



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the State Auditor
Suzanne M. Bump

Making government work better

Official Audit Report – Issued June 30, 2020

South Shore Stars, Inc.

For the period July 1, 2017 through November 30, 2019





Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Office of the State Auditor
Suzanne M. Bump

Making government work better

June 30, 2020

Mr. Christopher Ernest, President
South Shore Stars, Inc.
200 Middle Street
Weymouth, MA 02189

Dear Mr. Ernest:

I am pleased to provide this performance audit of South Shore Stars, Inc. This report details the audit objectives, scope, methodology, findings, and recommendations for the audit period, July 1, 2017 through November 30, 2019. My audit staff discussed the contents of this report with management of the agency, whose comments are reflected in this report.

I would also like to express my appreciation to South Shore Stars, Inc. for the cooperation and assistance provided to my staff during the audit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "SMB", written over a light blue circular stamp.

Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth

cc: Ms. Sheri Adlin, Executive Director, South Shore Stars, Inc.
Ms. Samantha L. Aigner-Treworgy, Commissioner, Department of Early Education and Care
Ms. Alicia Siryon-Wells, Associate Commissioner for Audit Resolution and Teacher Qualifications,
Department of Early Education and Care

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCFA	Child Care Financial Assistance
CCRR	Child Care Resource and Referral Agency
CMR	Code of Massachusetts Regulations
EEC	Department of Early Education and Care
ID	Identification
OSA	Office of the State Auditor
Stars	South Shore Stars, Inc.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with Section 12 of Chapter 11 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Office of the State Auditor has conducted a performance audit of South Shore Stars, Inc. (Stars) for the period July 1, 2017 through November 30, 2019. In this performance audit, we examined Stars' compliance with requirements related to family eligibility for subsidized childcare.

Below is a summary of our finding and recommendations, with links to each page listed.

Finding 1 Page 8	Stars did not always properly determine childcare financial assistance eligibility and enter accurate eligibility data in its reporting system.
Recommendations Page 10	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Stars should develop and implement procedures and effective monitoring of internal controls to ensure that the information entered in its Child Care Financial Assistance database is correct.2. Intake staff members should obtain sufficient proof of income, child identity and residency, family composition, child citizenship/immigration status, and need for service, as well as completed applications and fee agreements.3. Stars should implement the Department of Early Education and Care's Early Education Subsidy Authorization File Checklist.

OVERVIEW OF AUDITED ENTITY

Founded in 1970, South Shore Day Care Services became South Shore Stars, Inc. (Stars) in 2010. Stars is a not-for-profit organization licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to provide early education childcare and youth development programs. Each year, Stars serves more than 1,200 children who live in communities south of Boston. During the audit period, Stars provided its services through 10 centers and 17 home care providers.

According to its website, Stars' mission is as follows:

Stars provides comprehensive early education and youth development programs that enhance the optimal growth of children from economically and culturally diverse families, using a family support approach in collaboration with schools and other service providers.

Stars offers the following services and programs, which are more fully described in the [Appendix](#) to this report: Early Head Start, family childcare, preschool, elementary afterschool programs, middle- and high-school afterschool and summer-school programs, summer camp, and family support.

Subsidized Childcare

EEC uses both vouchers¹ and contracted slots² to purchase developmentally appropriate childcare for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children. Eligibility is primarily based on need for service, family size, and monthly income. Families with vouchers or contracted slots pay copayments based on their incomes and family sizes. Very-low-income families may not have to pay a copayment, according to the EEC Financial Assistance Parent Co-Payment Table that EEC uses to determine family copayments.

To be eligible for subsidized childcare through either a voucher or a contracted slot, a family must first be placed on EEC's centralized waitlist. Families are placed on the waitlist in one of three ways: by telephone, by applying online, or by contacting a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency³ (CCRR). Applicants must provide information about themselves, their children, their income, and their need for

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1. Childcare vouchers are certificates that show the number of hours and days per week for which a child has been approved for subsidized childcare. Parents with vouchers can select any childcare provider that has space available and accepts vouchers.
 2. Contracted slots set aside spaces at specific childcare centers, family childcare providers, or schools for children from low- to moderate-income families.
 3. CCRRs administer the childcare voucher program and give families information and referrals for licensed and license-exempt programs, including childcare centers, family childcare providers, preschools, and out-of-school programs. CCRRs also receive voucher payments from EEC that they then distribute to childcare providers.

service to be placed on the waitlist. If funding is available for an applicant, the applicant is notified and referred to a specific childcare vendor or a CCRR. Applicants are required to complete and sign an EEC application and fee agreement and provide current documentation (such as photo identification; children’s birth certificates; and proof of address, need for service, and income) so that a subsidy administrator⁴ can determine eligibility for subsidized childcare. Successful applicants are either given contracted slots with vendors or issued vouchers by CCRRs. Authorizations for subsidized childcare are issued for periods no greater than 12 months. At each reauthorization, parents or caregivers must complete and a sign a new application and fee agreement and submit current documentation that verifies their residency, income, and need for service.

Stars is a childcare provider with contracted slots; it also accepts vouchers. According to statistics provided by Stars, it provided childcare to clients in the following categories during the audit period.

Clients Served by Type

Type	Fiscal Year 2018	Fiscal Year 2019
Income Eligible	391	425
Supportive*	192	195
Total Contracted Slots	<u>583</u>	<u>620</u>
Vouchers[†]	221	231
Total	<u>804</u>	<u>851</u>

* This category consists primarily of referrals from the Department of Children and Families and the Department of Transitional Assistance.

† These vouchers are issued by CCRRs.

Sources of Revenue

During fiscal years 2018 and 2019, Stars received revenue from the following sources, according to its Uniform Financial Statements and Independent Auditor’s Reports⁵ for each year.

4. According to Section 10.02 of Title 606 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations, a subsidy administrator is “a person or organization authorized or designated by the EEC to conduct eligibility determinations for child care subsidies, subject to the EEC oversight and review.” Stars is considered a subsidy administrator.
5. Under Operational Services Division regulations (Section 1 of Title 808 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations), any contractor or subcontractor that has been awarded a contract in excess of \$100,000 to provide human and/or social services from a Commonwealth agency is required to file a properly completed Uniform Financial Statement and Independent Auditor’s Report annually. These reports contain contractual and financial information prescribed by the Operational Services Division, including audited basic financial statements.

Summary of Revenue by Fiscal Year*

Revenue Source	Fiscal Year 2018	Fiscal Year 2019
EEC—Contracts	\$4,112,271	\$ 3,941,289
EEC—Vouchers	1,253,690	1,111,482
Direct Federal Grants/Contracts	800,812	787,635
Client Resources	670,628	1,067,632
Other Grants (Excluding Direct Federal)	515,684	565,247
Private Client Fees	310,277	477,537
Federated Fundraising	212,623	174,817
Massachusetts Government Grants	200,000	220,523
Contributions and Gifts	180,918	179,581
State Agency Non—Purchase of Service	145,103	192,313
Released Net Assets [†]	109,914	89,513
Private In-Kind Contributions	19,384	45,774
Investment Revenue	3,192	0
Other Revenue	2,839	2,763
Total Revenue	<u>\$8,537,335</u>	<u>\$ 8,856,106</u>

* Stars' fiscal year begins July 1 and ends June 30 (e.g., fiscal year 2018 began July 1, 2017 and ended June 30, 2018).

† Released net assets are donated assets that have become available for spending because a donor-imposed stipulation has been satisfied.

AUDIT OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

In accordance with Section 12 of Chapter 11 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) has conducted a performance audit of certain activities of South Shore Stars, Inc. (Stars) for the period July 1, 2017 through November 30, 2019.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

During fiscal year 2019, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) contacted OSA regarding the results of a site visit EEC had conducted at Stars from May 16, 2018 through May 22, 2018. According to EEC's June 8, 2018 site visit report, which it provided to OSA,

On March 21, 2018, [Stars] informed EEC of [alleged] fraudulent activities performed by the organization's Enrollment Director. The Enrollment Director had full access . . . to EEC's Child Care Financial Assistance application (CCFA) which allowed him to create authorizations and placements within CCFA and, in doing so, intentionally violating regulations and policies that govern the [Child Care Development Fund] program.

EEC's report states that these allegedly fraudulent transactions⁶ took place between November 2016 and March 2018. They involved 141 families and a total of \$563,926 of subsidized early childcare funding, which consisted of \$456,246 in payments made by EEC to Stars for families whose incomes were incorrectly reported in the Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) database maintained by EEC and \$107,680 in daycare copayments that the enrollment director may have misappropriated from parents or caregivers. When EEC officials brought this matter to OSA's attention, they stated that their site visit only involved looking at the records of the parents or caregivers EEC suspected to be victims of these allegedly fraudulent transactions. EEC officials stated that they would like to know whether any other families were targeted by the enrollment director and whether Stars now ensured that all applications for subsidized childcare were properly processed. As a result, OSA initiated an audit of Stars.

6. According to EEC officials, this matter was referred to the local district attorney. On September 16, 2019, the former Stars enrollment director, whom Stars terminated on March 20, 2018, pled guilty to various counts of larceny. He was ordered to pay restitution in the amounts of \$456,246 to EEC and \$107,680 to Stars.

Below is our audit objective, indicating the question we intended our audit to answer, the conclusion we reached regarding the objective, and where the objective is discussed in the audit findings.

Objective	Conclusion
1. Excluding subsidy files that were previously identified to have misreported eligibility information, did Stars determine eligibility for subsidized childcare in accordance with Sections 10.03 and 10.04 of Title 606 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations (CMR) and enter eligibility information in CCFA?	No; see Finding <u>1</u>

To achieve our audit objective, we gained an understanding of the processes and internal controls we determined to be relevant to our audit objective by reviewing EEC policy guides and procedure manuals, as well as conducting interviews with Stars' enrollment staff and management. We evaluated the design and implementation, and tested the operating effectiveness, of controls over eligibility for subsidized childcare and entry of information in CCFA.

Additionally, we conducted further audit testing as described below.

Subsidized Childcare

We obtained authorization and reauthorization records through billing data extracted from CCFA. EEC periodically issues financial assistance policy guides as an aid in implementing 606 CMR 10. We tested authorizations approved from July 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018 using the *Financial Assistance Policy Guide for Families, Caregivers, and Service Providers 2013*. For authorizations approved October 1, 2018 through November 30, 2019, we used the *Interim Financial Assistance Policy Guide*, effective October 1, 2018, and the *Financial Assistance Policy Guide*, effective March 1, 2019.

From the population of unique CCFA authorizations approved July 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018, we removed 141 subsidy files that EEC and Stars had previously reviewed (see discussion of EEC's June 8, 2018 report above) to arrive at 621 unique authorizations. We then selected a random, nonstatistical sample of 47 unique authorizations. From the population of 386 unique CCFA authorizations approved October 1, 2018 through November 30, 2019, we selected a random, nonstatistical sample of 39 unique authorizations. Because we did not use statistical sampling, we cannot project the results to their respective populations.

For the samples selected, we reviewed eligibility documentation that parents or caregivers must submit when applying for subsidized childcare, such as photo identification (ID), proof of address, children's birth certificates, need-for-service information, proof of income, and signed applications and fee agreements. We used this documentation to calculate the applicants' monthly incomes, family sizes, and need for service. We also calculated copayments by referring to the Financial Assistance Parent Co-Payment Table that EEC uses to determine family copayments. We then traced eligible applicants' information (need for service, income, and children's and parents' or caregivers' names and ages) to CCFA and compared our eligibility determinations, copayments, and need-for-service hours to the corresponding data in CCFA.

Because we did not use statistical sampling, we cannot project the results to their respective populations.

Data Reliability Assessment

Family information, eligibility, authorizations, and placement are recorded in CCFA. To assess the reliability of eligibility data in CCFA, we performed testing on selected system controls (access controls, configuration management, contingency planning, and segregation of duties) implemented during the audit period. We also performed the following tests:

- We selected 20 childcare clients from CCFA and determined whether the information (family ID number assigned by EEC, authorization start and end dates, child name, parent or caregiver name, child birthdate, need for service, and copayment) in CCFA matched hardcopy subsidy files.
- We selected 20 hardcopy subsidy files and traced the information therein (family ID number, authorization start and end dates, child name, parent or caregiver name, child birthdate, need for service, and copayment) to CCFA.
- We ensured that the CCFA data contained no duplicate records, invalid agreement types or subtypes, data outside the audit period, invalid fee amounts, or blank fields.

Based on our assessment, we determined that the data obtained from CCFA were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of our audit work.

DETAILED AUDIT FINDINGS WITH AUDITEE'S RESPONSE

1. South Shore Stars, Inc. did not always properly determine childcare financial assistance eligibility and enter accurate eligibility data in its reporting system.

Our review of 86 authorizations for income-eligible childcare subsidies revealed that South Shore Stars, Inc. (Stars) did not make proper eligibility determinations for 17 authorizations and that it made additional errors entering data in the Child Care Financial Assistance (CCFA) database for 14 authorizations. As a result, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) made childcare payments to Stars for families that may not have been eligible; copayments from families, and payments from EEC to Stars, might have been incorrectly calculated; and eligible families on EEC's waitlist may have had their childcare needs delayed or unmet. In addition, some families received childcare without attesting that the information and documentation provided were correct and complete and that they agreed to pay the calculated copayments.

Regarding the 17 authorizations with inaccurate eligibility determinations, we found hardcopy subsidy files with one or more errors or omissions. Eight authorizations had errors involving verification of Massachusetts residency, 14 had errors involving need for service, 11 had errors involving income, and 1 had an error involving the child's citizenship.

The CCFA processing errors with 14 authorizations consisted of omitted or miscalculated income, incorrect determination of need for service, and missing or incomplete applications and fee agreements.

Twenty-seven of the authorizations in our sample of 86 were approved by Stars between February 15, 2019 and November 30, 2019. Our examination of these 27 authorizations' files and CCFA information indicated that no errors were made regarding the enrollees.

Authoritative Guidance

Criteria for obtaining EEC-subsidized childcare are set forth in Sections 10.03 and 10.04 of Title 606 of the Code of Massachusetts Regulations. EEC has supplemented these regulations with the policy guides discussed in the "[Audit Objectives, Scope, and Methodology](#)" section of this report, which provide additional guidance on implementing the regulations. The eligibility requirements include the following:

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- Massachusetts state residency: acceptable documentation includes lease agreements, property tax bills, vehicle registration cards, and utility bills
 - family composition, size, and relationship to child: usually established by birth certificates, court orders establishing guardianship or custody, or Social Security benefit records
 - citizenship or immigration status of child: established by birth certificate or United States passport
 - need for service:⁷ acceptable documentation includes pay stubs, educational enrollment verification, verification of active deployment, and proof of disability or special needs
 - income at or below certain state median income amounts: acceptable documentation includes pay stubs, income tax returns, Social Security benefit records, and public assistance documentation
 - childcare application and fee agreement: must be completed and signed by parent/s or caregiver/s before the child starts subsidized childcare.

EEC also provides guidance in the *Financial Assistance Procedures Manual for Subsidy Administrators* regarding implementing the above regulations. Section 3.1.1(D) of this manual requires childcare providers to enter complete authorization information in CCFA. CCFA calculates a copayment to be paid by the family based on the information entered.

Reasons for Issue

Stars had not implemented monitoring controls over review and approval of the eligibility information obtained and entered in CCFA, nor did it have internal procedures defining the responsibilities of each enrollment staff member. For example, eight errors⁸ were related to files that were processed by the previous enrollment director without secondary review by a Stars employee. These eight errors involved processing of applicants with missing or incomplete documentation related to residency, need for service, and/or income. Because there was no secondary review, the errors went undetected.

In addition, Stars did not use EEC's Early Education Subsidy Authorization File Checklist, which lists the documentation that must be obtained before a family can be deemed eligible for childcare. Stars enrollment staff members also told us they sometimes approved eligibility without complete

7. Parents are considered to have a need for service if they meet certain criteria, such as having or seeking employment, being enrolled in approved education programs or training, or being deployed with the military. Parents who are deemed incapable of caring for children or who have children with special needs are also considered to have a need for service.

8. These errors were in addition to the issues discussed in the EEC report and in the "[Objectives, Scope, and Methodology](#)" section of this audit report.

documentation, with an understanding that the parent or caregiver would produce the required documents later, but documentation either was not produced in a timely manner or was never produced.

Recommendations

1. Stars should develop and implement procedures and effective monitoring of internal controls to ensure that the information entered in CCFA is correct.
2. Intake staff members should obtain sufficient proof of income, child identity and residency, family composition, child citizenship/immigration status, and need for service, as well as completed applications and fee agreements.
3. Stars should implement EEC's Early Education Subsidy Authorization File Checklist.

Auditee's Response

In its response, Stars gave us additional information regarding the improper activities conducted by its former enrollment director. Stars' points included the following.

- Once Stars discovered the alleged fraud, it immediately reported this problem to the police, EEC, legislators, and its independent auditor, among others.
- Stars conducted a thorough two-month internal investigation.
- EEC performed a background check of the former enrollment director after Stars hired him and found him to be suitable to continue in his position.
- The former enrollment director used his position at Stars to override the controls that were in place over eligibility determinations for subsidized childcare.
- Past reviews by EEC and Stars' independent auditor did not identify any irregularities in the area of eligibility determinations for subsidized childcare.
- After the former enrollment director's improper activities were identified, Stars implemented a number of additional internal controls over eligibility determinations for subsidized childcare.

Stars also provided the following comments in response to the audit finding.

At the initial meeting with the State Auditors, in the Fall of 2019, Stars Executive Director stated that she expected that they would find:

- *No additional Stars United families or fraud [Stars United was a corporation established by the previous enrollment director, to which some parents were instructed to make payments]*

- *Likely irregularities (not fraudulent) in any file with an eligibility determination done by the former Enrollment Director*
- *Confusion as a result of the EEC interim policies and procedures implemented in the Fall of 2018.*
- *Accurate eligibility determination after January of 2019, once Stars' new controls and procedures were in place, and there was clarity regarding EEC's new policies and procedures.*
- *Child care eligibility determination is extremely complicated and the current rules are hard to interpret and sometimes contradictory.*

We believe that is precisely what this Audit found.

- *Of the 86 authorizations reviewed, no additional fraud was identified.*
- *All 17 authorizations identified by the State Auditors to have inaccurate eligibility determination were all directly related to the previous Enrollment Director or the lack of clarity from EEC's interim/revised policies. All of the files that were reviewed after Stars' new procedures and controls were put in place and EEC's new policies and procedures were clarified had no issues.*
- *Nine were processed by the previous Enrollment Director, only one of which eligibility could be an issue because proof of citizenship was not in the file.*
- *Of the other eight, the issue was documentation of Massachusetts residency, all of which had proof of residency at the most recent annual reassessment or a proof of residency that did not align with EEC's recommended documentation. This was later clarified by email by EEC Director of Caseload and Financial Assistance "When it comes to [proof of address, or POA], there is a general reasonableness test that Subsidy Administrators must work through. Most often, POA only needs to be collected once, not at every reauthorization as is the case below, unless there has been something that changed. Examples of changing circumstances would include things like paystubs that now say married; parent checking off a different box on the household composition statement; a new child in the household (even if that child will not be in care); second parent listed on enrollment/emergency contact with same address; etc. If nothing has changed, than POA should not be requested again." This email was shared with the State Auditors.*

Auditor's Reply

As noted in the "Audit Objectives, Scope, and Methodology" section of this report, EEC officials contacted the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) and stated that they would like to know whether Stars' former enrollment director targeted any other families and whether Stars now ensured that all applications for subsidized childcare were properly processed. As a result, OSA initiated an audit of Stars, the scope of which excluded all cases that EEC and Stars had already identified as having problems related to how the former enrollment director processed them. Although our audit testing did not find

any other specific instances of potential fraud, we did identify a number of issues related to how eligibility determinations were processed, which we believe Stars' management needs to address.

Stars' response mischaracterizes the information in our audit finding to an extent. Specifically, contrary to Stars' response, not all of the 17 inaccurate eligibility determinations OSA identified were "directly related to the previous Enrollment Director or the lack of clarity from EEC's interim/revised policies." Rather, as noted above, of the 17 incorrect eligibility determinations we identified, only 4 are related to the former enrollment director's actions. The former enrollment director also made 4 other errors related to the applications and fee agreements, which OSA reported as CCFA processing errors. Further, only 3 incorrect eligibility determinations happened after EEC issued its *Interim Financial Assistance Policy Guide*, effective October 1, 2018. They involved missing and/or incomplete documentation and therefore did not appear to be the result of any confusion about EEC's new policies.

Stars' response also states,

Of the other eight [errors processed by the previous enrollment director], the issue was documentation of Massachusetts residency, all of which had proof of residency at the most recent annual reassessment or a proof of residency that did not align with EEC's recommended documentation.

Stars indicated that it had received an email from EEC's director of caseload and financial assistance that stated, "Most often, POA only needs to be collected once, not at every reauthorization as is the case below, unless there has been something that changed." However, this guidance conflicts with both of the EEC policies that were in effect during our audit period. Section 2.5 of EEC's *Financial Assistance Policy Guide for Families, Caregivers, and Service Providers 2013* states, "Documentation of residency must be updated annually or at each reassessment, whichever comes first." EEC's *Interim Financial Assistance Policy Guide*, effective October 1, 2018, states, "Documentation of residency must be updated at each reauthorization." Because of the conflicted guidance from EEC, when performing our testing in this area, we determined whether applicants had provided proof of residency at either their annual authorizations or their last reauthorizations. However, Stars could not provide any acceptable form of residency documentation for the eight authorizations in question.

Finally, OSA acknowledges that we did not find any errors in the 27 authorizations in our sample that Stars approved between February 15, 2019 and November 30, 2019. Although this trend is encouraging and could indicate overall process improvements, Stars management is still responsible for ensuring that

adequate internal controls over this process exist and are adhered to. Therefore, we urge Stars to implement our recommendations.

APPENDIX

South Shore Stars, Inc. Programs

The following descriptions of programs are quoted or paraphrased from the South Shore Stars, Inc. (Stars) website.

Early Head Start

Stars provides the following services to applicants who are pregnant or have a child under three years old:

- *Playgroups*
- *Parent Workshops*
- *English Classes*
- *Child Development Screening*

Stars also helps enrollees find the following:

- *Prenatal and postpartum care*
- *Health and nutrition services*
- *Family Child Care (sliding fee)*
- *Job training*
- *[General Educational Development certification] classes*
- *Health insurance*

Applicants must be residents of Avon, Brockton, Holden, Randolph, or Stoughton. Services are free for income-eligible applicants.

Family Childcare (Birth–3 years old)

At Stars we believe infant and toddler care is best provided in a warm, nurturing home-like environment. Since 1975 Stars has operated a community Family Child Care (FCC) system of up to 25 licensed providers located across [six] South Shore communities. Each home provides a unique setting that combines the security of a home environment with the structure and careful planning that are hallmarks of a typical educational setting.

Our FCC homes are especially designed to meet the needs of infants, toddlers and young preschoolers and use the research-based Creative Curriculum for Family Child Care, providing a

developmentally appropriate structure for planning and implementing a program that emphasizes individualized learning, safe and healthy environments, partnerships with families, learning through play, and interactions with the environment.

All of Stars' Family Child Care homes are supported by an early childhood specialist, who visits each home several times a month, and acts as a resource and support to both parents and providers, helping them to meet each child's individual needs.

Our FCC homes are open a minimum of 10 hours/day, year-round, Monday through Friday. Stars Family Child Care homes are located in Braintree, Brockton, Holbrook, Quincy, Randolph and Weymouth.

Preschool (2years, 9 months –5 years old)

Our three nationally accredited (National Association for the Education of Young Children) preschool centers, located in Quincy, Randolph and Weymouth, offer children (ages 2 years nine months through age 5) the opportunity to learn and make friends in a supportive educational environment. Each center is small and specifically designed for preschool children. Using the High Scope "plan, do, review" approach, teachers plan child-centered activities that are fun and spark exploration, creativity, and the mastery of new skills.

We also use the High Scope [Child] Observation Record (COR), which is a research-based tool, to enable teachers to assess each child's developmental growth, strengths, and needs. Teachers use this information to develop and modify teaching strategies and curriculum for individual children, small groups of children, and their entire classroom. Teachers partner with parents to develop individual plans for each child and bi-weekly reports are sent home. Additionally, we provide ongoing assessment and quarterly progress reports to families.

Supports integral to the high-quality early education which we provide include:

- A Preschool Program Director, who provides ongoing staff training.*
- A Social Worker, who assists staff and parents with behavior management, coping with family stress and finding needed resources.*
- A Registered Nurse, who provides consultation and information on health issues.*

Program Highlights

- Each classroom's teaching team of three is led by an experienced lead teacher with a minimum of a bachelor's degree in Early Education.*
- Each Center has at least one small classroom (15 or fewer children).*
- Classrooms are well-equipped with materials focused on language, literacy, math and science.*
- Our RISE Program (Reading is So Exciting): Each classroom has a lending library of books and literacy materials for families to borrow, and each site offers four RISE family events each year.*

- *Each Center has a playground offering numerous gross motor opportunities.*

In Addition

- *Breakfast, morning and afternoon snacks provided (children bring their lunch).*
- *One teacher for every eight children.*
- *Care is available Monday–Friday from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM.*
- *Sliding fee available, based on family size and income.*

Elementary Afterschool (Kindergarten–Grade 6)

In our school age centers, located in Quincy, Randolph and Weymouth, children are encouraged to grow in self-reliance and self-expression as they enjoy many activities including athletics, arts, games, drama, cooking and field trips. We aim to excite children about reading and writing by integrating literacy activities into each center’s daily schedule. Throughout the year there are many special offerings including drumming, digital media and robotics. Staff work with parents to develop an individual homework plan, and homework time is a part of each day’s schedule.

Our program structure builds on the interests and needs of students and includes:

- *Social Time*
- *Homework support*
- *Safe and supportive social/emotional environment*
- *Opportunities for leadership*
- *System of accountability that provides support and recognition*
- *One staff member for every ten children*
- *Transportation provided from your child’s school to the Center*
- *Afternoon snack provided*
- *Sliding fee available, based on family size and income*

The strength of our school age program is the strong positive relationships staff develop with children. We support our children to express their feelings and resolve disputes while developing problem solving skills and empathy. By building a strong sense of community, our children feel supported by staff and their peers.

Middle and High School (Grades 7–12)

Stars has three programs coordinated with Randolph Public School and primarily funded by a MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education 21st Century Community Learning Center grant. With a goal of improving students’ school achievement, we innovatively integrate academic

support with art activities and sports at JFK Elementary and Randolph Community Middle School (RCMS) in Randolph. The Randolph High School (RHS) Stars program, including Youth in Motion (YIM) incorporates a community service learning model to promote social growth, civic responsibility, self-esteem and leadership skills.

Our RCMS, JFK and RHS Stars programs:

- *Focus on developing strong, caring, supportive adult/youth relationships*
- *Emphasize healthy social/emotional development*
- *Integrate school curriculum and MA Frameworks into activities*
- *Promote student participation in planning, action and reflection*
- *Involve students in determining program structure, goals and activities*
- *Create strong linkages between students' school day and out-of-school time*
- *Use a culturally responsive approach*

Program Overview

- *In 2016, RHS Stars received the highest level rating—"demonstration site" status—as a U.S. Dept. of Education 21st Century Community Learning Center*
- *In 2018, JFK Stars received "promising site" status*
- *Three, 11 week cycles operate 4 days per week (Monday–Thursday)*
- *Hours 3:15–6:15 PM*
 - *3:15–4:15 Homework Hour*
 - *4:15–5:15 Project-based Math Clubs*
 - *5:15–6:15 Enrichment Activities*

Stars Clubs

Robotics, Digital Media Arts, Double Dutch Science, Drama, "Girlfriends" Group, Fantasy Baseball/Statistics, Martial Arts, Dance

Summer Stars

During our six-week Summer Stars program, students entering 7th through 9th grade participate in a hands-on math/science/language arts curriculum in the mornings and spend afternoons in supervised outdoor recreation and team building activities including rock-climbing, orienteering, hiking and environmental awareness projects.

Summer Camp

Stars South Shore Day Camp offers children a full-day program with a wide variety of activity choices. Stars is pleased to operate its summer program at Hale, an independent, historic nonprofit in Westwood and Dover.

In addition to exposure to nature and the outdoors, South Shore Day Camp offers traditional activities like Red Cross swimming instruction, archery, martial arts, dance, a ropes course, arts and crafts, boating, music and drama, summer reading clubs, engineering/robotics, games, athletics and other [science, technology, engineering and math], math and reading activities aimed at reducing summer learning loss.

Stars South Shore Day Camp is especially accessible and affordable for working parents. The camp provides breakfast and transportation to and from the site in passenger vans and school buses with stops in Quincy, Weymouth and Randolph (additional 11:30 AM bus from Randolph for Summer School students). A professional, experienced staff and on-site directors carefully plan age appropriate activities for elementary-aged children.

Family Support

Our Family Support Program has the following components:

Family Involvement

Daily contact with parents builds trusting relationships.

Teachers meet with new parents within six weeks of enrollment, and then every six months to review children's progress and develop goals together.

Annual questionnaires solicit feedback from parents.

Our centers host a variety of family events including breakfasts, exhibitions and performances.

Resources/Referrals

Our social workers become familiar with all of our children as a result of their regular visits to each center and family child care homes, providing staff and parents with effective strategies for helping children with difficult behavior and developmental concerns.

When needed, social workers help families access counseling and mental health services.

Our Family Partner is an advocate for our families and helps identify and access community services.

Parent Education

We have a structured "teaming process," facilitated by our social workers, involving program staff and parents in the creation and review of individual plans with clear outcomes, activities and time frames.

Our ongoing communication promotes positive parenting practices and strategies for school success.

Our literacy initiative, Reading Is So Exciting (RISE) hosts multiple family events each year to inform parents about strategies that promote literacy. Our innovative home/school literacy activity kits called HomeLINKS support classroom learning with at-home activities designed to engage parents in their child's early literacy skill development.

One of our social workers facilitates a series of grandparent/kinship workshops that focus on building support networks for those raising a child.