

CHANGES PROVIDERS CAN EXPECT IN FY15

Family Application

In response to feedback:

- The child's name appears on the first page.
- Cell phone and email address are requested for parent/guardian.
- The PDF can be printed or used as a fillable form; parents/guardians and providers must sign the application for it to be considered complete.

Additional significant changes:

- The family income box has been clarified to improve calculation of Gross Annual Income (GAI).
- A document checklist has been incorporated into the application for the parent/guardian. Parents/guardians will calculate their Gross Annual Income using the acceptable documentation.
- Providers must "sign off" on each application, check the parent/guardian's income calculations, verify family size and ensure that copies of applicable documentation are included.
- First Things First will not require families to apply for a DES Child Care Subsidy in order to be eligible for a Quality First Scholarship. This may be a requirement in the future if additional funding for DES Child Care Subsidy is appropriated. At this time, the only families that may be eligible for DES Child Care Subsidy are those families that earn 165% of federal poverty level or below AND are working. If a family meets both of these requirements, they can be (but don't HAVE to be) referred to DES to apply, they can also receive a QF scholarship while they are in the application process. It is important to remember that an eligibility determination for a DES Child Care Subsidy may take 30 days.

Tip: The most common error found during Fiscal Monitoring is in GAI calculation and paperwork. Follow the policy and instructions for completing this section carefully. Please call or email if you need help with determining the family's Gross Annual Income (GAI). We are here to help.

Renewal Changes

- ACH and W-9 will not be required for everyone; they will only be required if there are changes.
- If you are open for less than twelve months of the year and you have not already identified your start and end dates in the extranet, we will be asking for them. Having this information will help us determine the months that we should not expect a report from you.
- You may optionally provide a cell phone for your billing contact and you will be able to elect whether you wish to receive text messages from us.

Tip: If you organize, scan and separately name each of your documents ahead of time, the online renewal process will be easier.

Changes to expect for the Reporting Portal

In response to feedback:

- The child's name column will be broken into FIRST NAME and LAST NAME columns and will be sortable so that you can sort the names alphabetically by first name or last name.
- The child's name will also appear on the far right of the page so that the name will continue to be visible as you scroll across.
- We will be streamlining our website to remove duplication of some items that are available on the Quality First website. Families interested in the Quality First Scholarships program should now be directed to the Quality First website: www.qualityfirstaz.com.

Tip: When completing your first report, double-check that first and last names are correct. We will be splitting the currently combined names of all children into first name, last name at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Changes per FY15 contract:

- Reports must be submitted in the first seven calendar days of each month. You will be able to either save or submit your report. You can go back to finish a saved report, but must submit it within the first seven calendar days of the month or your payment will be affected.
- Enter the number of hours the child attended each month.
- Enter the number of scheduled days for each child. This number minus the days attended will equal the number of absences.
- On the first report for Fiscal Year 2015, enter any family co-payment for each child, if applicable. If it changes in a later month, update the co-payment.
- On the first report of Fiscal Year 2015, enter the Gross Annual Income and family size for each child. Make certain the income is annual, not monthly. It will carry forward after that.
- Enter the number of days you were open for children during the reporting month.
- The list of vacate reasons has been changed slightly to provide better reporting accuracy and better assessment of continuity of care issues.

FY15 Scholarship Allotment and Reimbursement Rates

First Things First will determine the slot allotments and any reallocation of scholarships. VSUW will be able to explain the allocation process to you and answer questions. If needed, we will direct you to First Things First for additional answers.

Quality First Scholarships are part of the financial incentive package available to you at the progressing star level (2) and above. Scholarships will provide you with payments to support families who qualify at or below 200% of Federal Poverty Level to pay the full or partial cost of care for their children aged five and younger. Quality First Scholarships are considered an ongoing commitment to help families afford higher levels of quality care and to support your achievement and maintenance of quality improvements. Access to high quality early care and education is an important factor in school readiness, and is particularly important for high-risk children living in poverty. Most of the evidence for providing scholarships rests on what we know about children who cannot access high quality early care and education programs. Without access, these children are less ready to begin and realize success in school and later in life.

The number of scholarships and payment rate of scholarships are determined by the size of your program and your Quality First star rating. In future years, as your program achieves higher levels of quality, you could potentially receive a higher reimbursement. Your program’s star rating as of April 1st will determine your scholarship allotment for the upcoming year. If your program is in the Points Scale Assessment process, your estimated star rating based on ERS and CLASS will be used in determining your scholarship amount.

You will not be paid for more slots than you are allotted. If you report above your slot allotment, VSUW will make the necessary adjustments to your report. Scholarships are most often used for full-time care but a full time scholarship can be split into two part-time slots. Part-time slots should be considered if a child is attending less than twenty-eight (28) hours per week or less than ten (10) days per month. Programs may provide a part-time slot to a full-time family if the family is paying for the other half of the time.

The number of Quality First Scholarships available to you in the “Base” Model are:

	Large	Medium	Small	Home
2 Star	9	6	4	1
3 Star	12	9	6	2
4 Star	15	11	8	3
5 Star	17	12	9	4

The annual amount you will be reimbursed for scholarships per child is noted below. If your program does not operate for twelve months out of the year, this amount will be prorated:

Type	Age	2 star	3 – 5 star
Center			
	0 – 2 Years	\$7,970.00	\$11,300.00
	3 – 5 Years	\$6,000.00	\$7,300.00
Home			
	0 – 2 Years	\$5,625.00	\$7,600.00
	3 – 5 Years	\$4,875.00	\$6,200.00

Some Regional Councils may approve funding for additional scholarships if a specific community need has been identified. These additional scholarships will be awarded based on your program's Star Rating and ability to use them; you will be contacted in advance to make this determination. Some of these additional scholarships will be restricted for children 3-5 years of age and cannot be used for children 0-2.

If you choose to charge a co-payment to families, it is the recommendation of First Things First that families receiving scholarships would pay no more than 10% of their gross monthly income on any co-payment ((annual income / 12 months = monthly income) x .10 = 10% of gross monthly income).

Beginning next fiscal year, on July 1, 2015, only programs that receive a star rating of 3, 4, and 5 will receive Quality First Scholarships.

Scholarship Utilization & Reallocation

- Providers must agree to maintain 90 percent enrollment of the number of scholarships allotted to their site.
- Providers must agree to fill all scholarship vacancies within 60 days of the vacancy.
- Providers can request help from VSUW with recruitment of eligible families.
- If a Provider underutilizes the scholarships allotted for 2 calendar months in a row, the unused scholarships will likely be removed from the program for the remainder of the fiscal year and re-allocated to another program in the same region (prioritizing by programs with a star rating of 3, 4 or 5).
- If reallocation of slots occurs, programs receiving the scholarships will be awarded scholarships based on their program size and star rating.
- Providers will be notified of initial allocation and reallocation via an email from FTF (qfscholarships@azftf.gov).
- Scholarships will continue to be reallocated quarterly as needed. The information FTF has received by email (qfscholarships@azftf.gov) will be considered.

Child Attendance & Continuity of Care

- Children receiving scholarships should be in attendance at least 85% of the time they are enrolled – for example, a child enrolled (3) days per week x (4) weeks = (12) scheduled days x (.85) 85% of the time = (10) days of expected attendance.
- VSUW will regularly discuss attendance issues with the Provider and will offer resources to assist Providers in speaking with families about the importance of attendance. The circumstances for excusable absences need to be noted in the child's file.
- Providers need to document conversations about unexcused absences that they had with the family. These conversations need to be noted in the child's file as we will look for such documentation during fiscal monitoring.

This is a controlled document. It is valid only when viewed from a controlled source. Once printed, it becomes uncontrolled and users must verify the correct version by logging into <http://azftfscholarships.org/>. Questions? Call 1-866-973-0012.

Tip: VSUW will be providing attendance resources for Providers to use with parents. When discussing attendance with parents/guardians, Providers may have them sign a copy and keep it in the child's file as documentation of the conversation.

Newly Enrolled Providers

As programs are enrolled into Quality First, they are eligible to receive Quality First Scholarships at the start of the quarter after their enrollment (January, April, July, and October).

Policy and Procedure Documents

- Current policy and separate “how to” procedures will be readily accessible online and updated throughout the year. This is targeted for June 1, 2014.
 - Policies will be provided in one much shorter document.
 - There will be an index of required procedures and helpful “how to” information including resources for Providers.

This document is not intended to be comprehensive, but hopefully it is helpful. The VSUW QF Scholarships Team looks forward to working with you in the year ahead.

If you have questions or concerns feel free to contact us:

VSUW QF Scholarships Team

1515 East Osborn Road

Phoenix, AZ 85014

Phone: 1-866-973-0012 or 602-240-6325

Fax: 602-240-6326

Email: regionalscholarships@vsuw.org

Website: <http://azftfscholarships.org/>

Quality First Scholarships Attendance Expectations

❖ What is expected of my child and me?

It is recommended that children receiving scholarships are in attendance at least **85%** of the time that they are scheduled each month. The purpose of your Quality First (QF) scholarship is to give your child early learning opportunities. Child care Providers may **stop your scholarship** if your child fails to be in attendance at least **85%** of the time.

❖ Benefits of Consistent Attendance

- ➔ Children **thrive** in the care of familiar caregivers who play a **significant role** in their lives over time
- ➔ Children who remain with the same group of children longer are **more peer-oriented** and **less solitary** over time than those whose peer groups have changed frequently and they are **friendlier toward peers in distress**
- ➔ Children with **consistent** preschool attendance have **higher** kindergarten readiness scores
- ➔ **Consistent** attendance is a **habit**, that if formed early, will continue into later years

❖ Tips to Improve Attendance

- ➔ Make sure your child gets enough sleep: Young children should get **9 to 11 hours of sleep** per night
- ➔ **Get ready the night before:** Lay out clothes and pack lunches the night before to avoid the morning rush and reduce the chance for tardiness
- ➔ **Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session**
- ➔ Consider your schedule, wants, and your child's needs **before** choosing a child care provider; this will increase the chances of you picking the **right** provider for **you** and **your child** the first time
- ➔ Know your child care provider: Forming a **positive** relationship with your child care provider encourages your child to do so also, and makes them **excited** to come to school or daycare



I, _____ understand the attendance expectations as they have been presented to me. I understand that if I fail to bring _____ to his/her childcare center at least **85% of his/her scheduled days**, my childcare provider reserves the right to **stop his/her scholarship**.

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

(Date)

Quality First Scholarships Reminder of Attendance Expectations

Dear Parent,

According to attendance records, _____ did not meet the attendance expectations of the Quality First Scholarships Program for the month of _____. Below is an outline of your child’s attendance:

Month:	
Days Scheduled:	
Days Attended:	
Absences:	

Note: Absences are considered excused in the case of documented illness. Family vacations, work conflicts, car troubles, etc. may not constitute an excused absence.

The Quality First Scholarships Program was implemented with the intent that resources allocated have **maximum impact** for the benefit of children and families. Inconsistent attendance is one of the most significant barriers to your child receiving quality education and entering kindergarten ready to succeed.

Punctuality is important. When your child is tardy he or she misses out on learning opportunities and may fall behind. Additionally, consistent tardiness is a distraction and may slow the progress of the entire class when it interrupts lessons and activities.

Per program expectations, it is recommended that children receiving scholarships be in attendance at least **85%** of the time that they are enrolled each month. **This letter serves as an official reminder of expectations. Child care providers reserve the right to stop your scholarship if your child fails to be in attendance at least 85% of the time that he/she is scheduled.**



I, _____ understand that the above letter is meant to serve as an **official reminder** that if I fail to bring _____ to his/her childcare center at least **85% of his/her scheduled days**, my childcare provider reserves the right to **stop his/her scholarship**. I understand that absences are excused in the case of documented illness, but that it is my responsibility to communicate instances of illness to my child’s provider.

 (Parent/Guardian Signature)

 (Date)

Quality First Scholarships Final Reminder of Attendance Expectations

Dear Parent,

According to attendance records, _____ did not meet the attendance expectations of the Quality First Scholarships Program for multiple months. Below is an outline of your child’s attendance:

Month:		Month:	
Days Scheduled:		Days Scheduled:	
Days Attended:		Days Attended:	
Absences:		Absences:	

Note: Absences are considered excused in the case of documented illness. Family vacations, work conflicts, car troubles, etc. may not constitute an excused absence.

Per program expectations, it is recommended that children receiving scholarships be in attendance at least **85%** of the time that they are enrolled each month. **This letter serves as a final reminder of attendance expectations. If your child’s attendance does not improve his/her scholarship will be terminated without further notice.**

If you’re having trouble, consider the following:

- ➔ **Make sure your child gets enough sleep:** Young children should get **9 to 11 hours of sleep per night**
- ➔ **Get ready the night before:** Lay out clothes and pack lunches the night before to avoid the morning rush and reduce the chance for tardiness
- ➔ **Avoid medical appointments and extended trips when school is in session**
- ➔ Consider a **part time** schedule for your child if it will better suit your family’s needs
- ➔ Have a back-up plan: If you find that your current mode of transportation is consistently failing, consider carpooling or asking a neighbor or family member for a ride
- ➔ **Punctuality is important:** When your child is tardy he or she misses out on learning opportunities and may fall behind
- ➔ **Communicate with your provider:** If your provider knows why your child has been absent, they may be able to connect you to resources to help improve attendance



I, _____ understand that the above letter is meant to serve as a **final reminder** that if I fail to bring _____ to his/her childcare center at least **85% of his/her scheduled days**, his/her scholarship will be terminated. I understand that absences are excused in the case of documented illness, but that it is my responsibility to communicate instances of illness to my child’s provider.

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

(Date)

Quality First Scholarships Notice of Scholarship Termination

Dear Parent,

According to attendance records, _____ did not meet the attendance expectations of the Quality First Scholarships Program for multiple months.

Per program expectations, it is recommended that children receiving scholarships be in attendance at least **85%** of the time that they are enrolled each month. On _____ and _____ you acknowledged that you had received and understood these policies as they were presented to you.

Please let this letter serve as a **notice of scholarship termination** for failing to meet these expectations.

Please be advised to these facts:

- Childcare Providers reserve the right to distribute scholarships as they see fit
- Childcare Providers reserve the right to **terminate** your scholarship due to failure to meet attendance expectations.
- Scholarship termination does **not** mean that your child is no longer eligible to participate in the Quality First Scholarships Program; you and your child **may** apply for a scholarship at a different center. To locate resources visit www.qualityfirstaz.com
- If you require additional help, you may contact the QF Scholarships Team at **1-866-973-0012** or **602-240-6324**
- As the child's parent/guardian, you are responsible for any balance you may owe to your childcare Provider

(Center or Home Name)

(Signature of Site Director)

(Date)

Note for childcare provider: please keep a copy of this form for your records