

For Immediate Release
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Five YMCA Early Learning Centers Receive Star Quality Rating From State

Five YMCA Early Learning Centers in Cincinnati and Clermont County have received star ratings through the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services' Step Up To Quality Program. The ratings are given to early care and education programs that exceed quality benchmarks over and above the minimum health and safety licensing standards.

"The goal of the program is to promote school readiness by improving the quality of early care and education for all children," said ODJFS Director Barbara Riley. "These ratings can help parents make informed decisions about the programs that they place their children in."

Star ratings are given for having lower staff to child ratios, administrators and teachers with higher qualifications and more specialized training, increased administrative supports in benefits and compensation, and teachers who are familiar with Ohio's Early Learning Content standards (or use the standards in planning) which outline what children should know and be able to do when they enter kindergarten.

"YMCA Centers have always been focused on providing quality care that helps children of all backgrounds and abilities to grow to their fullest potential," said Susan Stai-Zureick, YMCA Child Development Services executive director. "Our teachers' goals are to teach children important developmental skills that will help kids to succeed when they enter kindergarten."

At all YMCA Early Learning Centers, play and exploration is used to engage and nurture children's thinking abilities while fostering social and emotional growth and confidence. Age appropriate interactive stations in classrooms encourage learning to count, analyze, read, draw, and imagine. All the while, teachers may engage them with open ended questions where no answer is wrong but every try is rewarded. Kids from infants to five years of age, of all abilities and backgrounds, are included together, fostering an environment of acceptance.

The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati is the largest provider of child care programs in the Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky area, with 60 locations. Most of its Early Child Learning Centers participate in Ohio's Early Learning Initiative, which provides a higher level of program performance and credibility, and all are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Only 7% of centers nationwide receive that recognition.

Locations that received star ratings include: YMCA West Early Learning Center; YMCA Early Learning Center at Raymond Walters College; YMCA Valley Early Learning Center; YMCA Northside Early Learning Center; and the Clermont Family YMCA New Beginnings.

Government subsidy and YMCA or United Way scholarship assistance is available to those who qualify. For more information, families can call 513-921-0911.

With more than 83,000 members across the Tri-State, the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati has grown to operate 111 program child care, CincyAfterSchool, and 21st Century Community Learning sites in addition to its 17 branches and summer camp locations. The YMCA of Greater Cincinnati is the largest non-governmental, non-profit community services organization in this area that is committed to helping everyone reach their God-given potential in spirit, mind, and body – regardless of their ability to pay. Each year tens of thousands of people from children to seniors are able to participate in YMCA programs and services because of financial assistance, including health and wellness, active older adult programs, youth and teen camp, swimming and water safety lessons , teen achievers, college readiness, and job preparedness. More information can be found at www.myy.org.

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