initial site visit. Participate in an initial site visit with your QIS. 4. Review and sign the GNJK Participation Agreement. 5. In NJCCIS, within the personnel section, identify a representative to be assigned the role of “GNJK Contact” for the school. This person will be the primary contact and spearhead the GNJK process for your program ensuring all requirements are met. 6. Ensure all staff have created accounts in NJCCIS, and that they are associated to their current employer(s). 7. Identify staff members to be a part of your GNJK Leadership Team. These individuals will support the Director/Administrator towards meeting the goals identified in the program’s Quality Improvement Plan. 8. Leadership/teaching staff should complete overview of Birth to Three Early Learning Standards and/or Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards for any staff that has not yet done so. 9. Program Director/Administrator register for and complete ERS Online Overview for ITERS-3 and ECERS-3. <p>QIS Responsibility</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. QIS will be assigned to program upon notification of program’s completion of GNJK Orientation. 2. Contact the program within 2 weeks of assignment and schedule an initial meeting/visit within 30 days. 3. Review this protocol with Director/Administrator (GNJK Leadership Team) and answer questions related to the GNJK Orientation and processes. 4. Share, review and collect the signed GNJK Participation Agreement. 5. Provide an overview of NJCCIS, how to navigate the Grow NJ Kids dashboard, find training within the Workforce Registry, and other relevant areas of the system. 6. Discuss curriculum, GNJK aligned curriculum options, and/or GNJK curriculum alignment process if applicable. 7. Share and review the Grow NJ Kids Standards for Center-Based programs with Director/Administrator. 8. Be available for support and consultation as needed.

Step 2: Assessing Environment and Transition to TA Center

Timeframe:	Months 4-6
Activity:	Classroom Observations and Transition to TA Center
Protocol:	<p>Program Responsibility</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure all teaching staff and supervisors have received an overview of the NJ Birth to Three Standards and or NJ Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards. 2. Meet with QIS and review feedback from Pre-Assessment of Personal Care Routine (PCR) Observations. With QIS support, the Director/Administrator will identify focus areas of quality improvement based upon pre-assessment and begin addressing any areas for improvement. 3. Director/Administrator or other assigned staff to complete a 3-hour observation in a minimum of 2 classrooms using the appropriate Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-3 and/or ITERS-3). Observations should be documented and shared with classroom staff. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Program to develop and document an annual schedule for regular observation and feedback using the Environment Rating Scales (ERS). 4. Work towards making improvements to the focus areas identified through ERS observations and PCR pre-assessment. 5. If applicable, submit documentation for curriculum alignment to the Division of Family Development (DFD). 6. Ensure all staff are registered in NJCCIS and associated to your program as their current employer. 7. Discuss and begin transition to the GNJK Technical Assistance Center. <p>QIS Responsibility</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide information related to GNJK Training, how to access training and current courses that are available. 2. Complete the pre-assessment of Personal Care Routines (PCR) and review the identified needs for next steps. 3. Provide ERS coaching support (with Director/Administrator participation) in at least 2 classrooms. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide copies (1 copy per program of each tool) of the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) relevant to the ages the program serves, b. Provide an overview of the ERS tools and discuss the role of program administration in regular/ongoing classroom observation. 4. Support Director/Administrator in developing an annual schedule for completing the ERS. 5. Review of Grow NJ Kids Self-Assessment document with program. 6. If applicable, provide support to program on the submission of documentation for curriculum alignment to DFD. 7. Gather data and information collected for transition for Technical Assistance Center (TAC) and establish communication with the TAC before transitioning within NJCCIS. 8. Collaborate with TA Center a smooth transition of the program.

Program Participation and Technical Assistance Protocol

Phase 2: Working with your Technical Assistance Specialist

Step 3: Self-Assessment and Planning for Improvement

Timeframe:	Months 7-8
Activity:	Complete the GNJK Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)
Protocol:	<p>Program Responsibility</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet with TAS within 30 days of assignment. 2. Review data from Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observations and inform Technical Assistance Specialist (TAS) of classroom coaching needs. 3. Select a research-based curriculum (if applicable). 4. Continue ERS observations in the remaining classrooms if not yet done. 5. Director/Administrator completes Grow NJ Kids Self-Assessment in NJCCIS. 6. Director/Administrator completes Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) in NJCCIS. Director/Administrator identifies focus areas within the standards for continuous quality improvement. 7. If program is eligible for incentives, they should complete their classroom enhancement request in NJCCIS. 8. Identify staff educational and training needs related to Professional Development (PD) plans and update plans accordingly. 9. Request guidance and support from your TA Specialist as needed. <p>TAS Responsibility</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Contact program within 2 weeks of the transition by phone call or email. 2. TAS must complete initial site visit/meeting within 30 days of assignment. 3. Information gathering and relationship building. 4. Discussion of research-based curriculum that best aligns with program’s goals/mission. 5. Conduct orientation of GNJK to staff with Director/Administrator’s support (if needed). 6. Provide support on completion of Self-Assessment. Review Self-Assessment on NJCCIS, provide feedback as needed. 7. TAS supports Director/Administrator in creating SMART goals for focus areas within QIP. 8. Order curriculum if applicable/allowable at this time. 9. Review data from Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observations to inform program’s approach to improving remaining classrooms <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review any additional plans developed by program (PD, Strengthening Families, etc.). b. Review of classroom enhancement incentives for which the program may be eligible. 10. Once QIP is developed, an enhancement request can be submitted. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Discussion of opportunities offered on NJ Workforce Registry, including but not limited to scholarships, as appropriate. 11. TA will be available for support and consultation as needed.

Step 4: Quality Improvement

Timeframe:	Months 9-16
Activity:	QIP Implementation and Rating Readiness Preparation
Protocol:	<p>Program Responsibility</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work to address all areas identified in QIP. Program follows QIP plan of action and implements areas identified as necessary, making adjustments as needed. 2. Ensure staff have completed or are working to complete the required training for the desired star rating in which your program wishes to achieve, as identified in staff PD plans and/or the program’s QIP. 3. Ensure classroom teachers receive ongoing observation, feedback, and support using the Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-3 or ITERS-3). 4. Determine submission date for rating. This should occur on or before months 17-18. 5. Begin compiling documentation and evidence for the GNJK standards you have met, including the use of an aligned curriculum or NJ Dept. of Education (DOE) approved curriculum. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure documentation is accurate, up-to-date and reflects evidence of the standard being met. Upload documentation to the file cabinet on NJCCIS. 6. Participate in check-in meetings with your TAS. Nature of the check-ins (phone calls, emails, visits) will be determined by the needs of the program. 7. Request guidance and support from your TA Specialist as needed. <p>TAS Responsibility</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide guidance and coaching tailored to the needs of the program and the goals identified in the QIP. This includes in-classroom support, as appropriate, related to the ERS, when allowable. 2. TAS supports program with staff professional development and training plans as needed. 3. TAS will review a sampling of documentation with program leadership, including all staff training records and provide feedback on staff training completion. 4. TAS will review all Level 2 standard documentation and confirm all standards have been met. 5. TAS will provide support through phone, in-person, email, or virtual meeting as needed. 6. Share information and encourage participation in upcoming webinars, PLCs, and networking meetings, and training.

Step 5: File for Rating

Timeframe:	Months 17-18
Activity:	Rating Readiness and File for Rating
Protocol:	<p>Program Responsibility:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prior to submitting for rating, verify any outstanding licensing violations have been abated with the NJ Office of Childcare Licensing. 2. Ensure all staff members meet the Grow NJ Kids training and professional development/curriculum training requirements for the desired star rating and that this is reflected on NJCCIS. 3. Within NJCCIS, ensure all staff information is up-to-date including current position, employment history, and training records. 4. Ensure all documentation, including time-sensitive documentation, has been reviewed in collaboration with TAS and is uploaded to the NJCCIS File Cabinet. 5. Complete QIP in NJCCIS. 6. Submit a new File for Rating Request on NJCCIS. 7. Complete and submit rating readiness checklist (indicating the 2-month rating window) and submit to GNJK Rating via email. 8. Request guidance and support from your TA Specialist as needed. <p>TAS Responsibility:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure program is in good standing with the NJ Office of Childcare Licensing. 2. Review most recent ERS scores, provide in-class coaching support, as necessary and permissible. 3. Complete full documentation review (including time sensitive documentation), including all staff training records and verification that ALL teaching staff have completed the required number of hours of curriculum training for the desired star rating. 4. Support and provide advisement on the file for rating process through NJCCIS. Review file for rating request in NJCCIS. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review program’s rating readiness checklist prior to submission via email to GNJK Rating. b. TAS and TA Supervisor must agree to sign off on the File for Rating form in NJCCIS. 5. TAS will provide support through phone, in-person, email, or virtual meeting as needed. 6. Share information and encourage participation in upcoming webinars, PLCs, and networking meetings, and training.

Step 6: Rating

Timeframe:	Month 18 until rating process is complete:
Activity:	Rating, including on-site ERS Observations as applicable.
Protocol:	<p>Program Responsibility:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wait for notification from GNJK Rating pertaining to the formal documentation review and rating observation dates. 2. Prepare for visit from GNJK Rating. Prior to formal observation by GNJK Rating, provide ongoing classroom/teacher observation and support as needed. 3. Once rating process is complete, schedule a meeting with TAS to discuss the rating summary report and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) protocol. 4. Begin referring to the “Grow NJ Kids CQI Protocol for Center-Based, Head Start and DOE Programs for next steps”.

TAS Responsibility:

1. TAS will provide support through phone, in-person, email, or virtual meeting as needed.
2. Provide program with CQI protocol and review.
3. Continue to share information related to TA Center group offerings (PLC, Webinars, Networking).