



## Program Participation and Technical Assistance Protocol School District Contracted and Public Preschool Programs

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 and the TAS. Grow NJ Kids (GNJK) has a multi-layered participation and technical assistance approach to efficiently support progressive movement through the GNJK framework. The protocol outlines clear parameters regarding program responsibilities, 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:	20 Months – Participating programs are expected to achieve their first rating within 20 months of enrollment in Grow NJ Kids.
NJCCIS:	If not already completed, school district programs will need to complete the license exempt application on NJCCIS prior to enrolling in Grow NJ Kids. If your program needs support with this process, please contact <a href="mailto:DFD.GrowNJKids@dhs.nj.gov">DFD.GrowNJKids@dhs.nj.gov</a> . All staff must register and have an individual account in NJCCIS. Programs must associate their staff to their program. Please visit <a href="http://www.njccis.com">www.njccis.com</a> for additional information and refer to the Help Desk for information on associating staff to your program.
Role of the GNJK Lead	<p>District programs must identify a GNJK Lead. This individual will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Serve as the lead facilitator between program(s) and GNJK</li> <li>• Ensure the completion of the Environment Rating Scale (ERS) observations (ITERS-3 and ECERS-3) and support classroom quality improvement efforts.</li> <li>• Coordinate completion of required curriculum training and other staff professional development</li> <li>• Guide program(s) in completing GNJK documentation</li> <li>• Navigate programs’ accounts through the NJCCIS system and ensure all staff members are registered in NJCCIS</li> </ul>
Blended Programs	Center-based programs that receive funding from more than one source (i.e., District, Private, Head Start, etc.) will follow the Center-Based GNJK Protocol and will initially receive support from a Quality Improvement Specialist (QIS) at their local county CCR&R (Child Care Resource and Referral agency) prior to being assigned a TA Specialist. Center-based programs that 100% Head Start will follow this protocol and will receive their TAS assignment upon completion of the GNJK Orientation. <b>Please note</b> 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. <b>Note about curriculum training:</b> Grow NJ Kids requires that all training be facilitated by the developer of the curricula or by an individual who has been certified 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 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:	<p><b>Program/Provider</b> refers to participating GNJK center, site(s), provider or school. These terms are interchangeable.</p> <p><b>GNJK Lead</b> is a designated representative identified by the participating program and is responsible for movement of the program through the Grow NJ Kids process.</p> <p><b>TAS:</b> Technical Assistance Specialist</p> <p><b>TAC:</b> Technical Assistance Center</p>

## Program Participation and Technical Assistance Protocol

### Step 1: Getting Started

<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Months 1-3</b>
<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Acceptance Notification, GNJK Orientation, TAS Assignment and NJCCIS</b>
<b>Protocol:</b>	<p><b>Program Responsibility</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enroll in Grow NJ Kids (GNJK) through New Jersey’s Child Care Information System (<a href="http://www.NJCCIS.com">www.NJCCIS.com</a>).</li> <li>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.</li> <li>3. Upon completion of the GNJK Orientation a Technical Assistance Specialist will be assigned. The TAS will schedule an initial meeting with the identified GNJK team at the program.</li> <li>4. In NJCCIS, within the personnel section, identify a representative to be assigned the role of GNJK Lead** for the school. This person will be the primary contact and spearhead the GNJK process for your program ensuring all requirements are met.</li> <li>5. 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.</li> <li>6. 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.</li> <li>7. Meet with your TAS and attend the GNJK Protocol Review Session. This session will provide program staff with step-by-step guidance to ensure programs are successful throughout the Grow NJ Kids process.</li> </ol> <p><b>TAS Responsibility</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TAS will be assigned to program upon notification of program’s completion of GNJK Orientation.</li> <li>2. Contact the program within 2 weeks of assignment and schedule an initial meeting/visit within 30 days.</li> <li>3. Review this protocol with Director/Administrator (GNJK Leadership Team) and answer questions related to the GNJK Orientation and processes.</li> <li>4. Facilitate/offer the GNJK Protocol review (i.e., Onboarding) for program administration and staff, if applicable.</li> <li>5. Assist program in understanding the GNJK process and the role of GNJK Lead/GNJK Contact and other leadership staff as applicable.</li> <li>6. TA will be available for support and consultation as needed.</li> </ol>

### Step 2: Assess

<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Months 4-8</b>
<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Classroom Observations, Self-Assessment and QIP</b>
<b>Protocol:</b>	<p><b>Program Responsibility</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure all staff are have registered for an account in NJCCIS and are associated to the school in which they are employed.</li> <li>2. Programs should have a system in place for regular observation and feedback using the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) using the appropriate tool for the age group served (ITERS-3 or ECERS-3). All classrooms should be observed and areas identified for improvement should be reflected on the program Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Feedback, strengths and recommendations should be shared with classroom teachers.</li> <li>3. Program Director/Administrator register for and complete ERS Online Overview for ITERS-3 and ECERS-3.</li> </ol>

4. Complete the Grow NJ Kids Self-Assessment in NJCCIS.
5. Director/Administrator completes Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) in NJCCIS. Director/Administrator identifies focus areas within the standards for continuous quality improvement.
6. Identify staff educational and training needs. Create a program-wide Professional Development Plan for ongoing staff training, including curriculum training.
7. Ensure each staff member has a PD plan identifying annual training requirements. Ensure all staff have attended or will attend the required number of curriculum training hours for the desired star-level your program will be working towards.
8. Participate in quarterly check-in meetings with your TAS. Nature of the quarterly check ins (phone calls, emails, visits) will be determined by the needs of the program.
9. Request guidance and support from your TA Specialist as needed.

**TAS Responsibility**

10. TAS to complete at least one on-site visit/meeting with program staff.
11. TAS will review and provide guidance on the Grow NJ Kids Self-Assessment and documentation, curriculum, and training requirements.
12. TAS will review and provide feedback on the program’s QIP.
13. Discussion of opportunities offered on NJ Workforce Registry, including but not limited to scholarships, as appropriate.
14. TAS will provide support through phone, in-person, email, or virtual meeting as needed.
15. Share information and encourage participation in upcoming webinars, PLCs, and networking meetings, and training.

### Step 3: Quality Improvement

<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Months 9-17</b>
<b>Activity:</b>	<b>QIP Implementation and Rating Readiness preparation</b>
<b>Protocol:</b>	<p><b>Program Responsibility</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>3. Ensure classroom teachers receive ongoing observation, feedback, and support using the Environment Rating Scale (ECERS-3 or ITERS-3).</li> <li><b>4. Determine submission date for rating. This should occur on or before months 18-19.</b></li> <li>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"> <li>a. Ensure documentation is accurate, up-to-date and reflects evidence of the standard being met. Upload documentation to the file cabinet on NJCCIS.</li> </ol> </li> <li>6. Participate in quarterly check-in meetings with your TAS. Nature of the quarterly check ins (phone calls, emails, visits) will be determined by the needs of the program.</li> </ol> <p><b>TAS Responsibility</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TAS to complete at least one on-site visit/meeting with program staff.</li> <li>2. TAS will review all Level 2 standard documentation and confirm all standards have been met.</li> <li>3. TAS will review a sampling of uploaded documentation and provide feedback as necessary.</li> </ol>

4. TAS will review and provide feedback on staff training completion.
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 4: File for Rating

<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Months 18-19</b>
<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Rating Readiness and File for Rating</b>
<b>Protocol:</b>	<p><b>Program Responsibility:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prior to submitting for rating, verify any outstanding licensing violations have been abated with the NJ Office of Childcare Licensing (center-based facilities only).</li> <li>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.</li> <li>3. Within NJCCIS, ensure all staff information is up-to-date including current position, employment history, and training records.</li> <li>4. Ensure all documentation, including time-sensitive documentation, has been reviewed in collaboration with TAS and is uploaded to the NJCCIS File Cabinet.</li> <li>5. Complete QIP in NJCCIS.</li> <li>6. Submit a new File for Rating Request on NJCCIS.</li> <li>7. Complete and submit rating readiness checklist (indicating the 2-month rating window) and submit to GNJK Rating via email.</li> <li>8. Request guidance and support from your TA Specialist as needed.</li> </ol> <p><b>TAS Responsibility:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure program is in good standing with the NJ Office of Childcare Licensing (center-based programs only).</li> <li>2. 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.</li> <li>3. Support and provide advisement on the file for rating process through NJCCIS. Review file for rating request in NJCCIS.</li> <li>4. Review program’s rating readiness checklist prior to submission via email to GNJK Rating.             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. TAS and TA Supervisor must agree to sign off on the File for Rating form in NJCCIS.</li> <li>b. TAS will provide support through phone, in-person, email, or virtual meeting as needed.</li> </ol> </li> <li>5. TAS will provide support through phone, in-person, email, or virtual meeting as needed.</li> <li>6. Share information and encourage participation in upcoming webinars, PLCs, and networking meetings, and training.</li> </ol>

### Step 5: Rating

<b>Timeframe:</b>	<b>Month 20 until rating process is complete:</b>
<b>Activity:</b>	<b>Rating, including on-site ERS Observations as applicable.</b>
<b>Protocol:</b>	<p><b>Program Responsibility:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Wait for notification from GNJK Rating pertaining to the formal documentation review and rating observation dates.</li> <li>2. Prepare for visit from GNJK Rating. Prior to formal observation by GNJK Rating, provide ongoing classroom/teacher observation and support as needed.</li> <li>3. Once rating process is complete, schedule a meeting with TAS to discuss the rating summary report and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) protocol.</li> </ol>

4. Begin referring to the “Grow NJ Kids CQI Protocol for Center-Based, Head Start and DOE Programs” for next steps.

**TA Responsibility:**

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